

Value Insight

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Bi-Monthly

- **The Spirit of India**
- **Unakoti:**
Where Time Stands Still
- **The Miracle of Collective Will**



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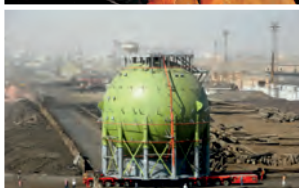
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Value Insight

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Geetali Mehra is an educationist with deep love for nature. She is passionate about plants, trees and gardening and enjoys spending her free time nurturing green spaces. An avid reader, she finds joy in both books and finding inspiration in the simple pleasures of everyday life.



Savita Joshi brings nearly fourteen years of editorial experience at MediaTrans Asia. She edited Indian Airlines and Air India's inflight magazines SWAGAT and NAMASKAR. She is now a freelance writer covering culture, travel, and lifestyle.



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Nandini Jain, a retired P.C.S. officer, dedicated 34 years to the Panchayatiraj Department of Uttar Pradesh. She played a vital role in strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Nandini also participated in workshops on e-governance, the Drinking Water and Sanitation Program, and disaster risk management. Beyond her government work, she is a certified health promoter and wellness advisor.



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

Readers Write

It was wonderful to see the impeccable editing of Rishi Kumar's article, "The Shield of the Nation," in the April issue 2026 bi-monthly magazine - Value Insight. The article powerfully highlights the courage, discipline, determination, daring, and sacrifice of the brave hearts of the Indian Armed Forces, inspiring our youth to embrace the values our Armed Forces uphold.

Ravi Verma

VALUE INSIGHT TOPICS FOR THE YEAR 2026

Main Theme	Spiritual Theme	Deadline
Spiritual Heritage of Modern India	Solitude	October 1, 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.

Self Effort to Elevate Oneself

Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru. Jai Guru.



How can seekers and devotees bring about a proper awareness, evaluation and also a resolve in their mind?

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥
६.५ ॥

**uddhared-ātmanātmānaṃ
nātmānam-avasādayet |
ātmaiva hy-ātmano bandhur-
ātmaiva ripur-ātmāna: ||**

Bhagavad Gita 6.5

***Uddhared-ātmanātmānaṃ
nātmānam-avasādayet.***

This is from the 6th chapter of Bhagavad Gita. Krishna is speaking about primarily meditation, how to reach the supreme inner state.

He says that “**uddhared-ātmanā ātmānaṃ**” – Everyone should elevate himself. Now, in the matter

of elevating oneself, are we dependent on others? Do we require any special favor or blessing from even God? Krishna says no!

Ātmanā ātmānaṃ uddhared – One has to elevate oneself only by making use of one's own mind and intelligence, inner resources. In the matter of employing this self-elevating effort, one is not depending upon anyone.

Ātmanā eva – No other factor is involved there.

Some say, “I want to improve, but I am not able to improve. I don't want to get angry but I get angry. I don't want to be this, I don't want to be that but I am becoming like that.” Let us understand that everybody has a nature. We are not controlled, we are all born and each parent can only give rise to a child born of him. So the child will have some inherited

tendencies. Just like one has a certain physical body with shape and features, one will also have an inner personality; mind intelligence and ego, with its characteristics, features, tendencies etc. Nobody is perhaps what he or she wants. We are what we are.

However, the human life is meant for examining one's own personality. So let us find out what the traits unacceptable or undesirable are and then eliminate them; try to know about the acceptable and desirable ones and incorporate them. This is the only spiritual exercise everyone is supposed to and can possibly do. We are all born with our own constrictions. These constrictions have to be identified properly and then by self-effort we have to remove them.

Physically changing our body is not possible nor is it meant for, but inner personality can be completely changed. An angry man can be very gentle and soft. A hateful man can be loving.

A certain habit that is either inherited in us or developed in us – suppose we have to change it. Depending on how long and how old the habit is, we have to develop something in its place for a longer time than what has been there. Suppose we are trying to

change a habit which is fifteen years old, it is not surprising if we have to spend another fifteen years! Then only the new habit will exceed the old one.

Uddhared-ātmanā ātmānaṃ. But we should not question whether we can change the habit or change the attitude at all or not. We are born as human beings only for this. Our scriptures give a lot of enlightenment in this matter. They tell us about the power of the senses and the harm the senses can work. They explain how corrupt the mind is and how pure it can be. They reveal how divergent the intellectual application can be and what is the best application. Why don't we be greedy for change, for correction, for improvement?

In the Bhagavad Gita, verse 12.13, there is a phrase:

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां

adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānām

One line - advesta sarva-bhutanam. When we read it and we give our mind to it, can we ever become hateful? How can it be? Then why are we reading? Are we giving our mind and heart to it? Everyone should examine how zealous or sincere he/she is in the matter of listening to or reading these wonderful excellent items.

Everything about spirituality is building up mento-intellectual excellence in the human, excellence in the level of the mind and excellence in the level of the intelligence. It increases our will power.

When I say that Vishnu Sahasranama will increase the power of retention, the power of application, there seems to be some doubt among some people. One need not doubt it at all! After all chanting Vishnu Sahasranama is spending about 20 or 25 minutes. If we go on applying our mind, very soon we will learn it by heart.

In the case of children, many come and say that they forget. Suppose they start trying to remember Vishnu Sahasranama – remembering the whole of Vishnu Sahasranama is a big job! If they do twenty minutes of recitation, then their memory power, that is the memory area of the brain will definitely be improved. So far as the examination is concerned, the performance also will be much better.

The whole devotional life is purely psychological. God has nothing to do there! He has already built our system to work properly, but it is psychological! By thinking about God, they get many things which otherwise they will miss! So, I believe that everyone should be feeling very clearly – uddhared-ātmanā ātmānaṁ.

We are born here only to improve. And we can! That is the only reason Krishna said it in the Bhagavad Gita.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru!

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SUBHASHITAM

उद्यमेन हि सिध्यन्ति कार्याणि न मनोरथैः।
न हि सुप्तस्य सिंहस्य प्रविशन्ति मुखे मृगाः॥

Tasks are accomplished only through effort, never by mere wishing. Deer do not automatically enter the mouth of a sleeping lion, even the king of the jungle must hunt.

कार्य केवल पुरुषार्थ से ही सिद्ध होते हैं, मात्र इच्छा करने से नहीं।
सोए हुए सिंह के मुख में हिरण स्वयं प्रवेश नहीं करते;
जंगल के राजा को भी शिकार करना पड़ता है।

From the President's Desk



In July the nation celebrated the 91st birthday of His Holiness the Dalai lama. All celebrations resounded with his four principal commitments. The first among them is that he had devoted his entire life towards the promotion of universal love and compassion. Indeed, whatever he speaks on, wherever he speaks, his message is always to foster and nurture love and compassion. I keep thinking that though these words are so easy to say, how difficult they are to practice. If these two values alone could be cultivated, we would be able to bring peace to this world. This world which is being torn apart by material greed and greed for power, would do well to take a few minutes to understand His Holiness the Dalia lama's message. Particularly in the times of the Iran-US war, this message makes one reflect on how many innocent lives could have been saved, how much suffering avoided if only, if only we could practice a little bit of compassion, feel a little bit of love for our brethren. How much is this little bit? We cannot quantify such values, we can only experience them and the magic they create. Let me now relate to you why I talk about quantifying them.

Only a fortnight ago, we in FRNV, were reflecting that we were pursuing values which cannot be quantified. How do we say what we have 'achieved'? Since we are not able to, we find ourselves not eligible for CSR funding. So, we were wondering if we could break down our objectives into tangible actions that will lend themselves to quantification so that they can be assessed and thereby monetized.

At one level as an administrator, I do feel it is necessary to fix targets and assess the pace of our journey towards achieving them. At another level, as a human being trying to influence society to move towards values such as love and compassion, I am baffled by this need to “quantify.” I wonder if our 'silent' readers have any views?

S. Regunathan
President (FRNV)

A Beginning...



We have known India as the land of snake charmers and soothsayers, as the heat and dust country, as the crown jewel of the British Empire, as the nation that gave the idea of nonviolence to the world, as the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, as the source of brilliant IT engineers, as the home to the Taj Mahal and so on. But does any of this actually describe India, except in parts? What makes people cheerful despite uncertainty about tomorrow? How does God and philosophy thrive alongside crime and corruption in one of the world's

oldest living civilizations? Why are people so hospitable? What is the spirit that lies inside a *samosa* or comes wrapped in a crisp *dosa*?

This issue explores the miracle that is India, not as a propaganda, but as a celebration, not to become smug, but to marvel and build on our strengths. To understand India, think of a popular North Indian dish - the *papdi chaat*. Like India, it appears chaotic at first glance yet every ingredient contributes something essential.

Papdi is the crisp foundation of the dish. It represents India's resilience and ingenuity. Indians, on average,

do not believe anything is impossible. They improvise with whatever is available. A quality known as *jugaad*. From ingenious homemade vehicles to clay refrigerators that cool without electricity, practical innovation flourishes. The famous Mumbai *dabbawallahs*, delivering thousands of lunch boxes with astonishing accuracy are another example. Such resourcefulness forms the crunchy base of everyday Indian life.

Yet ingenuity alone cannot sustain a civilization. It needs an inner compass. That is where the next ingredient enters the plate.

Add the boiled chickpeas. That is the protein, the substance beneath the crunch. They represent faith and conscience. Indians are great believers in God, fate and karma. They feel their karma will chase them birth after birth. So, this quiet awareness lends a measure of conscience to daily life. In crowded market places with lots of attractive things on sale theft is surprisingly rare. Even the poorest home is generally hospitable to a visitor. Ancient stepwells, built to quench the thirst of travelers, stand as enduring symbols of compassion and public service.

The humble potato and crushed *vada*

lend substance to the *chaat*. They represent India's deep cultural roots. Across the country, people remain connected to local temples, villages deities, ancestral lands and traditions passed down through generations.

From these roots emerges something more than utility. India seeks beauty as well.

Now add smooth, cooling yoghurt. It represents India's love of beauty. Stepwells, though built to store water, became architectural masterpieces adorned with exquisite carvings. The same creativity is seen in temples, sculptures and village shrines – expressions of the desire to bring the divine into everyday life.

And where there is beauty, artistic expression naturally follows.

Next come the spicy green and sweet tamarind chutneys. They represent India's artistic spirit. Music, dance, painting, weaving and sculpture flourish in countless forms. Every region has its own way of expressing beauty, devotion and joy.

Finally, sprinkle sev, pomegranate seeds, coriander, ginger and onions. These are the colorful, tangy notes of everyday life. No description can fully capture this kaleidoscope. Like a good *chaat*, India is to be experienced.

The Spirit of India

Miles of Kindness



*Over thousands of kilometers, across cities, villages, mountains and coastlines **Geetali Mehra** discovers the true spirit of India - in ordinary men and women whose kindness, generosity and humanity transformed her journey into an unforgettable experience.*

"We just have to go."

It all began with those simple words.

My hundred-and-five-year-old aunt, still beautiful in spirit and sharp of mind, lived in the midst of the breathtaking forests of McCluskieganj. She had begun emotionally blackmailing us into visiting her, and resistance was futile.

As the place was not well connected by rail or air, my son, Siddharth, and I decided to drive. To everyone's horror, we also decided not to take a driver or any other help, despite the dire warnings from my husband, friends and family.

I, however, was apprehensive of the dangers and mishaps that might befall us. I imagined bandits, thieves,



charlatans and every imaginable danger lurking along lonely highways. For protection, I packed a formidable bamboo walking stick. Unfortunately, it was so long that it had to be buried beneath the luggage in the car boot - comfortably present, but completely unreachable!

That first leg of the journey changed us forever.

The travel bug had bitten! One road trip led to another, and soon we found ourselves travelling the length and breadth of India - from Kolkata to Goa and Hampi, from Jaipur to Rishikesh, and from Leh to Kanyakumari. What began as a visit to an elderly aunt became an endless love affair with this extraordinary country.

This is not a travelogue about monuments or landscapes. It is about India herself - about her people. Warm, generous, honest, simple, cheerful and helpful. Everywhere we travelled, it was the kindness of strangers that stayed with us long after the scenery had faded.

One of my earliest experiences was at Maheshwar. Suddenly, out of nowhere, I suffered a panic attack with severe palpitations. Our guide immediately took charge, summoned his friend, an auto-



rickshaw driver, and rushed us through narrow lanes into the heart of the town to a doctor. The doctor examined me, smiled kindly and asked, "*Aap 45 ke to honge?*" - "You must be at least forty-five."

As I was a good twenty years older, all my palpitations vanished instantly! It remains the most delightful cure I have ever received.

His kindness reminded me of an earlier incident in Dalhousie, where I had been struck down with severe food poisoning. The doctor was away, but his wife welcomed me into their home, made me comfortable, and cared for me until he returned.

On another journey, a puncture brought an entire village to our rescue. We met honest taxi and auto drivers who returned bags we had accidentally left behind. Farmers insisted on loading us with fruits and vegetables fresh from their fields. Guides patiently planned our itineraries and introduced us to hidden gems. Hotel gardeners proudly filled our car with cuttings and saplings, while security guards lovingly showed us the plants they nurtured every day.

There was the flower seller on Marina Beach in Chennai who watched my hopeless attempts to fix a jasmine *gajra* in my hair. Unable to

bear my incompetence any longer, she gently took over, scolding me affectionately like a mother correcting a rather foolish child.

Then there was the delightful grandmother at Tiruvannamalai with whom we spent a hilarious time experimenting with *bindis* and *tilaks*.

At Ongole, we watched the day's catch being brought ashore as tractors hauled fishing boats onto the beach. The fishermen promptly invited us to share a meal of freshly grilled fish -simple, delicious and unforgettable.

At Rameswaram, my son decided to perform the complete temple rituals, including bathing in all twenty-two sacred wells. Crowds make me



anxious, and I hesitated. Then, as if sent especially for me, a fellow guest from our hotel quietly took my hand and said, "Come, let's do this together." She guided me through every ritual with such ease that my fears disappeared. Later, seeing me waiting patiently beside a long queue, a priest beckoned me forward, and I was blessed with one of the most serene and divine darshans of my life.

Yet our most unforgettable encounter awaited us at Kanyakumari.

As we waited for the sunset at India's southern tip, surrounded by tourists and vendors, a woman selling hair clips came over to us. We bought a





few clips and gradually learnt that she was deaf and mute and had lost her son to the sea. She gently guided us to the safest and best viewpoint, warned us away from slippery rocks, and even shooed away over-persistent vendors.

Then she quietly disappeared.

A little later she returned carrying a tiny gift for my son - a teddy-bear keychain she had bought with her own money. My son still keeps it attached to his car keys. It is worth more to us than anything we could



have purchased ourselves.

Remarkably, throughout all our travels across this vast country, we never had a single unpleasant experience. It almost sounds too good to be true, yet it is true.

Nor can I forget our four-legged companions along the way - the friendly dogs and playful puppies, the curious cats and kittens, the majestic elephant, and the magnificent peacocks at Madurai that danced before us and even ate from our hands.

People often speak of the Spirit of India. I believe we found it - not in grand monuments or famous landmarks, but in countless ordinary Indians whose generosity expected nothing in return.

If only every Indian could travel across our hills and plains, rivers and forests, villages and cities, temples and seashores, they would discover what we discovered: that India's greatest wonder is not her geography or her history. It is her people.

Under the Clouds and Above the Rainbow



*Unlike the four-season pattern followed in many parts of the world, India experiences a unique cycle of six seasons bringing its own colours, moods and traditions writes **Sudhamahi Regunathan**.*

It is amazing to think that the traditional Indian way of life drew generously from nature and her moods. When the day dawns and the peacock calls, you know that clouds have gathered and it is the monsoon season. Ayurveda or the medical knowledge system said food intake should be light and even detailed out recipes for the same. Poetry described this pitter patter in terms of the longing of love...separated partners yearned for each other. Agriculturists looked fondly at their growing plants quenching their thirst. Monks and nuns stayed indoors observing *chaturmas* or a period of staying in

one place, without travelling and recalling all their learning. And musicians created a whole range of songs in *raga Malhar* to draw into the notes the comfort of the rain.

Every season has its charm and every aspect of life draws its lessons from the season. In India have divided the year into six seasons instead of the four that we see around the world, known as the *Shad Ritu* or the Six *Ritus*. The system developed its thinking in consonance with nature's moods.

The six seasons are *Vasanta* (Spring), *Grishma* (Summer), *Varsha* (Monsoon), *Sharad*

(Autumn), *Hemanta* (Pre-Winter), and *Shishira* (Winter). Each season lasts approximately two months and has its own character, colors, foods, festivals, and moods.

Vasanta or spring, is often called the king of seasons. Occurring roughly during March and April, it is the time when flowers bloom, trees put forth fresh leaves, and the earth seems to awaken after the cold months. The air becomes pleasant, mustard fields glow with yellow flowers, and birds fill the countryside with song. Many Indian festivals are associated with this joyful season. It has inspired poets, artists, and musicians for centuries. Classical Indian literature often describes Vasanta as a season of beauty, love, and renewal.

Beautiful Vasanta is followed by *Grishma*, the season of summer. During May and June, temperatures rise sharply across much of India. Rivers may shrink, the earth becomes dry, and people seek shade and water. Ancient Indians did not view summer merely as an inconvenience. They recognized it as an essential stage in the annual cycle. The intense heat prepares the atmosphere for one of the most dramatic events in nature - the arrival of the monsoon.

Varsha, is perhaps the most

distinctive feature of the calendar. While many countries have rainy days, India experiences an entire monsoon season. During July and August, clouds gather across the sky, thunder echoes through the air, and life-giving rains fall upon the land. Farmers eagerly await these rains, which nourish crops and replenish rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. The monsoon has shaped Indian civilization for thousands of years. It influences agriculture, trade, architecture, and even the emotions expressed in poetry and music.

After the rains comes *Sharad*, the season of autumn. The skies become clear and bright. The air feels cleaner, and the landscape appears refreshed after the monsoon. Lakes bloom with lotuses, and the moonlight of autumn nights is celebrated in literature and folklore. Many important festivals occur during this season, making it a time of joy and community gatherings. Sharad represents clarity, balance, and beauty.

The fifth season is *Hemanta*, often called pre-winter. Occurring around November and December, it marks a gentle transition into colder weather. The air becomes crisp, mornings grow cooler, and agricultural fields are rich with crops. Traditional

Indian wisdom associates this season with strength and nourishment. It is a time when people often enjoy richer foods that help the body adapt to the cooler climate.

Finally comes *Shishira*, the season of winter. During January and February, temperatures reach their lowest levels in many parts of India. Snow covers the mountains of the north, while cooler winds sweep across the plains. Trees may shed leaves in some regions, and nature enters a quieter phase. Yet winter is not seen as an ending. Instead, it is understood as preparation for the return of Vasanta and the beginning of a new cycle.

Ayurveda or Indian medicine claims that the human body responds differently during different seasons. Diet, exercise, and daily habits were often adjusted according to the time of year. This approach reflects a holistic view in which human beings are part of nature rather than separate from it.

The arts were equally influenced by the six seasons. Indian poets wrote vivid descriptions of each *ritu*. Painters depicted seasonal landscapes, while musicians developed melodies associated with particular times of the year. In classical music, certain ragas are

traditionally linked to specific seasons. The monsoon, for example, inspired musical compositions that evoke the sound of rain and the longing of separated lovers.

Perhaps the most famous literary celebration of the seasons is the work *Ritusamhara* by the great poet Kalidasa. In this masterpiece, each season is portrayed with exquisite detail, showing how nature influences human emotions and experiences.

The six-season division also demonstrates the scientific spirit of ancient India. It is a window into an entire civilization's relationship with the natural world. It combines science, agriculture, health, literature, music, and spirituality into a unified vision of life.

In an age when many people feel disconnected from nature, India's six seasons remind us of the wisdom of observing the world around us. They teach us that every stage of the year has its own beauty, purpose, and meaning. The Shad Ritu is not merely a calendar - it is a celebration of the rich and ever-changing dance between humanity and nature. It is also a statement on the marvelous way of thinking of our ancestors.



Unakoti

Where Time Stands Still



Jishnu Devvarma writes about Unakoti, the mysterious rock-cut heritage site nestled amidst the verdant green hills of Tripura, where mythology, history and nature merge into a timeless saga carved in stone.

Somewhere in this vast world in the North East of India lies Tripura. The history of this land goes back to thousands of years into the realm of myths and legend. One such legend is of Unakoti – one of the most mysterious marvels of India. It is famous for its gigantic rock-cut sculptures and ancient stone carvings carved directly into the hillside.

Unakoti lies next to the town of Kailashahar in the district of North Tripura. The town itself derives its name from “Kailash” the celestial abode of Shiva and “Shahar”



meaning town - together signifying “the town near Kailash.”

Hidden amidst a verdant jungle, Unakoti lies shrouded in mystery and legend. There are no shops selling garlands, candles, sweetmeats or other bric-a-bac as offerings, nor are there any pundits to teach you how to pray. It is just you and nature and, in the background, the astonishing human endeavor to achieve the impossible - symbolized by the countless number of carvings spread across the hillsides. One less than a crore gods and goddesses stand witness to every silent prayer. Yet what one chooses to offer remains deeply personal. The name Unakoti itself is somewhat intriguing. It means “one less than a crore” – one less than 10 million. One wonders why not a crore?

Several Legends are associated with Unakoti. The elders say that once a holy man selected this site for making it into one of the holiest places on earth. He promised to do the impossible – to carve one crore statues of gods and goddesses on the rocks of this hill in one night without stopping. He began his work early in the morning and went on carving without rest, food or drink and he was sure he would be able to keep his promise.

Since the site was dark and covered with dense forest it was impossible to make out the time of day. He kept on laboring till he suddenly heard the crowing of a crow echoing through the jungle, signaling the arrival of dawn. Remembering his promise, he ran out of the jungle dropping his chisel and hammer to find that it was still dark. Alas! Even a slight distraction drew the line between success and failure. The moment he stopped carving, his vow was broken. Now, there was no hope of making this the holiest place on earth, so he carved no further. Just one more figure of a god or goddess would have fulfilled his dreams. Devastated by failure, he abandoned the site as an incomplete place of pilgrimage in sadness. Thus, instead of a crore it now contained one less than a crore of carvings of gods and goddesses.

However, according to a legend



described on the Archaeological Survey of India signboard at the site, Lord Shiva was once travelling to Kashi accompanied by a host of gods and goddesses. Resting for the night at Unakoti, Shiva instructed his companions to awaken before sunrise and resume the journey. When dawn arrived, none awoke except Shiva. Angered, he cursed them to turn into stone.

Unakoti remains wrapped in anonymity and mystery. In a place so remote and densely forested no one knows when and why the hillsides were carved with countless figures. It was a place out of nowhere, yet one becomes awestruck before the sheer multitude and magnificence of these sculptures. There are carvings of Ganesha, Brahma, Kartikeya and innumerable other gods and goddesses from the Hindu pantheon. The central figure at the heart of Unakoti is the colossal head of



Shiva that wears a crown. He is known here as “Unakotishwar Kal Bhairabh” - Lord of Unakoti, the Master of Time. Wearing an ornate crown and bearing a serene smile, this monumental carving seems to command time itself to stand still in these surroundings.

The massive head of Shiva is about 25 feet in height and his ears are adorned with earrings which resemble the '*Deri*' worn by the womenfolk of Tripura's royal family. Flanking his crown stands his two consorts – Parvati on a tiger and Ganga. His large eyes and his lips that curl up in a smile, reflects serenity, wisdom and enlightenment. Yet beyond serenity there is an overwhelming sense of power emanating from the mighty rock-cut figure. The impact of Unakotishwar lies not only in artistic brilliance but in sheer scale and spiritual presence. George Bernard Shaw once defined a miracle as “something that creates faith,” and for centuries this rock-cut giant must indeed have aroused awe and devotion among pilgrims who came to worship him. Even today, despite enduring the relentless ravages of time and weather, Shiva continues to smile on through the centuries silently witnessing kingdoms rise and disappear,

civilizations flourish and fade. In the presence of such immense proclamation of faith, skepticism quietly retreats and humility becomes inevitable.

In the monsoons the water from the Unakoti Cherra, a small shallow hilly stream, flows down from his crown to form a large *Kunda* (pool) before him. Symbolically it represents the descent of the Ganges from the matted locks of Shiva in the Himalayas to the plains below that goes on to form a mighty river. Every year during Ashokastami (March-

April) indigenous people from across Tripura gather here to take a dip in its holy waters. Only then do the hills of Unakoti resonate with human activity to stir Unakotishwar – the Master of Time - from his meditative stillness. As centuries passed Unakotishwar has silently observed the changing destinies of his people – witnessing both suffering and progress, loss and transformation. Yet time had but one course – to move on. Thus echoes the timeless wisdom from the Mahabharata:

*Time is fire and time the extinguisher,
Time the lord of good and bad.
Time cuts us down, and Time creates anew.
Time does not sleep when all things do,
Only Time stands when all things fall.
Is, was, and shall be, are Time's children,
Oh Reason, be witness! Be stable.*

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Panchayati Raj

A Marvel of India's Democratic Genius

*Thirty-four years in Panchayati Raj gave **Nandini Jain** a front row seat to the workings of grassroots democracy. She looks back on a journey shaped by people, purpose and the quiet power of local self-governance.*



When people speak of the marvels of India, they often mention ancient temples, scientific achievements, spiritual traditions, or technological progress. Yet, one of India's greatest modern marvels stand not in stone or steel but in the lives of millions of ordinary villagers who participate in governing their own communities.

This marvel is Panchayati Raj - the world's largest experiment in grassroot democracy. This conviction does not arise merely from books or official records. It comes from a lifetime of experience. I joined the Panchayati Raj Department of Uttar Pradesh as a District Panchayat Raj officer and served for 34 years before retiring as

Joint Director, Panchayati Raj, Uttar Pradesh. During these decades, I witnessed, from close quarters, how an ancient Indian tradition of local self-government evolved into one of the world's largest democratic institutions.

I remember my first posting in Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh, in 1986. I had arrived with textbook ideas about local government and the quiet conviction of a young officer who believed that the system worked. Within weeks, reality had dismantled both. The Gram Panchayat office in the village I visited was the Gram Pradhan's house, who was a prosperous farmer from the dominant caste who had held the position for years without a proper election. The village development funds had trickled in unpredictable directions. The villagers I met didn't think of Panchayat as their institution. It was someone else's arrangement, and they were simply living under it. That was the reality of a pre-1992 Panchayati Raj across much of Uttar Pradesh. The idea existed. The structure existed loosely. But the soul of it, the genuine transition of power to ordinary people, was absent.

Then came 1992 and the 73rd

Constitutional Amendment that transformed Panchayati Raj from an administrative arrangement into the constitutional institution. What emerged was nothing short of a democratic revolution in independent India's history. The amendment mandated a 3-tier elected structure, regular 5-year elections, proportional representation for scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes and reservation of at least one third of all seats for women.

The scale of what followed is still difficult to fully absorb. Uttar Pradesh alone has over 58,000 Gram panchayats. Across India, the number crosses 2,65,000, covering nearly 6,40,000 villages. More than 3 million people now hold elected office at the panchayat level nationally. This is not a system. It is a civilization learning to govern itself, village by village.

Besides, there are Kshetra panchayats and Zilla panchayats across the country. Through these institutions, democracy reaches the doorstep of ordinary citizens. Villages themselves participate in planning, decision-making, and monitoring developmental works.

During my service, I witnessed remarkable changes. Villages that

once struggled with poor sanitation gradually became cleaner through community participation. Drinking water facilities improved, rural roads connected isolated habitations. Public awareness about health, education, environmental cleanliness increased significantly. These achievements were not only government successes; they were examples of people taking ownership of their own development.

One of the most inspiring aspects of Panchayati Raj has been the emergence of women as leaders. Constitutional reservation opened the doors of local governance to millions of women. Initially, many observers doubted their capability. Experiments proved otherwise. I saw countless women representatives display courage, administrative ability, and deep commitment to public welfare. Their participation changed not only governance but also social attitudes.

Only a few countries can claim a democratic structure that empowers citizens so directly and so extensively. It transformed

governance from a distant authority into a shared community responsibility.

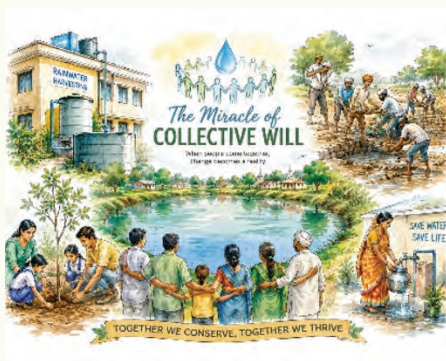
Of course, challenges remain. Capacity building, financial empowerment, and greater transparency are continuing priorities. Yet, the overall journey has been extraordinary. From village meetings under a tree to constitutionally empowered local governments, Panchayati Raj reflects Indian ability to blend tradition with modernity.

As someone who spent more than three decades in this system, I regard Panchayati Raj not merely as a government programme but as a living expression of democracy. It demonstrates that when people are trusted with responsibility and provided with institutional support, they can become active architects of their own development.

For me, this is the true marvel of India, a democratic experiment that continues to strengthen the foundation of the nation from the grassroot upwards.

The Miracle of Collective Will

India's progress is often shaped not only by grand projects but also by visionary individuals who see possibilities where others see obstacles.



Hailing from Haryana, Himanshu Nagpal is a 2019-batch officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre who became the driving force behind a remarkable movement that showed how collective will can revive dying water bodies and restore ecological balance.

Working largely through public participation and volunteer efforts, he encouraged communities to become custodians of their own natural resources. Villagers, students, local organizations and citizens joined hands to reclaim neglected ponds, desilt water channels and rejuvenate traditional water systems. Volunteers gave their time, labor and local knowledge. Communities rediscovered traditional wisdom about water conservation.

What began as scattered efforts gradually grew into a people's movement. The results were extraordinary. Water bodies that had been clogged, neglected or forgotten began to spring back to life. Seasonal streams and channels were revived, groundwater levels improved, and rivers that had dwindled over the years started flowing again with renewed vitality. The transformation brought benefits far beyond water security. Agriculture improved, biodiversity returned, and communities developed a renewed sense of ownership and pride.

What makes this achievement particularly remarkable is that it was a demonstration of the power of collective action. Nagpal showed that lasting change is possible when people unite around a shared goal.

The Man who Turned Grief into Water

From Loss to Lifeline



*Sometimes the deepest acts of service are born from loss. **Savita Joshi** writes about how one man's grief has become cool drinking water for thousands of strangers.*

Every summer in Ahraura, a small town in Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur district, Ghanshyam Maurya sets out before dawn to fill earthen pots with clean water. The people who drink from them may never know the story behind the pots.

Ghanshyam Maurya's mother did not die of anything rare. She died because of the water. In the village of Jungle Mahal, in Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur district, the tap water often runs a sickly yellow through much of the year. Years of drinking this water led to anaemia. She fell ill in 2015

and passed away in 2017. Her son spent one and a half lakh rupees on her. When the money and the medicine ran out, he bought a clay pot instead.

These days the pot is never just one. By four in the morning, when Jungle Mahal is still in darkness, Maurya sets out with a wooden cart carrying nearly 500 litres of clean water. Inside, Shashi Lata, his wife, lights the stove at home. By the time the first roti hits the griddle, he has stopped at a dozen places. At every stop, he empties the stale water, scrubs the clay pot clean and refills it with fresh water. Every pot he fills carries not just water, but the memory of the mother he could not save. Some get two or three pots. Others get a thin cotton towel, a pair of slippers, sometimes biscuits. The towel is for the heat. The slippers are for people he has seen walking barefoot.

People in Ahraura call him the 'Matka Man'. Throughout the scorching summer months he keeps about a hundred and fifty pots at junctions, by the bus stop, outside the hospital, and near labour sites. A daily wage labourer himself, he had no savings and no way to fix the pipes. He could not afford a borewell or a filtration plant. What he could

manage, with money borrowed from the contractors he worked for, was one clay pot. Then another. In a good season he has placed as many as four hundred.

The humble *matka* performs its own quiet science. The pot cools the water by itself. Fired clay is full of pores too small to see. Water seeps out to the wall, and dry air takes that film away. Evaporation pulls the heat with it, from the clay and from what is left inside, so the drink comes out cooler than the air around it. The unglazed clay breathes, and a little of the earth stays in the water leaving an earthy aroma and a softer taste than anything sealed in steel or plastic. If the pores clog, the cooling stops, which is why he scrubs every pot each morning.

The same clay turns up in *kulhads*, the small disposable cups at tea stalls that are crushed and returns back into soil after one use. A cracked *matka*



finds a second life as a planter or embedded in a courtyard floor. No wire, no plastic, no waste. The vessel is older than any machine we have built to do the same job, asking almost nothing in return.

For years Maurya rented a battery-run rickshaw, reaching hamlets and camps almost a hundred kilometres

away. Rising costs forced him back to a handcart. His round is now fifteen or twenty kilometres, but it still begins before sunrise. When the cart rolls into a lane, people call his name. They know what he brings - a clay pot, cool water and quiet compassion.

Seva in a Clay Pot

A *matka* placed out in summer is rarely just one man's idea. Across India the gesture repeats, season after season, as if the country remembers it instinctively.

Clay pots appear on pavements so any thirsty stranger can stop for a drink.

Saucers of water sit on rooftops for sparrows and pigeons. Bowls at street level wait for cows and dogs.

On pilgrim routes, volunteers place rows of *matkas*, sometimes with jaggery and roasted gram beside them.

In *langars*, the community kitchens, drinking water is kept in clay and ladled out with a steel jug.

During heatwaves, and even floods, relief groups load *matkas* onto tempos and carry them to the temporary relief camps, where the water stays cool without electricity.

A pot, water. Cool water and someone willing to fill it. For generations, this has been one of India's simplest and most enduring forms of *seva*.

*How can I be useful, of what service can I be?
There is something inside me, what can it be? –*

Vincent Van Gogh in Zen and the Art of Making a Living by Laurence G. Boldt

The Lake that Filled Itself

The Flamingo Marvel



Neharika Srivastava writes about the annual arrival of the flamingos in Maharashtra when the wetlands become a stage for one of nature's grandest performances.

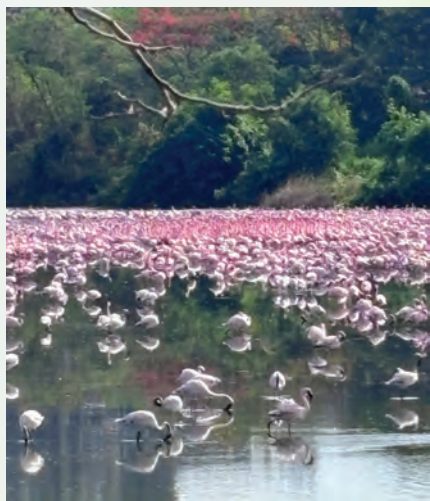
I had heard about the flamingos of Navi Mumbai for years. Every year, from late October until around May, thousands of these elegant birds make the city's wetlands their temporary home. I had seen photographs and read articles, but I wanted to witness the spectacle for myself.

By the time I finally made the trip, it was early June.

Technically, we had just missed the

season. A few birds were still expected to be around, but the great migration was largely drawing to a close. I wasn't sure what we would find.

The morning was already warm when we arrived at the sanctuary at 8 a.m. The timing of the visit was determined by the tides rather than by us. High tide draws the birds in, and on that particular day, nature had set the schedule.



When we reached the viewing area, the lake looked almost empty.

A handful of young flamingos stood scattered across the water. A few other birds moved about lazily. Is this, I wondered, was what remained of the famous gathering?

But there was something hopeful about the stillness. The young flamingos seemed to be waiting for something. And so we waited too.

A few minutes later, a small flock appeared in the distance.

Then another. And another.

Each arrival brought a fresh wave of excitement. Twenty birds. Fifty birds. A hundred. We found ourselves counting, pointing, and

trying to estimate numbers that quickly became impossible to estimate.

The arrivals continued.

The birds circled gracefully before touching down on the water, as if each group had received the same invisible invitation. What had seemed like an empty lake slowly began to transform.

By nine o'clock, the flock numbered in the hundreds.

Before I fully realized what was happening, the lake was half full.

What struck me was not merely the number of birds but the gradualness of it all. There was no dramatic moment when the flamingos suddenly appeared. The spectacle emerged little by little, almost



unnoticed, until suddenly it was everywhere around us.

It reminded me how often we expect extraordinary things to arrive all at once.

We look for instant results, immediate answers, visible progress. We want the lake to be full the moment we arrive.

Nature works differently.

The flamingos arrived in small groups, each one insignificant on its own. Yet together they created something breathtaking. Had we left after fifteen minutes, convinced that the season was over and there was little left to see, we would have missed the wonder entirely.

As we watched, a group of flamingos began performing what bird enthusiasts call the “broken-neck dance.” Dozens of birds moved together in synchronized patterns, their long necks twisting and turning in a display that was both graceful and oddly theatrical. It felt like watching a ritual that had been repeated for centuries.

For a few moments, everyone around us fell silent.

There are experiences that photographs capture beautifully. And then there are experiences

whose essence lies in being present. The flamingos belonged to the second category.

Standing there, watching the lake slowly fill with life, I realized that the true lesson of the morning had little to do with birds.



It was about patience.

About staying a little longer.

About trusting that not everything reveals itself immediately.

Sometimes the most remarkable sights in life do not arrive in a grand procession. They appear one small flock at a time, until one day you look up and realize the lake is full.

And sometimes, when you think you have arrived too late, nature still has one final performance left to offer.

Food Wisdom

The Kitchen is your clinic

*Food Wisdom is not a diet chart writes **Prema Raghavan**. It is a relationship - with the land, the season, and your body.*



Some decades ago, we believed fertilizers and pesticides were the answer to our food shortages. They filled our plates, but emptied our soil. Today, we live with the consequences: depleted nutrition, rising illness, and a planet out of balance. But we are remembering and returning to organic farming, seasonal eating, traditional grains and home-cooked meals. This is moving forward with wisdom.

Food is more than Fuel

In India, food has never been just calories. It is medicine, memory,

culture, community and prayer. Every festival meal, grandmother's recipe, temple offering, and seasonal delicacy carries generations of accumulated knowledge.

Eat with the Seasons

Ayurveda divides the year into six *ritus*. Each season aggravates certain *doshas*. Nature, in her intelligence, grows the exact foods to bring us back into balance.

- Winter calls for warmth, nourishment and strength-building foods. Traditional winter fare such as sesame, jaggery, bajra, ghee and leafy

greens helps the body withstand cold and dryness.

- Spring is a season of cleansing. Bitter and astringent foods such as neem, fresh greens, barley and raw mango help remove heaviness accumulated during winter.
- Summer demands cooling and hydration. Coconut water, buttermilk, cucumbers, melons and traditional drinks protect the body from heat and dehydration far more than many commercial beverages.
- During the monsoon, digestion naturally weakens. Warm, freshly cooked foods seasoned with ginger, pepper, cumin and *hing* support digestive strength and reduce susceptibility to infection.
- Autumn is a time for calming accumulated heat and acidity. Foods such as amla, grapes, rice and milk-based preparations bring balance and restoration.

Ayurveda: The Six Tastes

Rather than focusing only on nutrients, Ayurveda pays attention to the six tastes or *shad rasa*. A balanced meal contains all six tastes: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent.

- Sweet foods nourish and build tissues.
- Sour foods stimulate digestion.
- Salty foods enhance absorption and flavor.
- Pungent foods awaken metabolism and clear stagnation.
- Bitter foods tone and absorb excess moisture.

Ayurveda also recognizes that each person is unique. What suits one individual may not suit another. A person with a naturally light, dry constitution may thrive on warm nourishing foods and healthy fats. Someone with excess heat may benefit from cooling foods. Another sluggish digestion may require lighter and more stimulating meals.

Agni: The Forgotten Secret of Health

Ayurveda's most important concept is *agni*, the digestive fire.

According to traditional wisdom, health depends less on what we eat and more on what we can digest and assimilate. Three timeless principles emerge from this understanding:

- Eat when genuinely hungry. Hunger is a sign that the digestive fire is ready.
- Make Lunch the main meal. Digestive strength is strongest

around midday, mirroring the sun's peak energy.

- Eat with attention. Sitting down, chewing thoroughly, avoiding distractions and stopping before complete fullness all support healthy digestion.

Fermented Foods: Our Ancestral Probiotics

Fermentation serves several important purposes. It improves digestibility, increases the availability of certain nutrients, supports beneficial gut bacteria and naturally preserves food. Traditional communities understood these benefits intuitively. Farmers working in hot climates relied on fermented rice preparations for hydration and digestive health.

The Return of Millets

For centuries, grains such as *ragi*, *jowar*, *bajra*, foxtail millet, little millet and *kodo* millet formed the backbone of Indian diets. They adapted to local climates, required relatively little water and provided excellent nutrition.

With changing agricultural policies and consumer preferences, rice and wheat gradually displaced these

traditional grains. Millets acquired an undeserved reputation as food for the poor. Today they are making a remarkable comeback.

Why we need them back:

Climate warriors: They grow with little water, no pesticides. Food for a hotter, drier future.

- Nutrient powerhouses: Ragi has 10x the calcium of wheat. Bajra is rich in iron. Foxtail and little millet pack protein and fiber.
- Low GI: They release sugar slowly.
- Gluten-free: Gentle on sensitive guts.

Food wisdom reminds us that even healthy foods must be consumed thoughtfully. Millets are naturally drying and may not suit everyone in large quantities. Traditional cooking methods usually soak and combine them with ghee, buttermilk or other balancing foods.

Our ancestors left us a masterplan for eating that prevents disease, and honors ecology. The millet on your plate, the curd set at dawn, the temple coconut on your shelf - these are not fads. They are testimonies.

Wisdom Waves

Stay Tuned to the Beauty of Nature



*Nature is a continuous miracle, writes **Shammi Paranjape**. Ordinary life is filled with extraordinary wonder if we pay attention.*

Life is not as ordinary as it seems. You just have to look around you to feel the magic. A Chinese proverb says: "The miracle is not to fly in the air, or to walk on water, but to walk on earth." Every so-called ordinary day is suffused with the extraordinary; we just don't take notice. "It is God who moves the dew to drop, the lotus to bloom, the butterfly to flit and the Sun to rise. That is all the power, all the wisdom, all the love, all the miracle that ever was, is, and will be," says Sathya Sai Baba. There is continually wonderful activity happening in Nature around us all. Caught up as we are in the hurly-burly of our daily existence, we don't make the effort to observe. When did

we last pay attention to the full moon glittering in the night sky, or to the millions of twinkling stars? Flowing water is taken for granted and its beauty or value is realized only when there is water shortage and the tap goes dry. Remaining conscious of divine gifts will not only make life enchanting, it will also make us value God's gifts and hence prevent misuse or wastage. Nothing should be taken for granted, least of all Nature's bounty, because Nature is the very crucible of life. All that sustains life on earth - sunlight, air, food and water - come from Nature. Real wealth is not in coins and currency but in our natural resources that are so necessary for our very sustenance. So the more we stay in

tune with Nature and its rhythms, the more we stay tuned to ourselves. Sathya Sai Baba says: "Humanity is a limb of Nature and Nature is a limb of the divine... Imbibe wisdom from the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the rivers, the seasons, in fact from all beings and things. Education is no book affair. The universe is the university for those who care to watch and learn." Appreciation of the beauty of God's creation nourishes our inner spirit because Nature is a reflection of God and revering Nature is to revere the Creator. It was the belief that God *is sarva-vyaapi* and resides in every atom of creation that impelled our ancients to worship Nature and its five elements. The story of Bhakta Prahlad underlines the truth that God is Omnipresent. Prahlad, a great devotee of Lord Narayana was in a constant state of bliss, chanting the name of Hari. His father, the tyrant Hiranyakashyap, swollen with false ego, tried every evil device to stop this incessant chanting. He failed. In the end, utterly exasperated, he asked Prahlad: "Who is this God that protects you? Where is He?" Prahlad told his father that God was everywhere in the cosmos from the microcosm to the macrocosm. "Is your God then in this pillar, too?" he taunted his son. "Yes", said



Prahlad. Hiranyakashyap struck the pillar angrily with his mace and Lord Narayana in the terrifying avatar of Narasimha - half-man, half-lion - emerged. Ultimately, Nature is the best teacher. There are not only lessons to be learnt but also joy to be experienced. The galleria of Nature is meant to acquaint us with God's glory and then lead us on to the Supreme artist behind it all. This can be done by seeking from Nature the marvelous inspiration for infusing truth, beauty and goodness - *satyam, shivam, sundaram* - in our lives and thus sanctifying ourselves. Ideally, we should be able to appreciate and enjoy these divine gifts within the parameters of dharma, with a deep sense of gratitude, never forgetting that whatever beauty He creates, the Creator Himself remains far more beautiful than all of his creations.

*Courtesy: Speaking Tree
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Dec 17, 2004*

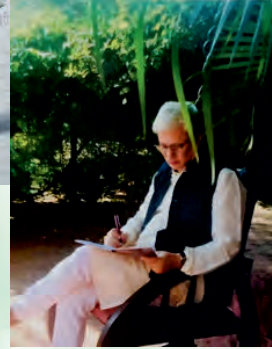
Book Review

History, Spirituality, Identity

Views, Reviews & My Poems' is a thoughtful blend of poetry, essays and cultural reflection. The book offers readers a glimpse into the author's mind, inviting them to journey through his observations, reading experiences and poetic responses to life. His writings are reflective and thoughtful, expressing opinions on life, society, human values and personal growth. His observations are not presented as absolute truths but an invitation to think. While discussing everyday experiences or broader philosophical questions, the author demonstrates an ability to connect the ordinary with the meaningful. The conversational quality makes the book both intimate and intellectually stimulating.

The book begins with poetry, setting a reflective and emotional tone from the very beginning. The poems explore themes such as nature, memory, hope, relationships, spirituality and the quiet struggles of everyday life. They are simple and emotionally honest, which makes them easy to connect with.

The real strength of the book,



though, lies in the large section titled 'Views,

Reviews', where the author's wide-ranging interests come through clearly. The essays move smoothly across philosophy, religion, history, politics, culture, and social thought. Instead of offering isolated opinions, they invite readers to think about the ideas that have shaped Indian civilization over the centuries.

Essays such as '*The Guru in the New Age*', '*The Yagna of Life*', '*The Concept of Ram Rajya*', '*Bhakti*', '*Sunya - The Zero*', and '*Non-Violence (Ahimsa)*' explore the

philosophical roots of Indian thought with clarity and respect. The author treats these themes not as abstract academic ideas or rigid doctrines, but as living traditions that still matter today.

The essays inspired by the Himalayas are just as engaging. Pieces like '*Idleness in the Himalayas*', '*The Himalayas—Earthly Paradise*', and '*Fold in the Himalayas*' are not simply descriptions of scenery; they are meditations on silence, contemplation, and our relationship with nature. The mountains appear as symbols of spiritual uplift, inviting readers to slow down and rediscover the value of reflection in a world that often feels too rushed.

The book has a large section that focuses on the history and culture of Tripura. The author writes about the state's heritage with both affection and authority. Essays on '*Kharchi Puja*' and the '*Risha of Tripura*', '*Dumbur - A Place of Pilgrimage*', '*Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose and Tripura*', '*Tagore and Tripura*', '*Sachin Karta: S. D. Burman*', '*The Lunar Dynasty of Tripura and the Ivory Throne*', '*The Brave Queens of Tripura*', '*Ujjayanta Palace*', '*Sadhus and Saints of Tripura*', and '*Maharaja Bir Chandra and the*

Renaissance of Tripura' together create a fascinating cultural archive. These writings bring lesser-known personalities and traditions out of the margins and present them to a wider readership.

The author tells history through stories - stories of kings and queens, scholars and musicians, saints and reformers.

Readers who are not familiar with Tripura's past will find these essays informative and engaging. Several essays also touch on contemporary concerns. '*Mainstreaming the Northeastern Region Challenges*', '*From Demand to Development-Based Politics*', '*Politics and Me*', '*Patriotism in the Indian Thought Process*', and '*Con(fusion) of Language and Origin*' show the author's desire to engage with questions of identity, governance, and national integration. Even when he deals with complex political and social issues, the author keeps the tone reflective rather than confrontational, encouraging conversation instead of division. Running through the whole collection is a deep respect for indigenous knowledge systems. Essays such as '*The Indigenous World View (Man and Nature)*' and '*From the Palaces to the Hills:*

Gender Equality in the Indigenous Society of Tripura highlight values like ecological harmony, community life, and social balance. These essays feel especially relevant today, reminding readers that traditional societies often preserve wisdom that modern civilization is only now beginning to rediscover.

Stylistically, the author prefers clarity over complexity. His prose is lucid, conversational, and accessible, which makes the essays enjoyable for general readers.

Ultimately, *'Views, Reviews & My Poems'* is a celebration of memory, culture, and thoughtful inquiry. It brings together poetry and prose, personal reflection and historical documentation, philosophy and public life. More importantly, it reminds readers that regional history is an important part of India's larger civilizational story.

One of the most appealing qualities is its authenticity. Throughout the collection, the author writes from personal conviction. His language is straightforward and unpretentious, making the work approachable for both seasoned readers and those who may be exploring reflective literature for the first time.

The different sections of the book present a portrait of a writer who is

not confined to a single literary form but is comfortable expressing himself through essays, criticism and verse. The variety keeps the reading experience fresh while maintaining a consistent voice rooted in curiosity, empathy and introspection.

Some readers may wish for more detailed exploration in certain essays. Because the collection spans several genres, individual pieces are necessarily concise. Yet this brevity allows readers to pause between pieces and absorb each one at their own pace.

Ultimately, the book does not seek to impress with complexity or intellectual display. Instead, it offers honest reflections, respectful literary criticism and heartfelt poetry. The author's voice is warm, thoughtful and encouraging, inviting readers to reflect not only on the texts he discusses but also on their own experiences and beliefs.

This is a book that can be read gradually, revisited often and enjoyed in moments of quiet contemplation.

Publisher:	Bhabani Books
Pages:	410
Price:	1500/-

Swami Vivekananda

The Desire to Travel

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:



As mentioned earlier, Swamiji had untiring wonder and curiosity that took him to visit new places and monuments. Among the many reasons that motivated him, the main one was that all of them aroused in him great pride in his country as he saw a reflection of her glory in them.

When he saw the great monuments, he heard their history spellbound and realized that the magnanimous people of India of yore had somehow become petty and jealous and spent a lot of their time fighting with each other. This is the reason why the nation was under slavery now. In Junagad, he saw and marvelled at the

old fortress and the great Buddhist monuments, particularly the Ashoka stone. He spent a lot of his time in Junagad climbing the Girnar mountains which is sacred to the Buddhist, Jainas and the Hindus. The Girnar range of mountains has ten main peaks and all the mountains have Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu temples. The highest peak is called the Gorakshanath peak where the sacred dhuni still burns. Swami Vivekananda wanted to climb that peak, but it was arduous and challenging. The diwan who understood that the journey could be full of perils, sent a man familiar with the terrain to follow Swamiji. Swamiji reached the peak and felt the great urge to meditate without any disturbance, in one of the caves. He did so and stayed a few days there before he returned to Junagad.

From Junagad Swamiji travelled to Somnath. There he prayed in the new temple built by Rani Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore. From here he went

to Porbandhar where he prayed in the ancient temple of Sudama. Sudama is believed to have lived in Sudamapuri which is in Porbandar.

All his travels made him extremely restless. Why? Because he could not reconcile the poverty and small mindedness of the people of the times with the grandeur and rich legacy that India belonged to. He could not understand why people did not understand the lofty philosophy of Advaita and the glory of the nation. Somehow with this thought he recalled the words of his master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. "You have a great mission to accomplish," he had told Vivekananda. Swamiji was advised by many of his followers, diwans, princes and kings that India would never realize the greatness of Vedantic teaching and also Swamiji's greatness. He should visit the West and introduce advaita there. For the first time Swamiji too felt he should travel to the west.



Children's Corner

Tales The River Tells

Handsome is as Handsome Does

Text: Dhriti Baruah

This is a tale of promises and the miracle of love.

It was the height of summer just before the monsoons. In the North East, this period is called 'The twelve days of dryness'. The river flowed lethargically, half the size of its usual self.

The princess arrived before sunrise. "You are up early", remarked the river. "I haven't slept a wink," she replied. "It was unbearably sultry, and frogs croaked outside my room all night."

"Ah!" said the river. "There must have been many frog weddings last night." "Frog weddings!" exclaimed the princess. "The villagers here catch frogs and get them married. They believe frog weddings attract rain. Speaking of frogs and seeing you are about to cool your feet in the water, be careful not to lose your gold anklets or you may land up with a frog"

"Why?" asked the princess.

"It all began with a handsome but terribly vain prince. He was the only son among seven sisters. The daughter of the kingdom's wise woman fell in love with the prince.



When she went with a proposal of marriage to the king, the prince laughed rudely. "Tell your plain daughter to get a 'make over' to match my looks." Insulted, the wise woman cursed him. "May you become an ugly toad until someone loves you despite your appearance." So the prince turned into a toad. Years passed and he lived alone in the river waiting for love. Even the frogs refused to marry him when their wedding seasons came around. "Too ugly," they said.

One sweltering day, a princess and her friends came down to the river for a picnic. They played and swam, feasted and rested beneath the trees. When it was time to leave, the

princess discovered one of her golden anklets was missing. "It must have fallen into the river when I was swimming," wailed the princess. "Whoever finds it shall become my closest and constant companion."



The toad saw his chance. He dived into the river and returned with the anklet tangled in seaweeds. The princess snatched the anklet from him and hurried away, forgetting her promise. Undeterred, the toad hopped all the way to the palace. At dinner, he leapt onto the royal table, causing an uproar. He was promptly arrested.

The next day he was brought before the king and court. He told the king the princess had committed "a breach of promise." He demanded justice. The king insisted that his daughter honor her promise and the toad was officially appointed "the constant companion" to the princess.

At first, the princess resented his

presence, but slowly her feelings changed. He made her laugh, ran errands, shared amusing stories and stood by her whenever she was in trouble. She affectionately called him "Toady." He even slept outside her room each night to guard her.

A year passed. With the monsoon came the frog chorus and Toady's deep baritone was the loudest of all. Night after night, the princess lost sleep. Finally, in exasperation, she threw him out of the window. When she saw him lying unconscious on the garden path, she ran to him in horror, cradled him in her arms and cried, "Oh Toady! I didn't mean to hurt you. I love you. Please don't die!"

Those were the magic words he had waited for ages to hear. He opened his eyes and turned again into a handsome prince.

Can you guess what happened next? They got married, of course, and lived happily ever after.



Zinky the Zebra

A Lesson in togetherness

Text and illustration: Gayatri Diggi



The morning mist played tricks as it drifted across the vast savanna, making the zebras' black-and-white stripes look blurry as they grazed peacefully. Little Zinky, a young zebra foal, trotted close to his mother, Zibby. "Mama," he said, "all zebras have stripes, but mine are different!" Zibby smiled.

"Yes, every zebra has a unique pattern. We all have our special stripes and we all are special in some way." Zinky looked proudly at the zigzag stripe running across his side. "See? Mine has a zigzag in the middle. I'm different!"

He skipped and danced happily, admiring his unusual markings. So busy was he showing off his stripes

that he wandered farther and farther away from the herd. Suddenly, he noticed something moving through the tall grass. At first, it looked like a bush swaying in the wind. Then he saw it clearly. It was the tail of a lioness creeping slowly towards him. Zinky froze. The herd was far behind him, and the lioness was getting closer with every step.

Zinky knew he would never be able to run fast enough to reach the group. All he could do was stand still and hope for a miracle. The lioness licked her lips. She was certain this would be an easy catch. Hidden nearby, a group of hyenas watched silently. They knew the lioness would do the hard work. Then they would rush in and try to steal her



meal. Back at the herd, Zibby suddenly realized that Zinky was missing. She searched anxiously until she spotted him standing alone in the distance. Then she saw the lioness. With a loud snort and a powerful stamp of her hooves, she signaled to the other zebras. At once, the entire herd understood. Together, they charged towards Zinky. The ground thundered beneath hundreds of hooves. The lioness stopped. The hyenas scattered. A herd of zebras was far more dangerous than a lone foal. Seeing his mother racing towards him, Zinky ran as fast as he could. “Quickly!” called Zibby.

“Stay with the herd!” In the blink of a moment the zigzag zebra pattern became a herd. They moved in quick speed together, their stripes blending into a dazzling pattern that confused any watching predator. That night, beside a river under the silver moonlight, the herd settled down to rest. Zinky snuggled beside his mother. “Mama,” he said softly, “I prayed for a miracle, and one came.” Zibby nuzzled him gently. “The miracle was not magic, Zinky,” she said. “It was togetherness. A zebra alone can be in danger, but a herd stands strong. When we stay together, we protect one another.” Zinky smiled. He finally understood. His special zigzag stripe made him unique, but being part of the herd made him safe. As the moonlight shimmered on the grass, Zibby sang a gentle lullaby:

Sleep, my little zigzag stripe, Sleep in peace....And before the song was over, Zinky was fast asleep.

Together we are stronger. When we help
and protect one another, we can overcome
dangers that we cannot face alone.



Leaving a Thought

*As you close this magazine take with you not
just the words you have read, but the
thoughts they have awakened.*

*We spend so much time searching for
extraordinary moments that we sometimes
miss the extraordinary hidden in the
ordinary...a sunrise, a kind word, a forgiving
heart, or the courage to begin again. Miracles
may not change the world but perhaps they
change the way we see it.*

FRNV NEWS AND EVENTS

READER'S REVIEW

Thank you for the June edition of Value Insight. It is always a delight and uplifting going through this journal.

With warm regards,
Ujjal Dasgupta

FRNV FOUNDATION DAY

Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV) wishes all its members and well-wishers, happy 18th Foundation Day. On this day 9th June 2008, this organization was set up to restore our time-tested national values and ensure ethics in public life.

Let us re-dedicate ourselves to our mission and appeal to all the citizens to uphold (a) nation first approach (b) ensure good education to our children, exams are conducted with fair means / equal opportunity, (c) clean politics - law makers without any criminal background and focus on public service (d) justice for all - timely, fair to all and transparent (e) good governance and administration - quality products/service - ensure proper roads, cleanliness, drainage, without corruption and (f) law abiding citizens enhancing country's image both at home and abroad - follow discipline, values & ethics in all walks of life.

Do become a member of the organization. *Asti sanghe shakti*...there is strength in togetherness.

S Regunathan
President/FRNV

FRNV Governing Body Meeting – 27th June 2026

The Governing Body of FRNV held its meeting on 27th June 2026 (google meeting) and decided the following:-

1. To consider reduction in expenses instead of requesting members for another financial support.
2. Corporate Financial support, including corporate membership and advertisement sponsorship.
3. Musical concert in Delhi may be considered in August/September
4. For the musical concerts, the auditorium of SOPS could be utilized to reduce the expenses.
5. Crowd funding is to be explored on priority basis.
6. CSR support may take some time since corporate organizations prefer funding for infrastructure creation. The objectives of FRNV needs a relook and views of Governing Body Members and Regional Chapters have been sought.
7. Next regional chapters review meeting may be held in the next 15 days focusing on strengthening of regional chapters and enrolling new members.
8. Finalization of audited accounts for financial year 2025-2026, preparing annual report and the AGM may be convened in September 2026. The current tenure of FRNV governing body members is up to 25th December 2026.

HOW TO DEVELOP QUALITIES

You can develop any
quality you want.

Be conscious of the
quality, wish it,
want it and
aspire for it.



Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha



When it
comes to
treatment
of tumours,
we have
The Edge.

Apollon Hospitals Delhi introduces the **Varian Edge®**
Radiosurgery System with Hyperarc Technology
a breakthrough that changes the
possibilities in cancer care.

WITH THE EDGE, DOCTORS CAN:

Treat tumours of any size,
shape, or location

Reach tumours previously
inaccessible or difficult to treat
surgically

Target multiple metastases in a
single session

Deliver **submillimetre precision**
that adapts to patient movement,
protecting healthy tissue at every step



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