America's Gurus

There's a galaxy of Indian Americans today in top U.S. universities, helming the frontiers of knowledge and innovation. What is their mantra?
GLOBAL – INDIAN NETWORK OF KNOWLEDGE (GLOBAL–INK): “THE VIRTUAL THINK TANK”


Global–INK positioned as a strategic “virtual think tank” connects Overseas Indians (knowledge providers) with the development process (knowledge receivers) in India and empowers them to partner in India’s progress.

Being a next generation knowledge management, collaboration and business solution platform, Global-INK provides context to connect knowledge experts with knowledge seekers. Consequently, these connections enable flow of knowledge and expertise from the Diaspora back into India and facilitate collective action.

Global – INK will catalyze Diaspora ability and willingness into well thought out projects and programs for development, transform individual initiatives into community action and achieve critical mass in chosen verticals.

The portal can be accessed only by registered users. Registration request can be submitted by filing out the registration form located on the Global-INK homepage (www.globalink.in)
## Contents

### GLOBAL INDIANS, AMERICAN GURUS

A large number of Indian Americans have come to occupy top positions in American academia, due, in large part, to hard work and a world-class higher-education grounding they received back home in India.

### A MILLION VOICES

Indian-Americans have emerged as a key demographic voice and are set to have a significant bearing on the future of American politics.

### SUCH A LONG JOURNEY...

Enid Whitehouse, a Guyanese Indian, retraces a ‘crossing’ her father made over a hundred years ago as an indentured worker.

### REACHING OUT

Know India Programme, an outreach project of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs aimed at Diaspora youth, has proved to be a productive cultural tool.

### LIFE CYCLE

In the face of a growing urban ‘mobility crisis’, cycling is an emerging movement in Delhi, where enthusiasts are spreading the good word on the humble cycle.

### ETCHED IN VERSE

In ‘The Rivered Earth’, an anthology of poems, Vikram Seth brings together an interplay of music, calligraphy and poetry.

### TRAVEL

**HEART OF DARKNESS**

The dark and mysterious Kutum sar caves in Chhattisgarh, one of the world’s longest caves, is truly awe-inspiring and not for the faint-hearted or the claustrophobic...

### CUISINE

**SUNNY-SIDE UP**

The egg is transforming itself into a versatile dish, with gourmet chefs in India whipping up tantalising offerings. Some of India’s top chefs share their egg tales...

### PAINTING BHARAT

Though called ‘expat’, a number of foreign artists, some of them long settled in India, are attempting to interpret its symbols, culture and mysticism on canvas.

### A THOUSAND BUT ONE

At a concert in Bengaluru, 1,100 veenas came together to produce ethereal music. Musicians played exquisite compositions based on a variety of classical ragas.

### LOVE IN VIENNA

India-born Austrian film director Sandeep Kumar is making a Bollywood-style musical film, titled ‘Servus Isch’ or ‘Hello, Love’, in the heart of picturesque Austria.
INDIA, QATAR SIGN OIL PACT, DISCUSS NRI WELFARE

INDIA AND energy-rich Qatar, home to half a million Indians, have sealed six agreements in diverse areas, including an overarching pact on cooperation in oil and gas exploration.

During his recent three-day visit to India, Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani held talks with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on a range of issues, including boosting trade and investment as well as energy ties between the two countries. They also discussed issues relating to the welfare of Indian workers in the Gulf country. Following the talks, India’s Petroleum Minister S. Jaipal Reddy and Qatar’s Energy Minister Mohammed Bin Saleh al-Sada signed a pact on establishing a cooperative framework to enhance bilateral cooperation in oil and gas.

The pact envisages cooperation in the areas of upstream and downstream oil and gas activities.

It is expected to encourage and promote investment and cooperation between the two ministries of oil and gas and through affiliated companies.

THE KERALA GOVERNMENT ON March 28 doubled the financial assistance extended to the weaker and poorer sections of the state’s Diaspora. The financial assistance is for contingencies such as medical help and bringing back the bodies of those who pass away abroad.

“The financial assistance for medical assistance and to take care of funeral expenses of those who pass away abroad has been doubled from Rs10,000 to Rs20,000,” Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said.

“The assistance for conducting marriages of the children of the Diaspora has also been doubled to Rs15,000,” the Chief Minister added.

KERALA Doubles AID TO DIASPORA

NEW PROTOCOL TO HELP INDIANS IN UAE

AIMING to streamline the registration of the 1.7 million Indian contract workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), India and the UAE on April 4 signed a protocol to facilitate an electronic validation system for the purpose.

The new system will ensure transparency in the contracting process by mandating that the prospective worker be duly informed by Indian government-accredited recruitment agencies of the terms of the contract.

The information to be given to the worker would include the scope of remuneration and employment conditions and benefits, as per a statement from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi said India was implementing a comprehensive e-governance system towards making the process of overseas deployment of Indian workers transparent and accessible to stakeholders.

INDIAN MODERN ART GOES ONLINE

THE NATIONAL Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) has officially moved to a ‘new address’ in cyberspace where visitors can walk through its new-age portals and check out the permanent exhibits in a virtual tour powered by the search engine Google. The popular search engine has also uploaded a separate slice of NGMA’s archive of 94 artworks by 71 artists under its ongoing Google Art Project. The project recently unveiled tie-ups with the New Delhi-based NGMA and the National Museum, as part of its partnership with the Ministry of Culture.

Altogether, 250 artworks have been uploaded from NGMA and the National Museum, spanning more than 150 years of Indian art, starting 1850. The partnership with the Ministry of Culture brings India on board the international project with 151 partners from 41 countries nearly a year after the project began in early 2011 with 17 countries to create an international database of art for online viewing.

INdiana SignS AgAINST SLOWDOWN IN IMF ReFORMS

EXPRESSING its disappointment at the pace of reform on quota and governance issues in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India has said that a dynamic reform process is necessary to ensure IMF’s legitimacy and effectiveness.

“The best possible means to improve governance and legitimacy is by ensuring that there is no slippage on crucial reforms,” Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said recently at a joint session of the policy-making International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) and G-20.

Stressing the central importance of quotas as the main determinant of the voting power of members, he said there should not be any slippage in the January 2013 target date for quota formula review.

For the emerging and developing countries, GDP was the most important variable in the quota formula and the weight of the blended GDP variable should be substantially increased in the formula, Mukherjee said.

“Our objective is a simple formula with GDP blend as either the sole or predominant variable and with a higher share of GDP-PPP,” he said.

Indian student wins contest

INdIA’S Sachin S. Kukke, seen above with India’s Ambassador to the US Nirupama Rao, is the Asia-Pacific region winner and one of the six global winners of the YouTube Space Lab 2012 contest for young people to design experiments that could be performed in outer space.

The winners of the contest, conducted by YouTube and Lenovo in cooperation with Space Adventures, NASA, ESA (European Space Agency), and JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), were announced at a ceremony at the Newseum in Washington on March 23.

A student of mechanical engineering at the BMS College for Engineers in Bangalore, Kukke’s experiment explores transfer of heat in ferrofluid—a special liquid that gets magnetised when subjected to a magnetic field. The study can benefit development of advanced cooling and heat transfer systems.

SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE GETS DADA SAHEB PHALKE AWARD

LEGENDARY BENGALI actor Soumitra Chatterjee, who has played a wide range of characters in films by Satyajit Ray, has been awarded India’s highest film honour — the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for 2012. Chatterjee made his debut in 1959 with Ray’s Apur Sansar and soon became the director’s favourite actor. He played the lead role in most of the filmmaker’s classics, including Somar Kella, Chandrakanta, and Ghirish Rair.

Apart from Ray, Chatterjee has also worked with other acclaimed directors, such as Mitali Sen, Tapan Sinha, Tarun Majumdar, Aparna Sen, Goutam Ghose and Rituparno Ghosh.

Some of his notable movies are Shunder Bandi, Kon, Kaspurah, Asish Kusum, Aparayon Din Ravi, Joy Baba Felonath, Teem Bhubancer Pan, Ganashatru and Shukha Prouddhaka.

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Besides films, Chatterjee is also known for his passion for the stage where he has both acted and directed plays. He is also one of the all-time best elocutionists of Bengal.

He is also a recipient of Padma Bhushan, Officier des Arts et Métiers from France and a lifetime achievement award from Italy.

INdian biz school courses for pakistan

THE INDIAN School of Business (ISB), one of the top business schools in the world, recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi, to provide executive education in Pakistan. The Centre for Executive Education (CEE) at ISB will offer “open” and “custom-designed” programmes under the collaboration, the first as part of its mission of focusing on emerging markets.

According to the MoU, ISB would provide executive education courses to senior management executives in Pakistan.
RHINO POPULATION UP BY 250

A CENSUS of one-horned rhinos at the renowned Kaziranga National Park (KNP) in Assam recorded an increase of almost 250 animals over a three-year period. The last census in 2009 recorded 2,048 rhinos in KNP, of which eight were translocated to Manas National Park. The latest census has recorded the presence of 2,290 one-horned rhinos in the park, a senior official involved in the census operation said. With 2,290 rhinos in KNP, Assam’s total rhino population now stands at 2,505.

$430 BN IN NEW FUNDING FOR IMF

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund has almost doubled its “fire power” to protect the world economy against deepening debt turmoil in Europe with the announcement that it is preparing by preparing a single owner collection of classical Indian and Southeast Asian art auctioned by the Christie’s in December 2012.

A python expert from Cambridge and Banaras Hindu University have dug out relics believed to be associated with the ancient Harappan civilisation from a village in Haryana.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL experts from Cambridge and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) have dug out relics located to Manas National Park. The latest census has recorded the presence of 2,290 one-horned rhinos in the park, a senior official involved in the census operation said. With 2,290 rhinos in KNP, Assam’s total rhino population now stands at 2,505.

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HARAPPAN RELICS FOUND

AROUND 400 square metres, in Sonipat district, Kumar said that the education hub being set up by Haryana at Kundli, 50 km from New Delhi, would benefit not only Haryana but also the whole of North India. He said the educational hub would receive all necessary help from the Central government.

FOURTEEN innovation universities would be set up in the country during the 12th Five Year Plan, Union Minister of State for Planning, Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Ashwani Kumar said in Chandigarh recently.

Kumar was speaking during a visit to the city where he reviewed the progress and plan priorities of the Haryana government. The visit preceded the meeting of the Haryana government with the Planning Commission for the state’s annual plan discussion. Ashwani Kumar said he had asked the Haryana government to send a proposal to set up one such university in the state as it was already developing an Education City in Sonipat district.

Speaking on the occasion, Banerjee told reporters that India now had the capability to develop its own uranium ore mines instead of depending on imports. He said nuclear power generation in the country would reach 60,000 megawatts by the year 2030. He described the uranium processed in Thummalapalle as one of the best quality uranium available in the world. The new commissioned plant has a capacity of mining and processing 3,000 tonnes of uranium a day.

The Doris Wiener Collection included nearly 400 sculpture and paintings from Gandhara, the Himalayas, India and Southeast Asia, assembled by Wiener, a renowned collector.
Nitin Nohria, Dean of Harvard Business School, addressing some of India’s top business leaders at Harvard Business School’s first classroom in India set up by the Tata Group at Lands End in Mumbai. Inaugurated by Ratan Tata, Chairman, Tata Sons, the amphitheatre-style classroom has a seating capacity of 82 students and is indistinguishable from the MBA classrooms in Boston. The Harvard Business School faculty will offer programmes to Indian industry leaders in business, government and academia. Seen in the picture (from left, front row) are Ratan Tata, Tata Sons Chairman-Designate Cyrus Mistry, and Naina Lal Kidwai, Country Head of HSBC India.

GLOBAL INDIANS

AMERICAN GURUS

Cutting across domains, Indian Americans today have come to occupy top positions, due, in large part, to hard work and a determination to succeed in an intensely competitive multicultural context. Arun Kumar writes from Washington
A WIDE SWATHIE

There are others too, who, like Khator, referred to as ‘the bamboo ceiling,’ she says. Business schools to institutions of science in explaining how she could make it to one of the most prestigious jobs in American academia. Other that preceded his, named Subra Suresh, a graduate from Indian Institute of Technology at MIT, Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF). Before becoming Dean of the prestigious Kellogg School of Management in 2001, he was the first Indian-American dean of a major institution in the world and called "The Marco Polo of Neuroscience" by Nobel Laureate Eric Kandel. ‘What people overlook is the fact that a great deal of science originally comes from India,” says Ramachandran, who is Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition and Distinguished Professor with the Department of Psychology and Neurosciences Program at the University of California, San Diego. ‘MASTERY OVER TWO CULTURES’ Jamshed Bharucha, 55, was a Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Dartmouth College, a private Ivy League university in Hanover, New Hampshire, till 2002, when he went on to become the Provost of Tufts University, before joining New York-based Cooper Union, one of America’s oldest schools dedicated to art, architecture and engineering, as its President last year. Bharucha points out the advantages of what he calls “a mastery over two cultures”. Such a capacity helps Indians to bring to the table a global perspective and to fuse some of the finest features of the East and the West in pushing the frontiers of research and innovation, says the Mumbai-born Bhattacharya. Another IIT-Bombay alumnus S. Shankar Sastry, an expert in robotics control theory, has been Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, since 2007. He was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2001 and received the Donald P. Eckman Award in 1990. Yet another IITian, Pradeep K. Khosla, 54, became Dean of the College of Engineering at Carnegie Mellon. He was previously Program Manager at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), where he managed a $50 million portfolio of programmes in real-time systems, internet-enabled software infrastructure, intelligent and distributed systems.

THE ‘B’-SCHOOL MATRIX

However, Indians were finding it a bit hard to crack the top jobs in American B-schools until Asian native Dipak C. Jain, 54, a marketing expert trained in mathematics and statistics, became Dean of the prestigious INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France, one of the world’s most prestigious business schools, in March 2011. Now, at least six Indian-origin people have become head prestigious American B-schools. Among them is Nitin Nohria, 49, an IIT-Delhi alumnus who, in July 2010, became the first Indian-American dean of Harvard Business School, possibly the most prestigious business college in the world. "When I started teaching at HBS (in 1988), it was difficult to find Indian or Chinese case studies. Today, we have 80 cases on Indian companies," says Nohria, the co-founder of The Smart Manager, the Indian business and management magazine, along with Gita Piramal and the late Sumanta Ghoshal. He wants to "give MBA students a dose of real-world experience" by introducing HBS’ “biggest curriculum change in nearly 90 years". IIT-Delhi alumnus Soumitra Dutta, 48, too will become the first person of Indian-origin to head the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University when he takes over as the 11th dean on July 1. Currently the Roland Berger Chaired Professor in Business and Technology at INSEAD, France, Dutta plans to focus on emerging markets to bring more faculty and students from Brazil, India, China and Indonesia.

"India needs more internal reforms: clean leadership, collective ambition and the courage to make bold decisions," Dutta says, suggesting, “The Indian leadership needs to do more to ensure the economy doesn’t stall.” ‘GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE’ Bangalore-born Sunil Kumar, 43, became the dean of another top school, Chicago University’s Booth School of Business, on January 1, 2011, after spending 14 years on the faculty of the Stanford University Graduate School of Business where he was the Fred H. Merrill Professor of Operations, Information and Technology. “Indians in the US clearly bring a strong global perspective. The strength of the Indian education system creates advantages,” he says. Jaishankar Ganesh, 46, a graduate of the Madras Institute of Technology and a noted business education innovator and scholar in international marketing, became the first person of Asian-Indian descent to be chosen as full and permanent dean of the prestigious Goizueta School of Business-Camden in August 2010. A global search brought G. ‘Anand’ Anandalingam, 54, to the helm of Mary-
Indians in the U.S. clearly bring a strong global perspective. The strength of the Indian education system creates advantages...

— Sunil Kumar
Dean, Booth School of Business, University of Chicago

Several Indians, who believe they owe their success to quality education at prestigious schools in the United States, have gifted millions of dollars to their alma mater. Topping the list is Tata Group Chairman Ratan Tata, who attended the Harvard Business School in 1975, with a gift of $50 million, the largest international donation in the school’s history. The Tata Group gift in October 2010 is funding a new academic and residential building — “Tata Hall” — on the HBS campus for the participants of the School’s broad portfolio of executive education programmes.

The same month, Anand Mahindra, Vice-Chairman of Mahindra & Mahindra, who did his MBA from Harvard in 1981, pledged $10 million to support the Humanities Center in honour of his mother, Indira Mahindra. It was the largest gift for the study of humanities in Harvard University’s history.

In November 2011, Siddhartha Yogi, founder and Managing Partner of The Xander Group Inc., an India-focused, emerging-markets investment firm, made Harvard University an endowment of $11,000,001 to establish two new professorships and an intellectual entrepreneurship fund. The endowment also covered fellowships and financial aid for students.

In September 2011, Rajen Kilachand, a Dubai-based entrepreneur, pledged $25 million to Boston University, the largest in its history. The university has renamed its Honors College in honour of his parents as the Arvind and Chandan Nandlal Kilachand Honors College.

In April 2010, Infosys Technologies co-founder Narayana Murthy gifted $5.2 million to Harvard University and Harvard Business School in recognition of “the Indian-American business community’s history of success”.

We contributed because of the India connection. It will be a two-way flow of scholars and research,” Rohini Nilekani said.

In 2008, Amritsar-born John N. Kapoor, widely regarded as a visionary in the pharmaceutical industry, invested $3 million in the pharmacy school at the State University of New York in Buffalo to set up a fund for faculty research, student financial aid and emerging-technology research. Kapoor has since gifted the university more than $10.8 million. Other Indians who have made gifts include a Florida doctor couple, Kiran Patel and his wife Pallavi, who donated $5 million to the University of South Florida, to help construct the Kiran C. Patel Center for Global Solutions.

— Arun Kumar

INDIANS GIFT MILLIONS TO ALMA MATER

Siddhartha Yog
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IN THE NEWS

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— Arun Kumar
They rule the Ivy League and their impact is truly global... For, most of them have had top-class education in India, says Rohit Bansal

Chris Fontein, my living-group mate at Harvard, and currently Chairman of the Board of the Netherlands Competition Authority, had difficulty remembering our accounting professor’s name. But Prof. Srikant Datar, “that Indian professor”, as Chris and Richard Gould, CEO of Somer- ser Cricket County, bantered, helped both emerge from the course “less helpless” be- fore their CVCs.

Datar should have known. He isn’t just a double gold-medallist from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmed- abad, he sits on the board of Novartis, and when he isn’t the Senior Associate Dean at Harvard Business School (HBS), he is “re- thinking the MBA”, a piece of seminal work, kickstarted in the school’s 100th year, that now has the education ministers of India and China as his collaborators.

One swallow doesn’t make a summer. In- dians at HBS are omnipresent. Out of 279 dons listed on the school’s faculty list, over 25 have origins here. From Bharat Anand to Guhan Subramanian — the latter being the first to be concurrently a professor with Harvard Law School — Indians make an impressive list.

Rohit Deshpande’s path-breaking case study profiling the “selflessness and leader- ship” in the face of 26/11 and Tarun Khanna’s work on the ‘Tata culture’ are gold standards used by MBA start-ups.

Fortune 50 companies would give an arm and a leg to feature in a marketing case study by Sunil Gupta or Ranjay Gulati — the latter besides working on “customer-centeredness”, is a broadcast buddy with Suzy Welch.

Others would be content with a tutorial of just a few hours on their global strategy with Krishna Palepu. Not surprisingly, Drew Faust, the Harvard President, has Palepu by her side as lead of the iconic school’s globalisation initiative for areas as diverse as law, politics and medicine.

What’s the secret sauce of “that Indian professor”?

Three things, I feel. First, India’s fantastic higher-education grounding — Deshpande has a BSc from Bombay and an MBA from Northwestern while Gulati read at St. Stephen’s and IIMA — gives them com- ceptual and communication skills that the world covets.

Second, many, if they aren’t second-gen- eration immigrants already, preferred the US for their doctoral and post-doctoral work. Anand went to Princeton, Datar to Stanford, Gupta to Columbia, and so on.

Third, and let’s not state the obvious: they worked real hard and all of them in- variably had a genuine interest in marrying research with industry and vice versa.

The shared vision is powering HBS Dean Nitin Nohria’s vision for “the world’s most international school”. Nohria wants to soak in over 50 percent of case knowledge from outside America (non-US cases were less than 10 percent when he joined HBS in the late 80s), and correspondingly, take in the vast variety of ideas that emerge from the salad bowl his colleagues create at Boston.

In an interview with Nohria, this author wondered if his “success was Indian or American”. The reply seemed to capture just what all the professors above could have potentially said: “Like many other im- migrants to America, I am proud of my In- dian heritage and just as proud to be an American citizen. Having lived almost half my life in two different countries, I have always been drawn to learning more about different cultures. Since I study MNs, I have travelled and done research in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America. Thus, for a multitude of reasons, both per- sonal and professional, I have a truly global perspective.”

The Nohria story, or the HBS story, goes beyond business schools like Cornell (Soumitra Dutta), Chicago Booth (Sunil Kumar), and Kellogg Northwestern (Deepak Jain) has since moved to IN- SEAD).

‘Typifying gen-next, there’s a queue for Priya Ranjan’s international economics course at the University of California in Irvine. Ditto for Sreemath Sreenivasan’s course on new-media wire at Columbia.

There is probably little systematic evi- dence to support what I am arguing, but it has been replicated across the academic world in America. From tenured professors (folks who are blessed with academic freedom and life- long employment) to what former Univer- sity of Pennsylvania don Vivek Bhambri describes as the “I-95 Corridor between Boston and Washington”, that “Indian pro- fessor” lends immeasurable value to India’s soft power.

What about trends?

Not everyone is staying put. In America, those who aren’t writing cases on India, and aren’t exactly in line for a “tenure”, are actually coming back! Bhan- dari returned ‘home’ despite having tenure at his alma mater, because in 2007 when he was a mere 37, he got the chance to lead the Institute of Rural Management, Anand. He attributes this reverse migration phenome- non to “what young associate professors in the US feel after rapid upward mobility has been achieved” and the “superlatives that await them at some of our private uni- versities”.

Will more gurus, the new-age academic dons, return like Bhandari has? Or will the place they swipe their ID card at become less and less compared?

Naturally, there will always be excep- tions, and in plenty. But what can be as- serted confidently is that the guru ‘dakshina’ these gifted folks can demand will continue to be in top currencies across the world.

(18 years in the media, Rohit Bansal did the advanced management programme at HBS. His CEO and Co-Founder, India Strategy Group, Hammurabi & Solomon Consulting. Email: rohitbansal@gscpost.harvard.edu)

FROM GRAMMATOLOGY TO FINITE GROUP THEORY: THE GREAT INDIAN

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

University Professor, Columbia University

One of the pioners of postcolonial and gen- der studies, Spivak translated into Eng- lish French philosopher Michael Derrida’s complex work, Of Grammatology.

Jagdish N. Bhagwati

University Professor, Dept of Economics, Columbia University

Tipped to win the Nobel Prize in Econom- ics almost every year, Bhagwati, an advo- cate of globalisation, has served in the World Trade Organisation and the UN.

Jagdish Shukla

University Professor, Climate Dynamics, George Mason University

‘Padma Bhushan’. Shukla is a top mete- orologist. In 2008, the UN gave him the 52nd International Meteorological Organisation Prize for climate research.

Shreeram Shankar Abhayankar

Marshall Distinguished Professor of Mathematics, Purdue University

Known for his contributions to algebraic geom- etry, the ‘Abhayankar’ conic of finite group theory is named after him. Also postulated what is called the ‘Abhayankar inequality’ theory.

Akhil Reed Amar

Sterling Professor of Law & Political Science, Yale University

One of the top legal minds of America, he is known for his acclaimed America’s Constitu- tion: A Biography. He also co-edited Processes of Constitutional Decision Making.

J.N. Reddy

Distinguished Professor & Oscar S. Wyatt Endowed Chair, University of Alabama

An authoritative theoretician in mechanics, Reddy has made seminal contributions to the ‘Finite Element Method’, plate theory, and solid mechanics, among others.

CAST DRIVING LEADING-EDGE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN AMERICA

Madhu Sudan

Principal Researcher, Microsoft Adjunct Professor of Computer Science, EECS, MIT

Awarded the prestigious Rolf Nevanlinna Prize, Sudan is known for his outstanding contributions to the mathematics of com- puter science.

Vijay Prashad

George and Martha Kellner Chair in South Asia, Trinity College

Known for his radical views, Prashad is the author of books such as Arab Spring, Liberian Winter and Uncle Sammi: South Asians in America Today.

C. Radhakrishna Rao

Eberly Professor Emeritus of Statistics, Penn State University


Meenakshi Nadkarni

Professor, Washington University

Wadwha has been part of NASA teams searching for extraterrestrial life and has had the unique honour of having a meteorite named after her.

Vidya Deheja

Barbara Stoler Miller Professor of Indian & South Asian Art, Cambridge University

Awarded the Padma Bhushan this year, Deheja’s studies range from Buddhist art to esoteric temples. She is the author of critically acclaimed The Body Adorned.

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FROM GRAMMATOLOGY TO FINITE GROUP THEORY: THE GREAT INDIAN

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

University Professor, Columbia University

One of the pioners of postcolonial and gen- der studies, Spivak translated into Eng- lish French philosopher Michael Derrida’s complex work, Of Grammatology.

Jagdish N. Bhagwati

University Professor, Dept of Economics, Columbia University

Tipped to win the Nobel Prize in Econom- ics almost every year, Bhagwati, an advo- cate of globalisation, has served in the World Trade Organisation and the UN.

Jagdish Shukla

University Professor, Climate Dynamics, George Mason University

‘Padma Bhushan’. Shukla is a top mete- orologist. In 2008, the UN gave him the 52nd International Meteorological Organisation Prize for climate research.

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Indian-Americans have emerged as a powerful group set to influence the course of American politics.

Indian-Americans have emerged as an increasingly powerful segment of the American electorate as President Barack Obama makes his re-election bid this November, according to a demographic snapshot of South Asians. The number of Indian-Americans who, as US citizens, are eligible to vote has now crossed one million with their total population growing by 68 percent over the 2000-2010 decade from 1.9 million to 3.19 million. Even counting single ethnicity (discounting mixed race), the Indian-American population grew a whole 78 percent over the last decade, the Indian-American growth rate, however, was the slowest. The Bangladeshi community experienced the most significant growth, jumping 212 percent to 147,500 in 2010. The combined Bhutanese and Nepali populations grew by at least 155 percent.

Pakistani-Americans, the second largest among South Asian Americans, grew 100 percent, from 204,000 in 2000 to 409,000 in 2010, while Sri Lankans went up 85 percent from 24,500 to 45,400.

States that have historically had significant South Asian populations continued to do so in 2010. The five states with the largest South Asian populations are California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Illinois. Metropolitan areas with the largest South Asian populations are New York City, Chicago, Washington DC, Los Angeles, and San Francisco-Oakland. Over the last 10 years, the Washington DC Metropolitan Area overtook the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area as the third-largest South Asian population area. Outside the big metropolitan cities, the South Asian population grew the most in Charlotte, North Carolina, increasing 187 percent over the past 10 years. This was followed by Phoenix (Arizona), Richmond (Virginia), Raleigh (North Carolina), San Antonio (Texas), Seattle (Washington), Stockton (California), Jacksonville (Florida), Harrisburg (Pennsylvania), and Las Vegas (Nevada).

When a non-resident Indian (NRI) lands in India now, he or she can zoom through customs with duty-free goods worth $15,000 ($25,000 as a resident and will have to declare his foreign income and pay tax on it. It does not matter if the person has lived outside India for decades. This change in tax residency has been delayed for now. The change in tax residency is part of the Direct Tax Code. Therefore, an NRI will be considered a tax resident only if he stays in India for more than 180 days in a financial year. NRIs are entitled to claim relief in India only based on a Tax Residence Certificate (TRC) from the government of the resident country. Even though no difference between individuals and companies has been given, a TRC appears to be more relevant for an offshore company because it will be important to determine if such a company is a mere shell entity or is a real company having substantial presence in that country. In the case of an individual, the tax residence cannot be easily determined — established by way of entry stamps of countries visited/stayed in his/her passport, said a leading lawyer and a qualified accountant from Rajan D. Gupta of SRGR Law Offices. Payments by some Indians to NRIs will be examined by the tax officer for determining taxable income. If such remittances from Indians are intended to be of withholding tax (TDS), a No Objection Certificate from the tax officer will be required. Basically, the budget has encouraged NRI investors.

Fortune magazine has listed Infosys co-founder N.R. Narayana Murthy among the 12 “greatest entrepreneurs of our time” along-side Apple’s late chief Steve Jobs, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. “The outsourcing” Murthy, ranked 10th, “proved that India could compete with the world by taking on the software development work that had long been the province of the West,” the magazine said. The “visionary founder” of Infosys has built “one of the largest companies in India, it noted, citing his lesson that an organisation starting from scratch must coalesce around a team of people with an enduring value system. “As one of six co-founder of Infosys and the CEO for 21 years, Murthy helped spark the outsourcing revolution that has brought billions of dollars in wealth into the Indian economy.”

“The outsourcing revolution today, fulfillment tomorrow,” Murthy, 65, who is now Chairman Emeritus, is quoted as saying. “It is all about sacrifice, hard work, being away from your family, in the hope that some day you will get adequate returns from that.”

A MILLION

DIASPORA NEWS

Indian-Americans have emerged as a powerful group set to influence the course of American politics.
ATOP THE ANDES

Malli Mastan Babu, an intrepid Indian mountaineer, recently scaled the tallest peaks of South America. Babu tells PB in Buenos Aires that his expedition has only begun...

When Babu went to climb the Cristobal Colon peak in the Sierra Nevada mountain range of Colombia, the local Indians would not allow him to go up. They consider the mountain as sacred and would not let outsiders climb it. Babu did not give up. He told them that he was also an ‘Indian’ and that the people from India too worshipped mountain gods. The Colombian Indians relented, Viswanathan said.

Babu’s current trip to the region is to reach the top points of all the 12 countries of South America. To climb Pico Nebjina, the highest peak in Brazil (3,007 metres), he has to travel by boat up the Amazon river to reach the base of the mountain. “I asked him how he managed the language problem. He smiled and said, ‘Mountains all over the world speak the same language’,” Viswanathan added.

Babu, who studied at the Indian Institute of Management Kolkata and at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, has given lectures on leadership at companies like GE, Intel, John Deere, and management schools in the US, UAE, Kenya and India.

Nearly 167 years after Indians arrived in Trinidad & Tobago to work on sugar plantations, the Indian High Commission in Trinidad & Tobago donated Indian musical instruments to the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies.

The Indian Embassy and its Consulates in the United States have, like many missions in other parts of the world, outsourced passport related services.

The outsourcing agency, VFS Global, was set to begin its operations for the Indian Embassy in Washington, and for the Consulates-General in Chicago and New York from April.

The Consulates-General at Houston and San Francisco will also be covered shortly. In Washington, the VFS Global website http://www.vfsglobal.com/india/usa and a Call Centre number 202-800-7412 became functional from April 9 for providing assistance to passport services seekers. Applications will be accepted by VFS Global in person or delivered by mail at Suite 103, 1625 K Street NW Washington DC. Addresses of VFS Global at other locations in support of the Consulates-General will be available on their respective websites.

Indian Visa/OCI/PIO services will, however, continue to be handled by Travisa Outsourcing. The Embassy and the Consulates-General will, however, continue to handle miscellaneous services like attestation of power of attorney. No prior appointment is necessary. Information on these services can be accessed from the websites of the Embassy and Consulates-General.

PASSPORT SERVICES OUTSOURCED

TWO INDIANS AMONG 2012 YALE WORLD FELLOWS

Yale University has named two Indians, Ayush Chauhan and Ruchi Yadav, to its list of 16 World Fellows for 2012. Chauhan leads Quicksand, a multi-disciplinary design and innovation consultancy working at the intersection of business, development, and culture. Chauhan is also a partner at the Box Collective, where he conceptualised and launched UnBox, the first interdisciplinary festival in Delhi bringing together leading voices from across the world for inspiration, debate and reflection.

Yadav, who is Senior Programme Officer, The Hunger Project, has a background in advertising, human rights, and the women’s movement in India.

From August to December, the World Fellows will enroll in a specially designed seminar taught by leading Yale faculty, audit any of the 3,000 courses offered at the University; participate in weekly dinners with distinguished guest speakers from around the world; receive individualised skill-building training; and meet American and foreign leaders.

Nearly 167 years after Indians arrived here, the sounds of the tabla, dholak and harmonium will be heard in over 550 primary schools of Trinidad & Tobago, which will now teach the Indian musical instruments to students. The T&T cabinet has agreed to introduce a multicultural form of music in the primary school curriculum, representative of the country’s diverse culture.

The Indian High Commission in Trinidad & Tobago has been funding classes in Indian music and dance through the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Cultural Exchange. Indians arrived in Trinidad and Tobago between 1845 and 1917 to work on sugar plantations.

—Pana Ramoutar, Port of Spain

GOPIO PLANS GLOBAL GADAR CENTENNIAL

The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) is organising the Gadar Centennial Commemoration, the 100th anniversary of the Gadar Movement launched to liberate India from Britain with the force of arms. The nationalist movement started as the Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast in 1913 with headquarters in San Francisco.

GOPIO plans include a petition to declare 2013 as the year of Centennial Commemoration of Gadar Movement; issuance of a suitably designed postage stamp; and, publishing a historic Centennial Commemoration book about the Gadar Movement.

DIASPORA NEWS
A multi-media museum celebrating more than 100 years of the Punjabi community in the United States opened in the community-dominated Yuba City in California recently.

A brainchild of the Punjabi American Heritage Society (PAHS), the multimedia museum, the first of its kind in the US, highlights the contribution of the Punjabi community to the social fabric of their adopted land.

“The museum is a multi-media record of the challenges and successes of generations of Punjabi Americans. It documents the hardships they faced on their arrival in California in the early 20th century and their journey to ‘Becoming American’,” said prominent community leader Jasbir Kang.

In his message to the community on the occasion, California Governor Jerry Brown said, “Showcasing the story of the Punjabi American and South Asian migration to the United States is a valuable and needed resource for current and future generations.”

“I congratulate all the individuals and families along with the Punjabi American Heritage Society of Yuba City for their dedication and hard work for the successful completion of this project.”

Brown added.

California Assembly members Jim Nielsen and Dan Logue, County Supervisors Jim Whiteaker, Larry Munger and Stan Cleveland, Yuba City Council member Tej Mann and former Yuba City mayors Kash Gill and Rory Ramirez were among the hundreds who attended the opening ceremony.

In a press release, the organisers said: “Since 9/11, Sikhs and South Asians have borne the brunt of mistaken identity by racist attacks, assaults and even murder. Through this exhibit, PAHS tells the story of Punjabis that have a long tradition of contributing to the success of their local communities.

“The story of the Punjabis, the Sikhs and the South Asians is the same as that of the Irish, the Italians and the Polish before them; it is an American story.”

Yuba City was one of the first destinations of Punjabi immigrants to the US in the early 20th century.

Known as ‘Punjab da Pind’, the city has the largest concentration of the Punjabi community in the US and boasts many gurdwaras, temples and even a mosque.

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Yuba City hosts America’s first Punjabi museum documenting the hardships the community faced on their arrival in California in early 20th century.

[From top left]: The newly opened ‘Becoming American’ exhibit at the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County provide a variety of glimpses into the history and culture of Punjabis and South Asians of Yuba City.
Journey tracing roots

A Guyanese Indian retraces a 'crossing' her father undertook over a hundred years ago as an indentured worker from a sleepy little village in Rajasthan. Enid Whitehouse recreates that journey in a chat with Shubha Singh.

I became interested in my father’s life. He never spoke about his past, but I wanted to know more about his earlier life...

— Enid Whitehouse

London-based Guyanese lawyer of Indian origin

just about a hundred years after her father left India for Guyana, Enid Whitehouse made an emotional journey to a small village in Rajasthan’s Ganganagar district to learn more about her father’s life.

According to family history, the family had owned land and camels in Sirdargarh village. Enid remembers being told that her father used to relate that he had come to Delhi to see the king when he met a man who persuaded him to go to ‘Demra’ (Demerara in British Guiana).

Enid believes that her father may have been referring to the grand Delhi Durbar. He arrived in Guyana alone, and later married a widow with a daughter. His wife died early when the girl was 18, he married again and had 10 children. He went into business and prospered.

For her own voyage, Enid contacted a travel agent in London and gave her destination, according to Krishna’s emigration pass as Sirdargarh, Thana Asonogar, in Bikaner district.

The travel agent made inquiries in Bikaner district and finally located Sirdargarh village in the district of Ganganagar. Enid travelled down to the small village of 200 houses. She could not locate any relatives in Sirdargarh but the villagers were happy to welcome Enid to their homes.

Enid was disappointed not to meet anyone who knew her father’s family, but was deeply moved by the warmth of the welcome she received from the villagers.

“I remember that my father always wore a turban. When I showed my father’s picture to the villagers, they told me that he was probably a Rajput because of the style of his turban. I was very surprised because his emigration pass showed his caste as ‘Jat’. But I read that Rajputs were not preferred as indentured recruits as they were not used to doing agricultural work.”

According to Enid, in September 1912, the sugarcane workers stopped work at the Lusignan Estate and went to manager Brassington’s house to protest. Alarm was raised at the sight of the group of agitated workers, Brassington shot and killed one of the workers. Enid’s father organised the workers and led a group of 300 armed with shovels to Georgetown to place their grievances before the colonial authorities.

The workers’ agitation rattled the British authorities. Enid’s father had asked the workers to cut off the telegraph lines. Later, he argued his own case in court and even refused the magistrate’s direction to remove his turban.

For Enid, visiting Sirdargarh was a moving experience. “I could imagine my father in those surroundings,” she said, when she saw the villagers in their colourful turbans.

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Relating the story of her father’s jour-
An important outreach mechanism of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs aimed at Diaspora youth, the programme has proved to be a useful tool in advancing greater understanding among them about their forefathers’ country of origin.

I always wanted to come to India but somehow couldn’t make it. When I came to know about KIP, I was like, I have to apply for it...

I never thought Delhi was so modern and has such an advanced Metro. What I knew about India was through Bollywood movies...

S. Manian, Malaysia 18th Know India Programme
Chanelle Singh, Australia 19th Know India Programme
Artika Devi, Fiji 18th Know India Programme

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi interacting with members of the 18th Know India Programme in New Delhi on September 29, 2011.

Said some of the participants in the Know India Programme (KIP), one of the key outreach programmes of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), S. Manian, who visited India as part of the 18th edition of KIP in October 2011, is a fourth-generation Malaysian of Indian origin. He has vowed to return to India in search of long-lost relatives whom the family lost touch with generations ago.

“I am sure some of our relatives are in Chennai and Bangalor but we are no more in touch. I would like to come back in search of them,” said Manian, who had left his part-time job in an orphanage to come for the trip.

The highly popular Know India Programme aims to help familiarise Indian Diaspora youth, in the age group of 18-26, with developments and achievements made by the country and bring them closer to the land of their ancestors.

The programme provides a unique forum for students and young professionals of Indian origin to visit India, share their views, expectations and experiences, and develop closer bonds with contemporary India. Artika Devi from Fiji, who was again part of the 18th KIP, had imagined India to be as was projected in Bollywood movies but her visit to the country made her realize the ‘real’ India.

“I am happy to welcome all of you who have come from different parts of the world. This is a programme to introduce India to you,” said a MOIA official.

According to an IGNOU official, the programme provided a unique forum for students and young professionals of Indian origin to visit India, share their views and bond closely with today’s India. “I am happy to welcome all of you who have come from different parts of the world. This is a programme to introduce India to you,” said the MOIA official.

Calling on high dignitaries, which may include the President of India, the Chief Election Commissioner of India, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, and Union Ministers in charge of Overseas Indian Affairs and other ministries/departments, members also get to live in Indian villages, interact with the villagers and even learn local craft. Besides travelling and sightseeing, they are also exposed to some of the institutions and systems of the country.

For instance, a group of 37 youngsters of the 19th KIP visited the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to acquaint themselves with the education system there. “These youth are the children of Indians settled abroad and are visiting different educational institutions in India. The basic idea is to expose them to the diversity of our country,” said an IGNOU official.

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi

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For instance, a group of 37 youngster...
They are part of a small but growing movement in Delhi—a group of cyclists who are riding out an emerging urban ‘mobility crisis’ on the humble cycle. Madhusree Chatterjee meets up with some of them at India Gate in the heart of New Delhi.

Cycling to work may soon become a reality in Delhi, and not just for the poor. With pollution and shrinking road space, India’s capital is under pressure to adopt the Netherlands model that promotes cycling as an alternative to driving.

“Cycle is the future in India but the voice has to reach out,” says Pankaj Munjal, president-designate, All India Cycle Manufacturers’ Association.

Every Sunday, Munjal and a group of 150 cyclists from across all walks of life assemble at the Lutyen’s Bikers’ Zone between Rahtapati Bhavan (the Presidential Palace) and India Gate in the capital for 45 minutes of vigorous biking and bike-related discussions. The event ends with a small feast.

“We drive to India Gate at 6 am, offload our bikes and cycle on the biker’s tracks,” says Munjal, also the managing-director of Hero Cycles, India’s largest cycle maker.

The machines range from the regulation black bikes at ₹10,000 to the designer models priced ₹1.5-2 lakh, Munjal says. His company manufactures nearly six million of the nearly 13 million bicycles made in India annually. A new study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) says Delhi must wake up to the ‘mobility crisis with non-conventional, eco-friendly and easier systems of transport’.

Increasing use of cars in the capital has reduced the carrying capacity of roads and by 2020, if the capital has to meet its target of 80 percent of public transport share, it will have to spend more on cycling and walking,” the study says.

The report says with the “new biking and walking facilities in some parts of Delhi like the BRT stretch between Ambedkar Nagar and Pragati Maidan, Vikas Marg from ITO to Laxmi Nagar, the Tughlaqabad stretch and the Noida Link Road — built after the Commonwealth Games — cycling is still seen as street scraping rather than a continuous well-designed usable system”.

“We have political commitment, will and interest, but it is actually work on the ground. We are not looking at cycling and walking as a small solution, but on a scale which actually works on the ground in the capital,” Sunita Narain, Director-General, CSE, recently said at a forum, ‘Our Right of Way: Walk and Cycle’. Citing figures for the capital, Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director, CSE, says, “Delhi has one of the highest walk and cycle trips in the country.”

“Even on the car-dominated roads like the Outer Ring Road, the share of cycles is quite close to that of autos — 7 and 9 percent, respectively,” she says, quoting figures. “At least 34 percent of Delhi homes have a bicycle. The domestic bike market has expanded by 3 percent every year,” Roychowdhury says.

But the cycling lanes have remained discontinuous and the intricate design of the tracks has created barriers for cyclists, Roychowdhury says. High-speed motor traffic often invades cycling lanes and there is no penalty for encroaching on non-motor vehicle roads. Cycling access to metro stations is also poor, she says. The high rate of fatal accidents in the capital has been a stumbling block to cycling and walking in the capital, says Satyendra Garg, the Joint Commissioner of Police, Traffic.

In 2011, nearly 104 cyclists were killed on the streets of the capital, Garg says. “One cannot have proper cycling without the involvement of the city’s governing bodies,” says Rajesh Kalra, the initiator of ‘Pedalyatri’ (literally, a ‘pedal’ traveller), a cycle initiative in the Delhi region.

“I am trying to promote the concept of bike sharing in the capital which will allow a commuter or a traveller to rent a bike for five rupees. But it requires funds and help from the government. The capital region needs more cycling space,” says Kalra.

Kalra adds he is soon starting the ‘India Cycle Service’ — a cycle rental with innovator Prabhat Agarwal, an IIT/IIM alumnus. Referring to the Netherlands model, Jeroen Buiss, of the Dutch Cycling Embassy, says, “The difference between the Netherlands and India is that in the Netherlands cycling is very much another mode of transport while in India it is something for the poor.”

A biker training at the Lutyen’s Bikers’ Zone at India Gate on a Sunday morning.
Music, calligraphy and poetry. These three arts merge in Vikram Seth’s new anthology of poetry, *The Rivered Earth*, a journey into the heart of rhythmic lyricism that the writer of *The Golden Gate* — a novel in verse — is known for. The slim anthology, inspired by Seth’s tryst with the celebrated 17th-century poet George Herbert, was unveiled recently at Penguin India’s Spring Fever Festival in New Delhi.

Seth, who bought Herbert’s country home ‘The Old Rectory’ at Salisbury in Wiltshire, England, says the fact that he “got to live there has created an aspect of sharing with Herbert’s poetry”.

Poetry comes naturally to Seth. “I never thought I would become a novelist,” the writer said.

“The poem (by Herbert) I used as a template is ‘Love 3’. When I compare George Herbert’s poetry to those by contemporary poets, there is sincerity (in Herbert’s poetry) and a wonderful way of creating a whole atmosphere,” Seth said.


Each section comprises an introduction and a libretto, which has been set to music by noted English composer Alec Roth and violinist Philippe Roth, and calligraphy in Chinese, English, Hindi and Arabic.

Conversations between Seth and the musicians about transposing the texts to music break through the rhymed verses like scenes from stage. The terrain of the poetry spans China, India and Europe.

The anthology is an extension of a project, ‘Confluences’, between Seth and his musician friends at his new home in Wiltshire by the river Nadder.

“Some time ago, when I was between books, I took part in a project that resulted in several remarkable works of music. It was a collaboration between a writer, a composer and a violinist. It developed over four years with a work produced each year. The libretti touched upon three civilisations — Chinese, European and Indian,” Seth elaborated.

‘Songs in the Time of War’, the opening panorama of poems and translations of the Chinese poet, Du Fu, who wrote in the 8th century, looks at imperial China in a series of musings, memories and stories from history narrated by Du Fu sailing on the Yangze.

“In my twenties, I had lived in China for two years, studying at Nanjing University, doing research in economics and demography in the nearby villages and travelling around the country whenever I got the chance to do so. I grew to love China, in a complex sort of way,” Seth says.

The poems are like narratives with references to folklore, myths, superstition, philosophy, rebellion and war. In one of his poems, ‘Grieving for the Young Prince’, Seth tells of an empire, ravaged by war: “Wolves, jackals roam the city. In the wild/The dragon and his court remained exiled/Take care, dear prince, I daren’t speak long with you/But for your sake will pause a breath or two/…I hear the son of heaven has abdicated/And in the north the Khan, it is related…”

A section, ‘The Traveller’, is a personal interpretation of Indian spiritual poetry and a Rig Vedic hymn on creation and the traditional stages of life. It processes lore from ancient Indian texts in a contemporary poetic canvas.

Seth, who is writing a sequel to his novel, *The Suitable Boy* (the tentative title of the sequel)!” The Rivered Earth has been published by Penguin-India
H
definitions of drama and peppy language. These elements that keep the average reader hooked.

“I think there are two major attractions that a historical narrative holds for us. First, history is all about stories. Stories about people and places with the benefit of hindsight. And who doesn’t like a good story?” asks Udayan Mitra, Publisher of Allen Lane and Portfolio imprint at Penguin Books India. “Secondly, historical epics are full of heroism, grandeur and romance, something that entertains everyone,” he adds.

People read historical fiction because they give readers a window on a time period they have had no idea of, says Priya Kapoor, Editor and Director of Roli Books. “Historical fiction brings alive history in a more entertaining way. We would certainly like to know how people of that time lived, what they ate and what they did. Such books take history to another level,” Kapoor says.

Roli Books have two new titles under production — *Hidden Women*, a work by British-Nepalese writer Greta Rana about the “Rana (royal) women of Nepal” who were literal royalty. Such books take history to another level,” Kapoor says. The market is flooded with such titles. “History books priced Rs 299 to Rs 499 with exciting tales fetch the most business,” Mirza Asad Baig of the Midland Bookstore in New Delhi says. Very visible on the shelves is a fiction makeover in writer Ashok Banker’s six-part Ramayana novels. In *The Forest of Stories*, Banker retells the *Mahabharata* while *The Krishna Codex* scripts the exploits of Krishna.

Writer Amitav Ghosh’s semi-fictional *Bas* series (*Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*) documents the history of 19th-century migration while the *Swadeshi Movement*, the Second World War and the Partition of 1947 come alive in his 1988 classic, *The Shadow Lines*. The canvas of Partition and Mughal emperor Akbar’s reign is best captured in Salman Rushdie’s cult fiction *Midnight’s Children* and *Children of the Jinn*, respectively, while writer Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* is still the most popular retelling of the ancient history of the *Mahabharata* in the modern Indian historical context.

“There is an immediate connect. When you are reading a novel, you are looking forward to an element of surprise in the story and yet you have a faint idea what the story is all about. Historical Fiction captures this essence,” says Kapish G. Mehta, Managing Director of Rupa & Co. “History has to be retold and put into fictional accounts for the lay readers to know and appreciate,” says Manoj Kulkarni, Chief Publishing Manager of Amar Ullal, an imprint of Manjul Publishing House. The canvas of Partition and Mughal emperor Akbar’s reign is best captured in Salman Rushdie’s cult fiction *Midnight’s Children* and *Children of the Jinn*, respectively, while writer Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* is still the most popular retelling of the ancient history of the *Mahabharata* in the modern Indian historical context.

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**Past with a Spin**

Fiction woven around history is slowly but surely carving a space for itself in the literary market, says Madhusree Chatterjee.

Zealand-based award-winning author David Hair connects to young Indian readers with his latest book *In the Return of the Ravana trilogy — Pyre of the Queens, Swayamvara and The Ghost Bride*. The exploits of Rama of Ayodhya gets a fictional makeover in writer Ashok Banker’s six-part Ramayana novels. 

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Art galleries are turning into integrated spaces that exhibit, sell, teach, offer residencies and run cafés

Not too long ago, art galleries merely exhibited and sold art. Today, Indian art galleries are fast turning into “integrated spaces” that teach art, conduct residencies for artists, sell handicrafts and even offer a quick snack to the tired and hungry soul.

One such emerging integrated art hub in New Delhi is 1QA, a sprawling green acre next to the Qutub Minar. It opened recently with a multimedia exhibition, ‘Roti Kapda, Makaan’, featuring works by 23 artists at its in-house gallery—Ojas Art.

Developed by the Ramchander Nath Foundation, 1QA is a non-profit, promoting handicrafts and jewellery shop and a manicured garden with space for performance and outdoor display. It proposes to add to the existing amenities with living rooms and a café to attract tourists who throng the nearby Qutub Minar. With living rooms and a café to attract tourists who throng the nearby Qutub Minar. It is a platform with an exhibition space, a café and a souvenir shop.

Lyla Rao, head of client services at Religare Arts Initiative, says, “Today, integrated art spaces are feasible in India. The focus of a 360-degree platform is to nurture all dimensions of art. Given the recent robust development of the Indian art sector, integrated spaces will draw most of the traffic.”

“We don’t have individual spaces for performance and interactive art, art education and residency programmes in the country. Galleries double as integrated spaces to cater to all aspects of art, including archiving,” says art curator Bhavna Kakar.

The success of integrated art-space models like the government-run Lalit Kala Akademi with its books division, Epicentre (Gurgaon), Cholamandalam Artists village (Tamil Nadu), Bharat Bhavan (Bhopal) and artist Jogen Chowdhury’s Shantiniketan Society for Visual Arts can be attributed to multiple resource pools, diversification of business models, government backing and occasional foreign funding, according to a leading art gallery owner in the capital.

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A number of foreign artists, some of them long domiciled in India, are interpreting its symbols, culture, mysticism and sensibilities on canvas. A look at the ‘Indian vocabulary’ some of them use in their œuvre

The tag “expat artist” sits on them like misnomers. Meet this band of painters who are of foreign origin but have been carrying indelible images of India abroad due, in part, to their fascination with the mysteries, faiths and colours of the Orient.

Indian multimedia artist of Dutch origin Sterre Sharma, who made India her home in 1971, delves into Oriental spirituality and everyday reality to look for inspiration. “All my paintings are inspired by Indian spirituality and culture,” says Sterre.

She has painted anecdotes from the love story of Radha and Krishna, using the visual imagery of Vrindavan’s traditional peacock dance, and has interpreted the stories of Hanuman and the sacred Hindu symbol of ‘Om’ in mandala-like abstract compositions in her art. The Hindu epic Mahabharata that she read after marrying Indian politician Satish Sharma has been a life-changing experience.

She has been helping nearly 1,200 families of poor Indian performers from the slums in the capital to showcase some of India’s endangered arts in Europe since 1992. “I wanted to be an artist when I was seven,” says Sterre.

British artist Olivia Fraser-Dalrymple inherits her passion for Indian art from her ancestor, James Baillie Fraser, who painted vignettes of Indian architecture during the ‘raj’ of the East India Company. Olivia paints in the north-Indian miniature style and picks up her subjects from the folk and street cultures of India.

Olivia, wife of well-known novelist William Dalrymple, says she uses “Indian vocabulary” in her work. The fact that she started off as a linguist helps her approach her art as an interpreter — “to capture the meditative quality of Indian miniature art”.

The history of the British Raj, beginning from the fag-end of the Mughal rule till independence, is peopled with artists who were commissioned to document India — the new jewel in the empire’s crown — for branding in Europe.

After Independence, Company painters, such as Thomas and William Daniell, James Forbes, John Zoffany, George Chinnery and James Fraser, passed into history, making way for artists who called themselves ‘Indophiles’.

Spirituality remains their source of primary inspiration, but coloured by issues, such as sustenance, economics and perspectives. “The avenues for foreign artists to showcase their works are far and few between. They have to adapt to Indian sensibilities to relate to buyers. But galleries now do look for foreign artists,” says arts promoter Anubhav Nath of the Ramchander Nath Foundation.

Indian Vaishnavism is young American artist Michael-Buhler Rose’s muse. Buhler, known for his India-insipred spiritual photographs, tries to put the West in the Indian context often through images of foreign women clad in saris.

The 32-year-old, who exhibited at expat gallerist Peter Nagy’s Nature Motte gallery recently alongside Olivia, looks for ideas from “Indian scriptures, performance traditions and religious mores”.

Then there is Delhi-based American artist Zachary Becker. “I came to India in 2009 to work for an art project for young inmates of Tihar jail in the capital and then stayed back,” Becker says. Becker, who works in multimedia on the sights and sounds of the capital, including politics and migration, says he often features in his own photographs, hit by the recent global downturn, India helps him to survive as an artist.

The school of ‘East-meets-West’ paintings has been pioneered by Italian architect, art professor and spiritualist, Nicola Strippoli, known by his Sanskrit name ‘Tanbho’. He has been collaborating with artists and craftspeople from Indian villages from the 1980s.

Italy’s lasting love affair with Indian art finds expression in Francesco Clemente’s mystical Oriental art on Indian handmade paper. Clemente lived and painted in India for several years during the 1980s and became the subject of a book, Made in India, compiled by art critic Jyotindra Jain.

“The Russian painter, Nicholas Roerich, who made the Kullu Valley his home, can be described as the best example of this maverick group who chose to paint India away from their homes,” a leading Delhi-based art writer says.
At a concert in Bengaluru, 1,100 veenas came together to produce music never heard before...

When a musician plucks the strings of a veena to play the notes of a composition, the listener is carried off to an ethereal world. Imagine the effect that an ensemble of over a thousand veenas would produce! Recently, music lovers in Bengaluru were treated to such a spectacle at a concert of 1,100 veenas.

Held to foster India’s ancient heritage of classical music, the concert organised by the Art of Living (AoL) Foundation saw veena exponents from Bengaluru and eight other cities from across Karnataka play at the Bangalore Palace grounds. The audience witnessed musicians playing exquisite compositions based on classical ragas like ‘hamsadwani’, ‘dhanashree’, ‘brindavani’, ‘reva’ and ‘mohana’.

“In happier times your love for music is spontaneous. In tough times music can soothe, heal and relieve you of stress. So, make music an integral part of your life. Veena is the most ancient instrument known to mankind. Its resonance is unparalleled, captivating and takes you to another dimension,” AoL founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said on the occasion.

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India-born Austrian film director Sandeep Kumar is celebrating spring with a difference this year. He has installed lights and cameras in the heart of Vienna’s Hirschstetten Botanical Gardens to film the first song for his Servus Ishq in Bollywood style.

At this time of year, the botanical garden is a riot of colours with 360,000 spring flowers already in bloom and another 1.5 million summer flowers about to burst into life. Kumar calls it “an enchanting backdrop for a movie.”

“I could not have asked for more. This is the backdrop to a romantic song that I will film in different parts of Austria,” Kumar said. The mahurat (a ritual conducted at an auspicious hour) of Servus Ishq or Hello, Love was held here at a temple to the chant of mantras.

An Indo-Austrian production, the film is slated for release early next year. Servus Ishq, written, produced and directed by Kumar, is a musical drama, a colourful mix of romance, songs and spirituality. It is also the first crossover film to be simultaneously shot in English, German and Hindi.

Kumar came to Austria about a decade ago after studying business management in the U.S. and Germany. For many years, he worked as a management consultant by day and wrote scripts by night.

Now he has taken a break from work to film Servus Ishq that stars Victoria Nougeria, a first-time Austrian actress and second-year student at Schaupielschule Krauss, an acting school in Vienna. Nougeria, who plays ‘Maya’, the central character, in the film, is an Indian with Austrian roots. Nougeria was chosen after a countrywide audition of 150 contestants for the role and has since mastered the moves of Bollywood dance.

In the film, Maya is shown arriving in Vienna from India following the trail of a diary left by her late grandmother who was Austrian. Shot entirely in Austria, the film traces the pilgrimage Maya undertakes to the picturesque city of Mariazell, about 200 km from Vienna and sacred to Catholics, where she lays her Austrian grandmother’s ashes to rest. During the same journey Maya also finds the love of her life.

“The magnificent church from the 17th century and the Erlaufsee Lake nearby serve as yet another spectacular backdrop to our tender love story,” said Kumar of Mariazell.

The inspiration to include the location as part of the film came after his Hindu mother, who also lives in Vienna, told him that she felt like praying at Mariazell. “I accompanied my mother to Mariazell and experienced a memorable feeling of spirituality. This was a surprise to me. My impression was that spirituality was dead in contemporary Europe,” recalled Kumar.

The song and dance saga is choreographed by Vienna-based Kathak danseuse Neha Kapdi, originally from Mumbai, who also stars in the film. Kumar’s crew of 25 people is mostly Austrian. Master cinematographer Max Leimstaettner is the director of photography.

Kumar’s love for the performing arts goes back to Delhi’s St. Columba’s School, where he was four years junior to Shah Rukh Khan. His most cherished memory is of the time when he shared the stage with the Bollywood ‘Badshah’ who played the wizard in the school’s version of L. Frank Baum’s The Wizard of Oz.
Walking down the narrow, steep staircase in a rock crevice surrounded by dense foliage, one enters through a small iron door the pitch dark and intimidating Kutumsar caves. Considered one of the longest caves in the world, the exhilarating journey, which lasts about an hour, is a must for those seeking an adrenaline rush.

Situated in the Kanger Valley National Park in Bastar, which is around 350 km from the Chhattisgarh capital Raipur, in central India, the caves have been named after the nearby village. They are 40 feet deep and an amazing 4,500 feet in length. The entrance of the cave is extremely narrow and big enough only to crawl through. However, a couple of feet down via the man-made iron staircase the caves open up to be explored with the help of guides equipped with solar lanterns. Once inside, the enigmatic setting will help you play out your Indiana Jones fantasies as you walk on the uneven and treacherous rocky surface thrilled by the fear of the unknown.

However, breathing in the damp air amidst pitch darkness and echoing sounds does make it a spooky adventure and a strict no-no for the faint-hearted or claustrophobic.

As the torchlight falls on the rocks around, mystifying and vivid stalactite and stalagmite formations on the roofs and walls are a visual treat powerful enough to trigger your imagination. The natural patterns have formed over hundreds of years due to rainwater percolating through small crevices in the rocks. While a pattern on the roof may resemble the eyes of goddess Durga another on the wall may look like an elephant’s trunk or a peacock’s feathers.

As you move ahead, small water pockets are inhabited by a unique species of fish and frogs which according to the locals are genetically blind, breeding in the dark depth as not even a single ray of sun penetrates inside.

There are several chambers inside the caves in all directions and in 2011 a new chamber believed to be 410 metres deep was discovered.

However, the guided tour passes through one main cave and venturing into the other chambers is prohibited. Access to the main cave too is limited to a point owing to lack of oxygen.

At the very end of the main cave lies the naturally formed Shiva ‘linga’ and every year on Maha Shivratri hundreds of local residents go down the cave to offer prayers. According to local folklore, the caves were first discovered in 1951 by tribals who were hunting a porcupine and followed it inside the caves. However, according to the official version, the caves were discovered around 1958 by geographer Shankar Prasad Tiwari.

How to Reach
Kanger Valley can be approached from Jagdalpur, the district headquarters of Bastar. It is at a distance of about 27 km from Jagdalpur on the Jagdalpur-Konta road. One can also approach the park via Jagdalpur-Surgapal-Jatam-Nianan-Bodal road. Raipur (330 km) is the nearest airport and Jagdalpur (27 km) is the nearest railhead and bus stand for the Kanger Valley National Park.
A decade ago, a dish of the humble egg. Gone are the days of the magical. Chef ‘Saby’, as he is known in his professional circle, gives the example of “the perfect omelette — white on the outside and runny inside, like the perfect half moon glued around the edges, an art that takes about six to eight months to master.”

“At the Eggs’ Station that I run at the Olive Bar & Kitchen we serve Eggs Benedict, poached eggs, egg sausages stuffed with minced meat, jelly eggs and sweetened fried eggs with vanilla toast for children,” says Saby.

The young chef, “who grew up on eggs as a child” makes use of a wide variety of eggs, including those of quail and duck, in experimental dishes such as the egg ‘potli’ — egg cooked in a bowl with truffles on top. Another dish that he likes is boiled egg set in a rich veal consommé and served with truffles. I love gull’s eggs — small and blue and have cooked duck’s eggs for years.”

At Jaypee Hotel’s Eggspectation in New Delhi, the egg gets an American and continental makeover with its signature dishes like ‘Three-Omelette Eggspectation’, ‘Triple Treat Tortilla’ and ‘Egg Chilauda’ — drawing hundreds of youngsters to it every day. “Like in India, it is one of the most popular foods in my native Italy and in North America from where I started my chain. It is one of the most basic breakfast dishes and widely accepted in India,” says co-founder of Eggspectation, Enzo Renda.

For more..., see the March issue of Pravasi Bharatiya.
BAgTA work fetches $300,000

A previously unrecorded work by master Indian artist Bagta (1769-1828) has fetched a record $302,500 at the Indian, Himalayan & South-East Asian Art auction in the US recently.

Dated 1808 and measuring 16 x 22 inches, the painting depicts Rawat Gokal Das (fl. 1761-1814), the 18th-century ruler of Devgarh in Rajasthan, celebrating Holi with his consorts.

Bagta was a consummate artist who attained great success with his maiden painting ‘Boar Hunting’. He played a vital role in the development of what came to be described as the Devgarh style of painting.

Bagta was featured in the landmark exhibition which opened at the Museum Rietberg, Zurich, and was on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York’s ‘Wonder of the Age, Master Painters of India, 1100-1900’ exhibition until recently.

“...it was truly incredible to witness the sale of this work come to fruition. Bringing in a lot of this calibre has proven to be not only a highlight of my career but also a highlight for (auctioners) Bonhams and for this 2012 Asia Week,” said Edward Wilkinson, Bonhams department specialist.

UNIVERSITY AWARD FOR INDIAN LINGUIST

Dr. Mohammad Jahangeer Warsi, a gold medalist linguist from Aligarh Muslim University, is the recipient of this year’s James E. McLeod Faculty Recognition Award, an academic honour given to teachers for positively influencing the educational experiences of the students at Washington University.

Previously called the Faculty Awards, the recipient of the prestigious honour is selected by the students of the university at St. Louis, Missouri.

Congratulating Dr. Warsi, Robert E. Hegel, Chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, said: “This is indeed exciting news — congratulations! This is a wonderful honour and strong testament to your efforts in the classroom.”

Dr. Warsi is also the recipient of the ‘Unsung Hero’ award 2005 from the University of California at Berkeley, and a recipient of UP Hindi-Urdu Literary Award for the year 2011.

INDIA-BORN JOINS U.S. ACADEMY

INDIA-BORN Kamaljit Singh Bawa, a distinguished professor of biology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, has been elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Bawa, founder and president of Bangalore-based Ashoka Trust for Ecology and the Environment, will join the academy on October 6.

Among others elected to the Academy are: US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; former Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen, Jr; veteran diplomat R. Nicholas Burns; and television journalist Judy Woodruff.

AJAY BANGA TO HEAD USIBC

AJAY BANGA, president & CEO of MasterCard Worldwide, has been elected next chairman of the US-India Business Council (USIBC), a trade association of 350 top American and Indian companies.

Banga takes over from Harold McGraw III, president, chairman, and CEO of The McGraw-Hill Companies. “By expanding the partnership between our two nations over the next several years we can move from $100 billion in two-way trade to $500 billion by the end of the decade,” Banga said.

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Confederation of Indian Industry
Apravasi Ghat, situated on Quay Street at the Port Louis harbour in Mauritius, was where indentured labourers from India first set foot in the then French colony. Some 400,000 Indian labourers, men and women, trod its steps between 1834 and 1924 to reach their new homes in colonial plantations. The buildings that exist today constitute only a part of the original ensemble. The entrance is still there, as well as the hospital meant for the immigrants, a shed for horses, the kitchens, the common halls, the water-closets, the area where the immigrants washed themselves upon arrival, and the quarters for the sirdars. Apravasi Ghat was earlier known as ‘Coolie Ghat’. In 1976, the Folk Museum of Indian Immigration of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute documented nearly 200,000 photos and other documents relating to the period between 1834-1920 for display. On July 12, 2006, UNESCO recognised Apravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site.