

# Value Insight

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- **Civilizational Milestone**
- **Women Who Helped Write India's Constitution**
- **The Genius of Bharati**



A bi-monthly magazine of  
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# Value Insight

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## Content

- 04 **Subscription**
- 06 **Contributors**
- 08 **Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha**
- 12 **Subhashitam**
- 13 **From the President's Desk**
- 14 **A Beginning**
- 16 **The Civilizational Milestone: Basing Freedom on the Victory of Values**  
*Lavanya Regunathan Fischer*
- 19 **The Evolution of a Seer: Sri Aurobindo**  
*Aruna Srinivasan*
- 23 **Women Who Helped Write India's Constitution**  
*Svetha Venkataram*
- 28 **The Genius of Bharati**  
*Maalan Narayanan*
- 32 **Mastermoshai: My Quiet Inheritance**  
*Avishek Sen*
- 36 **Turning towards the Divine**  
*Prema Raghavan*
- 39 **The Silent Prayer of Aloka**
- 41 **Carry it Forward**  
*Ranjini Narasimhan*
- 42 **Book Review**  
*R. Dasarathy*
- 45 **Swami Vivekananda**  
*S. Regunathan*
- 47 **Children's Corner**
- Prayer saved his life
  - The train that was looted
- 51 **Leaving a Thought**
- 52 **FRNV News and Events**

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**Malaam Maalan (V. Narayanan)** is an eminent bilingual (Tamil and English) writer, well known among the Tamil literati across the globe. He is honoured with many coveted awards. Born in India in 1950, he graduated from Madurai University, Tamil Nadu and later pursued his higher studies in journalism at University of Florida, Gainesville, US. He has more than 30 titles to his credit, some of which have won awards and many of them are being discussed in university classrooms of contemporary writing. 15 of his books can be found in US Library of Congress He is a member of Commonwealth Journalist Association and South Asian Literary Association.



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### VALUE INSIGHT TOPICS FOR THE YEAR 2026

- Contributors are requested ONLY for the MAIN theme given below and NOT for the spiritual theme.
- Please adhere to the deadline.
- Please tailor the length of your contribution to not more than 1000 words.
- We request you to give us your opinions and refrain from sending AI written pieces.
- Confirmation may be sent to frnvindia@gmail.com well in advance. The decision of FRNV Editorial Board shall be final and binding.

Main Theme	Spiritual Theme	Deadline
Women heroes of India	Fearlessness	April 1, 2026
Marvels of India	Human Effort ( <i>purushartha</i> )	June 1, 2026
Objectives for Citizens	Relationships	August 1, 2026
Spiritual Heritage of Modern India	Solitude	October 1, 2026

## Fondness for God

*Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha*

**Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru!**



**I**n the scriptures, Krishna makes a statement, “I am present in everyone, none I particularly love and none I particularly hate. All the difference that is made is because the people who worship me, they make the difference.” So, God never makes a difference. All the differences are made by the devotees.

Now, tell me what have you given your place in your devotional life? Does God have the central place? Because 'you' make the difference. You are not able to worship God fondly and well; that is why God remains at a distance. Things are not clear to you because you are not attempting to become clear. Your *sāadhanā* doesn't progress because you don't want it to progress. You don't know what real *sāadhanā* is. Then He says:

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते

मामनन्यभाक् ।

साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः

सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

api cet-sudurācāro bhajate mām-  
ananyabhāk |

sādhur-eva sa mantavya: samyag-  
vyavasito hi sa: ||

*(Bhagavad Gita 9.30)*

Apply it to yourself. Krishna says, “Maybe I am a worst person, very immoral, unethical, unsophisticated, unrefined. I have all these bad qualities, I have black marks. I am not going to look into them.”

***Bhajate mām-ananyabhāk.*** If I can worship God exclusively, wholesomely, I become a sadhu, a noble person. If anybody can become noble, the moment he starts

loving God and worshipping him fondly, then what is my problem? **All that I have to do is I have to be fond of God exclusively.** I do agree that God is great and supreme. While I agree, I don't worship Him as the supreme. If I worship Him as the supreme, nothing else will have any place in this world at all in my mind. Everything will become inferior and God will become the most superior. Do I consider Him to be so?

Or is it that on one hand I say 'God is Supreme', and on the other I hold on to many things in this world! I want X, I want Y. I still want something 'Super X'. What is meant by considering God to be Supreme? I am a devotee of the Lord and as a devotee I think I become excellent, I become priceless, invaluable, not because I have attained God but because I am fond of God, I worship Him through fondness. Am I doing it? Have I done it?

**Krishna makes this statement, 'A man may be the worst in the whole world, even then if he starts worshipping me extremely, that extreme fondness and worship for me make him a very noble person.'**

Now the question is do you feel that you are noble? Have you become noble? You should keep this idea in your mind, make it a practice, a pursuit, an evaluation. The mind has to become pure! So let the pure

thoughts, purity, process of purity be administered to the mind. How will you administer it? The 'mind' process has to become pure!

One way is reading these scriptural statements like those from Bhagavad Gita, trying to relate them properly, applying them to oneself. So even if I am a *durācāri*, what of it? What I have to do is, I have to be fond of God and worship Him from my heart. When I begin to worship God in my heart, that 'beginning to worship' makes me pure. It is not that purity is something else.

**My very worshipping God fondly, that is what makes me pure.**

And be a constant worshipper. Not necessarily that you go to a puja room, collect flowers. But you have to be a constant worshipper. **Worship being installed in your mind, thought process and attitude process, you will become a constant worshipper of God.** God is the goal, God is the truth, God is everything.

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्महविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।  
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥

brahmārpaṇam brahma-havir-  
brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam |  
brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-  
karma-samādhinā ||  
(Bhagavad Gita 4.24)

What does it mean? This realization will come only when your mind is filled with this thought, this process, this statement. Whenever you read Bhagavad Gita, it is this process institution that is taking place. It is not reading, it is not hearing, it is processing, processing, processing in your inside, in the mind level. The very purity is being sought, gained and displayed. Will you spend some time thinking about what I said?

*Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru!*

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**Prayer is a practice, a training for the mind, as walking is an exercise for the body. If you understand what you pray for, it will be sweet and charming. Even if you do not, it will build up your mind.**

*Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha*

**Meditation is an essential part of spiritual seeking and sadhana. But that does not mark the finale of it. The seeker's mind has to become purer and lighter every day. Only when the mind becomes sufficiently pure and sublime, Brahmic vision and the resultant blessedness can be felt freely. Let the attention be more on gaining sublimity of the mind than on anything else.**

*Swami Bhoomnanda Tirtha*

**We are born in this world to lose as well as to gain, to have happiness as well as misery. Enrich your mind by understanding this and improve, gaining stability thereby.**

*Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha*

# SUBHASHITAM

हिमालयं समारभ्य यावत् इंदु सरोवरम् ।  
तं देवनिर्मितं देशं हिंदुस्थानं प्रचक्षते ।

Starting from Himalayas and extending upto  
Indu Sarovaram (Indian Ocean) is the nation  
created by God which is known as  
'Hindusthan'

हिमालय से प्रारम्भ होकर इंदु सरोवरम (हिंद महासागर) तक  
फैला हुआ, यह भगवान द्वारा बनाया गया राष्ट्र है जिसे  
'हिंदुस्थान' के नाम से जाना जाता है।

## From the President's Desk

---



One of the heartening news items I look forward to reading every morning is about Aloka. Sixteen Buddhist monks are walking the world over for peace with an Indian street dog called Aloka. At the moment of my writing this they are reaching Washington in the United States with their message of peace and the need for compassion. What touches me most is not just the message they are taking to the strife-ridden world but the kind of response they are eliciting from people. Common people are coming in large numbers to pay their obeisance to the monks showing thereby that all people do want to live in peace and do want to practice compassion, but they just do not know how to establish them on the globe. A note on Aloka...the monks have tried their best to shake off the dog, but he has come back to them, as though insisting on making known his belief in the message. Presently Aloka is recovering from a knee surgery in the US.

Back home, we are fighting the demon of pollution. It is affecting almost all the cities of India and the capital, especially in its severe grip. It is a serious health hazard to all, be they children or the aged. Governments after governments are trying to tinker with the problem without finding an acceptable and lasting solution. We have to seriously think on how we can augment the efforts of the government.

I would be happy to hear from the readers and members of FRNV as to how FRNV can play a meaningful role in combatting it.

*S. Regunathan*  
President (FRNV)

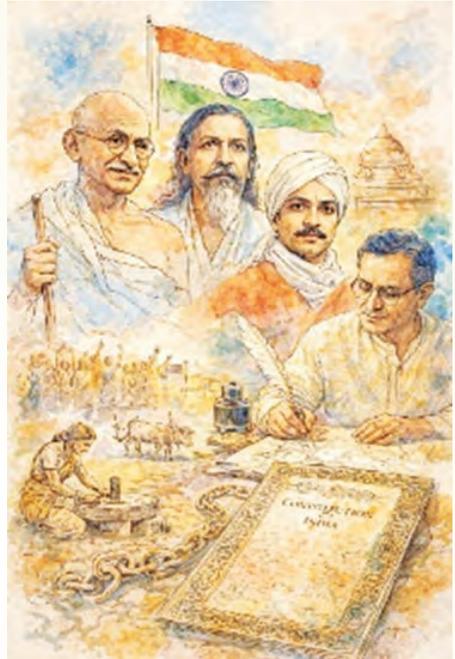
## A Beginning

**H**ow was our nation built? Many stalwarts visualized a free India, a country ruled by its own people, and so the story began. There were protests and rebellions and there were imprisonments and exploitation. In this oppressive environment, what gave the freedom fighters their extraordinary energy to sacrifice themselves for the nation?

As this issue unfolded, we got very excited. A representative sample of people from different walks of life; politics, spirituality, literature and the arts revealed their dreams. Not of a country that was the topmost military power or even the richest country or standing as a giant among nations with her economic and defense prowess. Their dreams were made of other stuff.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, in his profession as a lawyer discovered the need for facts and the merit of truth. He carried the importance of truth into the political strategy he built, to get India her freedom.

When Sri Aurobindo spent a few years trying to fight the British rule,



he realized that true freedom would come only when each individual evolves. He visualized a nation of highly evolved people and spent years of penance to find and elucidate that path.

Long before India actually got her independence, Subramania Bharati rejoiced with music and dance at the thought of her independence. His journalistic exposure gave him the dream of a unique country where

men and women would be equal, of a country which would not be foolishly tied up in rituals, superstitions and communal divides. He dreamt of a country where equality would reign.

It is not easy to think beyond the times. When the art world was copying Van Gogh or Leonardo da Vinci, Nandalal Bose looked around to find beauty in his countrymen. He saw the women grinding flour, the man ploughing the field, the folk arts, the natural mediums traditionally in use and in that he

found his inspiration. No wonder then that he illustrated the original document of the Constitution for he was full of pride in his country and her people.

They all dreamt of country which would cherish values. Truth, spiritual rectitude, equality and education and self-respect are some.

How far are we from those dreams?

That is the prayer which moves our lips is, "May we actualize those dreams. ■"

## The Civilizational Milestone

### Basing Freedom on the Victory of Values

*Lavanya Regunathan Fischer finds that Gandhi used the power of truth and moral values to combat unjust laws.*

As I walk a stranger on the streets of a foreign land, it is not uncommon to find some unknown person greeting me with “Gandhi! Gandhi!”. Both, my country and I share in his identity. Mahatma Gandhi, a lawyer who became the father of the nation and blended India's beliefs and tolerance into a defense for independence that captured the world's imagination while setting his country and others after her, free. There were people who said it was his strong religious background and the influence of Jainism on him. And yet I did not feel this was the whole story. His strategy blended philosophy with a more pragmatic approach. The approach every lawyer has when they need to prove illegality. He had to convince a vast and diverse jury comprised of the rest of humanity, of the *ultra vires* nature of colonial power (An oft used phrase in law, *ultra vires* is a Latin word used to describe an act that requires legal authority but is done without it) and force the colonizer to be the judge who had to accept the verdict of guilty. It was his greatest case and he won it.

The ideas that Mahatma Gandhi

translated into his vision for freedom shaped not only India's vision of herself but also gave the whole world goals by which to align their response to oppression. His ideas took humanity from believing in an eye for an eye to a literal standard operating procedure for turning the other cheek.

While those closest to him may have borne the brunt of some of his beliefs it cannot be contested that his method for gaining freedom heralded a new civilizational milestone.

However, though the kernel of this movement is found in philosophy the action and steps to achieving this



*Bapuji (1930) by Nandalal Bose, Photo by Biswarup Ganguly, Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 3.0)*

goal were formed by his training in law. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Gandhi struggled to settle himself as a lawyer. But the legal principles, the framework for his imagination was given by law. He understood the mechanisms and statutory instruments that the British sought to use to justify their colonial looting of the subcontinent and soon realised that he had to engage with and expose the fallacies in the legal structure the British used for legitimacy.

Scholars such as Charles DiSalvo have shown that Gandhi's years as a lawyer shaped his understanding of injustice not simply as moral wrongdoing, but a law based iniquity that had become entrenched in the structure of colonial administration and hence embedded in its institutions. The method by which imperial rule was consolidated by the mundane acts of administrators and clerks sitting with dusty rule books in the corners of empire.

Gandhi realized that expiation must necessarily first expose the injustices read into the laws of British India and their inability to do justice to the dominion. The requirement for Indians to be represented at the legislative level was precisely to counter this subterfuge. This legal sensibility distinguished Gandhi from many

contemporaries: rather than rejecting

law outright, he sought to expose the contradictions between British claims to legality and the realities of colonial repression.

It can be argued that

Gandhi's experience as a lawyer gave him familiarity with legal necessity, the ideas of rule of law and the need for countries in increasing their legal legitimacy. This knowledge helped him effectively look for persons and ideas that could invalidate the imperial claims of moral righteousness and show this against their moral claims embedded within the idea of the rule of law.

This legal consciousness is evident in the development of **satyagraha**, which can be understood as a distinctly legal-political strategy. Civil disobedience, in Gandhi's conception, was not random lawlessness; it was the deliberate, public, and disciplined violation of specific unjust laws. By breaking laws openly and accepting punishment, Gandhi forced the colonial state to reveal its coercive foundations. As Judith Brown

Gandhi's years as a lawyer shaped his understanding of injustice not simply as moral wrongdoing, but a law-based iniquity that had become entrenched in the structure of colonial administration.

demonstrates in her study of the civil disobedience campaigns of 1928-1934, Gandhi carefully selected laws that were symbolically powerful yet legally enforceable such as the salt laws to highlight the moral bankruptcy of colonial legislation. Law thus structured both the targets and the choreography of mass protest.

Colonial statutes themselves played a crucial role in radicalizing Indian politics and shaping Gandhi's leadership. Repressive legal measures such as the Rowlatt Acts, which permitted detention without trial, suspended writs like habeus corpus (latin phrase for 'you have the body' which requires law enforcement to ensure a person is not held without trial) and curtailed civil liberties, exposed the gap between Britain's professed commitment to the rule of law and its authoritarian practices in India. Gandhi's effective use of agitation against the Rowlatt legislation marked a turning point, transforming constitutional protest into mass civil resistance. The law was no longer merely an administrative framework; it became the visible instrument of domination. Exposing the lack of truth in the law allowed him to use ideas of dharma to counter imperialism.

The courtroom, too, became a site of political struggle. Gandhi's 1922

sedition trial under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code illustrates how he used legal proceedings to challenge colonial legitimacy.

Rather than defending himself in conventional legal terms, Gandhi accepted guilt while condemning the law itself as immoral. His statement at trial reframed obedience to unjust law as a greater crime than disobedience, turning the logic of colonial legality against itself. In doing so, Gandhi transformed the trial from a mechanism of repression into a moral indictment of imperial rule.

Finally, Gandhi's engagement with law must be understood against the broader colonial legal order. As historians like Elizabeth Kolsky have shown, British India operated under a racially uneven "rule of law" that normalized violence and inequality. Gandhi's strategy did not seek to escape this system but to confront it on its own terms, making law the very medium through which colonial authority was delegitimized.

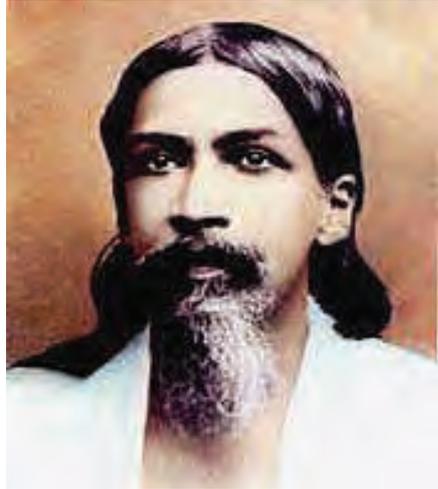
In sum, law was not incidental to Gandhi's freedom struggle—it was its architecture. Gandhi's legal training shaped his methods, unjust laws shaped his campaigns, and legal institutions became the stage on which the moral limits of empire were exposed.

## The Evolution of a Seer: Sri Aurobindo

*Aruna Srinivasan finds that liberation is not just freedom from Imperial rule but is built on the evolution of the mind of every individual.*

The period was between 1889 and 1891. The young man from India had completed his education in England and was ready to appear for the ICS (Indian Civil Service) exams. He qualified in the written examination spectacularly. However, he failed in the next qualifying test held separately. It was a horsemanship test – to ride on the horse. He didn't qualify for the ICS because he didn't appear for the test even after the authorities gave him several appointments, as recorded by the Civil Service Commission. He didn't show interest to pursue the career nor show any inclination towards that path. Later on, his biographers infer from his actions and later remarks that he was not interested in serving the Imperial Government.

The young man was Aurobindo Ghosh who was later known as Sri Aurobindo, the spiritual guru of Pondicherry. He was a revolutionary, fighting for India's freedom from the British, before he turned spiritual. His revolution began after he returned from England where his father had sent him for studies. He notes in his autobiographical notes



that his father was determined that he should receive an entirely European education. "He therefore took care that I should have no contact with Indian ways of life, no knowledge of Indian languages, no acquaintance with Indian religion or culture." His father was a Western trained doctor. He thought that the Indian traditions were socially and intellectually regressive and that India could progress only by adopting European knowledge, ideas and methods. His idea was to create an Indian who could stand as an equal to Europeans on European terms.

Thus, he was growing up as an

Indian with no Indian cultural background. So much so, when he was asked what his religion was, he replied, “none”. He valued his European education, admired Greek thought, European literature and Western intellectual vigour. At St. Paul's School, London, he learnt Greek and Latin thoroughly and acquired familiarity with Greek and Latin literature. He described himself not as industrious as per ordinary standard, but read books on his own besides his curriculum. In school, he stunned the teachers with his Greek and Latin verses. They thought that he was being coached aggressively and were astonished how an Indian child with his cultural background was able to produce such flawless poetry in a foreign language.

When Aurobindo and his brother were studying in England, their father wrote letters to them giving them updates on the political situation – about the imperialist attitude of British Government in India and sent clippings from India newspapers. These news items disturbed Aurobindo and his resentment about India's oppression by the British increased. While studying in Cambridge, he was drawn to revolutionary ideas. Although the thought of freedom for India was always running

undercurrent in his mind, he didn't act upon the thought till he returned to India.



On arrival back on Indian shores, he realised that he had no Indian consciousness. He didn't feel any organic connection with the land he was born and lived in and that disturbed him. He thought that his native land was a nation with a soul and destiny of her own and he made efforts to know her better on her own terms.

He served the Baroda State as an administrator and professor. During the Baroda years, he learnt Sanskrit and other Indian languages in order to understand India. His colleagues remembered him as an aloof intellectual and uninterested in politics. But the state of Indians and India did disturb him. He saw a dichotomy of thoughts in the way he learnt of equality in his European education. But here in India the same Englishmen were not applying the equality concept to Indians. In Baroda, he motivated young people through his writings. Later he joined

the secret society that was formed to organise a revolution to liberate India.

The trigger for his full involvement in the freedom struggle was the Partition of Bengal in 1905. He actively involved himself in the fight for freedom. He travelled widely around Bengal and held enormous number of meetings and spoke to the people. The revolutionaries used Aurobindo's family property in Calcutta to carry out experiments on making bombs. Aurobindo did not believe in terrorism, but accepted the possibilities of organised armed resistance if all peaceful avenues were closed. The Government was anxious about the rising stature of the Nationalists and tried to intimidate them through brutal punishments. One Magistrate in Calcutta ordered a 15 – year old boy to be flogged in his presence. Due to this attack, the boy became unconscious and was half dead.

The revolutionaries took this atrocity as a challenge and decided to retaliate. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1908, one revolutionary, Khudiram Bose threw a bomb at a carriage as it was coming out, thinking mistakenly that the person inside was Magistrate Kingsford, the magistrate who gave flogging punishment to the boy. But the passengers were two innocent

women. When Aurobindo heard this news, he immediately advised his fellow revolutionaries to remove the bomb making materials and the workers from his property. They were a clear give away of the crime. But the removal job wasn't executed properly and on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1908, the police raided the place and confiscated the weapons and bombs and arrested the revolutionaries. The government which was waiting for an opportunity to send Aurobindo to jail, promptly seized the opportunity and arrested him on charges of conspiracy although there was no evidence of his direct involvement in the act. He was sent to Alipore Jail and was an under-trial prisoner there for a year. On the judgement day, what Aurobindo said through his lawyer Chittaranjan Das echoed the core of his thoughts which remained consistent throughout his revolutionary life.

“The whole of my case before you is this. If it is suggested that I preached the ideal of freedom to my country which is against the law, I plead guilty to the charge. If it is an offence to preach the ideal of freedom, I admit having done it. I have never disputed it. I have adopted the principles of the political philosophy of the West and I have assimilated that to the immortal teachings of Vedantism.

“I felt I was called upon to preach to my country, to make them realise that India had a mission to perform in the comity of nations.

“If that is my fault you can chain me, imprison me, but you will never get out of me a denial of that charge. I venture to submit that under no section of the law do I come for preaching the ideal of freedom, and with regards to the deeds with which I have been charged, I submit there is no evidence on the record and it is absolutely inconsistent with everything that I taught, that I wrote and with every tendency of my mind discovered in the evidence.”

The judge acquitted Aurobindo and a few more revolutionaries in the case. He has often said that his nationalism didn't stem from sentiment or attachment to the past, but came through a clear perception of the necessity of India's freedom for her own life and future.

Although he was spiritually inclined before the Alipore jail – with a sense of calm and detachment enveloping him - the one year in jail was transformative for him. He reflected, read and wrote a lot and kept listening to the inner voice which gave him direction towards a spiritual path. In jail, he saw a oneness in all – the prisoners, the

jailors and the walls. He lost all sense of hatred. In the solitary confinement, he has later said that his personal anxiety disappeared; fear of punishment or death receded; m e n t a l agitation fell silent and actions and events seemed to unfold without inner strain. Instead of *doing*, he felt a state of being moved.

The condition of freedom is the search for truth.

*Sri Aurobindo  
Early Cultural  
Writings:  
The Revival of  
Indian Art*

When he came out of jail, he stepped away from active politics but didn't denounce it.

His idea of Indian liberation was the evolution of people's mind. It was a holistic approach. Before the Alipore case, he once wrote in the “Bande Mataram”, “India is the Guru of the nations, the physician of the human soul, in its profounder maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit. But Swaraj is the necessary condition of her work and before she can do the work, she must fulfil the condition.” He believed that India's freedom required change of consciousness and not merely a change of rulers.

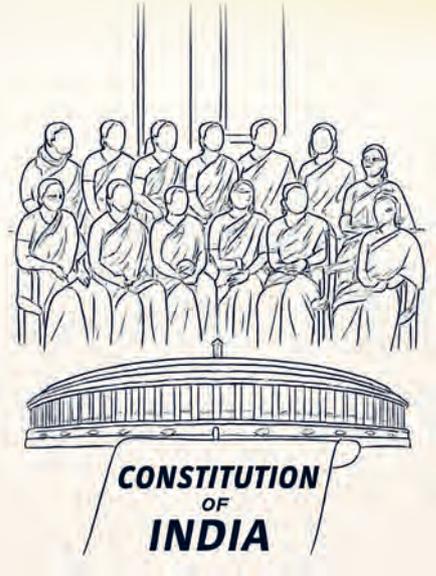


## The Women Who Helped Write India's Constitution

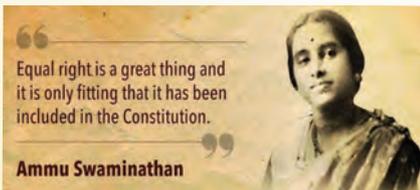
*Svetha Venkataram writes that the contributions of distinguished women played a vital role in shaping the Constitution and advancing the ideals of a newly independent nation.*

In pre-independent India there lived many remarkable women. They were fearless freedom fighters, committed social reformers, powerful thinkers, and brave voices of change. Among them, fifteen women shared a unique place in history: they served in the Constituent Assembly, the body of leaders responsible for forming the Constitution of Independent India.

For many of these women, the first battle was fought at home. Ammu Swaminathan grew up in Palakkad in 1894 in a home where boys were encouraged to study while girls were



trained to perform household tasks. Her refusal to accept this division shaped her politics for life. She insisted on education and independence to study after marriage which was considered unusual for women at the time. Yet, her persistence paid off because it helped her grow into one of India's most confident leaders. She co-founded the Women's India Association in 1917. It became one of the largest women's rights organizations in India and represented women workers and their economic needs. She was very vocal about her political opinions and the British rulers, afraid of her influence, decided to silence her by sending her to prison during the Quit India



Movement. When freed, she became a member of the Constituent Assembly and later the Rajya Sabha. Ammu Swaminathan's life story demonstrates that personal freedoms for women (such as the option to study what one likes) are powerful because they can become stepping stones to creating fearless leaders at the highest national level.

While Ammu Swaminathan was actively working to fight off economic oppression under the British rule; in the kingdom of Travancore, a brilliant lawyer called Annie Mascarene was challenging the idea that a single king and his children be given the sole right to rule over the kingdom simply because they were born to a royal family. She used her skills as a lawyer to present convincing speeches to public gatherings and was in favour of Travancore becoming a part of an independent India and participating in democratic elections to choose their leaders. The region of Travancore became the state of Kerala under Independent India. As a member of the Constituent Assembly and later the first woman from Kerala elected to the Lok Sabha, Annie Mascarene showed her people that democracy gives them the choice to select their own government.

Questions about elections and democracy were beginning to be asked everywhere in India. While Annie Mascarene was asking them in the south in Travancore / Kerala, in the north there was Begum Aizaz Rasul. The Begum was in fact born into Merlakotla's



royal family (now Punjab). She was a unique woman. She enjoyed playing both cricket and hockey and encouraged several women to build strength and stamina by participating in sports. Living the life of a royal, she began to realise the unfair advantages that simply being born rich could give a person. She wanted a fairer world for all people. She decided to join the Muslim League, a political party that was fighting for freedom from British occupation. In the Constituent Assembly, she ensured that India did not have electoral constituencies based on religious divisions, making the other members understand that democracy works best when there is unity.

Yet political unity meant little without social justice. For Dakshayani Velayudhan, democracy could not exist alongside caste

oppression. Born into the oppressed Pulaya community in Kerala, she experienced exclusion and untouchability at every level, be it at her school or the village public drinking water tank, from which members of her caste were banned. Education became her resistance. As India's first Dalit woman graduate and the only Dalit woman in the Constituent Assembly, she made brave strides to ensure that the laws of Independent India would be fair for all. Her interventions shaped Articles 15 and 17 of the Constitution, ensuring equality and the abolition of untouchability.

If Dakshayani Velayudhan insisted on constitutional equality, Durgabai Deshmukh focused on the tools required to access it. Arrested repeatedly during the freedom struggle, she realised that many of her fellow female prisoners were having a tough time navigating the judicial system, unaware of their



*Dakshayani Velayudhan*

legal rights and often signing confessions to crimes they didn't commit because they were illiterate.

Determined to change this, she studied law and founded the Andhra Mahila Sabha, offering education and legal aid to women. She was a leader many trusted and held positions not only in the Constituent Assembly but also the Planning Commission and various national welfare bodies and came to be known as India's "Iron Lady".

Education also shaped the politics of Hansa Jivraj Mehta, though her arena expanded beyond national borders.



*Hansa Jivraj Mehta*

Drawn into the freedom struggle through Sarojini Naidu and Gandhiji, she combined activism with scholarship. In the Constituent Assembly, she helped shape laws of Independent India, but her most enduring contribution came at the United Nations. By insisting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognise "all human beings" rather than "all men," she embedded gender equality into global language. Hansa Mehta demonstrated how Indian women carried their constitutional thinking into the world.

Meanwhile Kamla Chaudhary's life shows deep inner reflection of the self and forms of resistance that can be used to defy foreign power structures. She was born into a family close to the British administration; yet she courageously joined the Congress party, became very vocal about freedom from British occupation and endured imprisonment for her role in the Civil Disobedience Movement. She organised women through Gandhian charkha committees. Beyond her political career, she has also left a lasting legacy in her literary works which explore themes ranging from nationalism, power relations between landlords and peasants and the psychological trauma women endure when denied freedoms so easily available to their male counterparts.



While Kamla Chaudhary explored inner worlds of conflict and

resistance, journalist

Leela Roy became very interested in physical, visible methods of fighting for Independence. Working closely with

Subhas Chandra Bose, she entered revolutionary networks that trained women in physical combat and endured nearly a decade in prison. During Partition, she risked her life to rescue refugees.

All while running 'Jayashree Patrika', a magazine that discussed contemporary politics, economics and international relations and was the very first magazine which was managed and staffed completely by women. Leela Roy's life showed that resistance could be both disciplined and daring.

Daring courage also defined Malati Devi, though her arena was rural India. Though elected to the Constituent Assembly, she stepped away, convinced that true transformation required proximity to the oppressed. A Gandhian leader in Odisha, she organised peasants, fought zamindari, and endured long imprisonments. Even in jail, she taught literacy. After Independence, she focused on tribal welfare and adult education, living simply despite access to power. Malati Devi's choices underscored that democracy begins at the margins.

Purnima Banerjee was another leader committed to working with people at the margins of society. She organised workers and farmers and

encouraged them to fight for their economic rights. The British repeatedly jailed her. In fact, she once wrote exams from her prison cell! In the Constituent Assembly, she argued for minority rights, women's participation, and education as a Fundamental Right. Though her life ended early, her ideas anticipated reforms that would come decades later.

Renuka Ray continued this trajectory, grounding governance in reform. Through the All India Women's Conference, she worked to end child marriage and expand women's legal rights. In Parliament and the Planning Commission, she argued for secularism and inclusion, strengthening democratic foundations.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur carried these ideals into governance. Born into royalty, she rejected luxury for Gandhian simplicity and like the others, she too served prison time as a fearless freedom fighter. Not only was she a Constituent Assembly member, she was also Independent India's first Health Minister. She had some remarkable achievements such as establishing AIIMS, leading malaria eradication campaigns, and representing India globally through the WHO.

Threaded through many of these lives was Sarojini Naidu, whose poetry and oratory skills awakened political consciousness across India and abroad. As Congress President, movement leader, and later Governor, she united culture with resistance.

From Sarojini Naidu's dedicated mobilisation of masses for the freedom movement emerged leaders like Sucheta Kripalani, who transformed organisation into governance. Founder of the All India Mahila Congress and later India's first woman Chief Minister, she embodied the shift from protest to administration.

Finally, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit carried India's hard-won freedom onto the world stage. Despite personal loss, she rose through diplomacy to become the first woman President of the UN General Assembly, affirming India's place in global affairs.

Together, these women worked hard for the country. They were kind to the downtrodden, confident amongst their peers and deeply committed leaders who were never afraid to stand up to British oppressors to help India win its freedom.

## The Genius of Bharati

*Maalan Narayanan brings to us  
the enormous contribution of  
Subramania Bharati as a  
journalist*

**T**oday we fittingly celebrate Subramania Bharati as 'Mahakavi', literary genius, passionate freedom fighter, social activist, mystic and a visionary. But from where did his multi-faceted personality emanate? What had been the precursor of his various inventiveness? What bestowed on him the courage to take on mighty colonial powers? From where did he acquire the conviction to dismantle the caste oppression, communal bigotry, and challenge the age-old customs?

The answer to all these questions rests in one single word: Journalism.

Had he not taken up journalism as his career he might have ended as a Tamil teacher. In those days it was very common among Tamil scholars to seek careers in teaching.

But Bharati opted for journalism.



Tamil journalism was in a nascent stage at that time. Bharati entered the arena of journalism in 1904 when he was 22. Journalism is the only career he pursued in his entire life. In turn, it was journalism that enlightened him about the happenings around him be it global, national or social. It opened the windows to the world and many doors within. It chiseled his personality, brought him close not just with leaders of his time, but with the people too and forbade him from becoming a pundit or puritan

Bharati joined 'Swadesamitran' as a sub-editor and was entrusted with translating the news clips and copy

editing. He was able to publish his poems now and then and to write the editorial occasionally. Young Bharati was restless and felt restrained. Mr G.Subramaniam, his resourceful and eminent editor was one of the founders of Indian National Congress and a staunch nationalist but belonged to the moderates' faction. Bharati as a young Turk owed his allegiance to Tilak.

*After a stint of two years at 'Swadesamitran' he was hired by a group of radical young men who founded weekly 'India', to lead the paper as its de-facto editor. Bharathi bloomed fully when he was working in 'India'. He penned articles that were spitting fire against colonial masters, and equally on his moderate compatriots. He authored editorials incisively analysing budgets, British parliamentary proceedings and the hypocritical behaviours of bureaucrats.*

*He wrote elaborately and enthusiastically about the Bolshevik revolution that was in the offing at Russia and about the unparalleled sufferings of Indian labourers in South Africa. He wrote about the terrorism that erupted in the royal wedding in Spain and about the floods in Paris. It was very rare at the*

*time for Tamil newspapers to discuss global events and he was a pioneer in reporting international events.*

*Access to international news was not easy those days. Bharati arranged to get journals, in English and other languages, almost from everywhere. A cursory glance of his writings in 1905-1906 reveals that he was reading regularly more than 25 magazines in Hindi, Bengali and other Indian languages published in different parts of India and English magazines from United Kingdom, not to mention the Tamil newspapers.*

Presenting perspectives on global issues did not prevent Bharati from grass root newsgathering. He was the first one to introduce the "Citizen Journalists" system for newsgathering at the grassroots. Though he had not developed a stylebook for his reporters, he had authored a do's and don'ts list for his citizen journalists. To cite an example from his norms for citizen journalists which hold good even today for any journalists: "Do not file unjustified and unwarranted reports on insignificant persons and issues" Bharati was highly innovative in his journalism practice. He was a pioneer in introducing the following, apart from citizen journalism.

- Cartoons
- New Tamil terms for modern parlance
- Fiction elements in columns (Non-Fiction–Fiction)
- Debates
- News dissemination through a conversational style
- Contests for readers
- Free Supplements
- Free Issues
- Specimen issues for potential subscribers
- Different subscription rates for different classes of people
- Remuneration and Free copies for the contributors
- Datelines with Tamil months and year

Bharati had a strong conviction that if a message was to reach out to the masses then the medium that carries the message needs to be facile. He demonstrated this conviction in whatever he did, be it his poetry, or prose or journalism. To enable readers who were deprived of the skills of literacy he introduced cartoons in his India Weekly in the year 1909, which is the first of its kind in Indian Language journalism. It was a difficult task and an expensive proposition as lithography and block making techniques and printing technology were in their

early stages. Illustrations were to be carved in wooden blocks that were used for printing. In an announcement in 'India' weekly dated 13<sup>th</sup> March 1909, Bharati wrote “We are venturing into a new technique of bringing you cartoons which hitherto not used in Indian Language journals. It would cost us more but we have no intention to increase our subscription rates.”

Above and beyond innovations in his journalism practice, Bharati was concerned about ethics in Journalism and Press freedom. When the editor and the publisher of 'The Punjabee', a journal from Lahore were arrested, fined, and sent to jail for a news item they published about a British bureaucrat, besides writing editorials condemning the outrageous action he organized two public meetings in Madras to raise money to support the legal battle of that Lahore paper.

In 1910, consequent to the emergence of secret revolutionary organisations such as 'Anushilan Samiti' in Bengal and 'Mitra Mela' in Maharashtra which engaged in nationalist violence, the British came heavily on the press, particularly on vernacular press. It promulgated the draconian Indian Press Act 1910 which imposed strict censorship and

made financial securities vulnerable to confiscation. 'Suryodayam', a magazine edited by Bharati was not spared and it ceased its publication in February 1910. In the penultimate issue, Bharati published a cartoon depicting Press Freedom as a corpse being carried to the graveyard.

Despite being an ardent advocate for press freedom, Bharati did not hesitate to reprimand the press when they went overboard. When the young Lady Curzon passed away, 'Amrita Bazar Patrika' wrote a piece describing her death as an act of God, a punishment imposed on Lord Curzon who was instrumental in dividing Bengal. Bharati wrote a note chastising 'Amrita Bazar Patrika' in India weekly dated 28<sup>th</sup> July 1906. He wrote: "We are sorry to write this note condemning Amrita Bazar Patrika which is known for its wisdom and patriotism. Yet it will not be fair to cover up a misdeed of someone who happened to be your brother. Hence it becomes our responsibility to point out when our most esteemed newspaper Amrita Bazar Patrika errs. In an article published last week

in this venerated newspaper on Lady Curzon's death, it has stated that it is a punishment imposed on Lord Curzon by God. Doesn't it sound like a chat of the uncivilized? Let Curzon be our sworn adversary. But it is unmanly to gloat over his personal losses. We can condemn Lord Curzon in any measure for all the brutal acts he has committed to us. We can criticize the British establishment for not punishing him appropriately for his acts. But it is totally inappropriate for Amrita Bazar to gloat over like a child, saying " Hey You harmed me and now God has punished you" A gentleman editor will be more benign when his enemy is in distress and will not be delighted".

This is a thumbnail sketch, not a pen portrait of Journalist Bharati, who surmounted the challenges thrown to him by his inventiveness, courage to change the norms, commitment to ethics, concern for press freedom and the common man when he turned the tide, infused modernity in poetry, made the prose more functional and enriched journalism with his prolific innovative output.

## Mastermoshai

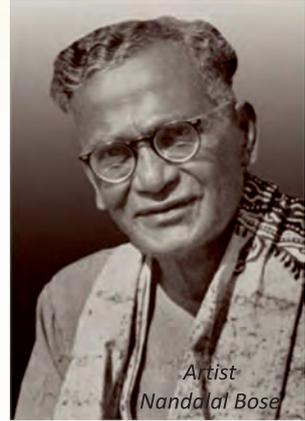
### My Quiet Inheritance

*artist Avishek Sen tells us how Nandlal Bose, who illustrated the original document of the Indian Constitution, turned the nation's understanding of art to the beauty and sensitivity around him.*

**N**andalal Bose – 'Mastermoshai', as he is known in Shantiniketan, is the soul of Kala Bhavana. When I arrived at Kala Bhavana more than two decades ago, carrying dreams of changing the world through my work, I encountered 'Mastermoshai' almost immediately. My teachers spoke of him with such intimacy that it felt as though his presence still lingered in the air of Kala Bhavana.

I came to know Nandalal Bose closely through my teachers, some of whom were his direct students and had interacted with him personally. To learn about him through those who had been shaped by his pedagogy was a rare privilege. Through them, I was introduced not only to his work, but to his way of thinking and making art: the insistence on Indian roots, an Indian way of doing things, an Asian approach to art-making. This was evident even in the most elemental

aspects of practice, such as how one prepares the surface, how one approaches the paper, how one sits. Working seated on the floor, the paper placed on a low desk close to the body, stood in sharp contrast to the Western mode of art-making on an easel. The proximity of the surface, the posture of the body, the intimacy of the gesture, all spoke of a different relationship between the



Artist  
Nandalal Bose



Artwork: Nandalal Bose.  
'Footfalls of Indian history'. (1915).

Illustration published in  
'The Modern Review'  
Vol. 15 (1914); Source:  
Internet Archive Book  
Images via Wikimedia  
Commons (Public  
Domain).

artist and the work.

At a time when my mind was filled with Van Gogh, Klimt, Schiele, I experienced, perhaps for the first time, a subtle conflict between different ways of making, seeing, and understanding art. It was a quiet questioning. The small building known as Mastermoshai Studio, has a low height, much like Tagore's other buildings at Santiniketan. Everything there seemed deliberately scaled to the human body. The way of living, of practicing art, was unmistakably different. I realized I had entered a new territory of art-making - Mastermoshai's territory.

Coming from the dense, congested neighborhoods of Kolkata, surrounded by old British-era buildings and incessant human movement, the transition was stark. Suddenly, I found myself amidst a barren, dry, red landscape dotted with palm trees, with the Santiniketan campus appearing like an oasis, marked by a few large, anchoring trees. After a few initial days of feeling displaced, a quiet calm began to settle in. I started feeling myself again. I could see myself more clearly.

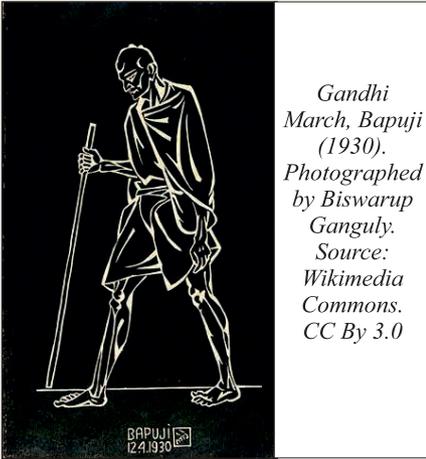
I began my art practice anew. Mastermoshai's way, sitting on the



*Artwork: Nandalal Bose: 'Festival of cakes'. The Modern Review Vol.5 (1914), Wikimedia Commons (Public Domain)*

floor, the desk almost resting on my lap, alone in my small studio. It is a practice I continue to this day. The simplicity of the environment, of living, and of working that I was introduced to then still defines my artistic practice. That simplicity continues to dominate my way of making art.

When I look back at Nandalal Bose's work today, through the lens of my own artistic practice, it is the breadth of his vision that strikes me the most. His lines, monochromatic surfaces, compositions, perspectives shaped not only the legacy of Kala Bhavana, but also led the Bengal School towards a distinctly new trajectory of Indian modernism. His practice and



*Gandhi  
March, Bapuji  
(1930).  
Photographed  
by Biswarup  
Ganguly.  
Source:  
Wikimedia  
Commons.  
CC By 3.0*

pedagogy opened up a direction for modern art in India, one that did not borrow its language from the West, but searched for its own ground. I see this today in the technical sophistication of his paintings, where restraint becomes strength. His work absorbed eclectic influences, styles, and methods, but the core of his language remained unmistakably Indian. From his extensive travels, he brought to his work fragments of Indian life as he encountered it. He drew scenes from the lives of ordinary folk, people who toiled away without representation in the public and political sphere.

And this distinctive visual idiom matched the political spirit of the time, embedded in the freedom struggle and in the renewed

awareness of India's past and its national identity. His iconic linocut of Mahatma Gandhi, inspired by the historic Dandi March, became one of the most widely circulated images of the period. More expansive were the Haripura posters, nearly four hundred works created for the Haripura Congress of 1938, drawing on everyday scenes of rural India. This project did more than echo the Gandhian vision of rural self-sufficiency and harmony; it demonstrated how visual culture can reflect a nation's aspirations.

It was perhaps this rare convergence of artistic mastery, nationalist commitment, and a deep understanding of Indian society that led members of the Constituent Assembly to invite Bose to conceptualize and illustrate the pages of the Constitution of India. He assembled and guided a group of artists to create twenty-two images that drew upon India's vast and layered cultural heritage, the illustrious past of Bharat. Rendered in bold lines and muted colours, these images depicted figures from Indian mythology and history, such as Shri Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Shri Krishna, Arjuna, Gautam Buddha, Mahavira, Shiva Nataraja, Emperor Akbar, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Tipu Sultan, Rani Lakshmi Bai,



*Painting by the author Avishek Sen. Title: 'As though she could come and go as she pleased'. Collection: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art*



Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji - encompassing diverse periods, subjects and styles. Collectively, these images inscribe history and mythology as a visual backdrop to the Constitution, suggesting the document as one built upon India's civilizational memory. The idea that the Constitution emerges from India's past even as it shapes its future. The decorative motifs and borders drawn from diverse artistic traditions make the Constitution a visual testament to India's cultural and artistic diversity.

His landmark murals, linocuts - which includes his illustrations of Tagore's Sahaj Path, his landscapes, his postcard drawings, inspired generations of artists. His travels to

East Asia paved the way for his huge body of work in brush and ink and the printmaking techniques which became integral to the pedagogic practices of Kala Bhavana.

Today, as a practicing artist working with socio-political and religious

questions, my main challenge is to keep my work simple to connect with people. This is where my learning from Nandalal Bose continues to guide me. Time has changed. After six decades of his life and work, I find myself living in a complex world. I no longer feel the urge to change the world through my art. Instead, my practice is to understand it—to observe society, the people of this country, and the politics of my time. My effort is to translate these layered and difficult realities into a visual language that is clear and simple. To make it possible, without noise or excess, remains both my challenge and my inheritance from him.

## Turning towards the Divine Within

*Prema Raghavan writes on prayer as a spiritual force*



*AI-generated illustration depicting diverse forms of prayer*

Let us enter the portals of the New Year with faith. Faith means knowledge and that we are made in the image of the Lord. When we are attuned to this consciousness within us, it is prayer.

Prayer is one of the ancient expressions of religion. It is a communication with the divine. The fundamental thought of man as a spirit is the foundation of all major religions. Though the divine is not

seen, still most of us have an intuitive faith in a higher power. In the history of every religion we have many solid proofs of how the divine responded to sincere prayers. Prayer power is a manifestation of energy, which is a dynamic force. It is a mighty spiritual force as real as the force of gravity

### **Types of prayers**

Prayer is probably the world's most widely practiced visualization

technique. There are as many approaches to prayer as there are people on this planet. There are different types of prayers. The earlier portion of the Vedas deals with ritualistic prayers for obtaining desirable objects by performing certain sacrifices. The later part of the Vedas deal with universal prayers and peace chants for universal peace, harmony and spiritual enlightenment. On such prayer is the *gayatri* that was revealed to sage Vishvamitra. There are innumerable prayers in the *Puranas* to propitiate various deities. The outpourings of our saints in the form of *bhajans* *abhyangas*, *kritis* and *dohas* form a special type of prayer for the spiritual welfare of mankind.

These prayers can be divided into three groups namely, congregational or mass prayers, group prayers and individual prayers.

**Group prayers:** A group of devotees gather in a particular place, like a temple, church, mosque, gurdwara, etc. pray to god regularly for their individual and collective welfare.

**Individual prayers:** There are no hard and fast rules or definitive methods for prayers. Tapping into the life force is an intensely personal search that means different things to different people. The style, location

and content of prayer is a unique individual choice. You can pray silently or aloud, recite from a book, invent your own prayer or sing a song - the important element is praying from the heart.

Larry Dossey M.D, perhaps the world's most vocal expert on prayer and medicine says:

"Prayer showed its effect on everything from seed germination to wound healing. It also operates as strongly on the other side of the earth as it does at the bedside."

Here is an incident from research. A young boy found a wounded pigeon in his backyard and nursed the bird back to health and gave it an identification tag. A year later the boy was admitted to a hospital 200 hundred miles away for a surgery. While he was recovering from the surgery in his room, he heard tapping at the window. He opened the window and in flew the same bird. Love had drawn it there. Love added to prayer increases its power.

Experiments have shown that a simple "thy will be done" approach was more powerful than prayer for specific results.

But it is not helpful if people use it to sidestep their own responsibility. Prayer does not necessarily spell out

or trigger solutions instantly. We gain insight and direction through prayers so that we can work productively towards a solution. When you pray with courage, you confirm your significant role in the world as well as God's presence in your life.

Experiments also show that prayer positively produced the following results:

**Good physical health:** The immune system is strengthened and nourished by a sense of peace and calmness. Prayer helps reduce the risks or effects of high blood pressure, wounds, heart attacks & headaches.

**Good emotional health:** Prayer acts like a shock absorber and can easily free us from worries, tension and depression. Suppressed negative emotions in the subconscious mind are the root cause of all our mental and physical troubles. We can sublimate them through prayers. Practice of prayers systematically replaces negative thoughts with positive and divine ones, leading to purity, strength, and courage and ultimately changes the character of the person. It is our feelings that give our prayers their power and bring about the matching experience in our lives. A prayerful attitude arrests the

aimless wandering of the mind and helps us to concentrate our mind on things at hand.

Intrinsic faith has the capacity to spark major personal enrichment in every area of life.

Gandhi said, "*Prayer is the very core of man's life*".

Here is an incident that occurred in 1926. Gandhi was traveling in Hyderabad with Kaka Saheb Kelkar and Mahadev Desai. After giving talks in different places they returned to their place of residence at 2 a.m. and went to sleep immediately. Suddenly Kelkar was awakened by cries from Gandhi. He said, 'I slept without prayers. Without expressing a word of thanks to the lord who bestows on us strength to deliver speeches throughout the day. How ungrateful we are!' He bemoaned this fact and resolved, 'from this day onwards whatever happens, wherever we are, we must offer our prayers at 5.30 pm.'. This resolve he kept right up to Jan 30 1948.

Prayer is a means of bringing orderliness and peace. When you take care of the vital things, other things will take care of themselves.

## The Silent Prayer of Aloka

*A walk that became a prayer...*



**V**ideos of a dog walking silently beside saffron-robed monks began circulating on social media. What

began as a local curiosity soon became a global symbol of peace. News outlets from Delhi to California carried the story of Aloka, the Peace Dog who traveled from Sarnath to Sacramento!



It all began during a 112-day peace walk across India when a group of Buddhist monks from the Dhammacetiya tradition set out on a long journey, retracing the Buddha's footsteps through sacred sites like Bodhgaya and Sarnath. One day in Kolkata, a stray Indian pariah dog with a heart-shaped mark on his head began following the monks as they walked, barefoot and silent, spreading messages of peace and unity. The monks named him Aloka,



meaning “light” in Pali.

Aloka became more than a companion. He became a symbol of devotion without doctrine, of prayer without words, of presence without demand.

The monks were soon invited to extend their peace walk beyond India, first to other parts of the country, and then, astonishingly, to the United States. They accepted - not as a tour, but as a continuation of prayer. But they could not leave Aloka behind. He journeyed with them to the Huong Dao Temple in Fort Worth, Texas, and later to New York, where he became a beloved member of their spiritual family.

On October 26, 2025, nineteen monks began a 2,300-mile Walk for Peace across the United States, from Texas to Washington, D.C - a journey of about 120 days through ten states, expected to conclude around February 13, 2026.

The monks' peace walk was not a protest, nor a pilgrimage. It was a prayer in motion. They walked not to



reach a destination, but to remind people that peace is not a place, but a practice. And Aloka walks with them - a four-legged sutra reminding people that prayer can be as simple as walking with love.

In Aloka's silent companionship, people began to see prayer not as something confined to temples or words, but as a way of being. A gaze held with compassion. A step taken with care. A presence offered without demand.

## Carry it Forward

*Ranjini Narasimhan weaves the thread of continuity in life saying that yesterday's today and today's tomorrow are all linked by prayer*

I think of my reciting prayer as an inheritance from my parents.

I remember the prayers that moved my mother's lips. I try to imagine what she would have been thinking when she was praying. Her calm composure, her love, her faith both in God and in her children, not to mention her husband, are all symbolized by prayer for me. Equally when I think of prayer, I can see my father bustling around so keen to finish all the tasks for the day even before the day had begun, but with a slow and steady prayer going on all the time in his mind. His strength and his determination are symbolized by prayer to me. I pray as my parents taught me to have faith. I pray to continue their faith.

So when I pray I do not ask for anything or expect anything. I pray for my peace of mind. When I pray, I feel I am communicating to that god to whom I am praying. I recite all types of prayers, it does not matter to which religion it belongs. A prayer is a prayer, that is all. Sincerity and the feeling of oneness with the prayer is

all that matters. Since I have been hearing prayers

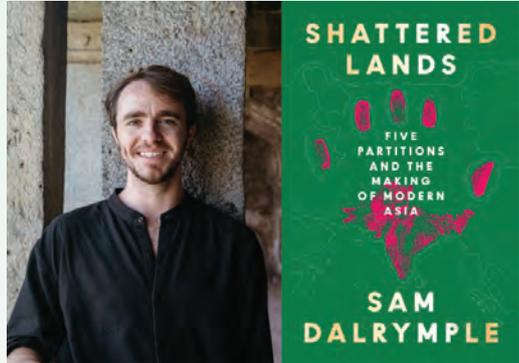
from the Vedic tradition all my life, I naturally recite them more regularly. I have a certain set of prayers I recite every day. If I manage to recite them all in one day, I feel very happy that day. Each prayer is personified for me so I feel I have met all my gods that day. I am not able to sit and keep reciting my prayers, I have to attend to housework also, play with my grandchild and even watch television. I find I am reciting my prayers even when I am working. If there is a minute's silence in my life, my mind automatically turns to pray. It is true they say that one should sit in one place, the same place and pray. It is also said that pronunciation is very important. I try to do both, the second one I try harder to do. But as for sitting in one place, I do not follow that. I think my god understand me and my pronunciations. I hope he or she does



Illustrated image  
(AI generated)

## Book Review

*R. Dasarathy reviews a book that has become one of the most-talked about history releases of 2025*



Indeed, the sub-text to the title of the book, catches your attention and you wonder which are the 'five' partitions. Even the author cannot help musing, at several points in the book – that the partition could have gone the 'other' way. The author, Sam Dalrymple is the son of William Dalrymple who has written 5/6 books on early Modern Indian History. Sam book is mostly about South Asia – actually about the 'British Raj' – stretching from Yemen in West Asia to Singapore in the Far East.

Today China and India are perceived as rivals in almost every aspect of human endeavour – militarily, economically, technologically,... .. However, looking back at a longer period, you realise that the two civilizations had great respect for each other. Here it is worth mentioning that Rabindranath

Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru held a view that both India and China could learn important lessons from their shared history.

Take the example of Xuanzang from the Ancient Period - “Xuanzang was one of China's greatest scholars, travellers and translators. When he wrote these words, he had just returned from an epic seventeen year, 6,000-mile overland pilgrimage to the great Indian centres of learning.”

Xuanzang ...” ...was largely dominated by Indic ideas, art, science, languages and religions. In particular, he looked with profound reverence at India's ancient Buddhist university monasteries, such as Nalanda, with their tens of thousands of learned monks. For Xuanzang they were simply the greatest centres of knowledge and scholarship in the world, the Indian equivalent of the

great Library of Alexandria. Lectures at Nalanda were given in hundred different halls each day, he wrote, 'and the students studied diligently without wasting a single moment'. He described the lecture halls, the stupa relic mound, five temples and 300 apartments and dormitories which housed the 10,000 monks and international scholars who gathered there.”

For a millennium and a half, from about 250 BCE to 1200 CE, India was a confident exporter of its own diverse civilisation, creating around it an empire of ideas which developed into a tangible 'Indosphere' where its cultural influence was predominant. During this period, the rest of Asia was the willing and even eager recipient of a startlingly comprehensive mass transfer of Indian soft power, in religion, art, music, dance, textiles, technology, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, mythology, language and literature. Sanskrit had been a profoundly sacred tongue for at least a millennium before the Common Era.”

“Indian learning, Indian

religious insights and Indian ideas are among the crucial foundations of our world. Like ancient Greece, ancient India came up with a set of profound answers to the big questions about what the world is, how it operates, why we are here and how we should live our lives.”

During this pursuit of knowledge, there was little time for wars. Even less time for commerce expressed through: The Silk Road. When Emperor Ashok's son and daughter went as missionaries to Sri Lanka, the value system of the ruling elite is revealed.

As the author says the book describes a historic epic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the extraordinary story of how five partitions transformed



Britain's Indian empire into twelve nation states. The evolution of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are explained in this book. Additionally, the origins of Burma, Oman and Yemen are also revealed. Surprisingly, the author has not mentioned the story of Sri Lanka's independence.

The 5 partitions identified by the author are (extending between 1937 and 1971)

1. Burma starting from 1937. A large community of Indians especially South Indians had been settled in Burma and they were forced out by the new regime in Burma.
2. Arabian Peninsula including Oman, Yemen, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, were separated from India, before Oil was found.
3. The 'Great' Indian Partition of 1947 into India and Pakistan

4. The integration of the Princely States into India or Pakistan

5. Pakistan was divided into two states West Pakistan and East Pakistan. The two states were united by Religion. East Pakistan later found its destiny as Bangladesh.

There are many nuggets in the book - which help to understand historical events and personalities – such as the identification of the 'Indian Arabs'. Besides the Great Partition in India, there were other partitions for the creation of Israel, transfer of populations between Greece and Turkey, East & West Berlin, Vietnam, Korea. This was partly due to the various colonial governments, who used a 'divide and rule' policy to exploit the differences within the population. The other reason could be the growing nationalism in the people of these countries.

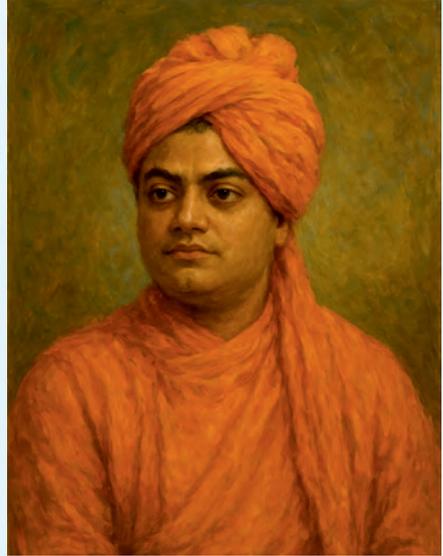
**Title:** Shattered Lands  
Five Partitions and The Making of Modern Asia  
**Author:** Sam Dalrymple  
**Publisher:** Harper Collins  
**Pages:** 520  
**Price:** 799/- (Hardcover)

## Swami Vivekananda

### Why Worship Idols?

*S. Regunathan*

*Thus far: Vivekananda, institutionalized his master Sri Ramakrishna's legacy by setting up a Mutt while continuing his own spiritual quest. He could feel the guidance of his master close to him, always. When he decided to head for the Himalayas, he faced many setbacks, but still his steps did not falter. Enroute, he met many interesting people. He even performed a miracle of curing a man. In the last episode we left him at Alwar where he ate at a Maulvi's house telling him and the community thereby that the highest religion was humanity. Now read one:*



Swami Vivekananda's stay in Alwar is significant in more than one way. It is here that he started giving discourses explaining the finer points of Hinduism and other religions as well. Very quickly, the audience he drew grew very large, including many youngsters and people from the Islamic faith. His admirers were thus a mix of enthusiastic people keen to learn and follow him.

One day the Diwan of Alwar chanced to hear Swamiji. His speech impressed him deeply. One thought

had been worrying the Diwan. His king, the king of Alwar was becoming more and more anglicized and shunning the traditional way of life. He feared it would impact the entire community. He decided his raja should meet Swamiji. He sent an invitation to this effect to the raja who was staying a little away from Alwar. "Come and meet a young but brilliant sanyasi who can speak English too," wrote the Diwan to his king. On receipt of the message, the king decided to check it out.

The disdain of the raja was visible in

his body language though he paid obeisance to Swamiji but did not waste time asking him why, when he was so young and healthy he should be living on alms instead of working hard to earn his living. Swamiji smiled in reply.

He gently asked him why he went hunting, neglecting as it were, his duties of state. The king said pensively that there was some internal compulsion that made him adopt this lifestyle. Placing his palm on the raja's knee, Swami Vivekananda said, "It is the same type of compulsion that had forced me to renounce the world and become a sanyasi".

The raja smiled. He understood. But, he said he still did not believe in praying to stones and metal which had been shaped in the image of gods. Swamiji nodded and casually asked the Diwan to bring down the picture of the raja that was hanging on the walls of his living room.

"Now spit on it," commanded Vivekananda to the Diwan. The diwan was shocked and recoiled... "How can I?" he protested.

"This is only paper, what is the problem? Spit on it," asked the swamiji. The diwan refused.

Then the Swamiji looked at the raja and said, "Even though you are not present in the photo in flesh and blood, the diwan sees you as a living figure. He refuses to spit on that because that would be irreverent to his raja. In the same way people who worship idols in clay and metal do not see them as such but see *their ishta devata* in it."

The raja was so impressed with this answer that he asked Swamiji if since all these days he had not believed in idol worship, would he earn the wrath of god? Swamiji told him that his belief or praying or not praying was not going to decide his future. "What is going to decide your future is what you do today and by doing noble acts you will build good karmas."

When the Swamiji had left to meet someone else, the raja requested the diwan to somehow make Swamiji stay a few more days for he had never met such a brilliant and erudite saint before.

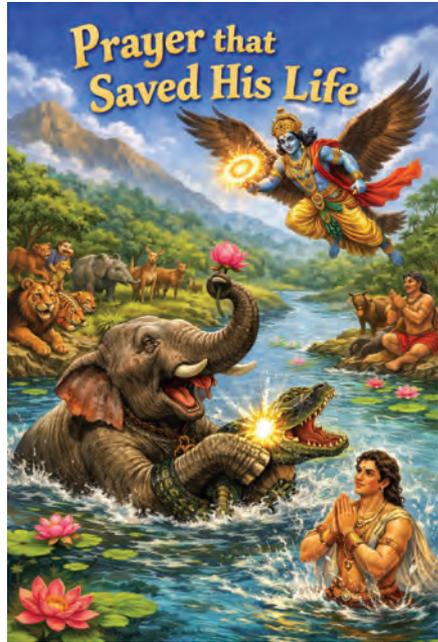
## Children's Corner

### Prayer that Saved His Life

**A**t the base of a mountain called Trikut lay a dense forest full of wild animals. The most powerful among them was Gajendra, the king of a huge herd of elephants. He was so strong and powerful that even lions, tigers, rhinos and snakes feared him. Animals of prey like the deer, pigs, and monkeys felt happy to hear him coming for they felt secure. They grazed, slept or danced around even more happily than before. Gajendra protected them.

One day the sun was very sharp and Gajendra found all the elephants were very thirsty. He followed the direction from which cool winds were blowing and reached a beautiful lake. His herd came behind him. The lake was full of lotuses and the waters were clear blue. All the elephants quenched their thirst.

Gajendra now stepped in to drink water. No sooner had he taken a mouthful, a crocodile came slyly from under the waters and grabbed his leg. Gajendra was not expecting this. He had been relaxed and suddenly when he was pulled, he almost slid into the waters, though he was so strong and big.



Soon he realized what was happening and pulled his leg, pulling the crocodile too along with. But the crocodile which was also very strong pulled with a sudden tug again just when Gajendra thought he had won. Again, Gajendra slipped and this pattern kept repeating itself for days together. So much so that onlookers felt a thousand years had passed by and the elephant and crocodile were still battling each other. Not only the Gajendra's own herd, but all the



animals of the forest and even the gods from the heavens had gathered to watch this fight between two equally strong creatures.

But then time came when the elephant was getting tired. Water is not the habitat of elephants and constantly going in and out of water had tired Gajendra. The banks of the lake were slushy and the ground soft. Gajendra was on slippery ground. The crocodile however was not so fatigued. He was in fact excited for he could see that Gajendra was getting tired.

At that moment, Gajendra knew that his strength alone would not be enough. He needed the support of God. So, he prayed to Vishnu. He prayed so intensely and beautifully that Vishnu heard his prayers. Vishnu knew Gajendra from his previous birth.

Gajendra had been a king called Indradhumna. As Indradhumna too he was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. But, you cannot neglect your duties just because you are praying. You have to do your duties alongwith. Indradhumna however did not. A holy sage called Agastya visited Indradhumna who did not honour him properly because he was observing silence. Agastya got angry and cursed him to be born an elephant.

As an elephant, Gajendra fought as much as he could. He did not pray for help immediately. Lord Vishnu appreciated that. He mounted his vehicle, Garuda, and flew down to the lake. When Gajendra saw him, he offered him a lotus from the pool which he plucked out with his trunk.

Lord Vishnu smiled. “Whenever you pray sincerely, after putting in your best effort, I will always come,” is what his smile said. He got off Garuda and dived into the sea. He sent his discus to sever the crocodile's head and Gajendra got free.

As Gajendra saluted the lord with gratitude, he found the crocodile had transformed into a beautiful celestial being called the Gandharva. He too folded his hands and saluted Lord Vishnu for freeing from the curse. Once, he told Gajendra that a pious sage was performing penance in the waters. He was a young and mischievous Gandharva named Huhu. He slipped into the waters in the form of a crocodile and pulled the sage's leg. The sage had got angry and cursed him to remain a crocodile. Now Lord Vishnu had ended his curse.

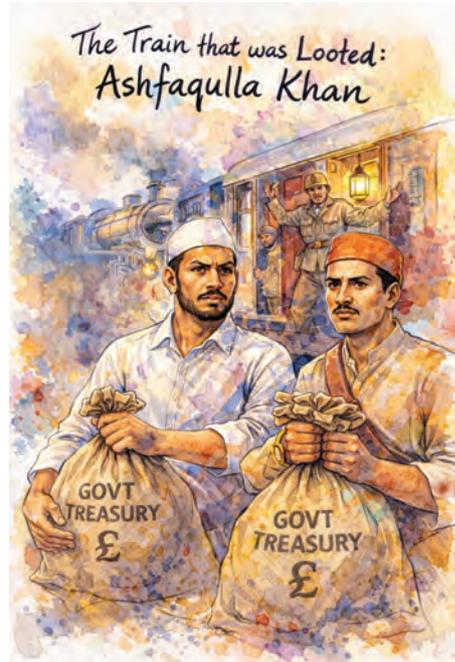
Prayer is fruitful only if you put in effort. When you do that, god will run to answer all your prayers.

## The Train that was looted

A train was chugging along near Lucknow. The date was the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1925, about 101 years ago. The train was Number 8 Down Train. Everything seemed calm and peaceful till one passenger pulled the chain. The train had just passed Kakori. At that time you know we Indians were struggling to get freedom from British rule. One revolutionary by the name of Rajendra Lahiri had in fact pulled the chain. When the chain is pulled, it means it is an emergency and the train should stop. It did come to a halt. Many more revolutionaries jumped into the train at that moment and looted the cash the train was carrying. They did not do so for personal gains. They needed money to fund their protest against the British.

This train was carrying tax money in money bags which were being taken to the British government treasury. They picked up only the bags that were in the guard's room and left from the place. One person who played a key role was called Ashfaqulla Khan.

Born on 22 October 1900 in



Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, Ashfaqulla realized very young that foreign rule was oppressive. He was deeply disturbed by the injustice, humiliation, and exploitation faced by Indians.

He did not define himself by the religion he belonged to but by his nation.

So, when he met the like-minded Ram Prasad Bismil, they became the best of friends. Despite belonging to



different religions—one Muslim, the other Hindu—their bond became legendary. They shared the same dream, the same rage against injustice, and the same readiness to die for the nation. Together, they became pillars of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA). He believed that polite requests would never shake an empire built on oppression. Freedom, he felt, demanded sacrifice and action. That is why when he was as young as 25 years of age he partook in the Kakori Train Action.

And the British were shocked. They were very very angry. They spared no efforts to catch the culprits. Ashfaqulla went underground and tried to escape to Afghanistan to continue the struggle. But, unfortunately he was betrayed,

arrested, and subjected to severe interrogation. The British tried everything...they said they would forgive him, they said they would torture him(which they did), but Ashfaqulla did not budge.

On 19 December 1927, at the age of just 27, Ashfaqulla Khan was hanged in Faizabad Jail. He was calm. He was sure that he was giving up his life for a freedom for his nation. He offered his last prayers and prayed for a free India.

Today it is his sacrifice and many others like him that has brought us the confidence to go out into the world as proud Indians. We should cherish our nation and build it with more sacrifice and action





## Leaving a Thought

*This issue may end here  
but when pages close,  
purpose begins.*

*Write to us. Tell us what moved you.*

*Our next issue explores*

*Unknown Heroes of India*

*people who do not make headlines*

*but make a difference everyday*

*who do their work quietly,*

*across every field of life.*

*We hope you'll join us.*

*Until then...*



# FRNV NEWS AND EVENTS

## MEETING OF ADVISORY BOARD

The 2<sup>nd</sup> virtual meeting of Advisory Board held on 16.12.2025 and decided the following:-

- Ø Funds position is critical and all were requested to explore support from corporate organizations, including Public Sector Undertakings.
- Ø Tapping of Corporate Social Responsibility funding could be an ideal route.
- Ø A musical concert is being planned to be held in Chennai and Delhi during January 2026/February 2026 for fund raising.
- Ø FRNV approach should be a mix of influencing the Influencers i.e. at the Leadership level and working at the ground level.
- Ø Explore setting up of more regional chapters especially in Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh (Punjab).
- Ø Explore Value Based Education Workshop for Teachers as a part of CSR Project. Tangible projects like sanitation, building toilets, tree plantation, etc., may also be explored so that FRNV is known to the public.
- Ø Continue social media outreach on decriminalization of politics and other values & ethics for wider reach of public.
- Ø Exploring collaboration with Rotary Club and also using their model for implementation of FRNV objectives.
- Ø Joint working with Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) needs to be explored.
- Ø Follow up on the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2025.



### **FRNV GOVERNING BODY MEMBER**

Shri Shiv Sahai, IPS (Retd.) joined FRNV Governing Body as Vice President w.e.f. 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Shri Sahai is a distinguished security and governance strategist with over 30 years of leadership in national security and policing. He is the Founder of Gurgia Charities, working to empower rural communities through education, livelihoods, and agriculture. A recipient of multiple President's Police Medals, he is widely respected for his integrity, strategic vision, and service to the nation. His expertise will benefit the organization.



### **FRNV ODISHA CHAPTER**

Seminar on “Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges & Choices” and Launch of Book, “Nurturing the Living Planet : Review of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals” was organized jointly by FRNV Odisha Chapter & Green Earth Forum In Collaboration with DAV School, Chandrasekharpur On 13/12/2025 at DAV School, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar.

The function was presided over by the Chairman, FRNV Odisha Dr Arun Kumar Rath, IAS( Retd.).Ms Abha Mishra, Head of Office, UNDP, Bhubaneswar was the Chief Guest. The event commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the dignitaries with Saraswati Bandana by the students.

Dr Jibitesh Rath, Vice Chairman, FRNV, Odisha Chapter delivered the welcome speech highlighting the objectives of FRNV and the theme of the Seminar. Chairman Dr Arun Kumar Rath, in his address, dwelled upon the topic of the Seminar focussing on the objectives of UNSDGs, the progress of UNSDGs implementation and the daunting challenges being faced in this regard. He also spoke briefly about the scholarly articles in the book by the eminent authors which are an eye opener for all the stakeholders. Dr Amarendra Narayan Mishra, former Vice Chancellor of Khalikote University and Life Member of FRNV Odisha Chapter presented the review of the book which was succinct and intellectually stimulating. Few of the Authors present at the event like Sri Pramod Kumar Panda, Dr Jagdish Tripathy, Sri Prakash Das, Dr Chitta Ranjan Mishra, Scientist, Dr Basant Kumar Kar spoke briefly about their articles and the UNSDGs at this event.



Ms Abha Mishra, Head of Office, UNDP, Bhubaneswar and the Chief Guest delivered her address on the genesis of UNSDGs, progress of UNSDGs and the multifarious challenges in the implementation of the UNSDGs.

There were about 300 participants from a cross section of fields including 200 students of the DAV School, Chandrashekharpur, and other schools of Bhubaneswar. The event was highly appreciated by one and all who participated in it. The students participated with full interest and were given priority in asking many questions about SDGs and social and national values which were answered by the eminent panel members

Sri Sanjay Kumar, Publisher of the book (Excel Publications, New Delhi) proposed the vote of thanks.

### Life Members joined since 07-10-2025

Name	Membership No.	From
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shri Ramswaroop Khileri, IRSE,</b> Jharkhand</li> </ul>	<b>FRNV/LM/108</b>	<b>07.10.2025</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shri Shiv Murari Sahai, IPS Retd.</b> New Delhi</li> </ul>	<b>FRNV/LM/109</b>	<b>07.01.2026</b>





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