

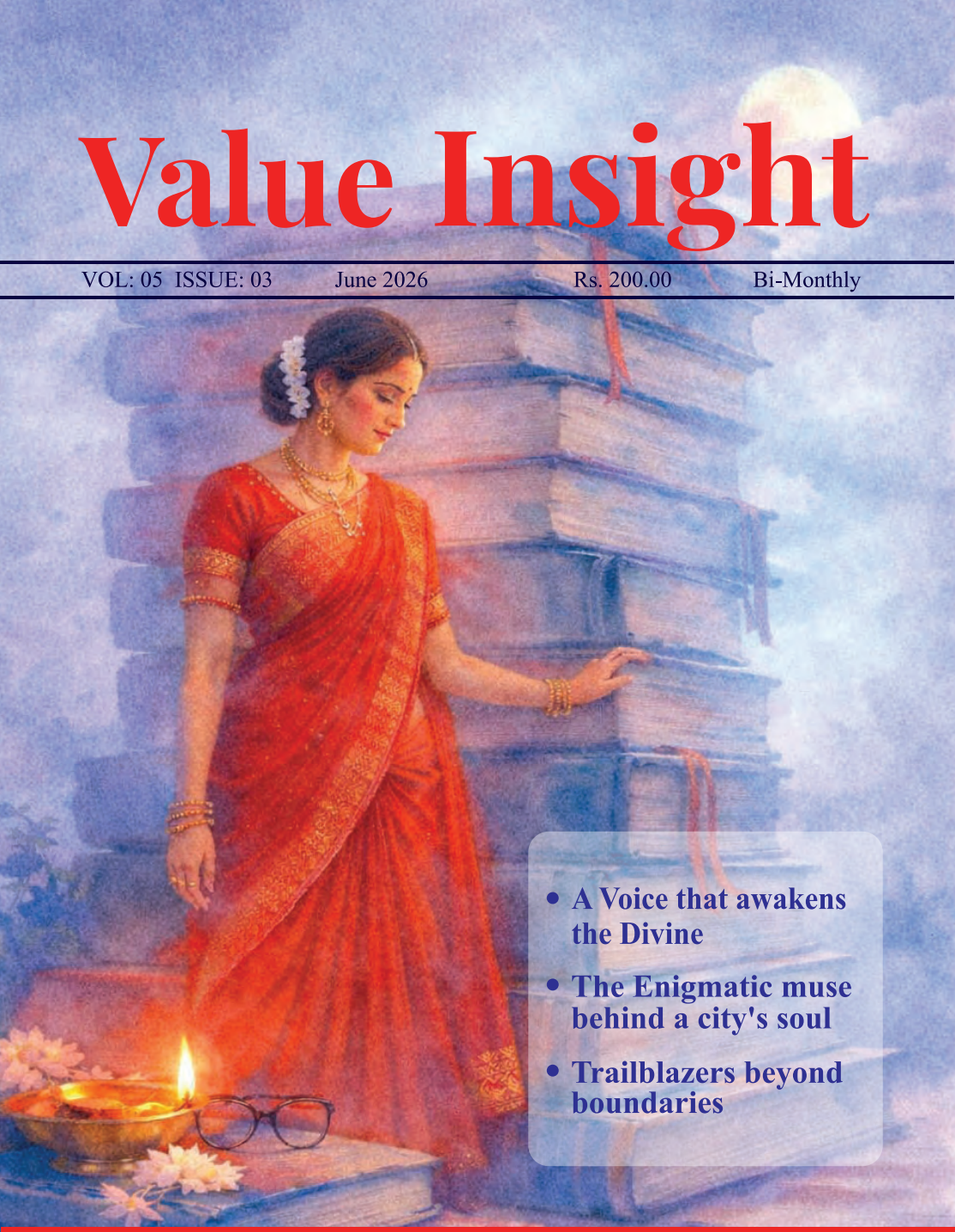
Value Insight

VOL: 05 ISSUE: 03

June 2026

Rs. 200.00

Bi-Monthly

- 
- A Voice that awakens the Divine
 - The Enigmatic muse behind a city's soul
 - Trailblazers beyond boundaries



A bi-monthly magazine of
Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV)
Website www.valuefoundation.in



VIJAY TANKS & VESSELS (P) LTD.

SINCE 1956

EPC CONTRACTORS FOR OIL & GAS STORAGE TERMINALS | FABRICATORS OF HEAVY PROCESS EQUIPMENT



Committed Partnership

Global Scale

Specialised & Focused



Storage Tanks

- Low Temperature & Cryogenic Storage Tanks
- Low Pressure Storage Tanks
- Atmospheric Storage Tanks
- High Pressure Spheres
- Mounded Storage Bullets
- Silos & Gas Holders



CHALLENGES

Process Equipment

- Heavy Wall Reactors
- Columns & Towers
- Pressure Vessels & Separators
- Shell & Tube Heat Exchangers
- Air Cooled Heat Exchangers
- CKD Tanks & Modular Skid Units

Offices | Vadodara | Mumbai | New Delhi | Chennai | Abu Dhabi
Tel: +91 9727734632 Email: ho@vijaytanks.com

Plants | Sankarda | Kandla | Jamnagar
URL: www.vijaytanks.com

Value Insight

Life President

Dr. E Sreedharan

Governing Body

President

Sri S Regunathan

Vice President

Shri Shiv Murari Sahai

General Secretary

Sri Ashwani Kumar

Treasurer

Sri Prem Arora

Joint Secretary

Dr. N Subramanian

Members

Dr. Devika Menon

Adv. Shri Rama Nath Jha

Editorial Board

Editor

Smt. Sudhamahi Regunathan

Consulting Editor

Smt. Shriti Nath

Members

Sri Ashwani Kumar

Sri Prem Arora

Magazine Design

Smt. Savita Sharma



A bi-monthly magazine of
Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV)
Website www.valuefoundation.in

Value Insight

Readers' views are welcome. For feedback on the journal, contribution and membership enquiries, please contact:

Secretariat: Chamber No.10, o/o CPM-5, DMRC, Airport Express Metro Station, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi 110021

Phone: 95996 97643 **Email:** frnv@valuefoundation.in, frnvindia@gmail.com


Website: <https://www.valuefoundation.in>

Note: Opinions expressed by authors/writers are not necessarily that of FRNV.

Find us on:

 @Valuesandus

 <https://x.com/ValuesandUs/status/1918194586985611438>

 facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010034894936 | **User Name:** @FRNV India

SUBSCRIPTION

Readers may subscribe to the print version of journal "Value Insight" for six (6) issues on payment of Rs.1,000/- (inclusive of postage).

Payment may be made online/RTGS
[Foundation for Restoration of National
Values, Savings Bank Account No.
76620100009436,

Bank of Baroda, Defence Colony Branch,
New Delhi,

IFS Code BARB0VJDEFE (5th digit is zero)] /

Cheque favouring FOUNDATION FOR
RESTORATION OF NATIONAL VALUES
and sent to Chamber No.10, o/o CPM-5,
DMRC, Airport Express Metro Station,
Dhaulta Kuan, New Delhi - 110021

After payment, postal address along with copy
of payment confirmation may be emailed to:

frnv@valuefoundation.in or
frnvindia@gmail.com

Bank QR Code is also available on our website
www.valuefoundation.in/contributions.



Content

- 04 **Subscription**
- 06 **Contributors**
- 08 **Swami Bhoomananda
Tirtha**
- 12 **Subhashitam**
- 13 **From the President's Desk**
- 14 **A Beginning**
- 16 **A Voice that Awakens
the Divine**
Prema Raghavan
- 19 **A Kingdom Waits...For an
8- Year- Old**
Haymantika Singh
- 23 **The Enigmatic Muse
Behind a City's Soul**
Moupia Basu
- 27 **Trailblazers Beyond
Boundaries**
Svetha Venkataram
- 33 **The Stage that Builds
Leaders**
Bijoya Sawian
- 36 **Wisdom Waves:
When Wealth Pales**
- 39 **Swar-Mitra: A Journey to
Fearlessness**
- 41 **Book Review**
Sudhamahi Regunathan
- 45 **Swami Vivekananda**
S. Regunathan
- 47 **Children's Corner**
- Tales by the River
Dhriti Baruah
 - What does silence mean
Gayatri Diggi
- 51 **Leaving a Thought**
- 52 **FRNV News and Events**

CONTRIBUTORS



Prema Raghavan is a writer, teacher, counsellor. She did her B.Ed at SNDT, MSW at Nirmala Niketan and studied Methodology at TISS and Nature Cure under Lakshman Sarma which she has been practicing for the last 4 decades using herbal remedies. She also learnt yoga at the Bihar School of Yoga and has authored 2 books, 'Living in Rhythm with Nature' and 'A journey with a Special Traveler'.



Haymantika Singh is a passionate exponent of Indian classical dance forms and is trained in the field of Kathak and Manipuri dance. She has taken part in various dance dramas based on Rabindra sangeet and Nazrul sangeet. She also did an advanced course in Kathak at Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra Delhi. Apart from the arts she was also worked as Municipal Corporator in Vadodara and was actively involved in ground level work striving to improve the lot of people living in *bastis*.



Moupia Basu grew up in the Delhi of the '70s and '80s and studied English Literature at Delhi University before stepping into a long, rich career in journalism. Over the last three decades, she's written on everything from business and education to social issues, travel and culture. She's the author of Khoka (NBT), The Queen's Last Salute and Anarkali and Salim: A Retelling of Mughal-e-Azam (Juggernaut), and her most recent book Bhagmati: Why Hyderabad's Lost Queen is the Soul of the City (Westland) came out in November 2024. She now lives in Pune.



Svetha Venkataram is a yoga instructor based in Chennai. She enjoys travelling, swimming and long walks on the beach.



Bijoya Sawian is a writer, translator and an educator. Her literary works of the indigenous culture of the Khasis of Meghalaya which she translated from Khasi into English have been published by Vivekananda Institute of Culture Guwahati and Ri Khasi Press Shillong. Bijoya Sawian's works of fiction include the highly acclaimed, Shadow Men & Two Stories published by Speaking Tiger Books. It was short listed for the prestigious Tagore Literary Prize 2020. Sawian is also a regular contributor to various literary journals, magazines and newspapers. Sawian is the Chairperson of the Annfield Senior Secondary School in Vikasnagar, Dehradun.



Dhriti Baruah is Founder and Principal of a primary school, Riverdale, in Nagaon, Assam. She scripts and choreographs stage performances in her school. She is also an artist and frequently writes stories for children drawn mainly from folk tales.



Gayatri K. Diggi is a keen writer of children's stories and an artist specializing in nature and miniature paintings.



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
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

"Yoga-buddhi leads to Inner Equilibrium"

Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha



Dear and Blessed Souls

Harih Om Tat Sat !

In Bhagavad Gita verse 2.39 Krishna inaugurates his yoga exposition. His words mark a very clear transition from Sāṅkhya-yoga to buddhi-yoga, where He is going to highlight the performance of activities and interactions.

Psycho-intellectual effects of buddhi-yoga

In this buddhi-yoga, there is no craze for or adherence to any exclusive meditational absorption. The whole emphasis is how to deal with activities and interactions wholesomely and well. Their psycho-intellectual effects are every time closely observed and sublimated. The process **instantly results in mind's placidity and intelligence's stability**. Krishna assures that by pursuing this buddhi-yoga, one breaks through all

bondage caused by intense activities. The message is aptly applicable not only to Arjuna but all those who are engaged in one or the other pursuit.

Let us remember that Krishna's instruction was aimed at removing Arjuna's grief and fear evoked by the thought of sinfulness. He uses the words 'therefore, Arjuna fight' . In the verse concluding Sāṅkhya exposition also he gives the same exhortation. If the mind has to behave with equanimity, correspondingly the intelligence also has to be enriched equally with Knowledge. Both go together.

Note that in verses 2.25-30, Krishna repeatedly asserts that **grief is unfounded and Arjuna deserves not to grieve**. Just see how fondly and deftly Krishna relates all his instructions to Arjuna's submission,

namely “Krishna, redress my grief and fear.” Krishna's present assertion strengthens the earlier proclamations.

Twin-defects of worldly activities

Let us move to the next verse 2.40. Krishna explains, how the practice of yoga-buddhi becomes a full safeguard against the chronic defects as well as side-effects all normal activities and interactions are likely to face. He calls the defects as abhikrama-nāśa, loss of effort, and pratyavāya, adverse result. Every kind of performance is subject to these twin-defects.

What are they? Loss of effort often takes place in agriculture, either due to drought or floods or even pests. A very good crop may get destroyed within a few hours or days. All the efforts in nurturing the harvest, can by one stroke crash into ashes. Imagine the impact on the mind of the farmer, agriculturist. Likewise, are instances of miscarriage, another illustration for loss of effort.

As for pratyavāya, adverse result, it is characteristic of treatment of diseases. In the attempt to cure the disease, unexpectedly adverse result occurs. Sometimes, the name of the medicine uttered by the physician may be misheard by the attending

nurse, and she may give the wrong medicine.

Yoga-buddhi is free from adverse effects

In practising activities with yoga-buddhi, karmayoga, both these defects are fully safeguarded from. Krishna further explains: “Even a small measure of karma-yoga practice **takes away all fear from the mind**, making the practitioner confident, clear-sighted and steadfast in whatever he does. The mind becomes greatly free and broad. This prepares the yogic student to take up even hazardous tasks, and perform them admirably well.

The fear element is altogether dissolved and the seeker begins to feel the taste of freedom while remaining active and involved. **His ability to perform gets enhanced considerably**. The key for all performance is in the mind. Mind becomes healthy and performance becomes efficient and glorious. The focus in karmayoga is the mind, and the effort consists in instilling into the performer yoga-buddhi. That is why **it is called buddhi-yoga, not karma-yoga**.

Resoluteness of intelligence

In the next verse, 2.41, Krishna

emphasizes that in this yoga, the only factor to count is the resoluteness of intelligence. Intelligence should remain firm and stable in its clarity and comprehension. Those who lack such resoluteness will have multibranching motives, leading them nowhere at all. Multiple thoughts, various distractions and fascinations will assail them, **pulling their mind in scattered directions**. To avoid such a catastrophe, the studious thinkers and seekers should reflect upon what Krishna says about the world, human personality and interaction between the two. The more and more one thinks about these, the deeper and deeper will his understanding grow. Disturbing attractions and repulsions will be maturated and will virtually fall from the mind effortlessly.

The influence intelligence sheds in the mind is marvellous, subtle and deep. **Mind can be acted upon by intelligence alone**. That is why Krishna highlights buddhi, intelligence, and says it has to **become clear, stable and resolute**. In fact, what Krishna does is to speak to Arjuna. By that he is instilling knowledge. It is a subtle transfusion from Krishna's buddhi to Arjuna's mind, the enlightened intelligence of one eradicating delusion in the other.

Overwhelm – not be overpowered by – worldly objects

Understanding well that the entire creation is full of pairs of opposites, dvandvas, Krishna says, first of all, be indifferent to them totally (nir-dvandvah). Learn to dwell in sattva-guṇa alone. Sattva bestows light, happiness and knowledge. **Rejoice in right knowledge**. Pursue the path of wisdom. Let your mind be given to wisdom pursuit and **overwhelm** the entire display of creation – be not **overpowered** by it! In place of yielding to attractions and repulsions towards sensory objects, reflect upon their evanescence and fleetingness and cultivate indifference and cripple the objects effectively.

Knowledge can work wonders. Suppose you are about to sip milk from a cup. If suddenly someone, well known to you, approaches and warns you that it has poison in it, will you not simply keep the cup away? So too keep away from poisonous sense-objects also. The whole process works in the mind, **guided by intelligence**. In the same way, the mind can also keep away from the allurements, the sense objects repeatedly display.

Let viveka be your guide

As the objects surround you, so too

spiritual **discrimination should permeate your mind and intelligence.** Your inner mind can act well on external gross objects. As you avoid walking on a slippery path, you should also avoid coursing through the path of allurements made by sensory objects.

The mind is Subjective and hence **it is far superior to gross objects** surrounding it. Remember: your body and senses are inert, equally so are the pañca-bhūtas constituting creation. Therefore, do not be weak and deluded. Instead be discriminative and wise to pursue the path of buddhi. Be a sattvasthā,

established in sattva-guṇa, dwelling in knowledge, basking in its brilliance and delightfulness.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru!

Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Narayanashrama Tapovanam

Venginissery, Paralam,

Thrissur

Kerala 680563

Phone: +91 487 2278302

E-Mail:

ashram@bhoomananda.org

Website: www.bhoomananda.org



SUBHASHITAM

मनुः मणिकर्णिका ख्याता, लक्ष्मीबाई इति सा उदिता ।
वीराङ्गना झाँसीवाली, स्वातंत्र्यसंग्रामे रक्षिता ॥
नारीशक्तिः सा ज्वलन्ती, अङ्गलानां प्रणाशिनी ।
राष्ट्रभक्तिः सा प्रदीप्ता, भारतीय इतिहासे स्मृता ॥

Born as Manu, also known as Manikarnika, she later became renowned as Lakshmbai. The fearless warrior queen of Jhansi, she stood guard over the nation during the struggle for freedom. A blazing symbol of women's strength, she fiercely challenged British rule. Her radiant patriotism remains etched forever in the annals of Indian history.

जन्म पर नाम था मनु, जिन्हें मणिकर्णिका भी कहा जाता था, वे आगे चलकर रानी लक्ष्मीबाई के नाम से प्रसिद्ध हुईं। झाँसी की निडर योद्धा रानी के रूप में उन्होंने स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के दौरान राष्ट्र की रक्षा की। नारी शक्ति की प्रज्वलित प्रतीक बनकर उन्होंने अंग्रेजों के शासन को हड़ता से चुनौती दी। उनका उज्वल देशप्रेम भारतीय इतिहास के पन्नों में सदा के लिए अंकित है।

From the President's Desk



The recent elections have thrown up some very good and positive dimensions as well as some negative ones.

The positive first: a large percentage has participated and voted, well entrenched parties and ideologies have been thrown out. It shows that the voters have a clear mind and they know what they want.

In Tamil Nadu a first-timer has come to power and in West Bengal a third timer has been removed. It is a very gratifying point that in Tamil Nadu that more than 200 candidates across the parties are from poor families and have not spent much for their elections, have not paid for their votes. In West Bengal an ordinary housemaid has been elected.

The negative aspect is that religion, caste and community still play a major role and violence has been resorted to where one party finds itself at a disadvantage, thus preventing voters to cast their votes freely. Threat, money power and violence have been used for achieving their political end even though they have not met with overwhelming success.

It was very clear that people want change, they expect clean leaders to occupy elected positions and hope that good governance will come from them. We have yet to wait and see if these changes will fulfill their expectations.

FRNV is constantly requesting people to participate and join in in bringing about the expected changes. Our social network messages are repeatedly emphasizing these aspects. An example of a few of our messages have been carried in this issue. However, the response so far from the people is not what we expect. It is requested that those who read the messages circulate it in their groups so that more people can be enrolled in bringing about this desired change.

S. Regunathan
President (FRNV)

A Beginning

When goodness stands in the feminine form

There is a story of a lady of great penance, a yogini, called Shandili. She lived alone on a hill far away from the crowds. Words begged to describe her; her wisdom, her intellect, her dignity, her beauty, her aura, her radiance...her. One evening when the light was soft and the breeze gentle, when the day was singing itself to sleep and the night was glittering with all its stars ready to come out in all finery, Shandili had some guests. A sage called Galava riding on the great eagle, Garuda. She was hospitable to them and made them feel welcome. She served them hot and wholesome food before they went to lie down in the open fields to sleep off for the night.

The next morning when Garuda awoke, he found his wings had been clipped. Deformation led to depression and sage Galava looked at him, nothing but a lump of flesh, with concern. "Did you nurse any bad thoughts about this lady who served us last evening?" asked the sage of the hapless eagle. "Oh no," replied Garuda. "I just thought her place should be in the heavens with the Gods, with Siva, Vishnu and Brahma."

That was a 'bad' thought for even though Garuda thought so in praise for her, Shandili told Garuda, "Whatever I am and what I have achieved is owing to my own conduct, which has in it no blemish. It is that which has brought me the power of goodness....Don't denigrate me ever again, Indeed, don't ever insult a woman."

The denigration lay in the feeble thought that she merited the company of the Gods. But she told him that she neither derived her identity from a man nor draws her inner energies from any. She is She. Her goodness stands alone and is a measure by itself.

The search is for the spirit of Shandili. This spirit bears no relation to the level of education or the career graph of a woman. It is a representation of her belief in herself. Take another story, of Jabala, a lady who was travelling so much in her youth that when her son, Satyakama, asked her who his father was she said, "Suffice it is to say, you are my son," Satyakama desirous of furthering his learning had gone to the teacher's house where he was told that he could enter only if he declared his father's name. He did not know

his father's name. When Satyakama announced himself as the son of Jabala, the teacher could not but bow to the spirit of Jabala and let him in.

Historically, brave and courageous women were many, like the Ahalyabais, such as Rani Ahilyabai from Jhansi and later Ahilyabai Holkar queen of the Maratha ruled Malwa kingdom, carrying the spirit of courage and conviction. What would you say about M.S Subbulakshmi whose voice still echoes in our prayers? It is difficult to peer into their heads and find out what they were thinking and how they became one with the universal mind.

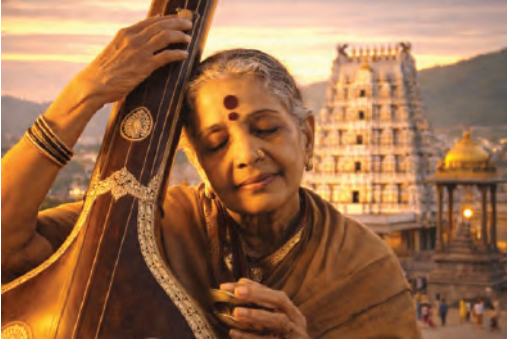
If one looks through stories of ancient India one finds women who have played prominent roles in state and stage craft every now and then. When a woman came into public space and wielded influence, if she was not the queen, she was generally a courtesan. Ancient Indian texts are full of stories about them. Highly

skilled and talented, adept in the 64 arts, these women wielded a lot of power and occupied an important position in society. These women were mistresses of prominent men. If the physicality of being a woman overshadowed all descriptions about them, one of the reasons for it could lie in the masculinity of the reporter and a second more unfortunate reason seeming to be that the role of a woman is easiest (not best) seen as an object of desire. To encompass her personality - and one could say power - (both reproductive as well as identity) in a box that would be least dangerous to the power dynamic of an object. An interesting article about Bhagmati stands as an example to this.

This issue is dedicated to the many women who have changed this world with their courage and sheer largeness of vision. Surely our mothers and grandmothers will rank first in our minds...



The Voice that Awakens the Divine



Prema Raghavan writes about M.S. Subbulakshmi, the nightingale of Carnatic music whose life is a testament to the transformative power of music and dedication.

In the sacred hills of Tirupati Temple as the temple doors open and the first light touches the sanctum, the serene yet powerful voice of M.S. Subbulakshmi echoes through the temple complex with the timeless strains of *Suprabhatam* – a melodious invocation that greets the divine at dawn to awaken the deity and begin the day's worship.

Her rendition is a daily awakening for Lord Venkateswara and millions of devotees. Few artists in history have achieved such immortality – to be heard every day in a living temple tradition.

Madurai Shanmukhavadivu Subbulakshmi was a trailblazing Indian Carnatic singer who left an indelible mark on the country's musical landscape. Born on

September 16, 1916, in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, into a family rooted in the devadasi tradition. The devadasi community, historically associated with temple arts, also carried social stigmas. Subbulakshmi inherited not only a rich musical lineage but also faced the unspoken expectations placed upon women of her milieu. Yet, she transcended those societal boundaries. Her marriage to Sadasivam, a respected widower, marked a turning point. It reshaped her life. She was introduced to a broader world beyond her community. Sadasivam supported her career and helped position her on national and international stages while ensuring her art retained its devotional purity.

She rose swiftly in the world of

Carnatic music, a field then dominated by male performers. Her fame crossed oceans when she performed at the United Nations in 1966. Her performance introduced global audiences to the depth and beauty of Indian classical music. Her voice was a gift to the nation, earning her the prestigious Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor, in 1998. She was the first musician to receive India's highest civilian honor

Early Life and Musical Journey

Subbulakshmi's musical journey



began at a tender age, trained by her mother, Shanmukhavadiivu Ammal, a talented veena player. She gave her first public performance at the Rockfort Temple in Tiruchirappalli at just 11 years old, mesmerizing the audience with her soulful voice. Her breakthrough came in 1929 when

she performed at the Madras Music Academy, establishing herself as a leading Carnatic vocalist.

Breaking Barriers and Achieving Greatness

Subbulakshmi shattered glass ceilings throughout her career. She was the first woman to receive the Sangeetha Kalanidhi title (1968) and the first Indian musician to perform at the United Nations General Assembly (1966). Her iconic renditions of kritis by Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Syama Sastri earned her national recognition.

Entry into Cinema and Success with Meera

Subbulakshmi's entry into cinema was a significant milestone. She made her film debut in



"Sevasadana" (1938) and went on to star in several successful films, including "Meera" (1945), which became a huge hit.

Her portrayal of the saint-poet Meera

was widely acclaimed, and the film's success led to its Hindi dubbing, bringing her artistry to a wider audience.

Awards and Accolades

Subbulakshmi's numerous awards include:

- * Bharat Ratna (1998)
- * Ramon Magsaysay Award (1974)
- * Padma Bhushan (1954)
- * Padma Vibhushan (1975)
- * Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1956)

Legacy and Impact

Subbulakshmi's music transcended borders, captivating audiences worldwide. She performed at prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall, Royal Albert Hall, and the Edinburgh Festival, showcasing India's rich cultural heritage. Her

devotion to music and philanthropy inspired generations, earning her the title "Nightingale of India".

Philanthropy and Social Impact

Subbulakshmi used her music for social good, donating concert earnings to charitable causes, including education, healthcare, and women's welfare. Her commitment to social reform and national integration earned her the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration (1990).

In 2004, the Madras Music Academy released a souvenir with articles to honour M.S. Subbulakshmi, further cementing her legacy in the annals of Indian music.

In an age of fleeting fame, Subbulakshmi endures. Not because of nostalgia, but because her music answers something timeless in the human spirit.





A Kingdom Waited... for an 8-Year-Old!

Haymantika Singh recounts the story of Ahilya Bai, the girl who was meant to be queen.

The kingdom was steeped in sorrow as she walked towards the funeral pyre of her husband. The practice of sati was prevalent in those times and the princess of Malwa, Ahilyabai Holkar was going to immolate herself in her husband, Khanderao Holkar's pyre. He had lost his life in battle.

When destiny called...

As she turned after looking back to bid farewell to her son and daughter, she found her father-in-law Malhar Rao Holkar, the king of Malwa blocking her way. "You are my son from today," he declared. And so Ahilyabai Holkar lived to be more than a son. She brought fame to the Maratha dynasty.

When a little girl caught the eye of fate...

Somewhere in the early 1730s,

Malhar Rao Holkar, was travelling to Pune one morning when he stopped at a village named Chondi in present-day Maharashtra. As Holkar looked around the village he was impressed by an eight-year old child. His sharp sense of perception noticed her piety and strong strength of character. At that moment he decided this girl was the only hope he had to reform his spoilt wayward son, Khanderao



Holkar. He did not bother about the fact that the child whose name was Ahilyabai was not born into royalty. Her father, Mankoji Shinde, was a simple village headman, who had already taught her archery, horse

riding along with instilling deep faith in the divine in her.

Chosen by destiny... A child, a vision, a queen in the making...

Ahilyabai-Khanderao's marriage took place in 1733. Instead of reforming, Khanderao was so overawed by the personality of his little wife, that he was scared of her. He did not change. They had two children Malerao and Muktabai. Malerao took after his father. Ahilyabai was saddened by the behavior of her husband and son. Meanwhile Malhar Rao Holkar had established control over the Malwa region. That was when tragedy struck and Khanderao was killed in the battle of Khumberi. Malhar Rao introduced Ahilyabai to politics and she gained a place as an important person in the Holkar dynasty even during Malhar Rao's lifetime. She



imbibed the lessons of diplomacy and warfare received from her father-in-law, but within four years he died. The whole kingdom was Ahilyabai's to take care of and protect. Despite resistance from sections of the court, she took charge as the ruler of the Holkar dynasty, with her capital at Indore.

Destined for greatness...

Her reign, which lasted from 1767 to 1795, is often remembered as a golden period of peace, prosperity, and justice. Ahilyabai was deeply committed to the welfare of her people. She held open courts where even the poorest subjects could present their grievances directly to her. Her judgments were known to be fair, guided by both reason and compassion. She believed that a ruler's duty was not merely to govern, but to serve.

Economically, Ahilyabai promoted trade and agriculture. She ensured that roads were safe for merchants and encouraged artisans and craftsmen to settle in her kingdom. As a result, Indore flourished as a center of commerce and culture. Unlike many rulers of her time who imposed heavy taxes, she maintained a balanced system that did not burden her subjects.

Ahilyabai Holkar is perhaps most widely remembered for her contributions to religious and cultural life in India. A devout Hindu,

she undertook the restoration and construction of numerous temples, ghats, and dharamshalas across the country. Among her most notable works is the reconstruction of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, one of the most sacred sites in Hinduism. She also contributed to the development of pilgrimage centers such as Somnath Temple and Dwarkadhish Temple, ensuring that devotees from across India had access to well-maintained places of worship.

Her Legacy

Her works were not limited to religious monuments. She built wells, tanks, rest houses, and roads that benefited travelers and local communities alike. What is remarkable is that her efforts extended far beyond her own kingdom—she saw herself as a guardian of dharma across India. By Rakeshnandi1990.

She maintained a strong army and successfully protected her kingdom from external threats. Yet, she preferred diplomacy and stability



over unnecessary warfare. Her reign was largely peaceful, allowing her to focus on development and public welfare.



Ahilyabai Holkar passed away in 1795, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire generations. She is often remembered as a philosopher-queen - someone who ruled not for personal glory, but for the greater good of her people. Her life challenges many assumptions about leadership, showing that empathy and strength can go hand in hand.

Epilogue

Few stories have this kind of continuity. Ahilyabai Holkar died in 1795. Her legacy, her grandeur lived for some years and slowly faded into the trivialities of day-day survival, foreign invasions and rule. By the year 1966, it had almost all but died. When the country gained freedom, the focus shifted from small scale handloom and handicrafts to large scale developments. Maheswar fell into slumber while many women were left without any means.

When Ahilyabai Holkar died, it was

her father-in-law's adopted son, Tukoji Rao Holkar, who ruled for a short time and then his son came to power. In that lineage came a young man called Richard Holkar who married an American, Sally Holkar, who turned out to be a devoted successor to the philosopher queen Ahilyabai. Born in the United States and educated at Stanford, Sally became part of the Holkar lineage through her marriage to Richard Holkar.

In the 1970s, the Maheshwari handloom tradition - originally established by Ahilyabai to provide livelihoods for her people - was on the verge of extinction. Power looms and changing tastes had left local weavers destitute. Recognizing that the spirit of her ancestor-in-law lay in social welfare through craft, Sally co-founded the **Rehwa Society** in 1978. Operating out of the historic Ahilya Fort, she provided weavers with raw materials, housing, and a platform to sell their intricate gossamer-thin sarees.

Sally's contribution, however, went beyond mere preservation. She understood that for the craft to survive, it had to evolve. Through her **Women Weave Charitable Trust** and **The Handloom School**, she modernized the sector. She introduced contemporary colour palettes and designs while ensuring that the artisans - specifically marginalized women, widows, and single mothers - remained the primary beneficiaries. By bridging the gap between rural looms and high-fashion runways, she transformed "Maheshwari" into a global luxury brand.

In 2025, her five decades of service were formally recognized with the **Padma Shri**, India's fourth-highest civilian honour. Sally Holkar did not just inherit a name; she inherited a mission. By empowering over 5,000 artisans and ensuring the financial independence of women, she has ensured that Ahilyabai Holkar's 300-year-old vision of a self-sustaining, dignified community remains a vibrant reality in modern India.

Picture Credits:

1. Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar of Malwa. Source: Wikimedia
2. Ahilyabai Holkar holding a diplomatic meeting between a nobleman and subject ruler. Chromolithograph. Iconographic Collections <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>
3. Ahilyabai Temple, Maheshwar By Arian Zwegers from Brussels, Belgium - CC BY 2.0 source: <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maheshwar>
4. Cenotaph of Rani Ahilya Bai Holkar. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International .Author: Eskay 001 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Bhagmati

The Enigmatic Muse Behind a City's Soul

Moupia Basu writes about one of history's most intriguing and debated personalities – Bhagmati, the beloved of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah.

Wrapped in romance, folklore and mystery, her story continues to blur the line between legend and history.



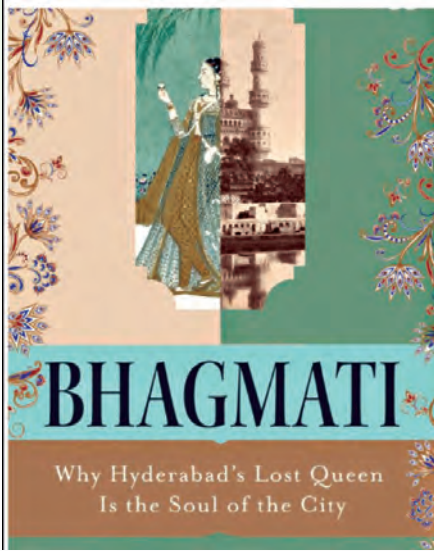
Bhagmati – the queen who was and yet wasn't, a woman married to a powerful king but who finds mention in neither her husband's literary works, nor his dynasty's records. A woman of humble origins who went on to become the only wife and queen of a medieval Muslim Sultan and the woman for whom her husband created a new dazzling city that exists even today.

B h a g m a t i ' s h u s b a n d w a s Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah, the fifth Sultan of the powerful Qutb Shahi dynasty, and a popular and much-loved king. Born of a Muslim father and a Hindu mother, he was to the Qutb Shahi lineage what Akbar was to the Mughal dynasty, and like his northern counterpart, having ascended the throne around the same age, took the empire to its zenith. Mohammad Quli consolidated the

glorious Qutb Shahi empire in the Deccan while at the same time, created literary history by being the first Urdu poet to have his anthology of 1,800 verses published.

In the city of Hyderabad, the city he built for the sake of love as is believed, he is remembered with much affection and respect as the Sultan who epitomised passion both in his poetry and in real life. His love for the Hindu courtesan Bhagmati is stuff of popular folklore and has been the subject of much study. If legend is to be believed, it is this famed love story that led to the foundation of the city of Bhagyanagar, later renamed Hyderabad after Bhagmati took on the title of Hyder Mahal. But, the love story is steeped in controversy that has provided adequate fodder for generations of historians who continue to debate over the existence of Bhagmati and Hyderabad's origin.

For four hundred years historians are still trying to figure out if Bhagmati at all existed or was she just a



figment of a fanciful and romantic imagination.

My book titled *Bhagmati – Why Hyderabad's Lost Queen is the Soul of the City* – explores the subject of Bhagmati's existence and presents this fabled love story with its different versions, and aims to find out who Bhagmati was - a celebrated courtesan, a devoted devadasi, a queen, a Hindu or a Muslim? And, why despite several contemporary historians specifically mentioning her in their accounts, there is no record of her in the official Qutb Shahi chronicle. But, most importantly, what imprints has this

celebrated love story left behind in the minds and hearts of successive generations of the people of Telengana?

For me, who has lived in Hyderabad for many years, the city is, and will forever be seen as an ode to love - the love that its king Sultan Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah shared with his queen Bhagmati, a love that is cherished, nurtured and kept alive in the hearts of its people and in the lanes and bazaars of this pulsating city even today. There have been several rulers who have left behind epitaphs of their passionate love stories. Among these, by far the most well-known is, of course, the Taj Mahal built by the

Mughal emperor Shah Jahan for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal.

But, Mohammad Quli took the emotion to a different level altogether. Given his penchant for extravagance, he built an entire city called Bhagyanagar for his beloved Bhagmati. The chronological name of the city was 'Farkhunda Buniyad', where the Persian 'farkhunda' connects to the Sanskrit bhāgya that means fortune.

An estimated two crore was spent to build this city with 14,000 shops and 12,000 mohallas, ten palaces and four roads leading in four different directions. And, this city of fortune he dedicated to his lady love

Bhagmati.

Would any ruler do so much for a woman – a woman whose religion, profession and social status were far removed from the Muslim ruler's royal lineage? But, ignoring all opposition, he made her his queen and conferred upon her the title Haider Mahal.

Yet, there is no substantial evidence,



nor any mention of Bhagmati or Bhagyanagar in the Qutb Shahi chronicles. The 16th century Persian travel writer and historian Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Astarabadi, better known as Firishta, wrote about Bhagmati in his book *History of the Deccan*: “This prince, ascended the throne of Golconda... he founded a city at about eight miles distance, which he called Bhaugnuggur, after his mistress Bhaug, a celebrated courtesan; but being afterwards ashamed of his amour, he changed it to Hyderabad.” Poet-scholar Faizi, who was the

Mughal envoy to the Deccan, mentioned Bhagmati in his letter to Akbar, albeit condescendingly. But then, Faizi was a Mughal and the Mughals were Sunnis while the Qutb Shahi rulers were Shias, hence a sense of superiority and snobbery can be expected. He writes, “Ahmad Quli is steeped in Shiism, and has built a city Bhagnagar by name, after Bhagmati, the old prostitute (fahisha-i kuhna) who has been his mistress for a long time.”

A love story that every Hyderabadí narrates proudly and passionately. A love story that lives on in the lanes and by lanes of Mohammad Quli's Hyderabad and four hundred years later no one thinks of being a Muslim or a Hindu. Could the Sultan bear to see his beloved's name thus erased?

Perhaps. He was, after all, a king and a wise one at that who was out to appease everyone, from the Mughals to the Persians. So, was it a political decision considering that Bhagyanagar, named after Bhagmati was no longer politically convenient especially after Mir Mumin secured an embassy from the Shah of Iran? Coins, firmans and official proclamations ignored her totally. She just disappeared into oblivion. But, the local citizens of the time continued to call the city Bhagyanagar. Why was there no official denial of it?

Mohammad Quli may have prevented this for two reasons. He did not want to alienate the local subjects and lose their affection. He, or his ministers could not remove her from the hearts of his people. And, he hoped that his subjects would offer the concession of the use of the new name for official purposes.

Second, the Sultan could not remove her from his own heart either. Perhaps, he wanted to be faithful to the memory of his first love. So, for a long time, both names continued to be used. According to some sources, it was only after his wife Hyder Mahal died was the city's name officially changed to Hyderabad. But, the same question pops up once again: Was Bhagmati Hyder Mahal?

Abdul Baqi Nihawandi, a contemporary Mughal writer, in fact spoke of two different cities existing as Bhagnagar and Hyderabad. Yet another explanation offered was by Tavernier who called it Baugnager or the city of gardens. For the orthodox Muslim nobility this would be any day preferable - for their capital city to be named after 'bagh' or gardens -

Quli's Hyderabad had some splendid gardens - rather than to live with the knowledge that their beloved capital was named after a Hindu courtesan.

But then, why did Mohammad Quli's subjects, his people, both Hindu and Muslim, chose to cherish and remember her and honour her memory and continued calling it Bhagyanagar or the city of fortune as named after her. When a story is believed by such a large number of people for four centuries, as writer and historian, Narender Luther points out in his book *Prince, Poet, Lover, Builder - Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the Founder of Hyderabad*, it is likely to be true. Besides, as Luther says, "It is romantic and fits in with the temperament of the prince and is in tune with the spirit of the time."

So, where does history end and legend begin? Why has a story so celebrated been wiped out of history, yet continues to be an integral part of Hyderabad's existence?



Trailblazers Beyond Boundaries

Svetha Venkataram writes about 3 Indian women who have quietly yet powerfully reshaped the frontiers of science.

A 19th century scientist



Dr. Mary Poonen Lukose was born on 2 August 1886 in the princely state of Travancore, which is in today's Kerala. Her father, Dr T.E. Poonen was the Royal Physician of Travancore. The young Mary often watched her father work and listened

carefully when he spoke about helping patients.

These early experiences planted a dream in her for the future. She wanted to become a doctor and help people, just like her father did.

At school, she was a smart student who often topped her class. However, when it was time to go to college, she was told by the administration of Maharajas College that she could not join any of their science courses because she was a girl. At that time, many people believed girls should not or could not study science. Though she was disappointed, she attended college to study history. Meanwhile, her father continued to encourage her to follow her dreams and supported her to apply for medicine courses in London. She was successful in her application and set sail to pursue her dreams.

In London the young Mary was often the only female student in her MBBS classes. She didn't let that bother her and worked consistently towards earning her degree. From London,

she moved to Dublin and did further studies to become a gynaecologist and obstetrician.

For a long time, most medical knowledge was based on studying men's bodies, and people did not pay enough attention to the special health needs of women. This meant many women did not get the right care. But doctors such as Dr. Mary Poonen Lukose made sure they helped many mothers and babies stay safe and well. Dr. Mary Poonen got further qualified as a paediatrician at the famous Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, which is well-known for treating rare diseases occurring in children.

In 1916, news of her father's failing health reached her. She immediately boarded a ship to return to Travancore but sadly, he passed away before she could reach him. She decided to remain in Travancore, ready to use her knowledge to help the people of her home state. She joined the Women and Children's Hospital and became known as the kingdom's first woman physician.

Her job at the hospital was not always easy. Some people did not want her to work in positions normally held by Europeans, and others wondered whether a woman could manage such an important

role. But Dr. Mary Poonen Lukose proved them wrong. She became the superintendent of the hospital, and worked tirelessly to improve the health of women and children. Back in those days, medical tools and equipment were not very advanced. Surgeries often had to be done by the light of simple lamps instead of modern surgical lights. But Dr Mary Poonen Lukose's skill and calmness helped her carry out many operations safely. Many mothers and babies who were in near-death situations had their lives saved by her steady hands, presence of mind and deep knowledge of her subject.

Her influence was not limited to hospitals. In 1922, Dr Mary Poonen Lukose became the first woman legislator in Travancore, making her the first woman legislator in India. She used this position wisely and convinced her fellow lawmakers of the importance of introducing vaccines. At that time, many people were afraid of vaccines because they did not understand how they worked. She used facts, evidence, and examples to show the legislators in Travancore's parliament why vaccinations were necessary to keep the population safe from dangerous diseases. It was because of her

efforts that Travancore expanded vaccination programs, which later became one of the reasons present day Kerala grew into one of India's healthiest states.

Dr. Mary Poonen Lukose continued to rise in her career. In 1924 she was appointed Durbar Physician, the head of Travancore's medical services, and in 1938 she became the Surgeon General of the state. This made her the first woman Surgeon General in India and possibly the first woman in the whole world to hold that position. She was responsible for 32 government hospitals, 40 dispensaries, and 20 private institutions. She travelled widely to inspect hospitals, visit schoolchildren, and teach communities about staying healthy.

In 1975, one year before she died, the Indian government honoured her with the Padma Shri, one of the country's highest civilian awards.

Scientists of Today

India's Polar Woman

At the age of 55, Mangala Mani was the first Indian woman to be part of the Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica, where temperatures are known to drop to below -40°C . Many people doubted whether a woman of her age could survive in such harsh



conditions. But she was not someone who would back down from a challenge and went ahead and submitted her application to be included in the team. After the applications came the selection process. It was incredibly tough. The scientists who had applied to be part of this prestigious mission had to undergo rigorous physical and mental training – and only those who were able successfully complete all the requirements would make it to the team.

To be able to survive under extreme cold and difficult weather conditions, Mangala Mani travelled to Auli, a high-altitude region in Uttarakhand, and trained at altitudes of up to 9,000 feet. The training included carrying heavy backpacks and building physical stamina. But the real test came when she was training at Badrinath, where the icy

weather left many scientists unable to continue. But Mangala Mani never gave up. She displayed strength, resilience, and discipline as she trained alongside younger colleagues, inspiring many of them with her commitment.

As a child, Mangala Mani was fascinated by space. She would often read about NASA's space missions. Her curiosity and interest in science grew with each passing day. She decided that she wanted to be a part of the world of science and technology. She pursued a Diploma for Technicians-Radio Apparatus (MDT-RA) in college, a stepping stone that eventually led her to apply for a job at ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation).

She was inspired by the former Indian President Late Dr. Abdul Kalam. One of the most important lessons she learned from observing Dr. Kalam was how to deal with failures. Instead of blaming anyone or getting upset, he would focus on analysing what went wrong and learning from it. She followed his example, which helped her face many challenges in her career with a positive attitude – and proved especially useful when so many people doubted whether a 55 year old woman could be physically strong

enough to live in Antarctica and mentally strong enough to leave her children and family behind in India, without seeing them for more than a year.

Once in Antarctica, Mangala Mani made sure that she threw herself into taking on all the challenges of working in a remote and isolated environment. The task ahead of her was one of furthering India's scientific goals. So in this case it wasn't about her individual glory of being India's first woman to be sent as part of a research expedition to Antarctica – but rather, she emphasized the importance of teamwork. In such harsh, difficult and extreme conditions it is essential to trust your teammates and collaborate with them towards achieving India's scientific progress. Her ability to work with others made her stand out in the group.

Mangala Mani's story is an inspiration for people everywhere. She showed that no dream is too big, no challenge is too tough, and no person is too old to achieve great things.

Reaching for the Stars

Have you ever looked up at the bright Sun and wondered what it's made of? Did you know that while the Sun



nurtures life on earth, its extreme heat can damage satellites in space? Nigar Shaji, a brilliant scientist from India, is helping the country understand and predict the Sun's behaviour. By understanding the Sun's patterns better, she is also helping India improve its satellites, making them sturdy enough to withstand the extreme radiation of the Sun.

She is the person who led a very important mission to study the Sun. It is India's very first solar space mission, called Aditya-L1.

Nigar Shaji was born in 1964 in a small town called Sengottai in Tamil Nadu. She went to a government school for girls and was always curious about the world around her. But she didn't just wonder. Instead she asked questions and wanted to find out how things worked.

Her father was one of her very first teachers. He loved to tell her stories about scientists, especially Marie Curie who in 1903 became the very first woman to win a Nobel Prize for her scientific research. Marie Curie's work led to present-day cancer treatments and Nigar was inspired to learn how science can help improve people's lives. She began paying close attention to science lessons in school and continued learning about the lives of different famous scientists from her father.

The other subject that Nigar really enjoyed was maths. Both her parents encouraged her to think about maths as something that needs to be approached with logical reasoning rather than memorization. Over time, her love for maths grew stronger. Her parents supported her love for learning, and that gave her the confidence to study engineering which was a subject that very few girls chose to study at the time. When Nigar joined college, there were only 20 girls in a class of 120 students! But that didn't stop her. She studied electronics and communication engineering, and later did her master's degree in electronics. All of this was during a time when people thought that girls couldn't do science as well as boys. But Nigar was

confident about her talents.

Right after she finished college in 1987, when Nigar was 23, she got selected to work at ISRO, the Indian Space Research Organisation. And that's where her journey to the stars began.

At ISRO, Nigar learned how to design spacecrafts and satellites, how to make sure all parts worked together, and how to test everything before launching it into space. She worked hard every day and slowly moved up to become one of ISRO's most respected scientists. The passion with which she studied maths, engineering and science helped her when she had to design satellites, which need careful planning using shapes, geometry, and physics. She also loved technology because it made science come to life, turning ideas into real machines that could travel through space.

In 2016, Nigar was a senior scientist at ISRO, in charge of her own team. She led them on their work on Aditya-L1. Their goal was that

Aditya-L1 would be India's very first solar observatory in outer space. On board this observatory would be seven different instruments that would study the Sun's radiations and gather data on solar flares, sun spots and explosions – all of which are powerful and have the ability to damage satellites, affect astronauts, and even disrupt phones and internet on Earth by interfering with the planet's magnetic fields.

In 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, several offices all over the world shut down. But Nigar and her team at ISRO continued to come in to work. They spent days planning the Aditya-L1 mission and relentlessly testing and re-testing their designs and equipment. The mission launched successfully on 2nd September 2023 and it made history.

Her story teaches us to dream as big as we want. She has paved the way for several girls who want to build satellites, showing them that successful careers can be created with passion, dedication and having faith in oneself and one's talents.



The Stage that Builds Leaders

Learning Beyond the Syllabus

Bijoya Sawian writes about, an educationist with a vision -
Deepanjali Singh - who has transformed the way children across
Dehradun experience learning.

A decade ago, Dehradun witnessed a quiet educational shift – one that believed that classrooms should nurture not just report cards, but personalities. Among the few who dared to think beyond textbooks was a multifaceted personality, Deepanjali Singh - an author, poet, painter, wildlife enthusiast, and educationist.

LearnTaastic, a brainchild of Deepanjali and her husband, RD



Singh, is an Edu-drama academy that has been running successfully in various schools across Dehradun for several years.

The idea of Edu-drama came into being when they moved to India and their elder daughter performed brilliantly in her school Founder's Play at the age of four. They looked for speech and drama classes for her in Dehradun but they could not find any. Thus LearnTaastic was born - an Edu-Drama academy designed to nurture confidence, creativity and communication through the performing arts in a fun and engaging manner.

What began as a simple search for speech and drama classes for their four-year-old daughter evolved into a movement that now shapes confident young voices across the valley.

In October 2024, Deepanjali was felicitated with the women's Achiever Award in education by Mr. Trivedi Singh Rawat, former Chief

Minister of Uttarakhand – a recognition not just of success, but of impact.

According to Deepanjali, she feels a great sense of achievement when parents share stories about how their children have improved in various facets of life, such as communication, creativity, and confidence. They often receive appreciative feedback from Heads of Schools who have observed shy children gradually open up, participate actively, and grow into confident individuals.

Over the years LearnTaastic has successfully staged various annual day musical productions, street plays (Nukkad Nataks), mimes, and short

theatrical performances. From historical sagas like *Ashoka*, to classics such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Tinker Bell*, *The Lorax*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, *The Jungle Book*, *Mulan*, *Aladdin*, and *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, among others. Each production is more than entertainment – it is a platform for transformation.

Through its structured Speech Development Program focusing on Public Speaking, Debates, and Creative Writing LearnTaastic empowers children to articulate their thoughts with clarity and conviction. This program enables children to express themselves effectively while nurturing imagination and originality.

Over time, engagement in drama and theatre has proven to play a vital role in child development. Drama, when thoughtfully taught, becomes a life skill. It nurtures empathy, strengthens teamwork, sharpens critical thinking and builds emotional resilience. These skills are cultivated through a well-structured curriculum comprising games, activities, and exercises designed to encourage spontaneity and the ability to think on their feet and beyond conventional boundaries.





The program works not only on cognitive growth but also on shaping confident adults by strengthening 21st-century soft skills such as teamwork, creative thinking, critical thinking, academic growth, emotional well-being, self-confidence, and the courage to step out of one's comfort zone.

Today, LearnTaastic partners with both prestigious institutions and emerging schools across Dehradun. Their work is widely appreciated by schools and parents alike, many of

whom have witnessed significant positive transformation in their children.

Reflecting on her journey, Deepanjali often finds resonance in Rudyard Kipling's timeless poem "If".

The closing lines of the poem capture the spirit she strives to instill in every child:

*If you can fill the unforgiving
minute*

*With sixty seconds' worth of
distance run,*

*Yours is the Earth and everything
that's in it,*

*And - which is more - you'll be a
Man, my son!*

Every line, she says, mirrors her path – though she smiles and adds that the final line should perhaps read:

"You will be a woman!"

Through LearnTaastic, Deepanjali Singh ensures that children do not merely memorize lessons – they discover themselves. And in doing so, they learn something far greater than the syllabus could ever teach: confidence, courage, and character.



Wisdom Waves

When Wealth Pales

There once lived a king named Aridaman. He ruled over the city of Vasantapur. He had four queens. One day he was sitting with all of them in his palace. The room overlooked the courtyard where there was a lot of hustle-bustle. The king was playing a game of dice with his wives when suddenly they all noticed that all the noise from the courtyard down below had ceased. There was a silence that shrouded the air. Intrigued, they looked out to see all eyes turned to the street where the king's soldiers

had hand cuffed a man and were leading him down the road. The man who they had handcuffed had a red garland around his neck. All the clothes he wore were red. His whole body had been smeared with red sandalwood.

Soon, the drums that were being beaten behind him came closer and the words that were being said alongwith became clearer. It was being announced that this man was being led to the gallows.

The king saw him. So did the queens.



One of them articulated the question that rose to everyone's mind, "What was his crime?"

Replied the king's men, "He has committed theft and gone against the king's orders."

The queens were upset. Surely a man can be reformed not sent to death for a crime, particularly when it was not so heinous.

One queen looked at the king and said, "Lord, you had once granted me a boon which I am yet to ask for. May I ask for it now so I can help the thief." The king answered in the affirmative.

The queen said she wanted the thief to be let off for one day. On that day he should be given a luxurious bath, dressed in all finery and be adorned with jewellery and live in the lap of luxury.

It was done accordingly.

The second queen was also influenced by the idea of the first queen asked for one lakh gold coins from the king which she gifted to the thief and sought one more day of freedom for him.

That too was granted

The third queen increased the money she demanded and asked for one crore gold coins which she gifted to the thief and again gave him one more day of freedom. Three days of

life gained and lots of money and jewellery, food and pleasures had been gained by the thief.

Now it was the turn of the fourth queen to speak. "Come on dear, what is your request," asked the king.

"I have nothing to give," replied the queen. "I have no wealth of my own that can bring comfort to the thief."

The king was shocked by this statement of his queen. "Oh my dear, what do you lack? I place the whole kingdom at your feet, choose what you would like to give the thief."

The queen gave him the gift of fearlessness...the gift of freedom. He was released by the soldiers.

Maybe there was a spark of joy in the eyes of the thief or a flicker of admiration in the eyes of the king, I do not know what it was but the queens got insecure about the favours they had granted the thief.

Each queen felt she had given the gift the thief would have enjoyed the most. Somehow the first three queens felt they were on one side because they had followed the same pattern as set by the first queen. The fourth one stood different and the air seemed to have become lighter after her gift. It irked them and they all ganged up together and said to the fourth queen, "What a gift to give! Some gold and jewellery would not have hurt."

The fourth queen was silent but firm in her conviction. After much prodding she said, "I have given the most valuable gift; the gift of fearlessness."

Now her smug face bothered the other queens so much that the thief who was just about to breath a sight of releif was summoned back to court. He came trembling with fear. Had the king over ruled the queens? Had the queens changed their mind?

"Tell me which queen's gift gave you most joy?" asked the king of the thief.

"Sire, if I may, I could not enjoy the gifts granted by the first three queens because I could feel the sword hanging above my head. It is the fourth queen's gift that gave me a new lease of life and I was filled with hope and joy. It has come like a new birth for me."

About the story

The highest act of charity is to grant fearlessness. This story is told in the notes to the verse in 'Suyagado' chapter 3, sloka 23 which says:

*D a n n a n n a s e t t a m
abhayappayannam*

The highest act of charity is to grant the boon of fearlessness.

Another related sloka which is illustrative of the story says,

*Diyate mriyamannasya kotim
jivitameva va*

*Dhanakotim na grihanniyat sarvo
jivitamucchati*

On one side there is wealth worth crores and on the other there is lease of life

To the dying man, life would be the better choice, for everyone desires to live



Swa-Mitra **A Journey to Fearlessness**

An article in the Times of India about two women gliding down a snowy mountain slope on snowboards wearing saris sparked an unexpected reflection

Reading about two women in 'The Times of India', gliding down a snowy slope in Gulmarg on snowboards wearing saris set a thought in motion. At first it appeared like a playful image but the more one sat with it, the more it stirred a deeper line of thought...from something seen to something understood.



A thought emerged from the image of the women in saris flying down that slope moving with grace, keeping pace with speed and wind: Perhaps freedom is not in shedding but in seeing clearly. In removing the inner hesitation and the thought that we must become someone else to step into something new. What if freedom begins in becoming a *Mitra* to oneself? Not merely as a friend in the ordinary sense, but that inner presence which removes fear and confusion, and restores clarity. The one that does not divide the self between who we are and who we think we must become.

So often the obstacle is not the world but the misunderstanding within – that we must leave parts of ourselves behind to belong elsewhere. To be one's own *Mitra* is to dissolve that divide. And the women in saris on snowboards on the snowy slope of a mountain seemed to embody this – carrying their identity into a new terrain without losing their self.

This is important because, “what will people say?” is a rhetoric that plays

heavily on our minds. All the great women profiled have not cared about what people said. They have not compromised on their values but shown the world that women too are human beings with aspirations, desires and capabilities.

The women on the slope were not abandoning identity, they were 'inhabiting' it. They were blending tradition with adventure; they chose not to be limited by fear or convention – it was an act of courage in challenging conditions. It made me wonder whether freedom is an outward act or an inward clarity. A

recognition that nothing essential needs to be left behind. One can move across terrains – outer and inner – without losing one's identity – becoming one's own *Mitra*.

“When you stand by yourself, fear steps aside and courage takes the lead.”

“In the silence of self-trust, fear fades and strength begins.”

“The moment you become your own support, fear loses its power.”



Book Review

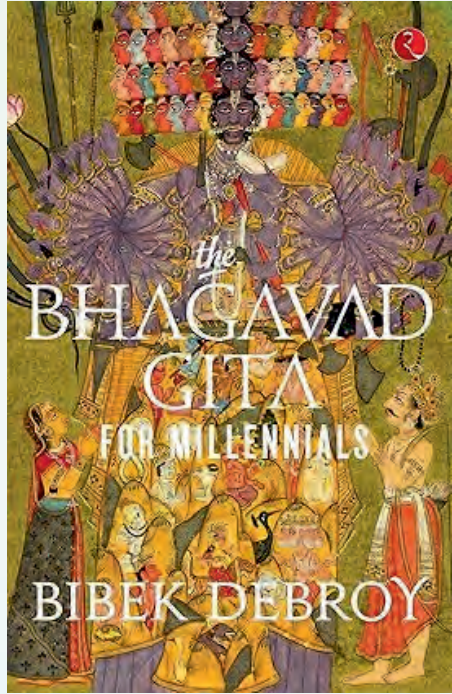
In Continuation of a Tradition

Sudhamahi Regunathan

As an opening sentence, it is perhaps the best yet. A blind king, Dhritirashtra, asks his charioteer, Sanjay, what his sons and the sons of Pandu, both of whom were wanting to fight, did on the battlefield?

The suspense-filled question, however, occurs in the middle of the Bhishma parva of the Mahabharata. Sanjaya's account has come to be known as 'The Book' sacred to the Hindu faith called: The Bhagvad Gita, and so is often found as an independent book. Dhritirashtra's question mentioned above, is the opening question of that book.

Innumerable translations and interpretations have deliberated on the Bhagvad Gita, but somehow, the suspense still remains: not so much about who won or lost or was wounded on the battlefield, but more on what Sanjaya reported and what is meant by it. Bibek Debroy's new book with a seemingly ageist title, *The Bhagvad Gita for the Millennials*, is a valuable addition to



this. Valuable because it is not a translation of the Gita, but an understanding of it, in the context of the entire system of Hindu faith. It is meant to be that prod that makes the millennials want to understand better, what Sanjaya said. It is also useful as a prod for non-millennials to gain knowledge without appearing ignorant. And Debroy supplies the background, the tools. He does so meticulously and repetitively as a good teacher would.

Divided into ten chapters, the first three chapters prepare the ground while the next seven present the Gita,

not in the sequence they appear in the text but more as they flow in Debroy's thought process and explanations. Through the entire book not all the verses of the Gita have been explained, only some have been dealt with.

A significant chapter is titled 'Bhagvad Gita Synthesis' in which Debroy speaks of how yoga which means yoking together is used a chapter heading in the Gita. Therefore it is, that we find the synthesis of, the human and the divine, the six schools of philosophical thought and so on in the Gita. In Debroy's chapter too there is an interesting weaving of a rich matrix of thinkers who have contributed immensely to the manner and method of appreciating the Gita, be it Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Sankara or Rajaji. Particularly since this book is meant for those who are trying find their footing while tackling the Gita, the voices of these thinkers synthesises many dimensions, easily.

For example, even if it is to motivate the reader to read the entire Bhagvad Gita, he quotes Sankara's famous stotram Bhaja Govindam to lead to the expression, "...Bhagvad Gita, Kinchidhita,!'...'Having studied a little bit of the Gita.' As if reading a few verses from the Bhagvad Gita is enough for salvation... it should be

read, but all of it, not just a verse from here and a verse from there...."

In the process of talking of how the Bhagvad Gita synthesises different schools of philosophy including the pancharatra, Debroy gives a glimpse of terms and concepts like the eight limbs of yoga, the different vayus in the body, the gunas, concepts of Purusha and prakriti, the mahabhutas, the jnaendriyas, not to mention jivatma and paramatma and so on. He also suggests that the Moksha Dharma Parva, also from the Mahabharata be read to understand the Gita better.

The background builds in the next chapter which is titled The Smriti Background. Here concepts such as the different yugas in the Hindu timeline, and customs that have origin in religious concepts are also introduced. One important and very noteworthy point he mentions is that the Bhagvad Gita was composed maybe a thousand years after the death of Krishna. He says, "Therefore three propositions should be self evident: 1. What Krishna said may not be the same as what was stated in the fifth century BCE text, (when the Bhagvad Gita was probably composed). But this proposition we can't do much with. 2. The Bhagvad Gita text we possess may not be the same as the Bhagvad Gita text composed in the fifth

century BCE. 3. As a smriti text, the Bhagvad Gita will reflect value judgements of either 1400 BCE or fifth century BCE. “ But, these three propositions go to only highlight the catholicity of approach. The more significant statement is one that follows, “But, what is important is the core teaching, not these incidental and peripheral bits.” In the same spirit, I feel the entire discussion on whether Krishna was a historical person (chapter 3) does not matter. The wisdom in the Gita is eloquent of a wise mind, whatever the name. Is there need to “prove” it?

While he is taking us along the different ideas embedded in Hindu thought, he is also quoting from the Bhagvad Gita and relating the two. They are not just the concepts that Debroy explains while capturing the spirit of the Gita, he also tells stories. Stories which are rarely heard these days but are so beautiful in the imagery and the ripples they create. His illustration of dharma is open ended and yet detailed for such words cannot be defined, they can only be illustrated.

Some stories are so complicated and long that Debroy suggests that it be read again before going further...it takes multiple readings to understand because each character in the story, symbolises an emotion and the whole play of senses is enacted

through human figures; where each human is one of the five senses.

The stories and quotations are not limited to scholars of Indology. Talking of limitation, I enjoyed a nuance that Debroy points out in the second chapter. The word 'paryapt' is used with its opposite, 'aparyapt', in the same verse. Paryapt could mean enough, could mean limited. What does it mean in this context? In explaining the meaning in that context, Debroy draws the whole picture of the battlefield, how wars were fought and what norms were followed even in war.

The chapters address crucial questions and their names are given accordingly, Who Am I? is a chapter which says, “All of us are insignificant. What we can change is ourselves. That is what the Bhagvad Gita is about.” This conclusion comes after examination of the intellect, the mind and the ego...and all the associated complexities. The following chapter titled, What Am I Not?, flows from one story to another example to gently convey the message that we are now talking of the eternal, not the transient world defined by our senses. The build up to Jivatma and Paramatma, which is the title of the next chapter is excellent.

The view is panoramic. Debroy

quotes authors from across the world to illustrate and make his ideas comprehensible to the section of people he is addressing. An interesting example is the explanation of the word pratyaksha. Pratyaksha is what we see and we all state that we believe what we see. But do we see it all? Debroy refers to the 'Gorilla experiment' which, briefly put, is about how a person dressed up as a gorilla walks on to the stage while a basket ball game is on. Every viewer is so engrossed in the game that few actually notice the gorilla which comes right up to the camera, thumps his chest and moves on. This video is available on youtube. With that Debroy leaves the question in the air: can we trust our senses?

The book continues on the course of bhakti, ahankara impermanence and finally the much sought after, moksha.

Covering a plethora of concepts

building up to a holistic idea of Hindu dharma and the place of the Bhagvad Gita within it, the book written in easy style, is full of so much information that it is, at times, distracting, at times, overwhelming, particularly for the one who is just being introduced to the Bhagvad Gita.

In the second chapter on Sanskrit and Poetry, a question is posed: "Why should we be more familiar with Latin than with Sanskrit?" If the comparison is because they both are ancient languages, then there it stops. But, otherwise the question has to be posed more to us, the generation that brought up the millennials and maybe we can pass on some parts of the responsibility to answer to our ancestors. If Sanskrit is not read by the millennials it is because we have not done to Sanskrit what Eliezer Ben-Yehuda did to Hebrew, all reasons notwithstanding.

The Bhagvad Gita for Millennials

By:	Bibek Debroy
Pages:	209
Price Rs.:	500
Publisher:	Rupa

Swami Vivekananda

Face to Face with Tradition

S. Regunathan

Thus far: Vivekananda, institutionalized his master Sri Ramakrishna's legacy by setting up a Mutt while continuing his own spiritual quest. 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. At Alwar he ate at a Maulvi's house telling him and the community thereby that the highest religion was humanity. Vivekananda explained the basics of worship in many ways...and there are times when we just know he pondered over a practice...but what did he think about it, we do not know. Read on to see:



Vivekananda was always curious about our history and cultural heritage. He never failed to visit places of historical importance or go on pilgrimages. During his journey across Rajputana and Western India we will see that these were the two

aspects of travel that attracted him greatly. This journey had another interesting aspect. Though he stayed with all types of people including the modest ones, treating them with great respect and love, most of the time it was found that he was staying with friends, princes, diwans and

influential persons. This caught the attention of his critics. Some of them raised questions about this preference of his. He had a ready answer.

In India, he said that people follow the king or the leaders of society. If he could influence them, the princes, diwans and other people in positions of power, he could discuss and convey the ideals of governance, of their duties and service to the people. He could also influence them on Sanatana dharma. He felt he would bring together and harness many common men to their way of living without spending both money and energy. So that is why he constantly had discussions and discourses in the palaces and in the diwan's houses on religious matters and the greatness of Vedanta.

During his visit to Ahmedabad, Swami Vivekananda went to many places of historical interest both within the city and around it. He was particularly attracted by Jaina temples. He added to this knowledge of Jainism as there were many Jain scholars in the city. He was

wonderstruck by Islamic culture as seen in the mosques and tombs in Kathiawar. Here comes an interesting story. Swami Vivekananda visited the old temple of Ranik Devi. Swami Vivekananda wanted to know the history of the temple. He was told that Ranik Devi was a very beautiful woman in Junagadh territory. She was betrothed to Raja Sidh of Patan state. But the ruler of Junagarh Rakhengar was in love with her. The ruler of Junagadh abducted and married her. This resulted in a fight between the two rulers.

Raja Sidh killed Rakhengar in the fight. Ranik Devi performed sati. She walked into her husband's pyre. She did not want to marry Raja Sidh. Raja Sidh stood desolate. It is in her memory that the broken-hearted ruler raised the temple. After seeing the temple and knowing the history the Swamiji, all historical accounts say, pondered over the the relevance and sanctity of the relationship in marriage as practiced in the Hindu tradition. What did he conclude?



Children's Corner

Tales The River Tells

The Promise of a Rainbow

Story and Illustration Dhriti Baruah

A rain god's promise...

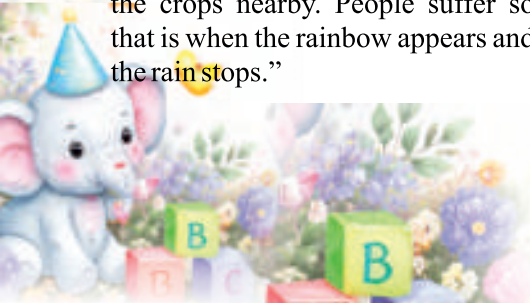
There was a lull in the monsoon downpour. The princess was back in her favourite spot by the river. She looked up at the sky and wondered if it would start raining again. The sun was beginning to peep through the clouds and she exclaimed, "Look, look there's a rainbow."


"That, my dear," said the river, "is the sign from the seven sisters to remind the rain god to stop the rain. He is very absent minded. He keeps "showering" his blessings and forgets to stop!! The rains are a "blessing" at first. The parched earth quenches her thirst with the rains, after a long dry summer. All the browns turn green. It's all very lovely. But when the forgetful rain god forgets to stop there are floods. Land is washed away. There is so much destruction. Even a gentle river like me overflows and spoils the crops nearby. People suffer so that is when the rainbow appears and the rain stops."



"Who were the Seven sisters?" asked the princess.

"They were the daughters of the ruler of this land. They were not only beautiful but so graceful. When they danced they seemed to cast a magic spell. Tales of their beauty and grace spread far and wide but people





outside only saw them in passing, never their dance. The seven princesses danced only within the palace walls.

Once there was a terrible deluge upon the land. The downpour continued day after day. Villages were washed away, crops destroyed. People were starving and homeless. The situation was grave. The king held an emergency meeting of his council...among them was the 'wise woman' of the land. Many suggested practical ways. Bunds were built which got washed away. Shelters were set up which were getting overcrowded. Food grains were being distributed but the supplies wouldn't last forever. The rain needed to stop.

Then the wise woman looked into her crystal ball for a solution. She told the king, "Let your daughters go out and dance in the rain" The king hesitated. "It is against the rules," he said.

“ For the well-being of this land set your daughters free and see the magic they will spread.”

"How will they dance without music?" asked the king, reluctant to break with age-old traditions.

"Thunder will be their music and

lightning will shine upon them," answered the wise woman.

The princesses were eager to step out and told their father so. Out they went in their colourful finery to dance in the rain. They danced to the drums of thunder and the rhythm of the rain lit by flashes of lightning. Nature was enchanted, even the trees swayed with them. So enthralled was the rain god that the rain stopped!

He told them he would be pleased to grant them anything they asked for.

All they wanted, they said, was for him to remember to stop the rains on time every year.

He gave his word. "Throw me your veils," he said "And I will make a rainbow with them which will appear to remind me of my promise"

So, the seven sisters threw up their veils which floated up to the clouds.

Varuna the eldest sent up her violet veil. Indira Her sister gave her indigo one. Bibhas followed with a blue. Gagana's was green. Yamini's had a yellow veil. Omana's was orange Raveena, as always, was red

These became the colours of the rainbow, the rain god's promise to the seven sisters.



The Riverside Story

Story by Gayatri Kumari Digg

Stay calm, look out for one another, and face danger together. With patience and unity, peace always returns.



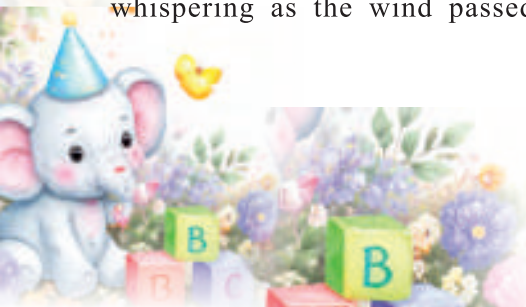
It was a warm day, and the sun was high in the sky. Its blazing light made all the animals and birds move slowly toward the cool riverside. The river flowed gently, its silver surface shimmering in the breeze, inviting everyone to rest and relax.


Near the riverbank, tall green trees stood quietly, their leaves whispering as the wind passed

through them. The soft rustling sound made the place feel calm and peaceful.

A little rabbit hopped around, looking for a quiet place to rest. It paused near the water and listened to the soothing sound of the flowing river. Everything seemed still and serene.

Around the river, hippopotamuses rested in the cool water. These large





animals were strong and alert, ready to protect themselves if needed. Nearby, young ones played happily as their parents watched over them.

Suddenly, the elephants came marching toward the river, stamping loudly. Seeing them, the monkeys began jumping from tree to tree, chattering excitedly and swinging from branch to branch. Among them was a clever monkey named Koko. “Wait, be calm. It is not safe here right now.”

Just then, crocodiles began to swim nearby. Known for their bad temper and sudden attacks, they made all the animals alert. The monkeys quickly climbed higher into the trees, while the elephants gathered their families together, raising their trunks and making loud warning sounds.

Fear spread across the riverside. The animals began to move away, searching for safety. Some ran toward the hills, while others stayed close together. The hippos slipped deeper into the water, keeping a careful watch.

Then, slowly, the crocodiles lost interest and moved away into deeper waters.

One by one, the animals began to come out from their hiding places. “It looks like the danger has passed,” said one of the monkeys.

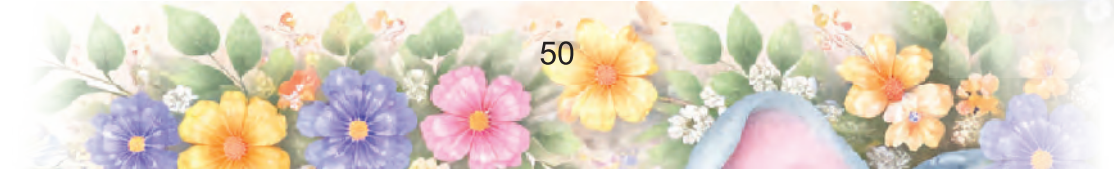
Soon, calm returned to the riverside. The elephants relaxed, the monkeys resumed their playful jumping, and the birds returned to the sky, singing softly.


As the sun began to set, the sky turned shades of orange and pink. The river glowed with golden light, and the cool breeze brought a sense of peace.

The little rabbit returned to its favorite spot near the riverbank and watched the beautiful sunset. Everything felt safe again.

As darkness slowly covered the land, the animals returned to their homes. The riverside grew quiet under the gentle glow of the moon.

And so, the river continued to flow—calm, steady, and full of life.





Leaving a Thought

If these stories of the quiet courage and unseen strength of Women Heroes of India stirred something within you, hold on to the feeling. Write to us. Share your reflections. Your voice is part of this journey.

In our next issue we turn the page toward Marvels of India and Miracles - celebrating the timeless wonders, and mysteries that continue to inspire awe across generations.

Until then...

FRNV NEWS AND EVENTS

READER'S REVIEW

In three engrossing sittings, I went through the contents of Value Insight, April 26 Edition, from cover to cover. Each article made me hungrier for the next, and overall, I feel uplifted in some way. Congratulations on this wonderful presentation.

Thank you very much indeed.

With warm regards,

Ujjal Dasgupta

Journal received ... Grateful ... appreciate the team for so much effort
Sushil Kumar Jain

FRNV Regional Chapters

Lucknow Chapter

FRNV Uttar Pradesh Chapter (Lucknow as its HQ) started functioning from 23rd March 2026 under the Chairmanship of Shri Alok Ranjan. Shri Ranjan ji is IAS (Retd.) and former Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh.

Hyderabad Chapter

Smt. Achala Kumar ji took over as Chairperson of FRNV Telangana (Hyderabad as its HQ) w.e.f. 2nd April 2026. Smt. Achala Kumar is a professional with over 30 years of rich corporate experience in marketing administration, community development and government affairs.

Values Based Education Workshops

(a) Balvantray Mehta Vidya Bhawan, Lajpat Bhawan

FRNV/HQ organized Values Based Education Workshop – training the teachers at Balvantray Mehta Vidya Bhawan Sr. Secondary School, Lajpat Bhawan, New Delhi on 4th April 2026. About 30 teachers attended the workshop. Dr. Mukesh Chand, School Principal, Dr. Arti Batra, Headmistress, BMVB and Dr. Sharda Kumari ji, Head, Values Based Education Workshop & CBSE Resource Person addressed the participants.



(A) Abhinav Global School, Dwarka

On 23rd April 2026, FRNV/HQ in association with Abhinav Global School, Dwarka, New Delhi arranged a values based education session for senior class students of the school. The students were from Class 9 to Class 12. About 180 students participated in the enriching workshop. The session was an interactive one.

Dr. K K Bansal, Director, Abhinav Global School graced the occasion. Along with Dr. Sharda Kumari ji, Dr. Pushpa Jindal, Educationist & Philanthropist, Smt. Mamta Varma ji, Philanthropist & Social Worker addressed the students.



FRNV Regional Chapters – Chennai, Dehradun (soon to be established) and Hisar have initiated steps for organizing Values Based Education Workshops for the teachers during May/summer vacations.

Poojya Nutan Swami ji also discussed with Jamshedpur administration for values-based education workshops in the schools.

FRNV Teachers Manual for Classes 1-8 needs to be translated in Bengali language. As more and more FRNV regional chapters are being established, it is the endeavor of FRNV to make the teachers manual available in all regional languages.

FRNV seeks the support of volunteers and corporate organizations towards this.

FRNV Odisha Chapter

The first program of FRNV Odisha was held on Odisha Day on 1 April 2026 in collaboration with IIPA Odisha and Green Earth Forum at the auditorium of Budhha Mandir Bhubaneswar with elocution contest for students on “Youth Empowerment for Building Viksit Odisha “in which our members, citizens and students from Colleges and Schools participated in large numbers, addressed by Dr Arun K Rath Chairman FRNV Odisha and other distinguished guests. The event was covered by leading press of Bhubaneswar.





DELENG/2022/81829 - VALUE INSIGHT

Printed on: 01-06-2026

“Printed and Published by PREM ARORA on behalf of FOUNDATION FOR RESTORATION OF NATIONAL VALUES and Printed at STAR PRINT O BIND, F-31 OKHLA INDUSTRIAL AREA PHASE-I, NEW DELHI – 110020 and published from CHAMBER NO.10, GROUND FLOOR, OFFICE OF CPM-5, DMRC, AIRPORT EXPRESS METRO STATION, DHAULA KUAN, NEW DELHI - 110021.

Editor: SMT. SUDHAMAHIREGUNATHAN