

INDIA PERSPECTIVES

Volume 31 ■ Issue 4 ■ July-September 2017



**INDIA-US: TOWARDS
NEW STRATEGIES**

MONSOON TRAIL
INDIA'S ODE TO RAIN

INDEPENDENCE DAY
MUSEUMS OF FREEDOM

A CONVERSATION
WITH AKSHAY KUMAR

POTPOURRI

UPCOMING EVENTS ACROSS INDIA



JANMASHTAMI

Marking the birth of Lord Krishna, Janmashtami is celebrated with special pomp in Vrindavan, since it is believed to be his birthplace. It is observed on the eighth day of the Krishna *paksha* according to the Hindu calendar.

WHEN: August 15, 2017

WHERE: Across India, but especially in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh



GANESH CHATURTHI

Also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi, this festival is celebrated across the country, and with special fervour in Maharashtra. The celebrations include prayers and offerings of *modak* to Lord Ganesha.

WHEN: August 25 to September 5, 2017

WHERE: Across India, but especially in Maharashtra

ID-UL-ZUHA

This festival, also known as Bakrid, is celebrated all over the world. Attired in vibrant dresses, people across continents mark the occasion with *namaaz* (prayers) and the exchange of greetings.

WHEN: September 2, 2017

WHERE: Across India and all over the world



LADAKH FESTIVAL

Organised every year by the state government and local communities, this festival showcases the rich culture, traditions and folk heritage of Ladakh. The spectacular procession of people attired in ceremonial costumes is a must-see.

WHEN: September 20-23, 2017

WHERE: Leh, Jammu & Kashmir



NAVRATRI

Celebrated over nine days that culminate in Dussehra on the tenth, Navratri is a festival that brings together fasting and merriment. People across the country offer prayers to Goddess Durga and exchange gifts.

WHEN: September 21-29, 2017

WHERE: Across India



FOREWORD

It has been an intensive diplomatic calendar for India in recent months, characterised by several high profile and important bilateral and multilateral engagements. On the bilateral front, in this issue of *India Perspectives*, we are covering Prime Minister Narendra Modi's highly successful visit to the United States in June, followed by his historic visit to Israel. More recently, the Prime Minister visited Myanmar on his first bilateral visit to the country as part of India's Act East policy.

This issue of the magazine also covers the recently concluded visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to India for the India-Japan Annual Summit. On the multilateral front, two important engagements - G20 and BRICS - also figure in this issue. Moving further, we celebrate the golden jubilee of the Submarine Arm of the Indian Navy, an entity that has fearlessly guarded our international waters since Independence. This year has been declared as the Navy's "Year of the Submarines", and we show you what makes the life of a submariner, special.

We trace the journey of the great Indian monsoon across the country through the festivals celebrated by various states, displaying their culture and traditions in all their glory. From the Minjar Fair in Himachal Pradesh and Hareli in Chhattisgarh to Teej in Rajasthan and Onam in Kerala, we showcase how each region embraces the season of plenitude and rejuvenation. We also continue our celebration of India's Independence with a look at museums that recount the freedom struggle and the lives of freedom fighters.

Durga Puja is celebrated with full gusto in September, with idols of Goddess Durga finding pride of place in homes and beautiful pandals across the eastern part of India. We bring you a look at how the idols are painstakingly crafted by artisans in Kolkata.

The Indian women's cricket team put in a stellar show at the recently-concluded ICC Women's World Cup. We examine how viewers across the country are now more inclined towards watching the women in blue wield the willow.

Finally, we talk to actor Akshay Kumar, a strong believer in the power of films serving as a medium to educate an audience while entertaining them, thereby effecting social change.



Raveesh Kumar



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SUPERSTARS IN BLUE

The power-packed performance of the Women in Blue at the ICC Women's World Cup 2017 has given us a new set of cricketers to follow and has proven that women's cricket in India has truly arrived

BY SHIBAJI ROY CHOUDHURY



The Indian women's cricket team may have lost the ICC Women's World Cup final, but they gained an even greater victory. For the first time in Indian women's cricket history, we saw India united in its support for a team whose existence has effectively been ignored for over five decades. It's true that losing a World Cup

final, and that too by a margin of only nine runs, is heartbreaking. But no effigies were burnt, no woman cricketer was trolled on social media and no one pelted stones at the homes of these players. This is probably because we as a nation acknowledge the fact that a motley crew that has reached the top with scant help from us, deserves adulation and respect.



India celebrates the dismissal of England's Fran Wilson

Despite being treated as mere adjuncts to the Men in Blue until now, the tenacious Women in Blue had a dramatic journey to the final, beating teams like six-time world champions Australia, arch rivals Pakistan and others such as Sri Lanka, New Zealand, England and West Indies during the group and knock-out stages, dazzling one and all. The team didn't have a dearth of outstanding performers either, with legends like Mithali Raj and seasoned campaigner Jhulan Goswami leading from the front and young talent like Punam Raut, Deepti Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur contributing when it counted.

A KNOCK TO REMEMBER

There are a handful of centuries scored by Indian cricketers that we recall as match-turning innings. Kapil Dev's 175 against Zimbabwe during the 1983 Prudential World Cup was probably the greatest until Harmanpreet Kaur scored her blistering 171 not out against a team like Australia in the semi-final this year. The talented young player from Moga, a small town in Punjab, who used to play cricket with boys, is now the cynosure of the cricketing world. She instantly became a household name with experts analysing her every



I'm happy that we have defined women's sport in India, especially the team sport, and I would like to see many more women's team sports coming into the limelight

Mithali Raj
Captain, Indian women's cricket team



A dream has come true, a dream to play good cricket. Proud that we have made our country's flag fly high. The country has woken up to women's cricket

Harmanpreet Kaur
Indian cricketer



ACHIEVEMENT



It was such a close game. Full marks to them. Very very happy they have played (exceedingly well) throughout the tournament

Sunil Gavaskar
Former Indian cricketer

”



Super proud of the girls. Tough luck today but women's cricket in India has truly arrived. Thank you girls. Salute your spirit. #WWC17Final

Virender Sehwag
Former Indian cricketer



shot on national news networks, Twitterati cheering heartily for every boundary she scored and news portals fleshing out old interviews, statistics and every other bit of information about her for the next day's front page.

And don't be mistaken by the notion that she was a World Cup find for the Indian team. Kaur is the first woman cricketer from India to have been signed for the Women's Big Bash League, hosted by Cricket Australia, where she will play for Sydney Thunder. She is also the first to have been selected to play in the Kia Super League, a T20 tournament hosted by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) where she will be a part of the Surrey Stars.

LONE WARRIOR

Even before Raj and the rest of the team could make it back to India, comparisons of her and Sachin Tendulkar started making headlines. Nicknames like 'Lady Tendulkar' and 'Tendulkar of Women's Cricket' were doing the rounds. They have had a similar narrative in their

Facing page (left to right):

Cricketer Sushma Verma clicks a selfie with her teammates. Harmanpreet Kaur shines with 171 runs at the ICC Women's World Cup

Below: Mithali Raj, captain of the Indian women's cricket team, and cricketer Harmanpreet Kaur during a felicitation ceremony in New Delhi





exceptionally long cricketing careers – Sachin Tendulkar single-handedly enabling the men’s cricket team to sail through the rough 90s and Raj being the lone warrior for the women’s team throughout the first decade of the new millennium. However, unlike Sachin, almost no one knew Raj even after her outstanding performance in the 2005 World Cup.

Appreciated or not, she has relentlessly performed for the country and set records that can give even Sachin a run for his money - the highest number of runs by a woman cricketer, the youngest to score a century in women’s ODIs and 74 innings without a duck are only a few on her exhaustive list.

In fact, both Sachin Tendulkar and Sunil Gavaskar have requested people not to call her ‘Lady Tendulkar’ as she is a unique and irreplaceable asset to the Indian women’s cricket team in her own right.

DREAM RUN

Though the team made it to the front page of newspapers and panel discussions on prime time television during its World Cup run, the women have been playing extraordinary cricket

for a much longer time. In the recent past, the team made history by winning its maiden T20 series against Australia, three-time world champions, defeating them on their home ground in January 2016. The Women in Blue then went on to beat Sri Lanka in the ODI and T20 series in February, while also defeating former world champions New Zealand in a keenly-contested ODI series in 2016.

WORLD-CLASS TALENT

The Indian women’s team is no longer an underdog; today, it is considered a serious contender in world tournaments. The calm and composed opening bat, Punam Raut, has taken Indian cricket to new heights with her unhurried batting style, holding one end of the crease at all times. She is followed by ‘captain cool’ Mithali Raj, who possesses every

Sachin Tendulkar and Sunil Gavaskar have requested people not to call Raj ‘Lady Tendulkar’ as she is unique in her own right



The Indian women's cricket team had a great run at the ICC Women's World Cup 2017 in England

In the recent past, the team made history by winning its maiden T20 series against Australia

shot in the book and has adapted well to the faster scoring format of the game. There is also pugnacious speedster Jhulan Goswami, who has been taunting batswomen the world over with her bowling prowess for decades, and the young and talented Deepti Sharma, Veda Krishnamurthy and Harmanpreet Kaur, unmatched world-class players who will serve Indian cricket for decades to come. Such a team can no longer be taken lightly.

AWAITED TRANSFORMATION

After the overwhelming support and recognition that the team has been receiving lately, it wouldn't be amiss to expect that women's cricket might finally get some much-deserved attention in India now, both from the Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI) and sponsors. However, just getting sponsorship or increasing the players' salaries will not better the status of Indian women's cricket. The real transformation lies in keeping the lantern of adulation and acceptance lit, as recognising these talented athletes is the key to their success. Indian women cricketers are sports personalities who have carved a space of their own in this male-dominated sport.

TOWARDS NEW STRATEGIES

On his fifth visit to the US in June this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi strengthened Indo-US ties and added new dimensions to the bilateral relationship between the two nations

BY MAROOF RAZA



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump shake hands as they deliver joint statements at the White House in Washington, DC

As US President Donald Trump addressed the media after his first meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House, Washington, DC in June this year, he stated, “The relationship between India and the United States has never been stronger, never been better.” Among the

highlights of PM Modi’s visit to the US was his effort to bring about a meeting of minds between the heads of state of the two largest democracies in the world, and he seems to have succeeded with the two-day trip yielding a series of significant outcomes. The visit has been termed ‘historic’ by the international media on account of the significant ground

covered between India and the US - from addressing counterterrorism and the sale of 22 unmanned Guardian drones to India, to discussions on maritime security and an invitation to the Trump family to visit India.

FIGHT AGAINST TERROR

Reiterating their commitment to cooperate in the fight against international terrorism, PM Modi and President Trump held that terrorism is a “global scourge that must be fought and terrorist safe havens rooted out in every part of the world.” They affirmed that they are “committed to strengthening cooperation against terrorist threats from groups including al-Qaeda, ISIS, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, D-Company and their affiliates.”

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

President Trump urged PM Modi to relax trade barriers against US companies. He stated that

he would like a trading relationship with India that is “fair and reciprocal”. PM Modi described the US and India as “leading engines of growth” in the global economy and stated, “I am sure that the convergence of my vision for ‘New India’ and President Trump’s vision for making America great again will add new dimensions to our cooperation.”

The joint statement by the two heads of state said on this subject that “the United States and India plan to undertake a comprehensive review of trade relations with the goal of expediting regulatory processes; ensuring that technology and innovation are

“The relationship between India and the United States has never been stronger, never been better,” Trump stated during the visit



Left: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump and US First Lady Melania Trump during a meeting at the Oval Office in the White House

Facing page: PM Modi and President Trump address the media in the Rose Garden at the White House



appropriately fostered, valued, and protected; and increasing market access in areas such as agriculture, information technology, manufactured goods and services.”

DEFENCE DIARIES

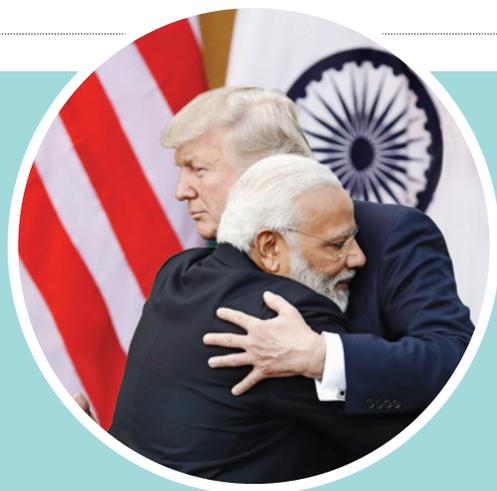
The leaders of both countries reaffirmed their commitment to working together on advanced defence equipment and technology “at a level commensurate with that of the closest allies and partners of the United States”. Ahead of the meeting, the US cleared the sale of 22 unmanned Guardian drones to India, and the deal, estimated to be worth \$2-3 billion, is

The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to working together on advanced defence equipment and technology

being termed a “game changer”. Talking about expanding their maritime security cooperation, PM Modi and President Trump also announced their intention to build on the implementation of the ‘White Shipping’ data sharing arrangement. It allows countries to share data on maritime traffic and enhances collaboration on maritime domain awareness.

The upcoming MALABAR naval exercise was also addressed during the visit. The joint statement said: “Noting the importance of the upcoming MALABAR naval exercise, the leaders determined to expand their engagements on shared maritime objectives and to explore new exercises.”

President Trump also expressed strong support for India’s early membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group, and a permanent membership on a reformed United Nations Security Council.



WHAT THE LEADERS DISCUSSED

Excerpts from the joint statement:

Peace in the Indo-Pacific region

As responsible stewards in the Indo-Pacific region, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi agreed that a close partnership between the United States and India is central to peace and stability in the region. Recognising the significant progress achieved in these endeavours, the leaders agreed to take further measures to strengthen their partnership. In accordance with the tenets outlined in the UN Charter, they committed to a set of common principles for the region. President Trump welcomed Indian contributions to promote Afghanistan's democracy, stability, prosperity and security.

Stand against terrorism

The leaders stressed that terrorism is a global scourge that must be fought and terrorist safe havens rooted out in every part of the world. They resolved that India and the United States will fight together against this grave challenge to humanity. In this spirit, the leaders welcomed a new consultation mechanism on domestic and international terrorist designations listing proposals. They also announced increased cooperation to prevent terrorist travel and to disrupt global recruitment efforts by expanding intelligence-sharing and operational-level counterterrorism cooperation.

Strategic convergence

President Trump and Prime Minister Modi pledged to deepen defence and security cooperation, building on the United States' recognition of India as a Major Defense Partner. The United States and India look

forward to working together on advanced defence equipment and technology at a level commensurate with that of the closest allies and partners of the United States. Reflecting the partnership, the United States has offered for India's consideration the sale of Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Systems, which would enhance India's capabilities and promote shared security interests. Resolving to expand their maritime security cooperation, the leaders announced their intention to build on the implementation of their 'White Shipping' data sharing arrangement, which enhances collaboration on maritime domain awareness.

Free and fair trade

The leaders committed that the United States and India — leading engines of growth in the global economy — should intensify their economic cooperation to make their nations stronger and their citizens more prosperous. Noting that extensive economic and tax reforms launched in their respective countries will unlock immense economic opportunities for both countries, the leaders committed to further expanding and balancing the trade relationship and to removing obstacles to growth and jobs creation. They also resolved to pursue increased commercial engagement in a manner that advances the principles of free and fair trade. To this end, the United States and India plan to undertake a comprehensive review of trade relations with the goal of expediting regulatory processes; ensuring that technology and innovation are appropriately fostered; and increasing market access in areas such as agriculture and manufactured goods.





President Trump and PM Modi stated that they would take measures to strengthen their partnership in the Indo-Pacific region

SHIFT IN FOCUS

President Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that they would take measures to strengthen their partnership in the Indo-Pacific region. They affirmed that they would reiterate the importance of respecting freedom of navigation, overflight and commerce throughout the region. They also called upon all nations to resolve territorial and maritime disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law.

OFFICIAL INVITATION

Ivanka Trump, President Trump's daughter, will lead the US delegation to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES), to be held in India later this year. GES is a key foreign policy initiative that brings together global entrepreneurs and innovators, and India will be hosting its upcoming edition. "I have invited her (Ivanka Trump) to lead the US delegation," PM Modi said while jointly addressing the media alongside President Trump. The Indian Prime Minister, who has also invited the President and his family to India, said that Ivanka Trump has accepted the invitation. Ivanka later tweeted, "Thank you, Prime Minister Modi, for inviting me to lead the US delegation to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in India this fall."



Above: PM Modi and President Trump shake hands at the White House

Left: The two leaders during a meeting at the Oval Office



ON A LINE OF PROGRESS

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India marked the strengthening of bilateral cooperation between India and Japan in key areas such as technology and defence

As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe together laid the foundation stone for India's first high-speed rail project in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, they also laid the foundation for stronger bilateral ties and greater cooperation between the two nations. Prime Minister Abe was in India for two days, from September 13 to 14, to attend the 12th India-Japan annual summit. The joint statement

issued during the visit states that the two leaders held discussions on a vast range of issues under the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between the two countries and "welcomed significant deepening of bilateral relations in the past three years and the growing convergence in the political, economic and strategic interests, based on the firm foundation of common values and traditions, as well as on an emerging consensus on contemporary issues of peace, security and development."



The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) was launched by the two leaders at Sabarmati railway station in Ahmedabad

BULLET TRAIN

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR), launched by the two leaders at the Sabarmati railway station in Ahmedabad, comprises India's first bullet train that will connect "Aapnu Amdavad to Aamchi Mumbai (my Ahmedabad to our Mumbai)", PM Modi said after the inauguration. The project, speculated to reduce the travel time between the two cities from seven hours to under three, is based on Japan's Shinkansen super speed train technology. The ambitious 508-km line is a welcome addition to the growing list of infrastructure cooperation projects being undertaken by the two countries, and is scheduled for completion in 2022 – marking a new era on the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

INDO-PACIFIC COOPERATION

The two Prime Ministers signed 15 agreements to broad-base their strategic partnership and reaffirmed their commitment towards achieving a "free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific region where sovereignty and international law are respected." The leaders emphasised that India and Japan could play a central role in "safeguarding and strengthening such a rules-based order," to which end they will reinforce their efforts to align India's Act East Policy with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. They also pledged to enhance security and defence cooperation, encourage prosperity through the India-Japan Investment Promotion Partnership, ensure the timely implementation of infrastructure projects, tackle global challenges such as terrorism and climate change, strengthen "trilateral cooperation frameworks with the US, Australia and other countries", and strengthen people-to-people ties through "collaboration in the fields of tourism, civil aviation, higher education, women's education, skills development and sports."



Top: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attend the Ground Breaking Ceremony of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Project (MAHSR) in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Above: PM Modi and PM Abe at the 12th India-Japan Annual Summit in Gandhinagar

PARTNERSHIP



Left: PM Modi and PM Abe with his wife, Akie, at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad

Below: PM Modi presents the book *Mann Ki Baat - A Social Revolution on Radio* to PM Abe in Gandhinagar

Facing page: The two Prime Ministers at the Ground Breaking Ceremony of MAHSR in Ahmedabad



NATIONAL SECURITY

PM Modi and PM Abe laid emphasis on defence and security cooperation between the two countries in order to enhance their strategic partnership, welcoming the recently held annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue, the first Defence Industry Forum held in Tokyo recently, which was addressed by the defence ministers of the two countries, as well as the discussions covering other promising initiatives in defence industry cooperation. The two heads of state “commended the significant progress achieved in maritime security cooperation” and “noted the ongoing close cooperation between the Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) in various specialised areas of mutual interest.” They further noted recent progress in bilateral cooperation on defence equipment and technology, including the future research collaboration in the area of Unmanned Ground Vehicles and Robotics.

A CONNECTED WORLD

The two leaders expressed their commitment towards enhancing connectivity in India as



The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment towards advancing the Make in India initiative

well as with other countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The two Prime Ministers “welcomed the efforts to explore the development of industrial corridors and industrial network for the growth of Asia and Africa, which will benefit various stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region.” They also laid emphasis on the importance of all countries ensuring “the development and use of connectivity infrastructure in an open, transparent and non-exclusive manner based on international standards and responsible debt financing practices, while ensuring respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the rule of law, and the environment,” the joint statement states. PM Modi and PM Abe also welcomed Indo-Japan cooperation for

the development of India’s North Eastern Region (NER) and “smart islands” to enhance regional connectivity.

PROSPERITY AND PARTNERSHIP

The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment towards advancing the Make in India initiative as well as the transfer of technology in HSR projects. They welcomed technological collaborations between the two nations, such as the prospective collaboration between Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) and Kawasaki, and expressed an inclination towards further strengthening their partnership in the arena of high-speed railways.

As Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe departed for Japan at the end of the visit, he thanked the Government of India as well as the people of the country for their hospitality and also extended a cordial invitation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Japan for the next annual summit meeting. PM Modi has accepted the invitation and will be visiting Japan at a mutually convenient time.

SALUTING HERITAGE IN MYANMAR

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his first bilateral state visit to Myanmar on September 5, 2017

At the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was given a ceremonial welcome as he arrived for his first bilateral visit to the country on September 5, 2017. He paid a courtesy call on the President of

Myanmar, U Htin Kyaw, who hosted a State Banquet in his honour. The second day of the visit saw PM Modi and Myanmar's state counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holding bilateral talks on a range of subjects. The joint statement issued during the visit states that the two leaders "reviewed ongoing official





Left: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets President of Myanmar, U Htin Kyaw, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar
Facing page: PM Modi signs the visitors' book at Ananda Temple in Bagan

exchanges, economic, trade and cultural ties, as well as people-to-people exchanges that reflect the harmony between Myanmar's independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy and India's pragmatic Act East and Neighbourhood First policies."

Besides his official meetings and engagements in the country over the three-day visit, PM Modi also visited places of historical importance in Bagan and Yangon. In Bagan, he visited the Ananda temple, an ancient Buddhist temple built in the early 12th century and the second largest temple in the entire Bagan region. Archaeologists from India and Myanmar have been carrying out restoration work at the temple after an earthquake last year, under the expert guidance of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The Indian Prime Minister paid his respects and took a parikrama of the premises while ASI representatives explained the restoration process to him.

On the last day of his three-day visit, PM Modi paid a visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda in

On the last day of his three-day tour, PM Modi paid a visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon

Yangon. The 2,500-year-old structure, located west of the Royal Lake, is among the most sacred spaces in Myanmar and is considered to be the spiritual centre of Burmese Buddhism. The Indian Prime Minister also paid his respects at the Martyrs' Mausoleum and performed a puja at the Kalibari Temple. He also visited Bogyoke Aung San Museum, accompanied by state counsellor Suu Kyi. The museum dedicated to her father, General Aung San, and contains exhibits on his life as well as a few personal possessions.

Concluding the state visit on a positive note, PM Modi tweeted before departing for India, "My Myanmar visit covered significant ground in giving a much needed impetus to India-Myanmar relations and deepening bilateral cooperation."

SETTING A NEW MILESTONE

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel has been a significant landmark in building bilateral relations between the two countries

BY S VENKAT NARAYAN



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel on July 4-6 this year was historic for many reasons, the most prominent among them being that it was the first state visit to the Jewish nation by a sitting Indian Prime Minister. It has been a major step in building India's relations with Israel and Palestine, and also celebrates the

civilisational link that was established over 2000 years ago with the arrival in India of a tiny Jewish community, seeking refuge.

It was in 2006 that Modi had first visited Israel as the then Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat, and he had returned very impressed with the strides that nation had made in agriculture and water management. In



Left: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leave for Haifa to pay homage to Indian soldiers

Facing page: PM Modi and PM Netanyahu at the Community Reception Programme in Tel Aviv

September 2014, he met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in New York on the sidelines of a UN General Assembly session, where the latter invited him to visit Israel. Netanyahu said on the occasion: “We are very excited by the prospects of greater and greater ties with India. We think the sky is the limit. This is an opportunity for Israel and India to expand further our relationship.”

The Gulf is an important space for India. It is India’s principal source of energy, meeting most of the country’s oil and gas requirements. It is also India’s major economic partner, with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries collectively in the top three of India’s trade partners, crucial export destinations and major investment partners. The GCC is now home to

The Gulf is an important space for India. It is India’s principal source of energy, meeting most of the country’s oil and gas requirements

about eight million Indians, who have made a significant contribution to the development of the region, and send home \$40 billion annually.

India wants to maintain good relations with the Muslim countries in the Middle East as well as with Israel. As many as 85,000 Indian Jews have migrated to Israel since it came into existence. India is today Israel’s top destination for arms exports, buying 41 per cent of Israel’s arms export between 2012 and 2016, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Israel is India’s third-largest source of arms, with a 7.2 per cent share of imports between 2012 and 2016, next to the USA (14 per cent) and Russia (68 per cent).

India hosted Palestine President Mahmoud Abbas in May 2017. PM Modi had stated during the latter’s visit: “The relationship between India and Palestine is built on the foundation of long-standing solidarity and friendship since the days of our own freedom struggle. India has been unwavering in its support of the Palestinian cause.” This would have assured the Palestine President that India is not dismissing

PM Modi announced the setting up of an Indian Cultural Centre in Israel as part of efforts to enhance people-to-people contact

his country to befriend Israel. The earliest Indo-Israeli collaboration came about during the 1962 Sino-Indian war, when Israel provided India with military aid. India reciprocated during the six-day war in 1967 by providing Israel with spare parts for French-made Mystere and Ouragan aircraft as well as AX-13 tanks (also French-made). The highlight of the partnership was Israel's supply of artillery shells during the Kargil war in 1999.

It was in 1992 that the then Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao established full diplomatic relations with Israel. In May 1993, the then Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres became the first Jewish dignitary to visit India. In September 2003, during Atal Bihari

Vajpayee's prime ministership, then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited India. But no Indian Prime Minister ever visited Israel until PM Modi in 2017.

This visit has turned out to be memorable for the bonhomie and warmth it has generated. PM Netanyahu received PM Modi at the airport, and declared that the India-Israeli relationship was made in heaven but being executed on earth. Pm Modi also met Israel President Reuven Rivlin and tweeted: "The President of Israel welcomed me so warmly, he broke protocol. This is a mark of respect for the people of India."

Addressing the Indian diaspora, PM Modi announced the setting up of an Indian Cultural Centre in Israel as part of efforts to enhance people-to-people contact between the two countries. India and Israel signed seven agreements to step up cooperation in key sectors like space, agriculture and water conservation. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between



Right: PM Modi visits the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem with Israeli PM Netanyahu

Facing page: PM Modi and PM Netanyahu at the Olga Beach in Israel



India and Israel signed seven agreements to step up cooperation in key sectors such as space and agriculture

the Department of Science and Technology and Israel's National Technological Innovation Authority for the setting up of India-Israel Industrial Research and Development (R&D) and Technical Innovation Fund worth \$40 million.

After witnessing the ceremony, PM Modi said: "We are of one view that together our scientists and researchers would develop, build and implement mutually beneficial solutions in the field." An Indo-Israel agriculture action plan for 2015-18 is operational, and 15 of the

proposed 26 centres of excellence in agriculture are being developed in India with Israel's help to showcase the latest technology to Indian farmers.

India has benefited from Israeli technologies in horticulture mechanisation, protected cultivation, orchard and canopy management, nursery management, micro-irrigation and post-harvest management, particularly in Haryana and Maharashtra.

Israel has been India's 38th largest trading partner, with trade of \$5.02 billion (₹33,634 crore) in 2016-17. The two sides hope to double the bilateral trade over the next five years.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel has been hailed as a resounding success, especially as a multidimensional strategic partnership was formalised between the two countries.



A MOVE TOWARDS PROGRESS

At the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany this year, leaders of the 20 nations pledged greater cooperation on seminal international issues

BY NB RAO

The Preamble to the G20 Leaders' Declaration adopted at this year's G20 summit in Germany, states: "We are resolved to tackle common challenges to the global community, including terrorism, displacement, poverty, hunger and health threats, job creation, climate change, energy security, and inequality including gender inequality, as a basis for sustainable development and stability. We will continue to work together with others,

including developing countries, to address these challenges, building on the rules-based international order." The G20 (Group of Twenty) leaders who met in Hamburg for this annual summit on July 7 and 8, 2017, reiterated that their highest priority was their joint objective - strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. The two-day summit had as its theme 'shaping an interconnected world' this year. It concluded with the leaders proposing the Hamburg Action Plan to address major global

challenges such as climate change, harnessing digitalisation, and effectively contributing to prosperity and well-being in the world.

COUNTERING TERRORISM

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, one of the key speakers at the global event, stressed that the G20 should collectively oppose terrorism financing, franchises, safe havens, and those supporting and sponsoring the acts. Terrorism poses the gravest threat to humanity, he pointed out, while welcoming the plan of action drawn out by G20 for countering it. He also presented an action agenda to tackle the growing threat from terrorism.

UK Prime Minister Theresa May added that the UK also supports bolstering the global fight against terror and modern slavery.

ECONOMIC REFORMS

The Prime Minister also highlighted the major economic reforms that had been initiated in India including the introduction of GST, and

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated India's commitment to implementing the Paris Agreement

emphasised the need for all nations to work together for sustained economic recovery.

Referring to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set up by the United Nations Development Programme, PM Modi pointed to the Skill India scheme, Digital India and other financial inclusion schemes, which were India's initiatives in consonance with SDGs.

He spoke about India's initiatives for achieving SDG targets through a consistent roadmap for implementation and the national review as per UN guidelines. He also proposed an international coalition of countries that can identify technology, develop systems and build capacities, and also added that India was ready to lead. Speaking at length about technology facilitation, Official Development Assistance



Left: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets British Prime Minister Theresa May on the margins of the G20 summit

Facing page: Leaders from the G20 nations pose for a group photo during the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany on July 7, 2017

(ODA) commitments, infrastructure, labour mobility and health, the Indian Prime Minister said that all the G20 nations need to play a more major role in these sectors.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Laying emphasis on climate change, PM Modi remarked that developing nations need to have more space to grow. He also advocated a collective voice against practices of protectionism, especially in the spheres of trade and movement of knowledge and professionals. He reiterated India's commitment to implementing the Paris

Agreement – the agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that also deals with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation – in “letter and spirit”, and described its implementation globally as essential to fighting climate change. He stated that today, it is “mandatory” to implement the consensus of the Paris Agreement to protect the environment.

He also called for expeditious action to establish a BRICS rating agency and affirmed that cooperation on the development of Africa should be treated as a priority. Of the 20 leaders, 19 were able to reach a consensus on all points made in the joint declaration (also known as the communique) with the exception of US President Donald Trump, who did not agree on the subject of climate change. In a break from tradition, a separate paragraph on the United States' stance on the Paris Agreement and on fossil fuels was added.

British Prime Minister Theresa May emphasised that the UK supports the global fight against terror and modern slavery



What was discussed

- Deterrent action against nations supporting terrorism
- G20 nations must exchange lists of suspected terrorists
- Legal processes against terrorists should be expedited
- Adoption of comprehensive convention on international terrorism
- Implementation of UNSC and other international resolutions
- G20 nations should focus on deradicalisation programmes
- Financial action task forces to curb terror funding
- Curb the flow of weapons to terrorists by setting up task forces
- Ensure cyber security and cooperation in fight against terrorists
- Appoint national security advisors to counter terrorism



Above: First mayor of Hamburg Olaf Scholz poses with partners of heads of state and representatives of guest invitees, during the partner programme of the G20 summit
Facing page: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hold talks at the summit

Chancellor Merkel stated that a focus area of the Leaders’ Declaration is to ensure stability in the international financial system

President Trump had announced the decision to withdraw from the agreement earlier this year.

TOWARDS COOPERATION

German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her satisfaction with the outcome of the G20 summit this year. She was happy with the fact that an agreement was reached on the notion that markets must be kept open. She also appreciated the fact that the major industrialised states as well as emerging economies had agreed to fight protectionism

and unfair trade restrictions at the summit. She further noted that the rules-based international trading system, as embodied by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), plays a vital role in this context. Chancellor Merkel also pointed out that one of the focus areas of the Leaders’ Declaration is to ensure stability in the international financial system. Referring to the Hamburg Action Plan, which was adopted at the conclusion of the summit, she said that the Leaders’ Declaration stipulates: “We will promote greater inclusiveness, fairness and equality in our pursuit of economic growth and job creation.” Interestingly, leaders of the five BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) also held an informal meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Hamburg, as a run up to the 9th BRICS Summit held in Xiamen, China, in September this year.



BRICS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The 9th BRICS summit brought together the five BRICS nations in Xiamen, China. We give you an overview of what it addressed

BY NB RAO

BRICS, the international body representing five leading countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – hosted its ninth summit at Xiamen in the Fujian province of China from September 3 to 5 this year. With ‘BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future’ as its theme, the three-day event also ushered in the organisation’s second decade. Chinese President Xi Jinping chaired the summit, which was attended by President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, President Michel

Temer of Brazil, President Vladimir Putin of Russia and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India. As the leaders came together, several issues of international significance were discussed, including terrorism, international trade and cooperation.

COMMERCIAL TIES

The 9th BRICS summit saw the member countries signing four documents, including on economic and trade cooperation, with an aim to deepen commercial ties with each



The ninth edition of the BRICS summit, held at Xiamen, China, was centered around the theme of 'Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future'

At the plenary session of the summit, PM Modi addressed the need to further cooperation in key areas like agriculture and climate

other. These were: action agenda on economic trade and cooperation, action plan for innovation cooperation (2017-2020), strategic framework of BRICS customs cooperation and Memorandum of Understanding between the BRICS Business Council and the New Development Bank on strategic cooperation.

TEN-POINT SOLUTION

Speaking at the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested 10 commitments that all BRICS nations should make to play a significant role in global transformation. These included efforts towards counterterrorism, safeguarding the environment for a greener world and working together towards greater digitalisation and equity.

GREATER COOPERATION

In his statement at the plenary session of the BRICS summit, PM Modi also addressed the need to further cooperation in key areas such as agriculture, energy, environment, climate change, sports and culture. He also shared details about India's consistent efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure better healthcare, food security, sanitation and education.

THE XIAMEN DECLARATION

All heads of state at the summit jointly named and condemned Pakistan-based terror groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Haqqani network in a declaration. Bracketing them with global terror groups Islamic State and al-Qaeda, this marked a significant diplomatic win in India's efforts to counter cross-border terrorism. Over the past decade, BRICS has emerged as an important platform for cooperation among developing countries. With this year's summit concluding on a positive note, the primary takeaway is, indeed, the promise of a better future.



THE INDIAN NAVY'S POTENT ARM

As the Indian Navy's Submarine Arm celebrates 50 glorious years of operations in 2017, we salute the submariners who have tirelessly ensured India's national security



Above: Plumbing the depths of our waters or skimming their surface - submarines are key to our defence strategy

Above right: A Sindhughosh-class submarine on the surface



The unknown deep has held an extraordinary fascination for mankind over the ages, the darker depths of the ocean standing as a challenge to the chosen few who dared to venture beneath the waves. For years now, submariners across the world have overcome this challenge with sheer grit and determination. Groped by the fathoms below the keel and with miles of ocean all around, each moment spent in a submarine is an exhilarating battle with the current, the waves, the machinery and, most importantly, one's own resilience and determination.

The Submarine Arm has been a tremendous addition to the impressive capabilities of the Indian Navy since 1967, which has patrolled our expansive waters and served as a vital tool and stealthy platform in safeguarding our maritime interests. The zeal and professionalism of its personnel are hallmarks of the proud submarine tradition today.

The Navy is celebrating the golden jubilee of the inception of its Submarine Arm this year. Fifty years ago, on December 8, 1967, on a cold and breezy morning at Riga in Latvia in the erstwhile USSR, the Indian Naval Ensign was hoisted on the erstwhile *INS Kalvari* and thus began the tryst of the Indian Navy with submarines. In early 1971, along with the



On Guard

The history of the Indian Navy's Submarine Arm goes back to the years just after India attained independence. Through dedicated efforts lasting over a decade, a modest beginning was made when a team of officers was trained at *HMS Dolphin* in 1962. The commissioning of the first Indian-built submarine, *INS Shalki* on February 7, 1992 heralded the Indian Navy's indigenous submarine construction capability. The commissioning of nuclear-powered *Chakra-I* in 1988 and later *Chakra-II* in 2012 leap-frogged the Indian Navy into a select group of nuclear submarine-operating Navies.

rest of the Navy, the Submarine Arm was entrusted to prepare itself to meet the impending threat on India's national security. Despite being a fledgling force at the time, with barely three years of operational experience in an entirely new professional field, the Submarine Arm readied itself for battle as war clouds hovered over the subcontinent. When the war finally broke out, our submarines sailed forth, deploying on both fronts - in the Bay of Bengal as well as the Arabian Sea - and some ventured deep into the adversary's waters, which had a decisive effect on the outcome of the war.

Over the years, the Indian Navy has looked towards the Submarine Arm during many situations of conflict - during the Kargil conflict in 1999 and the attack on the Parliament on December 13, 2001, the Submarine Arm maintained the highest state of readiness throughout both the campaigns.

The Arm's 50-year journey has had its challenges, but the unremitting dedication of early submariners ensured

that the Indian Navy joined the elite band of Navies across the world that operate these potent underwater war vessels. Few Navies have acquired four submarines in three years and then fought a victorious war in the fourth; few have made the transition from surface to underwater and then from conventional to nuclear propulsion, all in the space of three decades; and few have taken on the daunting task of building their own submarines a mere 20 years after the formation of their Submarine Arm.

Today, the Indian Navy's Submarine Arm is on the threshold of a radical metamorphosis. Whilst in our stables, we still have the venerable, robust, reliable and conventional *Sindhughosh*-class and *Shishumar*-class submarines, we are also ushering in indigenous strategic submarines. Commissioning of indigenously constructed conventional submarine *INS Kalvari* in 2017, the golden jubilee year and submarines of its follow-on series will be following the government's vision of *Make in India*.

The Indian Navy is at a stage where the long years of planning and hard work have now fructified into realistic assets that afford extended reach, unlimited endurance and sustainability. As the Navy sets sail in the largely uncharted waters of marine nuclear technology, the challenges that lie ahead to harness this energy are many. Our submariners though have always worked best under pressure - whether of the ocean or of professional

The Indian Navy is at a stage where the long years of planning and hard work have now fructified into realistic assets





Facing page: Crew members are all attention aboard the *INS Kalvari*, the first Scorpene-class submarine



Right (top to bottom): A submarine on the surface before a dive. Submarine *INS Chakra* preparing to dive

challenges. The Indian Navy has a major task in safeguarding our country's maritime interests, which are wide-ranging and complex. There is every confidence that the Submarine Arm will overcome all difficulties and fulfill all tasks and missions within its overall Naval role in the defence of the country.

Vice Admiral Srikant, AVSM, Inspector General Nuclear Safety and the senior-most serving submariner, asserts that 2017 would be etched in the Indian Navy's almanac for remembrance. He further adds with conviction that with our eyes fixed on the horizon, this journey of 50 years has been about

courage, dedication, commitment and most of all, a journey of hope, mutual trust and lasting camaraderie. As a befitting tribute to commemorate 50 years of glorious service to the nation, the Chief of the Naval Staff – Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, ADC declared 2017 as the year of the Submarine Arm on Navy Day 2016.

The President of India will be presenting the prestigious 'President's Colours' to the Indian Navy's Submarine Arm on Dec 8 at Visakhapatnam. The event will be witnessed by a host of veteran Indian submariners and distinguished guests.

SEVENTY-ONE YEARS YOUNG

In August 2017, India marked its 71st Independence Day. Relive the momentous celebrations and let the patriotic fervour run high!

BY GAURAV NAGPAL



A sand sculpture commemorating the 71st Indian Independence Day



At the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, India, the land of the tricolour, marked its Independence from British rule. The flag has fluttered proudly ever since, and the Independence Day has been a day of great significance for the country, declared as a national holiday to commemorate the event.

As with all previous years, this year too, the Prime Minister delivered a strong, patriotic and inspiring address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort in New Delhi. Like 2015, in the build-up to his speech, he called for suggestions from Indian citizens about the subjects he should address in his speech. About 6,000 suggestions came in via the Nammo App and 2,216 from the MyGov.in portal.

The Prime Minister talked about the fact that this year also marks 75 years of the Quit India movement, the call by Mahatma Gandhi asking the British to leave India and a definitive phase in the history of our country. It was on August 8, 1942, that the All India Congress Committee (AICC) held a meeting in Bombay (now Mumbai), with an agenda to launch a movement urging the British to leave India. Prior to this, in a meeting on July 14 the same year, the Congress Working Committee had declared the “urgent” need for ending British rule in India. Among other things, the declaration stated: “The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism.”

Interestingly, in 1942, there had been a fair bit of deliberation when it came to the slogan



Our resolve, strength and determination remembering the memory of our great patriots will help us to build an India of their dreams by 2022

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

”



New India must include that integral humanist component that is in our DNA, and which has defined our country and our civilisation

Ram Nath Kovind
President of India

”

GOING DIGITAL

Gallantry awards

On the eve of the 71st Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a special online portal dedicated to the winners of the gallantry awards in India: gallantryawards.gov.in. It contains, among other features, a detailed database of all the awardees from 1950 to 2017, with their names and photographs.

BHIM - Aadhaar

During his Independence Day address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to “adopt BHIM App for transactions and make it a part of our economic activities”. The BHIM-Aadhaar platform, launched by PM Modi in May this year, is a biometric-based payment system that allows people to make payments through a fingerprint scanner function.

Namo App

The Narendra Modi mobile app, launched in June 2015, is a platform that enables direct interaction between the Prime Minister and citizens of India. Providing updates on the day-to-day activities of PM Modi, the app also enables users to receive messages and emails directly from him and tune into various editions of Mann Ki Baat, among other things.

for the Quit India movement. “Get out” was a suggestion, not favoured by Mahatma Gandhi as he felt it was impolite. His “conscience keeper” (as he called him), C Rajagopalachari, suggested “Retreat” or “Withdraw”, neither of which was selected. Yusuf Meherally, socialist and trade unionist who was jailed eight times during the freedom struggle, suggested “Quit India”, and it stayed! The movement was launched on the midnight of August 9 at Mumbai’s Gowalia Tank, later renamed to August Kranti Maidan (which is also the place after which a Rajdhani train linking Delhi and Mumbai is named). In his speech to the people at the venue, Mahatma Gandhi had said: “There is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You imprint it on your heart and let every breath of yours give an expression to it. The mantra is ‘do or die.’”

Other than the Quit India movement milestone, 2017 marks 75 years since the formation of the Azad Hind Fauj (also known as the Indian National Army) by Subhash Chandra Bose. For both occasions, the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, organised

Right: Rashtrapati Bhawan, the house of the President of India, brightly illuminated on the occasion of Independence Day

Below: Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort





an exhibition of the declassified documents relating to both events for the scrutiny of the citizens of India. The exhibition was titled 'Kareng Ya Mareng 75 Chalo Dilli', and was held on the premises of the National Archives of India, New Delhi, with thousands of declassified files and documents on display. One of the rare documents available on view was a letter by Mahatma Gandhi written on August 8, 1942, where he coins the slogan *kareng ya mareng* (do or die). When it comes to *Bharat chhodo* (Quit India), the widely-held belief is that this too was coined by Mahatma Gandhi, whereas some of the documents on display prove that the credit in truth (and as described above) goes to Yusuf Meherally.

This year, PM Modi called on Indian citizens to unite their resolve to work for the benefit of

the country. He said: "A collective resolve of the citizens was visible during 1942 to 1947 across the country, which forced the British to Quit India within a span of five years. We now have five years before we reach the 75th year of our independence. Our united resolve, strength and determination to work hard remembering the memory of our great patriots will help us to build an India of their dreams by 2022."

He also called on the youth of the country, mentioning that those born in this century would start turning 18. "For these people, this is a decisive year of their lives. They are going to be the creator of the destiny of our nation in the 21st century. I heartily welcome all these youth, honour them and offer my respects to them. You have an opportunity to shape the destiny of our country," he said.

HOMES OF FREEDOM

India has many museums that are dedicated to the nation's struggle for Independence. We list a few that you must visit

BY NITASHA PANDA

The repository of a nation's cultural, political and historical heritage, a museum is an experience in itself. It embodies a journey through time and space that breathes life into many an era bygone. And when it commemorates an event as momentous as the Independence of a country, it acquires a special resonance. India has thousands of museums that continue to preserve memories, records and artefacts from the freedom struggle. On the occasion of our 71st Independence Day, take a peek into some of them and hear the stories that animate their every exhibit.

GANDHI MEMORIAL MUSEUM, AHMEDABAD, GUJARAT

The Gandhi Memorial Museum and Sabarmati Ashram, through the display of personal objects that Mahatma Gandhi used during his stay in Ahmedabad, give visitors a glimpse of how he lived. They take every visitor on a journey through India, seen from Gandhi's point of view. The new museum, which was built by Charles Correa in 1963, houses 34,177 letters written by Gandhi, along with 8,718 pages of Gandhi's manuscript, some 6,000 photographs, 334 films, 509 audio cassettes, 121 records, 63 video cassettes, 155 awards and more.



HIGHLIGHTS ▶

Built in
1963

Number of exhibits
40,000

Must-see
34,177 letters written by
Mahatma Gandhi

6,000
Photographs



HIGHLIGHTS ▶

Built in
1998

Inaugurated by
Sheila Dixit in

2000

Located
2 KM

from the Delhi-
Haryana border

AZAD HIND GRAM, DELHI-NCR

The Azad Hind Gram Tourist Complex at Tikri Kalan, Rohtak Road - near the Delhi-Haryana border - is a project developed by Delhi Tourism to honour Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The architecture of the project is inspired by North Indian design sensibilities and is animated by traditional Indian craftsmanship. There are several panels at the museum that showcase the life of

the Indian National Army. Medals and badges of the men who served in the INA, newspaper clippings and photographs of events related to the struggle for Independence in India find place among its exhibits. The elaborate mosaic domes surrounding the museum are another highlight of the complex, which is also equipped with facilities such as an amphitheatre and food kiosks.

MORE MUSEUMS



Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Memorial, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Located in the Shahibaug Palace, the museum displays all the personal belongings of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, curated chronologically.



Jyotisangh Vikas Yatra Museum, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

This museum displays the journey of women's emancipation through the early years of India's freedom movement till the inception of Jyotisangh in 1934, focusing on Gujarati women in particular.



National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi

This museum is beautifully curated to take the visitor through a journey through Mahatma Gandhi's life. The displays include six hand telephones that play Gandhi's recorded speeches in Hindi.

MORE MUSEUMS



Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi

This museum portrays through visual media the life and work of Jawaharlal Nehru. Some of the rooms, such as the study, have been preserved as they were at the time of his death.



Netaji Research Bureau Museum, Kolkata

Established in 1961, this museum is a biographical museum about Subash Chandra Bose. The collection includes furniture, clothes, a set-up of his living room, letters and more.



Swatantrata Sangram Sanghralaya, Delhi

Located within the iconic Red Fort, this museum provides a glimpse into the major phases of India's struggle for freedom.

VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL, KOLKATA

The Victoria Memorial Hall reflects the resplendent architectural sensibilities of the British, and was envisaged by Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of British India, as a memorial to the deceased Queen Victoria. It was a platform where people could see pictures and statues of men who played a

prominent part in the history of the country. A magnificent white structure formally opened to the public in 1921, it exhibits some of the finest collections of paintings from the colonial era, rare photographs of India that were captured by the British to document the country and more.



HIGHLIGHTS ▶

Founded in
1906

Number of artefacts
28,394

Must-see **21** beautiful gardens it is surrounded by

MANI BHAVAN, MUMBAI

This museum records Mahatma Gandhi's stay in the Mani Bhavan mansion and houses several of his personal belongings. It was an important centre of Gandhi's activity from 1917 to 1934. He initiated many of his most important

movements from here, including the Non-Cooperation Movement, Swadeshi movement, Khadi and Khilafat movements. Gandhi's association with the charkha began in 1917, while he was staying at Mani Bhavan.



HIGHLIGHTS

Founded in
1955

Centre of Gandhi's
activity for
17 years

Trivia
1917
Gandhi's
association with
charkha began here



HIGHLIGHTS

Built in
1926

Transfer of
records

1937

Must-see
7,500
microfilm rolls

MUSEUM OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES, NEW DELHI

The records at the Museum of National Archives run into 40 km of shelf-space and are arranged in a regular series from the year 1748 onwards. These are in English, Arabic, Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu among other languages. Apart from the records that exist on paper, there are also records on palm leaf, birch bark and other materials, that are broadly divided into four categories: public records, oriental records, manuscripts and private papers.



ON A SOLAR TRACK

Indian Railways' first solar-power augmented diesel-electric train is emblematic of its endeavour to shift towards green energy

BY GAURAV NAGPAL

Rail transport has a glorious and long-running history in India, dating back to the early 19th century, with the steam-engined Red Hill Railway of 1837 being the country's first train. Today, the Indian Railways has become a significant participant in the Government of India's larger effort to promote energy-efficient and environment-friendly practices in the country. It has recently marked a very significant milestone - a move towards solar power! The first solar-powered diesel-electrical multiple unit (DEMU) train was launched from the Safdarjung railway station in Delhi, by the Indian Railways Organisation for Alternate Fuels (IROAF). Former Union Minister for Railways, Suresh Prabhu, said on the occasion: "Railways is



FACT FILE

The train will travel from Sarai Rohilla station in Delhi to Garhi Harsaru Junction, Farukh Nagar in Haryana

Six of the eight passenger coaches have solar panels. The train is equipped with a total of 16 such panels, each producing 300 watt peak (Wp) and manufactured under the Make in India initiative

The train also has a built-in power backup system via battery, which allows it to run without solar power for up to 72 hours

Per coach, 89 passengers can be accommodated

There will be cushioned seats, luggage rakes and a display board in each coach

The train is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions equivalent to nine tonnes per coach per annum

The total cost of the train is ₹13.54 crore - eight coaches of ₹1 crore each, two motor coaches of ₹2.5 crore each, and solar panels on six coaches of ₹9 lakh each

Facing page: The new train all set to roll out from the capital

Top: A historic day, as the first solar-powered DEMU train sets off

Above: Former Union Minister for Railways Suresh Prabhu inaugurating the train at the Safdarjung station in New Delhi

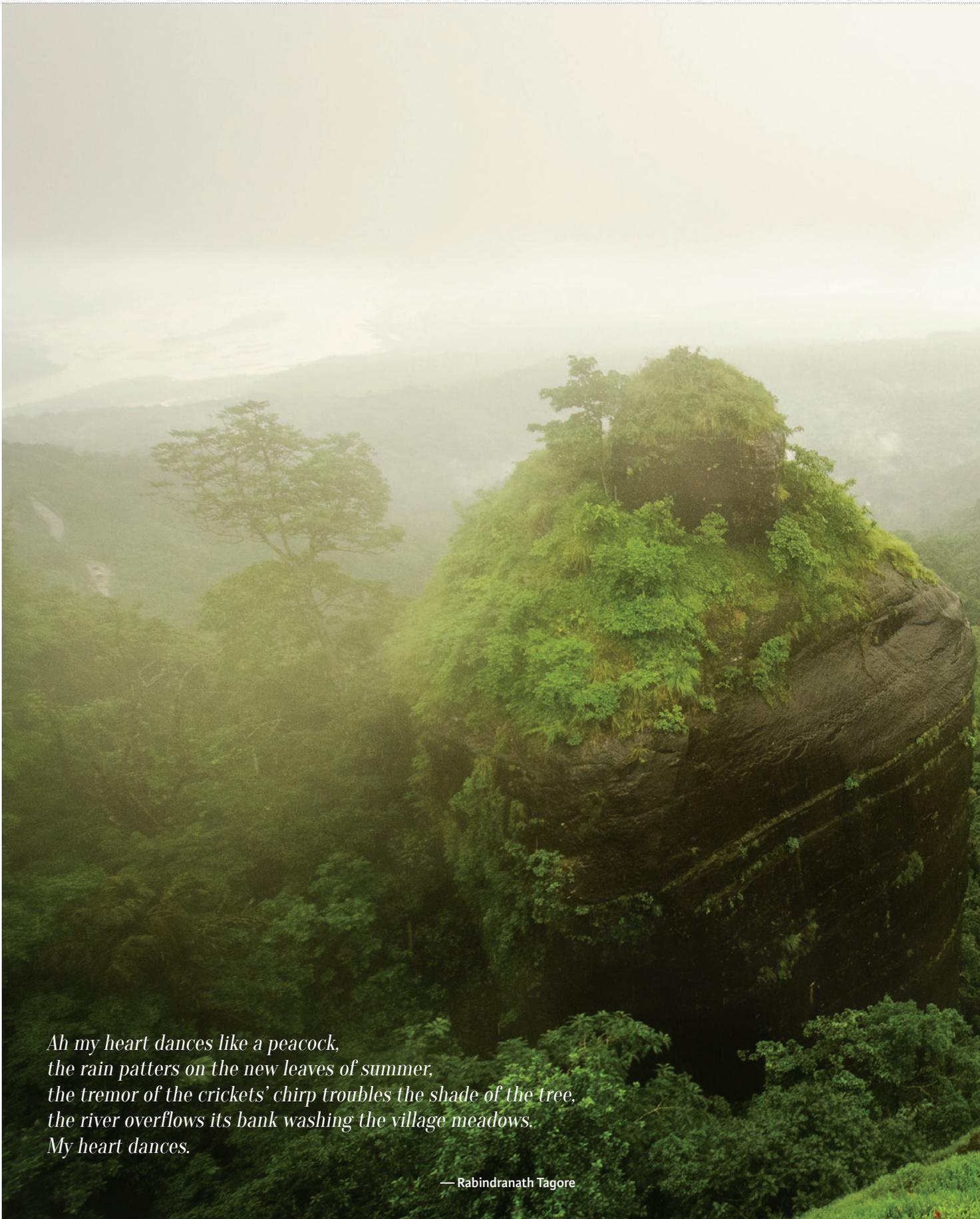
trying to increase the use of non-conventional sources of energy". The 10-coach train - with two motor coaches and eight passenger coaches - will travel from Delhi to Haryana in one-and-a-half hours, ferrying more than 500 passengers at full capacity.

Six of the passenger coaches are equipped with a total of 16 solar panels, manufactured under the Make in India initiative; the remaining two are powered by diesel. The solar panels have an estimated life span of 25 years, and will be monitored on a regular basis. In case of insufficient solar power, the train has a battery-powered backup system, sufficient to run the train for up to 72 hours.

This is an important step in the Railways' focus on renewable energy, and the

benefits are immense - an annual saving of diesel worth ₹2 lakh per coach per annum is expected, with total annual savings amounting to ₹672 crore. This also fits in neatly with the announcement in the 2016 railway budget that the railways would generate 1,000 MW solar energy in the next five years.

It is expected that the success of this solar-powered train will encourage the Indian Railways to bring in more such initiatives, as the organisation is exploring options to use solar energy as fuel for its operations. Previously, in 2016, the Indian Railways had introduced India's first CNG DEMU train on the Rewari-Rohtak section of Northern Railways.



*Ah my heart dances like a peacock,
the rain patters on the new leaves of summer,
the tremor of the crickets' chirp troubles the shade of the tree,
the river overflows its bank washing the village meadows.
My heart dances.*

— Rabindranath Tagore

THE GREAT INDIAN MONSOON

Greeting the rain god with music, dance and traditional rituals, India celebrates the season with a spirit of thanksgiving through its various monsoon festivals. We list eight such celebrations you must experience on your next visit

BY NANDINI D TRIPATHY

The harbinger of rejuvenation and plenitude, monsoon holds a special place in India's heart as a season of celebration. From Himachal Pradesh in the north to Kerala in the south, and from Meghalaya in the east to Maharashtra in the west, every part of the country has its

own way of greeting the rain gods and expressing how grateful it is to nature as it partakes of its bounty. Elaborate rituals accompany joyful singing and dancing as the season arrives and retreats with equal grandeur. Take a peek into eight of India's most vibrant monsoon festivals and create your own travel path to follow the rain clouds!



SAO JOAO, GOA

Begin your monsoon trail in Goa as the state ushers in the first rains of the season with Sao Joao. Held towards the end of June, this festival will have you taking a leap of faith, or several, quite literally. With the feast of St John the Baptist at its heart, it has people singing, dancing, feasting and jumping into wells, streams and ponds around the state. The display of Sangodds, decorated floating platforms made by tying two boats or banana tree trunks together, is also an important part of the vibrant and energetic celebrations.

Do more in Goa

Take a high-speed Konkan Railway train from Margao to Mumbai for a unique trail through the stunning Goan landscape. For more details, visit: goatourism.gov.in/by-rail



Photo: Debraj Chakraborty



Do more in Chhattisgarh

Visit the Baster Myna reserve for a tryst with tigers, blackbucks, deer, leopards, chinkara and more. The deciduous forest is at its best during the monsoon. For more details, visit: cgtourism.choice.gov.in

HARELI, CHHATTISGARH

As the name suggests, the Hareli festival is an ode to nature. Among the most unique festivals in India, it is meant to seek Mother Nature's blessings during the monsoon as the rains quench the thirst of the land. As a

part of the festivities, farmers worship cows and agricultural equipment as they pray for a bountiful harvest. Another interesting ritual involves the stringing together of neem leaves, which are then hung at the doors of households to ward off diseases.



BEHDEINKHLAM, MEGHALAYA

This colourful festival is celebrated for three days at Jowai and sees men dance on the street to the accompaniment of traditional pipes and drums. Although the women do not participate in the dancing, they have a significant role to play

within the space of the home, offering a sacrificial spread to the spirits of the ancestors. A tower-like structure called a rath is built and decorated by localities across the state, to be carried by 30 to 40 men to a small lake at Aitnar for immersion.



Do more in Meghalaya

The Khasi Hills are home to some of the most exquisite caves in the state that are ideal for caving, including *krem mawkhyrdop* and *krem dam*. For more details, visit: megtourism.gov.in

Do more in Rajasthan

Take a camel ride in Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Mandwa to experience the desert as well as the rustic Rajasthani way of life. For more details, visit: tourism.rajasthan.gov.in



TEEJ, RAJASTHAN

Celebrating the arrival of the rains in Rajasthan, Teej refers to an entire set of monsoon festivals celebrated across western and northern India and is dedicated, in many parts of the country, to Goddess Parvati who is also known as Teej Mata. Paying homage to the bounty of nature, greenery and birds with traditional social activities, rituals and customs, the festival is primarily for women and includes dancing, singing, storytelling, applying henna on hands and feet, wearing bright lehariya sarees and gorging on festive food. Haryali Teej also sees women playing under trees on swings and praying to Goddess Parvati for their husbands' well-being.



ADIPERUKU VIZHA, TAMIL NADU

As the sun's rays become less harsh and cool winds begin to blow, Adiperuku Vizha ushers in the spirit of a new beginning. Also known as Aadi Perukku or Padinettam Perukku, the festival is meant to pay respect to River Kaveri

and its tributaries. Held on the 18th day of the Tamil month of Aadi every year, it is celebrated with particular fervour in Hogenakkal, Bhavani and Trichy. People from across the state come together in a spirit of thanksgiving as they regale the life-giving properties of water.



Do more in Tamil Nadu

Take a trip aboard the Nilgiri Mountain Railway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site connecting Udhagamandalam and Mettupalayam. For more details, visit: www.tamilnadutourism.org, nilgiris.nic.in, irtctourism.com

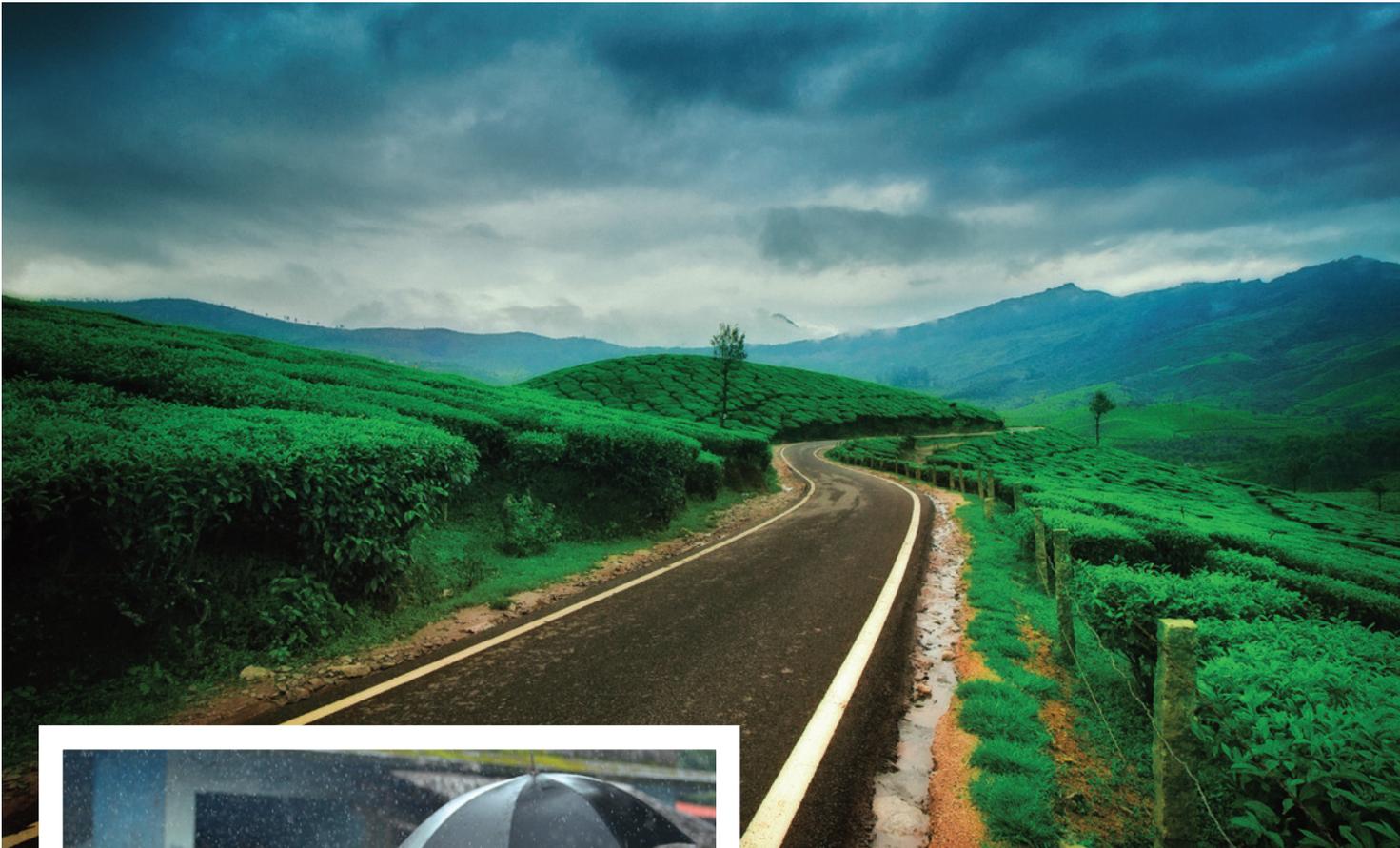
Do more in Himachal Pradesh

When in Chamba, also visit its famous temples, such as the 11th-century Hari Rai temple. Rangmahal, an old palace that combines colonial and local architecture, is also a must-see. For more details, visit: hptdc.in

MINJAR FAIR, HIMACHAL PRADESH

The western Himalayas echo with songs of the rain as Himachal Pradesh celebrates the bounty of nature during the Minjar Fair. Held in the Chamba district, it begins with an elaborate opening ceremony and is believed to be an extremely auspicious time. As a part of the celebration, people indulge in traditional sporting and cultural activities, attired in vibrant costumes. As an interesting accompaniment to tradition, the fair now also includes exhibitions on subjects as modern as forensics!





Do more in Kerala

Monsoon is the best time to visit some of the state's most stunning waterfalls, such as the Attukad Waterfall in Munnar and Chethalayam Waterfall in Wayanad. For more details, visit: www.keralatourism.org

ONAM, KERALA

Among the most well known monsoon festivals in India, this 10-day cultural extravaganza brings together mythology and traditional agricultural practices. Celebrating harvest and plenitude, the festival also marks the return of King Mahabali to meet his praja (subjects). The legend goes that every year, the righteous king returns from the nether world to pay the land a visit and people across social and economic strata unite in festivities to welcome him. Beginning on Atham and ending on Thiruvonam in the Malayalam

month of Chingam, the 10 days see the front yards of houses, offices and other public places being elaborately decorated with floral arrangements called Athapookkalam. On Thiruvonam, also considered the most auspicious day of the festival, new clothes, known as *onakkodi*, are distributed, a special traditional feast known as *onasadhya* comprising a minimum of 11 dishes is laid out, and traditional games are played alongside a display of traditional music and dance. Onam culminates in the iconic boat race at Aranmula, with oarsmen rowing magnificent snake boats along River Pamba.



NARALI POURNIMA, MAHARASHTRA

As the monsoon begins its gradual retreat after heavy showers, the land is rife with a spirit of rejuvenation accompanied by a promise of prosperity. In Maharashtra, the Narali Pournima, or the coconut festival, marks the end of the season on Shraavan Purnima, the first full moon during the Hindu month of Shraavan. Also known as Shravani Pournima, Rakhi Pournima or Raksha Bandhan, the occasion also marks the beginning of a new fishing season. This is why the state's fishing community, known as Koli, celebrates Narali Pournima with special zest every year by appeasing the sea god before venturing out on vibrantly painted and decorated boats. An offering of coconuts is made and prayers are chanted to seek a large bounty of fish as well as protection from natural calamities. Sweet coconut rice, a special delicacy prepared during the festival, is savoured by one and all.



Do more in Maharashtra

Bhandardara is a trekker's paradise during the monsoon, with a roaring waterfall, towering hills and lush green paddy fields all around. For more details, visit: www.maharashtratourism.gov.in



Image courtesy: Sattriya Dance Company

ODE TO DIVINITY

Sattriya, an Assamese dance form that has stayed true to its original technique and style through the years, is an Indian classical practice originally developed with a motive of worship

BY ANJANA RAJAN

Love for dance is seamless. Cultures differ but the passion for dance remains, and no border can define it. Every part of India has its own distinctive art forms, be it dance, visual arts or music. Although the country took its place among the modern nations of the world in August 1947, the history of the region is actually much older. Interlaced with this ancient as well as medieval history are innumerable arts. It often happens that an art tradition that is commonly prevalent in one region is barely recognised by citizens of other areas until an effort is made by practitioners and scholars to spread awareness about it. A case in point is the beautiful dance form known as Sattriya, indigenous to Assam in Northeast India.

Sattriya has its origins in monasteries known as *sattras*, where Vaishnavite monks practise the tradition of devotion to God in the form of Vishnu. Vaishnavism celebrates Vishnu and his incarnations and is known for its many colourful traditions of song, dance, storytelling and crafts. One of these is Sattriya. While familiar to the people of Assam, this intricate dance form was not known to audiences in other parts of

the country until around the 1990s. It was then that a few classical dancers began performing it, after having trained under gurus attached to the *sattras*. Sattriya was gradually introduced in major cities like New Delhi and other art capitals of India as a proscenium art.

Today, the dance form has a large number of female exponents, although it was originally performed by monks. The lithe movements and delicate hand gestures of Sattriya give it a grace associated with the feminine or *lasya* aspect of dance. On the other hand, it also has powerful elements like strong footwork, agile pirouettes, muscular jumps and solid postures, all of which tend towards the *tandava*, associated with the masculine aspect of dance.

This is a dance form conceived and developed with the motive of worship. It engages in storytelling through songs, stylised

Sattriya performances can be enjoyed especially during the winter in Dispur, Guwahati - the capital of Assam

Facing page:

Sattriya exponents Madhusmita Bora (left), attired in the traditional *ghuri* (skirt) and Prerona Bhuyan wearing the *paguri* (turban) and dhoti



OTHER FORMS

BIHU

The most popular folk dance of Assam, Bihu is characterised by rapid hand movements and brisk steps. It is performed by young boys and girls during the Bihu festivities, in traditional Assamese attire. They are accompanied by musical instruments such as the *dhol*, *penpa*, *gagana* and *banhi*.

JHUMUR

Over more than a century, the tea tribes of Assam have developed a synthesised form of dance called Chah Baganar Jumur Nach. It is performed either by girls only, or by girls and boys together, with emphasis on the precision of footwork while holding tightly onto each other's waist.

BAGURUMBA

The Bagurumba dance, performed by the Bodo community during Bwisagu festival, is mainly a formation dance comprising slow steps. Girls dressed in colourful attire perform it, accompanied by traditional Bodo instruments. It is also known as 'butterfly dance'.

DEODHANI

The Deodhani dance is associated with the worship of the snake goddess Manasa. A Deodhani girl, in an inspired state, dances to the accompaniment of *kham* (drum) and *ciphung* (flute), propitiating a series of deities beginning with Shiva and ending with Lakshmi.

mime and aesthetic, ornamental postures as well as brisk footwork. The songs are sung by a vocalist who sits at the side of the stage along with percussionists and instrumentalists. The orchestra includes the cylindrical, horizontal drum known as the *khol*, besides cymbals, a flute and sometimes a violin and a harmonium.

The creation of Sattriya is credited to Sankaradeva, a 15th-century religious reformer revered as a saint across Assam. He amalgamated elements of dance forms prevalent in the state, both folk and classical, and devised an art form that was a vehicle for devotion. Sankaradeva also created *borgeet*, songs of devotion, and dramatic presentations like *bhaona*.

The stylised mime of Sattriya is based on an elaborate code that combines the dancer's facial expressions, bodily postures and hand gestures or *hastas*.

Most classical dance forms across India use these tools, but a great variety exists in the ways of folding the hands into the *hastas*. Two of the best-known Sanskrit treatises on classical dance, the *Natya Shastra* and the *Abhinaya Darpana*, contain lists of single-hand and double-hand gestures. The hand gestures of Sattriya too can be found in them, as also in other texts such as the *Srihastamuktavali* and the *Kalika Purana*. But all live traditions have a practical aspect that sometimes overrides the theoretical. Thus, since Sattriya has been passed down through generations in Assam, many of the Sanskrit terms have been replaced by words in the local language. For example, the *hast* known as *pataka* (the flag), in which the palm is held straight, the four fingers pressed together and the thumb bent at the first digit, is called *dhwaj*.



Photo: Danny Chan



Photo: Deepak Mudgal



Facing page:
Anwesa Mahanta
in a posture of
Sattriya dance
Left: Sarodi Saikia
performs with her
fellow Sattriya
dancers

Sattriya was declared one of the classical dance forms of India by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the country's topmost cultural body dealing with matters related to dance, music and drama, in 2000. Like its counterparts in other states, it has a structured training method. The beginners' training includes ground exercises known as *mati akharas*. During this a student learns the two basic stances — the *purush ora* and the *prakriti ora* — as well as a variety of other postures and movements, besides jumps and pirouettes.

Interestingly, Indira Bora, one of the first dancers to bring Sattriya to the notice of a national audience, was a senior disciple of Rukmini Devi Arundale, the pioneering spirit who helped bring Bharatanatyam, once confined to temples, into the mainstream.

The creation of Sattriya is credited to Sankaradeva, the 15th-century religious reformer revered as a saint across Assam

Bora's quest with Sattriya has been similar, bringing it out of the monasteries and into auditoriums. Another Bharatanatyam dancer who has steadily pursued Sattriya from her native Assam is Prateesha Suresh. Indira Bora's daughter Menaka Bora is also a well known Sattriya practitioner. Sharodi Saikia has taken Sattriya to many parts of India, while Anwesa Mahant is another young dancer and scholar of Sattriya. When monks perform this dance, they usually wear a white dhoti, a kurta and a turban. With women entering the scene, the costume has been improvised with various kinds of drapes, and colours have been added to the predominant white. While some dancers retain the dhoti drape, others' costumes resemble a saree or skirt-like garment. Women sometimes wear the turban too. The materials used in the costumes include the indigenous mulberry silk and other traditional fabrics.

Sattriya has come a long way from being confined to Assam's monasteries. The changes notwithstanding, perhaps the one abiding quality that remains is the reverence for divinity that Sattriya and its dancers exude.



Akshay Kumar at a promotional event for *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*

‘CINEMA IS A POWERFUL MEDIUM’

For actor Akshay Kumar, educating an audience while entertaining them is among the greatest challenges of making a film. He talks to us about his belief in cinema as an instrument of social change

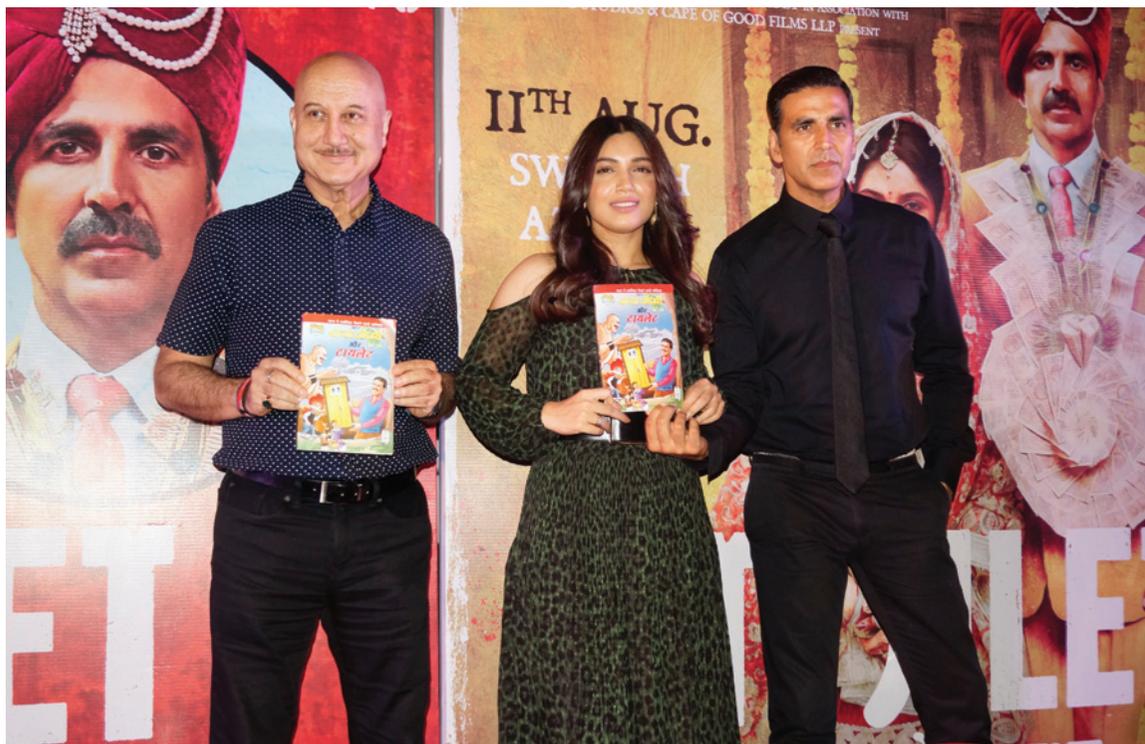
BY NANDINI D TRIPATHY

A film, besides being founded on a story and characters, is also a character in itself. It is, in fact, a multitude of characters and can play several roles: an entertainer giving you your money's worth, a dreamer helping you forget the vagaries of daily routine, a realist confronting you with facts or a philosopher imparting life lessons. For actor Akshay Kumar, the one thing a film should not be, however, is a preacher. "You can't preach to a nation – you have to intrigue and provide information in a manner that encourages people to make a difference rather than passing a problem on to someone else," he says, offering as an example *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, his most recent successful outing on the celluloid, that carried forward the message of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. In a freewheeling conversation, the actor gives us a glimpse of his passion for his craft as well as the purpose that craft can serve to make the world a better place.

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION

"I was made aware of the open defecation crisis in India when Neeraj Pandey approached me with a script that narrated the story of a young woman in rural India, who divorces her husband for not having a toilet in his house," Kumar shares, recalling how *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* drew him in as an actor as well as a citizen of India. "I was immediately touched by the tale, as also by the fact of how something so many of us take for granted is actually a matter of great concern in our country. When we were making the film,



Facing page: Kumar attends Mumbai police show, UMANG

Left: The star cast of *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* at a promotional event

***Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* addressed the issue of open defecation through a love story set in two villages near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh**

we thought there couldn't be a better way to promote this cause than by aligning our efforts to the Swachh Bharat Mission," he explains. Directed by Shree Narayan Singh, the film addressed the issue of open defecation in rural India through the love story of Keshav (Akshay Kumar) and Jaya (Bhumi Pednekar), set in two villages near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh.

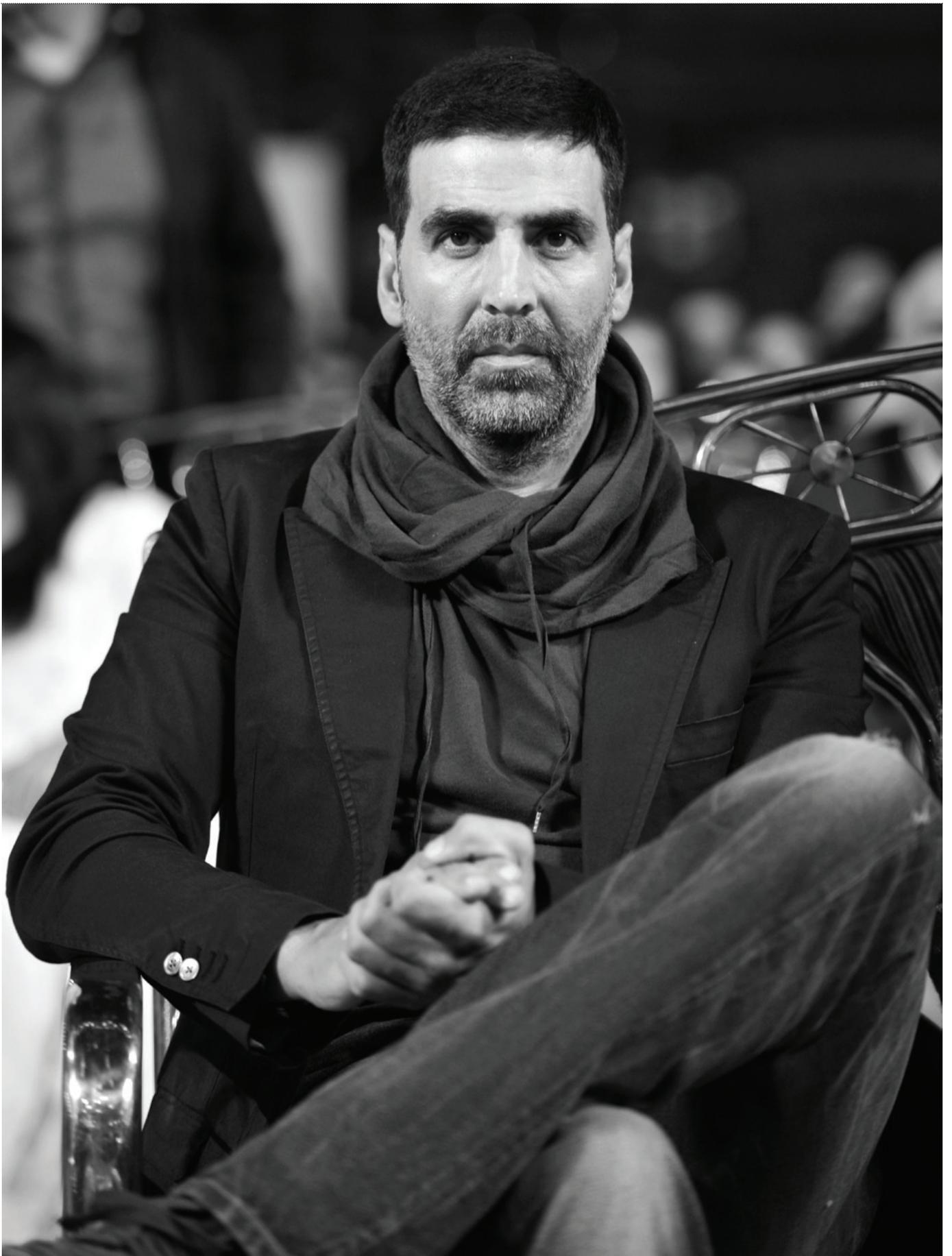
THE ART OF STORYTELLING

When one is making a film on a subject that concerns society - and here, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is directly linked to the government too - one is always running the risk of slipping from storytelling into didacticism. Ask the actor if this was kept in mind during

the making of *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* and he responds, "Absolutely. You have to know how to differentiate between storytelling and statistics, and then strategically blend all the necessary qualities with humour, memorable dialogues and a cast that can deliver information in a way that makes you sit up and pay attention. This film was, first and foremost, a love story that people could relate to. The idea was to educate an audience through the medium of entertainment, which is a challenging task. By all means make people laugh, but make them think while they laugh so that they can help accomplish things the government can't accomplish alone. Making a better India takes effort from everyone and cinema can certainly do its bit."

CINEMA SCOPE

As a medium, cinema occupies a unique position when it comes to sending out an important message to the populace. Unlike a newspaper or a book, it is a visual medium whose methods of conveying a point can veer far away from the literal, and can generate dialogue around



SOCIAL SAGAS

OMG - Oh My God!

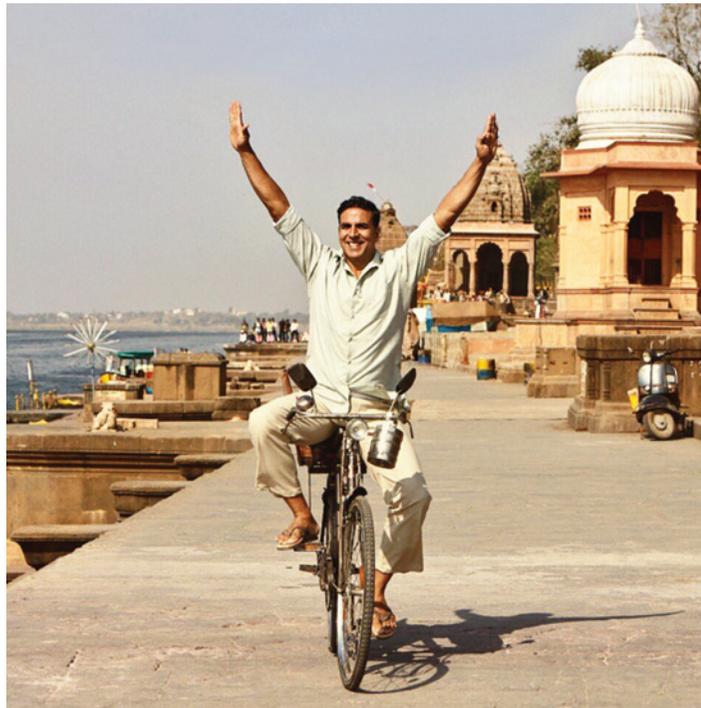
Released in 2012, this Akshay Kumar-starrer foreshadowed Rajkumar Hirani's *PK* as a satirical take on the difference between faith and blind faith. The film is based on a Gujarati play titled *Kanji Virudh Kanji* and narrates the story of a man who sues God. Kumar essayed the role of Lord Krishna in the film, which was directed by Umesh Shukla.

Jolly LLB 2

The sequel to Arshad Warsi-starrer *Jolly LLB*, this film opened to packed theatres in February this year. Taking on the legal system like its predecessor, it raised several issues along its elaborate storyboard including the rights of the underprivileged. The film also received widespread critical acclaim for its handling of female characters, especially that of Pushpa Mishra, played by actress Huma Qureshi.

Padman

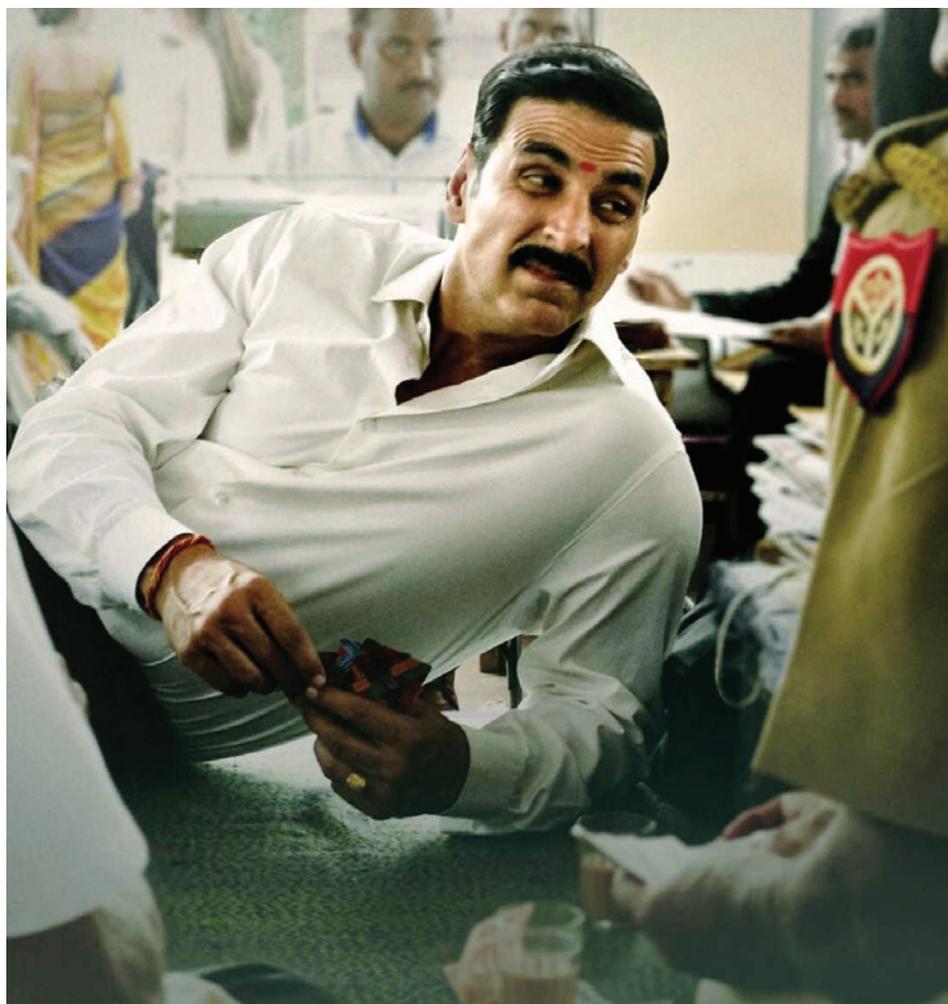
Slated for release in 2018, this film has Akshay Kumar taking on the subject of menstrual hygiene. A fictionalised retelling of the story of Arunachalam Murugantham, the social activist who revolutionised menstrual hygiene in rural India by creating a low-cost sanitary towel machine, the movie forays into yet another crucial women's issue.



Facing page: Kumar in a still from the movie *Airlift*

Left: The actor in a still from his upcoming movie, *Padman*

Below: Kumar in a still from the movie *Jolly LLB 2*





subjects that are otherwise ‘uncomfortable’ in polite conversation. Kumar opines, “Sometimes, it takes one brave voice to break a taboo and bring subjects like defecation from the margins into mainstream discourse. The more dialogue is generated, the more movement can be made. After all, how can you change what you are hesitant to talk about? When you see a film addressing it, your perspective begins to change. If a hero is prepared to talk about something and act upon it, watching him can make you want to do the same. In India, cinema is a powerful medium.”

CHARACTER BUILDING

Having been in the Indian film industry for over 26 years now, Kumar has had his share of highs and lows. The one thing that has remained constant, however, is his commitment to playing characters with a cause. “My favourite aspect of my job is engrossing myself into a character with a point to prove. I love sinking my teeth into situations that have depth and multiple layers, but most of all if they can

As a medium, cinema occupies a unique position when it comes to sending out an important message to the populace

influence the masses to do something good for the world,” he avers. While his words might resound with idealism, he remains a realist and says that while he is acutely aware of his limitations, they have never deterred him from engaging with his audience. “I may not be the best actor, but I have always loved engaging people - even if that is limited to my extended family and friends. I’ve always loved telling stories, exaggerating episodes as a child and evoking as much laughter as possible. Growing up, I learnt a lot from the tales of Akbar and Birbal - they gave me the knack of taking any situation and turning it into something positive. That is what I attempt to do in my reel as well as real life,” he shares.

THE CRAFT OF DEVOTION

In the run up to the festival of Durga Puja, we bring you glimpses of how idols of Goddess Durga are lovingly and meticulously crafted by artisans in Kumartuli, Kolkata

PHOTOS SUBINOY DAS

The victory of good over evil is a universal theme that echoes across cultures, beliefs and legends the world over. In the state of Bengal in India, the month of Ashwin Krishna *paksha* marks the arrival of a festival that celebrates the trope on a grand scale - Durga Puja. The legend goes that Goddess Durga led a battle against Mahishasura, the buffalo demon, and ultimately beheaded him, fulfilling the prophecy that he would meet his end at the hands of a woman. Durga Puja is a celebration of Her victory. In the run up to the four-day spectacle, idols of the Goddess are lovingly, meticulously crafted by some of the state's finest artisans in Kumartuli, Kolkata. We give you glimpses of the confluence of art and devotion that animates this act of creation.





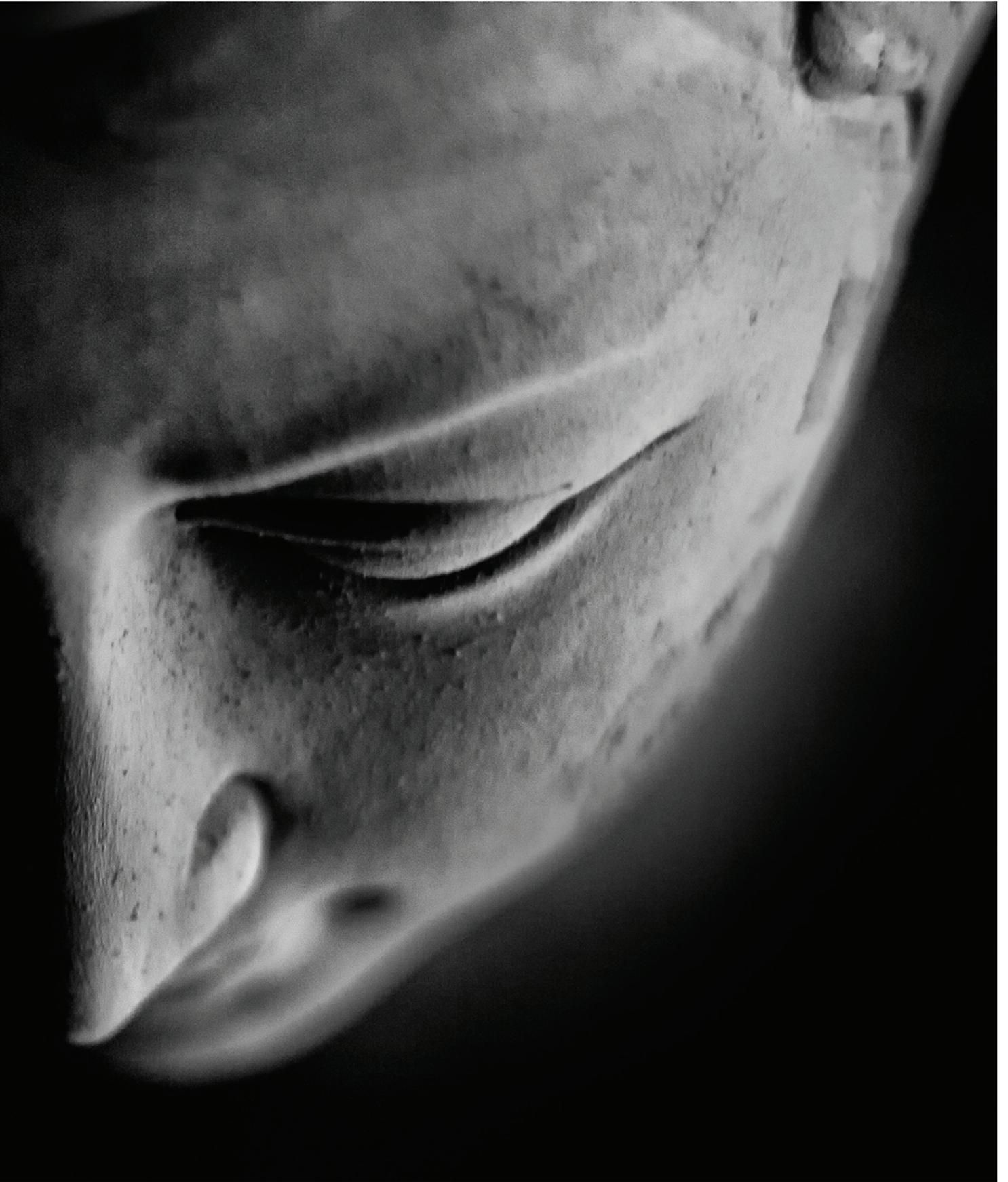


Above and facing page: The frame of the figurine of the Goddess is built using bamboo sticks and hay, which are then covered with clay that is specially prepared for Durga Puja.



It is said that the moment an artisan paints the eyes of a god, the divine being comes to life. Thus, this auspicious aspect of idol-making is done in the dead of night, with no onlookers.







Above and facing page: The torsos of the idols are molded first while the head, palms and feet are made separately and fixed to the idol later.



**The idols are consecrated on Mahalaya,
the beginning of Durga Puja, and
immersed in a water body on Bijoya
Dashami, the final day of the festival**





According to the legend, Mahishasura is the son of Rambha, the king of asuras, and is half human, half buffalo. And he is the one whom Goddess Durga kills, ending the advent of evil on earth.



A TRYST WITH THE ABSTRACT

Among the few Indian artists to be showing at Documenta 14 in Germany, one of the most prestigious art shows in the world, veteran abstractionist Ganesh Haloi talks about inspiration and detachment

BY POONAM GOEL PHOTOS AKAR PRAKAR ART GALLERY

Speaking with Ganesh Haloi, even though it's over a long-distance phone call, is like an exercise in meditation. And expectedly so, as the Kolkata-based octogenarian, despite his fame, has chosen to stay away from media glare, even though he is one of the few Indian artists selected for Documenta 14, ongoing in Kassel, Germany, till September 17 this year. The famed art exhibition is held once in five years.

What moves him, instead, is a conversation about his childhood, spent on the banks of the mighty River Brahmaputra - the hardships of moving from his birthplace in Jamalpur, Bangladesh to Kolkata after the Partition and his stint

as a mural reproduction artist at the Ajanta caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Maharashtra. Haloi's choice of the abstract form stems from his earliest memories of growing up around water and the marshy lands of the Brahmaputra. "I used to hear sounds like *dub dub, sun sun* and wonder where they were coming from. Perhaps that's how I was drawn to abstraction. Abstraction is not as simple as the mere application of brushwork, texture or colour. It is created through a rigorous mental debate that reflects multiple experiences. Abstract work plays with the viewer's imagination. We make the world beautiful with abstraction."

So uncluttered is Haloi's mind from the chaos of the outside world that he is



Facing page: Artist Ganesh Haloi at his workshop

Right: Untitled, gouache on board, 2016, by Haloi

FACT FILE

Haloï graduated from the Government College of Art and Craft in Kolkata in 1956.

He spent seven years at the Ajanta caves, making reproductions of murals for the Archaeological Survey of India.

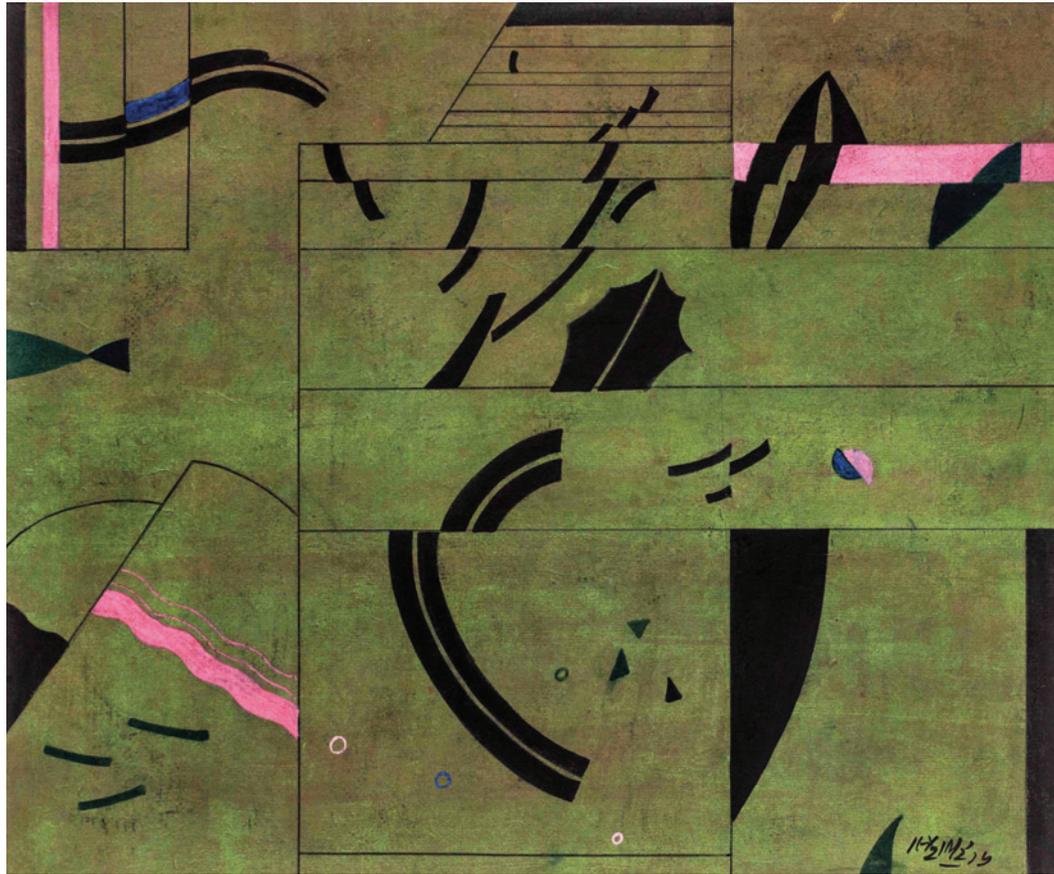
He taught at the Government College of Art and Craft from 1963 till his retirement.

Since 1971, he has been a member of the Society of Contemporary Artists.

Haloï's stint at Ajanta led him to study Buddhism.

DOCUMENTA 14, KASSEL, GERMANY

Held once every five years, Documenta is among the most prestigious art exhibitions in the world. Founded in 1955 by Arnold Bode as a platform to bring Germany back into dialogue with the rest of the world after the end of World War II, it aimed to connect the international art scene through a "presentation of twentieth century art." Twenty seven of Haloï's works – paintings as well as sculptures – will be displayed at Documenta 14.



Above: Untitled, gouache on board, 2016

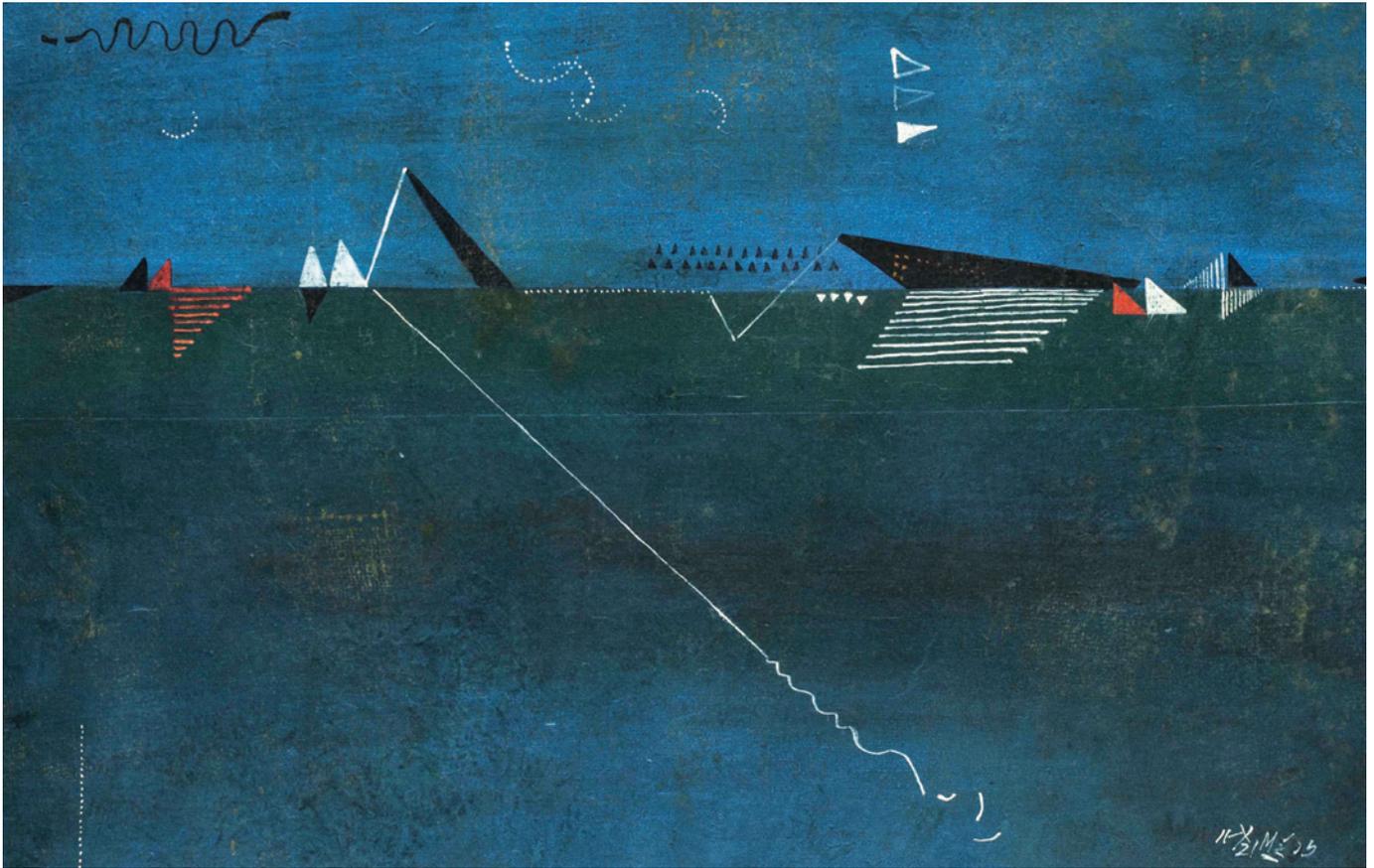
Below: *Composition*, Bronze, 2015

Facing page: Untitled, gouache on board, 2016

able to recall even the smallest aspects of his life that have shaped him as an artist. He shares in vivid detail, for instance, that it was on Buddha Jayanti that he visited Bodh Gaya as a student. "It was here that it came to me - that I should go to Ajanta," he shares and adds, "When I came back to college, there was a notice saying four artists were needed to make reproductions of Ajanta murals. *Andar se jo chaaho zaroor milta hai*. When I went to Ajanta, the painters were mostly making watercolours and I was drawn to the medium. I couldn't achieve the depth that I wanted in simple watercolours, however, and so I started mixing white with watercolours. That led me to gouache, which is opaque and earthy, just like our soil. Like miniatures, creating gouache is a very personal process - you have to sit on the floor, or at a table, so the art comes right into your personal space."

When Haloï came back to Kolkata in 1963 to join an art college as a lecturer after his time at the Ajanta caves, he felt an urge to create a new





Haloi's choice of the abstract form stems from his earliest memories of growing up around water and the marshy lands of the Brahmaputra

language and a new visual landscape. The rock face in Ajanta and the geometric forms of the Sahyadri Hills ultimately seeped into his work. "Then, a chance visit to an exhibition of British sculptures in 1967 gave me some visual clues. The works of Kenneth Armitage, Robert Adams and Bernard Meadows - all young sculptors - delighted me. Their use of the jagged surface had a stream of consciousness in it that led to my encounter with my language," he says.

Varied geometric forms, dots and dashes, crooked lines and contours inundate his

landscapes, which can be interpreted as belonging both to nature and the mind. Identification with the Ajanta caves and the tradition of Indian miniatures has brought Haloi to a more intense consciousness of our heritage, and this finds representation in his work - whether in the form of the temple carvings from the lower Gangetic delta, the water bodies of Jamalpur where he was born, or the decorated manuscripts or *Jataka* stories he had seen or read as a boy. Dots, dashes and lines also become cryptic signs for trees, water and green fields.

Art critic Natasha Ginwala, who was instrumental in selecting Haloi's work for Documenta, explains, "Haloi's works are exercises in bringing to life the genre of landscape painting through the assembly of disparate symbolic forms. Throughout his oeuvre, there is never a separation between the nature within and the nature without."

A STITCH IN TIME

Reflective of a changing India that remains rooted in its heritage, these five traditional Indian embroideries are coming into their own on a global stage

BY HUMRA AFROZ

When renowned designer Isabel Marant unveiled her spring 2016 collection in France, the influence of Rajasthan – from the colourful embroidery to the rich textiles – could not be missed. A year earlier, Indian designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee collaborated with Christian Louboutin for his Autumn/Winter collection at the Amazon India Couture Week, and created 80 pairs of shoes for men and women featuring traditional Indian embroideries interpreted to suit a modern aesthetic. Indian embroideries have been making a statement in the fashion world, across not just genres and themes but also continents and clientele. A melting pot of culture, tradition and history, the art of embroidery has been reflective of a changing India that remains rooted in its heritage. While embroideries such as zardozi and *gota patti* have been on the

fashion map for some time now, lesser known embroideries from various regions in India are now finding their place under the sun. We delve into five among them, that have always been an intrinsic part of the Indian design fabric but are now coming into their own on a global stage.

PARSI GARA

This embroidery is believed to have been brought to India in the 1800s by the Parsi community. “*Gara* embroidery is mainly done using motifs that have to do with nature – such as flowers, birds, butterflies, animals, water and even fungus!” says Mumbai-based designer Zenobia Davar. Each motif has symbolic

Parsi *gara* is believed to have been brought to India in the 1800s by the Parsi community



Embroideries such as Chamba *rumal* and *kasuti* were traditionally practised only by women



significance too – a lily, for example, represents good health, a chrysanthemum, long life, and so on. The base of the embroidery is typically either pure *resham* or handwoven *gajja* silk from China. Davar, who has been working exclusively with authentic, handmade Parsi *gara* for the last decade-and-a-half, elaborates, “The original embroidery was primarily done on sarees, with work so fine and so painstakingly done by hand that it would be hard to distinguish the front from the back.” Due to the costs involved, *gara* work would be worn only by elite Parsi women, and was reflective of upper class luxury. A *gara*

saree was meant to be treasured and passed down generations. Today, Parsi *gara* can be found on everything from sarees and western dresses to sherwanis and *bandh galas*, and can be worn by men and woman alike.

CHAMBA RUMAL

Said to have been practised since the 15th century, this embroidery replicates *pahadi* murals and paintings on cloth through meticulous needlework. Having flourished under the patronage of the royal family of Himachal Pradesh, the craft originated in the Chamba district of the hill state. The embroidery was typically done on rectangular or square handkerchiefs, hence the second part of its name, *rumal*, which means handkerchief. Originally, an expert artist would first draw the figures which would later be embroidered

Chamba *rumal* embroidery replicates *pahadi* murals and paintings on cloth



Left: Many traditional Indian embroideries use floral motifs

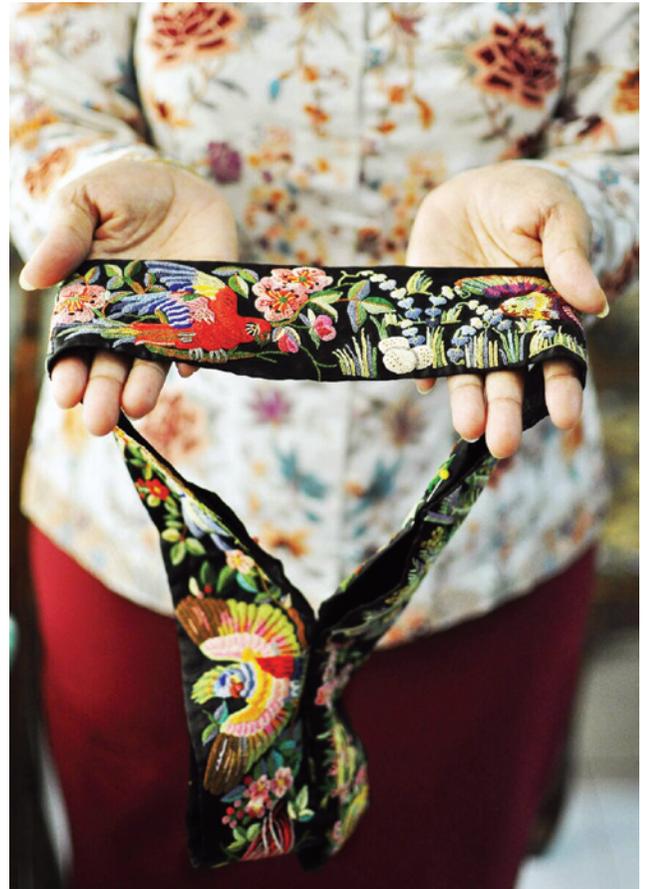
Right: A saree by Rahul Mishra embellished with Parsi *gara* embroidery



by women artisans. Says Lalita Vakil, who was honoured with a National Award in 1993 for her contribution to the craft, “The needle work has to be impeccable and it can take weeks, even months, to work on one small piece.” She adds that the cloth traditionally used for the embroidery is either mulmul or khaddar and says, “The *do-rukha* (double-sided) stitch is used, which is so intricate that you can use the fabric from both sides.”

MOCHI BHARAT

In the early 17th century, this embroidery is said to have been used only by *mochis* (cobblers) in parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat, from where it gets its name. They would use a chain stitch to decorate the leather shoes they made. The embroidery was widely appreciated and was soon done on other leather products such as



saddles and harnesses, before finally finding its way to cloth. Initially, the base fabric was either khaddar, silk or velvet, with time making way for lighter materials as the work also became finer. The embroidery is done using a special needle known as *ari* or *katharni*, a finer version of the cobbler's awl, using either cotton threads or silk floss called *pat*.

Indian designer Rahul Mishra, who works extensively with traditional Indian embroideries for his collections, points out that the most challenging task at hand for today's designers is giving these embroideries a modern interpretation. "It is important to adapt and evolve, in order to survive. Today, a bomber jacket can be embellished with traditional Indian embroidery and still look modern and chic," he says.

Right: Intricate needlework is the most important aspect of all traditional embroideries

Facing page: Traditional Indian embroideries are now being given modern interpretations by contemporary designers like Ritu Kumar



An amalgamation of weaving and embroidery, *shamilami* is rooted in the history of the state of Manipur in Northeast India

SHAMILAMI

A gorgeous amalgamation of weaving and embroidery, this unique style comes from Manipur and is firmly rooted in its history. The word *shamilami* in Manipuri broadly implies a warrior cloth of wild animals or a wild animal-patterned warrior cloth. This embroidery uses bold and bright hues, and features animal imagery – elephants, butterflies, horses and more. *Shamilami* work is popular in indigenous circles in Manipur even today, and several locals are adept at the craft. “Such folk embroideries were done for personal use, so every family would have members that knew how to do it on family-owned clothes,” explains designer Ritu Kumar, who has worked extensively with traditional embroideries.

KASUTI

One of the oldest embroideries in India, *kasuti* is believed to date back to the 7th century and carries immense cultural significance – it was originally done only by women and was considered auspicious for occasions such as marriage. “Most traditional embroideries are local narratives – they are anthropological representations of the communities that made them, and taken from media such as paintings. Since this was practised by women, it would often depict the women’s lives,” says Kumar.

Practised mainly in the state of Karnataka, the embroidery is done using a regular sewing needle with colourful threads that are drawn from the borders of old silk sarees. It involves a complicated math of the weft and the warp, where craftsmen have to keep a count of the overlapping longitudinal and transversal threads, and make the stitches without any pre-designed outlines or templates on a blank canvas – relying only on the magic of their impeccable needlework.



THE ESSENTIAL RASAM

It's delicious, comforting and has remained the same for centuries, albeit with new tweaks added once a while. So what makes the oldest consommé such a perfect dish?

BY MADHULIKA DASH



The lunch table of every South Indian family has a regular staple delicacy that has medicinal value and is also a delicious accompaniment to rice: rasam. It is a meal essential that is custom-made for every festive spread, a go-to home remedy for asthma and fever, and a nutritious supplement for young mothers. The iconic *sadhya* spread served across communities in Kerala is incomplete without this ancient consommé, which is also a popular *prasadam*. *Kozhi rasam*, a Chettinad variation, is made in the Kali Kovil temple during Poosai Poduthal and served as a *prasadam*. Rasam was, in fact, one of the first Indian dishes to impress the foreign palate – mulligatawny rasam was created to appeal to British preferences in the 17th century.

Rasam, which also finds mention in the Ayurveda, was at one point considered such a fascinating innovation that even the French had to accede to the notion that it is one of the finest consommés in the world. Its magic lies not only in the technique of preparing it, but also in the composition. In its most rudimentary form, rasam is a light tamarind curry flavoured with dal, spices and herbs that was designed to accentuate the wellness characteristics of tamarind, the ancient wonder food. According to the Ayurveda, tamarind aids digestion and rasam was created on the lines of Siddha's philosophy of "*unave marunthu, marunthe unavu*" (roughly, food is the medicine, and medicine is food).

How well rasam worked as a healthy supplement to a spread can be ascertained from the fact that it is



traditionally served along with *karkidaka kanji*, a unique medicinal porridge of Kerala, mostly had during the monsoon. Aside from the interesting play of hot and cold on the palate, rasam also makes the meal sensorially fascinating on account of the vessel it is prepared in - in the past, either an *eyam*, a copper pot coated with lead, or a *kall chetty*, a pot made of stone. The choice of vessel is believed to determine how a particular rasam will smell, taste and heal.

How did the story of such an extraordinary dish begin? While some suggest that rasam,

which is likely to have originated around 400 BC, could have been an attempt to lighten up a heavy but effective tamarind-based concoction called *marundhu kuzhambu*, others believe it may have been a natural progression of the food habits of the time. It was a common practice to add herbs to dishes according to season, location and availability. Dishes were designed to serve a particular purpose and flavours were kept subtle. There is a good chance that *kandan thippili* rasam, one of the oldest rasam recipes that is still in use, could have been the result of such a practice. It created nutritive powders like *angaya podi*, which is still given to new mothers to help recuperate from a delivery. It was the wholesomeness of rasam that brought it to the same league as *korrakan kali* (black gram porridge, given to girls to ease the transition into puberty).

Some suggest that rasam was created as an attempt to lighten up a heavy tamarind-based concoction called *marundhu kuzhambu*

It didn't take time, therefore, for rasam to lose its initial reputation as an enjoyable side dish, and become a home remedy for conditions like the common cold, fever and even indigestion. *Molaga* rasam, believed by many to be the father of the now famous tomato rasam, was hugely beneficial in this context. Unlike sambar, which is another ode to South India's love of tamarind and dal, rasam is based not so much on ingredients as it is on culture. Ingredients can be added or changed depending on the purpose. Dal, an intrinsic part of the recipe, and the tempering, for instance, can be reduced or increased as needed. The consistency can vary from thick

to watery. Tamarind, essential to most rasam recipes given that sourness is the dominating flavour, is given a miss in *kalyana* rasam, an Iyengar community speciality, or *poricha* rasam. An excellent example of how versatile the dish can be is *kollu* rasam, which is millet-based and was once a part of military food, and *bassaru* - made by farmers with minimal resources and time, using the stock of green vegetables and lentils.

Vethalai rasam, made of betel leaf, renders the goodness of paan, but much more quickly. Traditionally, *vethalai* rasam is served after a heavy lunch to not only aid in digestion, but to do so in a way that can relieve constipation. With a little adjustment in the heat and sweetness, it can even make an excellent cold and cough remedy. *Veppampoo* rasam, with its own therapeutic qualities, is known to curb worms and is made to celebrate the new year in Tamil Nadu. A lesser known variant of the same is *mor* rasam, also called *majjiga pulusu*, which

Tamarind, essential to most rasam recipes given that sourness is the dominating flavour, is given a miss in *kalyana* rasam



Right: Rasam is generally tempered with curry leaves, mustard seeds and a type of lentil

Facing page: The addition of vegetables to rasam can add significantly to its health quotient



Left and above: From non-vegetarian varieties (left) to pepper-based variations (above), rasam is an extremely versatile dish
Facing page: Tomatoes are sometimes used to add sourness to some rasam varieties

is a simple rasam from Andhra Pradesh and is among the few of its ilk that use rice flour in their recipe. It is served to keep the stomach cool and fight acidity after a particularly spicy meal.

Over the years, adaptability has made rasam an iconic South Indian dish, and has also given it, its most interesting aspect: it has at least 300 varieties. In Kerala, rasams are usually tamarind-based; in Karnataka, they have a sweeter edge; and in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, they are medium spicy with regular use of tomatoes. Tomato rasam, which debuted around the 15th century when tomatoes and chillies made it to the mainland during the Chola Empire, stands testimony to how the dish has travelled and evolved through the ages.

Given that food habits were highly local in earlier centuries, rasam also became the

ruse of extracting benefits from ingredients that would otherwise be unpalatable. *Nellikai rasam*, which uses *amla* (Indian gooseberry), has at its core sour ingredients that are difficult to eat by themselves. It plays with them to reap the benefits they contain with the clever use of spices and herbs. Similarly, *sodakuppai* rasam and *vendhaya* rasam aid in maintaining hormonal balance and keeping sugar levels in check. *Kathirikai* rasam, a spicy and tangy rasam from the Kongunadu community in Tamil Nadu, is the finest example of how food can be both medicine and indulgence. Another example of the same is *naatu kozhi* rasam, the Chettinad version of chicken soup, and the famous mutton rasam which was once a part of military food thanks to its protein content and ability to warm up the body. It is also said that it was *meen* rasam, served in coastal areas, that



***Kathirikai* rasam, a spicy and tangy rasam from the Kongunadu community in Tamil Nadu, is the finest example of how food can be both medicine and indulgence**

VEPPAMPOO (NEEM FLOWER) RASAM

During the rainy season, this traditional rasam from Tamil Nadu is a must-try:

Ingredients: 1.5 cups of tamarind water, 2 neem flowers roasted in ghee, 4 dried red chillies, a pinch of asafoetida and mustard, 1 tsp of toor dal, a sprig of curry leaves, ½ tsp of jaggery, salt, ghee and mustard seeds to taste.

Method: Boil the tamarind water, *toor* dal, turmeric, asafoetida salt and curry leaves in a saucepan. Add 2 cups of water, jaggery and boil till frothy. Take off the stove. In a separate vessel, fry the red chillies, splutter the mustard seeds and add curry leaves. Add to the rasam and garnish with fresh coriander leaves.

eventually inspired *mappila muttai* rasam. Aside from being a great accompaniment to rice/appam, it was also a strengthening concoction that helped people recuperate from illnesses. Of course, not all rasam varieties are intended to balance taste and health benefits. Several that exist today were created for the sheer joy of something new. Paneer rasam, for instance, uses rose petals and apple rasam uses green apples to create a refreshingly light soup. *Kattu saaru* showcases the brilliance of *byadgi* chillies and *thakkali* rasam uses fresh tomatoes.

What has not changed through the years, however, is that while each rendition of rasam is delicious, at times a meal in itself like *paruppu urandau* rasam, it is still a dish that offers more than just the gift of satiation. Wholesome, healthy and gratifying, it remains a concoction of goodness like no other.

TAX FOR GOOD

In the wake of the Government of India rolling out the Goods and Services Tax, we outline the basics of this revolutionary tax reform

Over the years, India has transformed at an economic level into a destination for investment, with many a measure having been taken to bring about the ease of doing business in the country. Among the most revolutionary of these is the Goods and Services Tax, which came into effect on July 1 this year. The need for GST arose from the fact that India has two distinct authorities that charge indirect taxes on goods and services – the Central government and the state governments. With a multiplicity of taxes at both levels, it became important to bring in one tax that is levied simultaneously by both authorities. The discussion on GST alone took up nearly a decade, and its rollout has ushered in a new era for the Indian economy.

THE TAXES

Nearly all indirect taxes are subsumed into GST. The few that aren't include registration charge and stamp duty on real estate, entertainment tax levied by local bodies, electricity duty, state excise duty charged on portable alcohol and the five petroleum products that can be subsumed into GST at any time but are not at the



The states will have more buoyancy with GST since the system is IT-driven and self-disciplining

Hasmukh Adhia
Revenue secretary



moment part of it – petrol, diesel, aviation turbine fuel, natural gas and crude oil.

THE RATES

Under GST, four major tax rates have been determined by the council – 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent. The lowest rate - 5 per cent - applies to basic necessities that include essential items of daily use such as edible oil, sugar, tea and

coffee. Many essential items are outside the tax net too, such as rice, dal and wheat except when they are sold by registered, trademark brands.

EXEMPTIONS AND COMPOSITION SCHEMES

Taxpayers with an aggregate turnover of less than ₹20 lakh pa are exempt from taxation under GST. There are 11 Special Category States, as defined in the Constitution of India, for whom the exemption threshold is ₹10 lakh. These include the Northeast and hill states. For traders, manufacturers and restaurants with an aggregate turnover of up to ₹75 lakh pa, 1 per cent of the total turnover has to be paid by traders, 2 per cent by manufacturers and 5 per cent by restaurants. For the Special Category States, the limit for this composition scheme is ₹50 lakh.

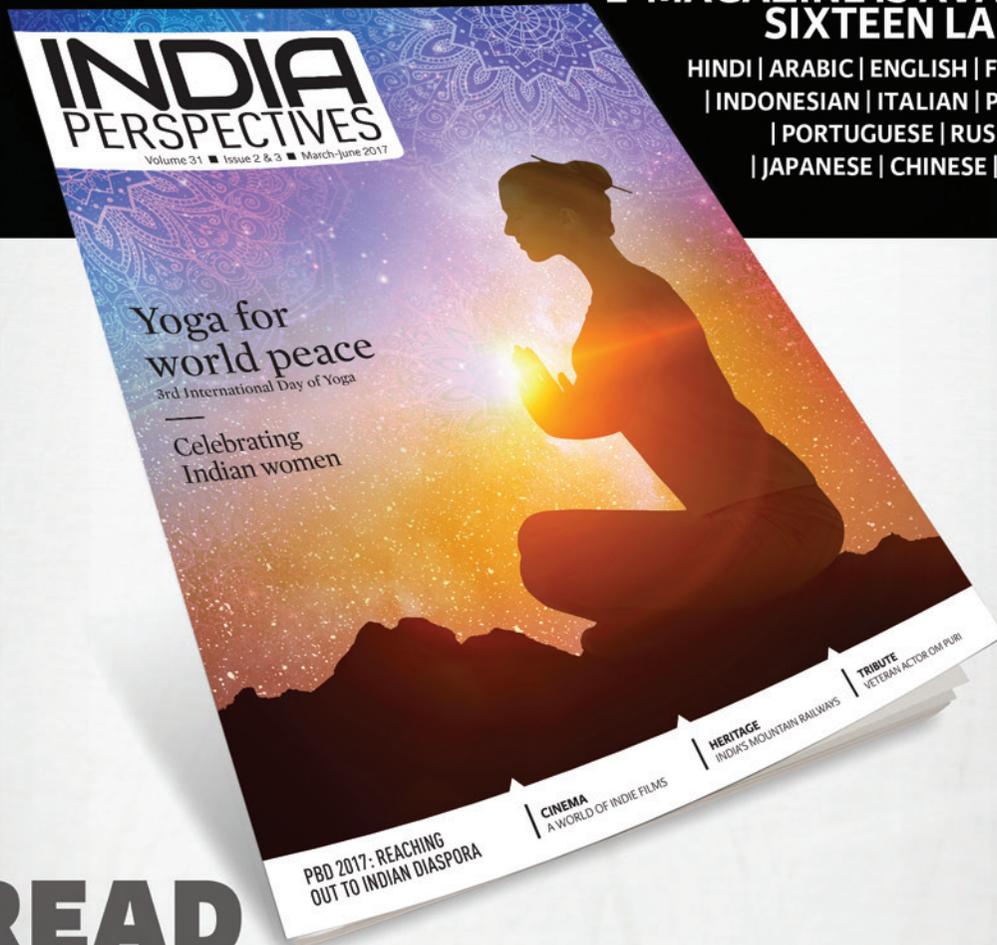
BENEFIT TO STATES

Revenue secretary, Government of India, Hasmukh Adhia affirms, “The states will have more buoyancy with GST, in terms of the compliance of taxation being better, since everything is IT-driven and the system is self-disciplining.” The latter ensures a significantly lower chance of tax evasion under GST.



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