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Where Tales of Valour Ride the Mountain Air

Pratapgad Fort
Text and Photographs © Ranadeep Bhattacharyya and Judhajit Bagchi

Occupying a very significant place in the history of the Maratha rule in Maharashtra, the Pratapgd Fort, located close to the hill station of Mahabaleshwar, dazzles the mind and sight with its majestic encircling mountain ranges and the tales of the might and power of the ruler of those times, Shivaji Maharaj. Ranadeep Bhattacharyya and Judhajit Bagchi explore the fort to get the details.
Maharashtra, the great nation of the Maratha warriors known for their valour, is blessed with tales of courage and victory. In particular, out of the 360 forts that bear testimony to the glory of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the Pratapgad fort is the fount from where the history of this legendary Maratha ruler turned into a decisive course after he scored a historic victory against the mighty Afzal Khan, commander of the Bijapur Adilshahi forces on November 10, 1659.

Deathly Encounter
Shivaji held a commendable position in parts of Maval and his growing power alarmed the Adilshahi court that decided to curb his activities. As a result, Afzal Khan, a renowned general of Bijapur who had previously killed Shivaji’s elder brother Sambhaji through treachery, was selected to lead an assault against Shivaji. He started from Bijapur in June 1659. Afzal Khan wanted to fight Shivaji on plain land where his large cavalry and the elephants in his armed forces would give him an advantage in comparison to the mountainous terrains of the Western Ghats where Shivaji and his soldiers were masters of guerrilla warfare. Hence, in order to entice Shivaji out of the mountains, Afzal Khan embarked on the destruction of the temple of Bhavani at Tuljapur (the family deity of Shivaji) and the temple of Vitthal at Pandharpur along with slaying innocent villagers and converting them to Islam by force.

However, unable to incite Shivaji to attack first, Afzal Khan moved his army to Pratapgad and settled at the foothills, waiting for a diplomatic solution. According to reports of that era, Shivaji was deeply worried on how to win over the huge army of Afzal Khan waiting at his doorstep. One night, his sleep was disturbed by a vision of Goddess Bhavani who urged him to confront Afzal Khan boldly and promised him victory and her full protection. Hence Shivaji decided to privately meet Afzal Khan at the foothills of Pratapgad to arrive at an understanding. Unknown to Shivaji, Afzal Khan had a diabolical plan up his sleeve.

The historic meeting took place on November 10, 1659 in a shamiyana, a highly decorated tent especially made for guests of honour, at
the foothills of Pratapgad Fort. When the two warriors met, the over six feet tall Afzal Khan embraced Shivaji as a customary sign of friendship and then drew his hidden dagger to stab Shivaji in the back. The dagger was fortunately deflected by the iron armour that Shivaji had worn under his dress. Shivaji immediately used his presence of mind and responded by disemboweling Khan with a single stroke of his waghnakha (iron tiger claws) that he had worn on his hand and concealed with his finger rings.

Afzal Khan rushed out of the tent shouting “Dagaa, Dagaa” (treachery) and his bodyguard Sayyed Banda retaliated by attacking Shivaji with his sword. At this decisive moment, Shivaji’s personal bodyguard, Jiva Mahala, fatally struck him down, cutting off one of Sayyed Banda’s hands with a dandpatta (a kind of sceptre). Since then, the saying “Hota Jiva Mhanun Vachala Shiva’ (Because There Was Jiva, Shiva Lived) has been echoed over the centuries. Sambhaji Kavji Kondhalkar, Shivaji’s lieutenant, finally beheaded Afzal Khan and his severed head was laid to rest.

Flushed with their victory over Afzal Khan and the destruction of his army, Shivaji conquered the entire stretch from Pune right up to the fort of Panhala in Kolhapur district. Among the Marathas, Afzal Khan’s death caused the wildest exultation because it marked the dawn of their national independence. The defeat of Bijapur was complete, the chief had fallen, his army had ceased to exist and the victory, both in respect of carnage and booty, was the most complete possible. This victory made Shivaji the hero of Maratha folklore and a legendary figure among his people. Ballads, known as powadas, were composed by the gondhalis (wandering bards) to celebrate the victory. This crushing defeat of the Muslim forces in the Deccan raised the hopes and confidence of Hindus across India and helped to create the Maratha nation as a united force under Shivaji’s able leadership.

To commemorate the tercentenary of that historic event, a 17-feet high equestrian bronze statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was unveiled by Jawaharlal Nehru, the then prime minister of India, on November 30, 1957, the same year in which a road was constructed by the Public Works Department from Kumbhrosi village up to the fort, thus making it accessible to the common man.

**Strategic Location**

The fort of Pratapgad, located at the extreme northwestern corner of the Satara district, is at a height of 3,500 feet above sea level on a spur, which overlooks the road between the villages of Par and Kinesvar. This place has
over the years become an important tourist spot because of its proximity to the hill station of Mahabaleshwar that is barely 24 kilometres away. Uday Raje Bhosale, the heir of the Satara princely state and a descendant of Shivaji, currently owns the fort, which is still inhabited by the descendant families of the original Maratha Mavale (soldiers) of Shivaji.

The hill on which the fort is situated was originally a flat-topped high round rock called Bhorapya at the head of the densely forested Koyna basin of Javli. In history, Javli is described as hilly and thickly wooded with evergreen trees. The narrow rugged and steep crest of the Sahyadris, rising 4,000 feet or more above sea level, forms its western wall and in the valleys the tree growth is luxuriant. In fact, legend has it that even sunlight could not penetrate to kiss the ground of Javli.

The state of Javli, by its position, barred the path of Shivaji’s expansion in the south and southwest. Also, Shivaji had envisioned this extremely hilly and rugged terrain to be strategically advantageous for mountainous guerrilla warfare. Hence, after strategically winning over Chandrarao More, the Muslim-favouring Hindu ruler of Javli who was granted the state by the Sultan of Bijapur, Shivaji commissioned Moropant Trimbak Pingle, who later became his Peshwa, along with architect Hiroji Indulkar to undertake the construction of this fort in order to defend the banks of the Nira and the Koyna rivers, and to defend the strategically located Par Pass. The construction of this fort took two years and was completed in between 1656-58 CE. Since then, Pratapgad Fort remained invincible due to its excellent architecture and was only surrendered by private negotiation in 1818 as part of the Third Anglo-Maratha War.

Exploring The Fort

The Pratapgad Fort is described by locals as being ‘a fort within a fort’ since there are two parts to it. The lower fort, which is around 320 metres long and 110 metres wide, has been built on the southern and the eastern terraces and is defended by towers and bastions 10 to 12 meters high at corners on the projecting spurs. The roughly square upper fort, which is 180 metres long on each side, was built upon the crest of the hill where the main proceedings and meetings were held. It had several important buildings, including the famous temple of Mahadev located at the northwest of the fort. The royal darbar used to be held right in front of this temple so that no one would tell a lie in this pious place. There was only one punishment for the traitors and liars and that was to throw them from the steep cliff that drops off up to 250 metres. It’s a different story that there are no records of anyone being punished at this fort as there never were any traitors among the valiant Maratha soldiers.

The fact that the Pratapgad Fort never fell into the enemy’s hands had its secret in the...
The fact that the Pratapgad Fort never fell into the enemy’s hands had its secret in the way the fort was meticulously planned. The dense forests at Pratapgad made for a perfect cover for Shivaji’s surprise attack strategy and in the cover of darkness, the Maratha Mavale positioned themselves in the caves along the foothill to attack the enemy. The entrance to the fort was itself a big puzzle due to the circular boundary wall which hid the entrance gap through the illusion of a continuous wall. The passage to the entrance was intentionally kept narrow and steep so that the enemy attacking this fort would not only get exhausted from climbing the mountain but would also need to break into small groups to enter the fort. This meant that at the entrance, the Maratha soldiers could attack the enemy with swords in both their hands and overpower them. The entire cementing of the fort wall was done with a mixture of clay, jaggery and lime.

The curve of the fort wall just before the entrance gate situated at a height. This curved approach, in turn, prevents the enemy from using elephants or battering rams to breakdown the main door. To have complete control over the fort, there is only one entrance gate to the entire fort and the walls leading up to this have small windows or openings on the top from which the Maratha soldiers could throw huge stones or pour hot oil on the approaching enemy. Immediately after the narrow entrance door, in the dark corner of the passage is a hidden cannon from where the soldiers could easily fire at the enemy. The fort commands spectacular views of the surrounding countryside of Rajgad, Torna and Makarandgad. The double walls with corner bastions, gates with studded iron spikes and two dipmal (lantern towers) in the lower fort formed ideal beacons.

Once inside the fort, there are many walkways and chambers leading to trap doors and steep cliff falls so that the enemy could be deceived.
En route inside the fort, the second gate is called the Raj Marg. This was the gate from which Shivaji used to come from his capital Raigad, 65 kilometres away, on every Tuesdays and Fridays to offer his prayers to Goddess Bhavani. He would arrive on his horse till the gate but would then be carried ahead in a palanquin. As a sign of respect to Shivaji, the gate has been closed for all visitors after his demise.

It is believed that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had the temple of Bhavani built in 1661 after he was unable to visit the original temple of the goddess at Tuljapur. The temple, located on the eastern side of the lower fort, consists of wooden pillars about 50 feet long, 30 feet wide and 12 feet high. The entrance to the temple is the Nagara Hall (Drum Hall) where huge drums would be played during the various festivals. On display now are the original artillery and cannons used by the Maratha soldiers that give an idea of the strength and power of the Maratha infantry.

The dark ashtabhuja (eight-handed) idol of Goddess Bhavani draped in a sari is installed in the inner shrine of the temple. This special Gandaki Sheela (stone from river Gandaki) is said to originally have been sourced from a
river valley in Nepal. On entering the shrine, besides the idol of the goddess one can notice a sword, which is also worshipped by the faithful. It is the same sword belonging to Shivaji’s main captain, Kanhoji Jedhe, who had single-handedly killed 600 soldiers of Afzal Khan’s troop in the battle of Pratapgad. As a reward for his exemplary courage, the sword was adorned with a diamond star.

For the construction and sustenance of any fort, the most essential requirements are stone and water. But how was it possible to carry the stones from far-off areas to such a height and build the entire fort within a span of two years? This is where the Maratha foresight and intelligent planning came in handy. At present, one can see four lakes surrounding the fort. These lakes were specially dug to solve the twin purpose of supplying stones for the construction of the fort as well as serve as water reservoirs storing rain water to be used by those who lived here as also for the horses and elephants. Each of the lakes is around 25 feet deep and can store enough water for an entire year.

A little ahead uphill from the temple, is the temple of Lord Hanuman that was installed here by Ramdas Swami, the guru of Shivaji Maharaj. Ramdas Swami had established 11 Hanuman temples in the entire south Maharashtra, the seventh of which is inside Pratapgad Fort, facing southwards. The distinctive feature of this idol is that it has a full front profile of Lord Hanuman whereas in all the other idols we only get to see one side of his face. Also in contrast to the other idols of Hanuman, where he is shown carrying the gada or the mountain in one hand, here Lord Hanuman is seen with his raised right hand. The local folklore has it that Lord Hanuman granted Shivaji the boon that Pratapgad Fort would never be defeated by any enemy.

The Hanuman Temple marks the entry to the main fort. The palace, meeting place, the horses’ stables - everything is concealed within the smaller fort. And the purpose of the outer or lower fort was to guard this main upper fort. This fort never saw defeat by war, thus proving its architectural perfection. Even if the enemy would win over the lower fort, the Maratha soldiers would any-
way outnumber the enemy from the vantage point of the upper fort. Secret tunnels leading to the lower fort would also help in fighting guerilla wars and attacking the enemy troops from behind. Even the entrance to the upper fort is through a small angular door, making it safe from the attack of enemies straight on.

There are around 450 steps that one needs to climb to reach the top of the fort. Even though this seems to be difficult, it is worth the effort considering the grand vista of the Sahayadri mountain range overlooking the fort apart from seeing and hearing about the wonderful and inspiring tales of the Maratha rule. ‘Pratap’ means valour and it can be seen defined here in its full form.

Travel Tips

Even though there is a straight road to the Pratapgad Fort, the real fun is to take an alternate fantastic trekking road surrounded by greenery that takes around one and half hours to reach the top of the fort. Walk this route to have a taste of the original road used by the Maratha Mavlas in the times of Shivaji. If visiting in monsoons, please avoid the trek.

The fort is filled with trap doors. So its better if you are accompanied by a local guide.

Distance from Mumbai: 210 kms

How to reach:

By Air: The nearest domestic airport is Pune. Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, Mumbai is the closest international airport.

By Rail: Nearest railhead is Vir Dasgaon.

By Road: Pratapgad is usually visited as a day-trip from Mahabaleshwar, 24 km away by road. Otherwise one can also take a State Transport bus from Panvel to Poladpur at night & then stay at Poladpur ST stand for the first ST to Wada (base village). When you reach Wada village you can hire a car to the base of the fort.

Where to stay:

MTDC Holiday Resort
Mahad Naka
Tel: 02168-260318, 261318. Fax: 260300

Pratap Heritage
Valley View Road.
Tel: 02168-260071, 260078-79

What to eat:

Local Chhaas from the stalls inside the fort after a tiresome climb uphill.

You can also shop for fresh Strawberries from Mahabaleshwar at the bustling shops inside the fort.

Idol of Goddess Bhavani and the sword of Kanhoji Jedhe

Must Read

Faster Fenay the popular character in Marathi children’s literature, created by author B.R.Bhagwat is now available in English - “Faster Fenay at Fort Pratapgad” translated into English by Tejas Modak and published by Penguin Books.

Fafe and his classmates have come to the legendary fort of Pratapgad on a school trip. Things are going well till a massive earthquake comes calling at midnight, leaving everything scattered in its wake.

Join Fafe in this action-packed adventure as he pieces the clues, bit by bit, till the final nail-biting finish.
A Quaint Delight

Matheran

Susheela Nair  |  Photographs © Samir Madhani, Gaurav Issar, Yogesh Chavan

It may be Asia’s tiniest hill station but Matheran has loads to offer by way of scenic view points, long treks through dense woods, a pollution-free environment and a market of curios, not to forget the horse rides, says Susheela Nair.
Sometimes the journey can be as much fun as the destination. Matheran, a quaint hill station near Mumbai, is the perfect example. From Neral Junction, a narrow gauge toy train chugs its way around the green slopes, through the thick forest cover and past gushing streams. As the train winds its way through this landscape, narrowly skirting several drops on its journey, it passes through a short tunnel, nicknamed the ‘one kiss tunnel’, and halts at three small stations, Jumma Patti, Waterpipe (where water is filled up for the steam engine) and Aman Lodge, before it reaches Matheran, its destination. During the two-hour ascent, food vendors hop on and off, hawking their forest produce as the valley glides by sedately.

At the Matheran Station, one can see a tiny old steam engine mounted on a pedestal, which served the populace of Matheran for 77 years. The Neral-Matheran Railway was constructed from 1901 to 1907, at what was
then a staggering cost of Rs 16,00,000. The railway was a welcome relief to the residents who had to either trek or ride up while goods were carried by porters and on horseback. The mountain railway was introduced thanks to the efforts of two gentlemen - Sir Adamjee Peerbhoy, the sole owner of Matheran Railway and his son, Abdul, who earned the nickname ‘Matheran Railwaywala’ because of his ‘rare engineering skill’ in constructing the rail line. The 20-km track is considered an engineering marvel, as it cuts through steep gradients and inhospitable terrain. But it was Sir Adamjee Peerbhoy’s introduction of the Matheran Hill Railway in 1907 that made the journey as famous as the destination.

Matheran is out of bounds for vehicular traffic (except for an ambulance donated by a philanthropist), which accounts for the healthy, clean and unpolluted environment unspoilt by the signs of progress. It is the country’s only ‘pedestrian’ hill station. Buses ply from Neral to Matheran or one can drive up or hire taxis, which stop at Dasturi car park where an entry fee is levied. Matheran is strictly a walking or riding town where horses and hand-pulled carts are the only mode of transport. From Dasturi, it’s a 30-minute walk to the centre, or you can hire a horse. In this walker’s paradise, you can trudge along the ‘kutcha’ red-gravel road or the tiny railway track. If walking distances is a problem, you can opt for a palanquin or rickshaws hand-pulled by wiry mountain men. Those with an equestrian flair can choose a horse among the many that throng the horse stand in the bazaar. Matheran is an eco-sensitive fragile region, putting a cap on individual and other development in this region.

**History**

Perched 803 metres above the sea level, Matheran (which means ‘the forest on top of a mountain’) was discovered in 1850 by Hugh Poyntz Malet, the then Collector of Thane district. Malet Spring marks the spot where he once stopped to drink water from a spring on a hilltop while camping around the village of Chauk. He also built himself a house at this
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It is an undulating hilltop cloaked in shady trees and ringed by walking trails leading to several vantage points from where one can have stunning views of the cliffs, plains, grassy glades and the mountain range.

scenic spot. Lord Elphinstone, the former Governor of Bombay, was so enamoured by the scenic beauty of this haven that he built a mansion here, called the Elphinstone Lodge. Thanks to Lord Elphinstone, the road from Neral to Matheran and the railway line came into existence. He also laid the foundation for its development into a hill station and sanatorium for the British, who looked for cooler stations to get away from the heat.

The Landscape

It is an undulating hilltop cloaked in shady trees and ringed by walking trails leading to several vantage points from where one can have stunning views of the cliffs, plains, grassy glades and the mountain range. One can hike one’s way through wooded pathways winding through towering evergreen trees, ferns and wild flowers to see the green-carpeted slopes and cliffs and the whorls of haze or blue mist swirling down the mountains into the gorges from these points. Matheran has a sizable population of monkeys and they will accompany you wherever you go. Hence be wary of carrying foodstuffs in bags as these risk being snatched away. The entire hill sta-
tion can be traversed by foot in the space of a single day and holds the distinction of being the tiniest hill station in Asia!

Matheran has 38 designated lookout points spread across three different ranges, covering an area of eight square miles and an 18-mile circumference. Many of these places at the edge of escarpments of this hill station still bear English names and each point has a peculiar charm and interest of its own. Some of them are attributed to a geographical position, natural feature or a famous person. Leisurely walks lead you through languid trails,

Night walks, travellers looking for some offbeat adventure and fun can indulge in night treks from Matheran to Neral. These treks also offer great star gazing opportunities

Matheran is out of bounds for vehicular traffic which accounts for the healthy, clean and unpolluted environment unspoilt by the signs of progress. It is the country’s only ‘pedestrian’ hill station.

Swimming is not the only way to cross a lake, Rope Lake crossing at Charlotte Lake
each one leading to a vantage point from which one can soak in the charm of the hills. The old world charm is still discernible in the British and Parsi homes en route to the view points. Hugh Malet’s rambling old mansion called ‘The Byke’, beautifully restored by an hotelier, is one of them.

From Porcupine Point one can see the dramatic sunset, and you can hear your own voice thrown back at Echo Point. Louisa Point flaunts a beautiful plateau and the ruins of the Prabhal Fort and the many grass-topped hills. The Hart Point offers you a view
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of the nightlights of Mumbai. You can reach the valley below Tree Hill down the path known as ‘Shivaji’s Ladder’. It is so called because the Maratha leader is said to have used it. From Rambagh Point, Khandala and Karjat can be spotted, and Alexander Point provides views of Chauk Valley. From Panorama Point, almost 5 kms north of the market, you can get a bird’s eye view of Neral town and on a clear day, even as far as Mumbai in the west. Another interesting place to unwind is the Charlotte Lake, fringed by forest, with the dam at one end and the Pisarnath Mandir on the other.

Curio Shopping
A trip to Matheran would be incomplete without a visit to the main bazaar on M G Road where one can shop around for the famous chikki, leather footwear, riding boots, straw hats, dried flowers, bags and other knick-knacks. Salted chana and fresh honey are the other ‘must-buys’ from the bazaar. Also try the scrumptious fudge. The street is also lined with provision stores and souvenir stalls selling walking sticks, riding whips and other paraphernalia. You can indulge in street cuisine here, sip cups of piping hot masala chai over nibbles of vada pav or try out the snacks in small eateries or the bakeries.

Best Season
Pleasant weather throughout the year but magical during the monsoons when the hillsides are draped in swathes of green and colourful wild flowers. Temperatures vary from 16 degrees Celsius in winter to 32 degrees Celsius in summer.

Location
2,636 feet above sea level in the Western Ghats, 22 kms from Karjat.
Distance from Mumbai: 90 kms

How to reach:
By Air: Nearest airport is Mumbai, 110 kms away.
By Road: From Neral, a taxi can be hired. The distance is 8 kms.
By Rail: Mini train – 21 kms from Neral (two hours). Check if the train services are regular as they are suspended during the monsoon.

Where to stay:
The resort closest to the arrival point is the MTDC Holiday Resort, Dasturi Naka, Tel: 02148-230277. For information contact: Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation on 022- 22026713, 22027762, 20411678.

Website:
www.mtdcindia.com

Travel Tips
Matheran is known for being an eco-sensitive area. As far as possible avoid carrying plastic bags and bottles to the hill station.

Susheela Nair is a Freelance Food, Travel & Lifestyle Writer and Photographer. She has contributed content, articles and images to various leading national publications, travel guide books and websites.

Late in the dark nights, leopards also pay a visit to Matheran!

A view from Sunset Point at Matheran

A ride that you will never forget- A toy train
An Indomitable Spirit

Maharshi Karve

Text and Photographs © Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha

At a time when educating women was unheard of and any such attempt was instantly frowned upon by society, Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve took it upon himself to kindle a revolutionary movement across Maharashtra by empowering women. This he did alongside working for the upliftment of the child widow. It made Anna, as he was known, a social reformer that India had never come across before.

Indian philosophy believes that the descent of God (āvatār) occurs for the ascent of mankind. More than 150 years ago, when womanhood was a curse and half the population—that of women—was confined to the restrictive bonds of an orthodox, unjust patriarchal society, a prophet returned to the salvation of womanhood. His mission was to enlighten and empower women. The visionary was the virtuous son of the land of Konkan, Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve.

Born on April 18, 1858 in Shervali, near Murud in Konkan, Maharshi Karve alias Anna belonged to a very pious, diligent and meticulous family. His father was an accountant. Anna was raised in a disciplined, dignified atmosphere. His maternal family was progressive and this quality was absorbed by Anna’s sensible and liberal mind. Though the platform for his reformist activities was strong because of his progressive family background, the journey towards his mission was certainly not a bed of roses.

Early Life and Education

Anna started his own education in a small village school, run by a village teacher. Till the fourth standard, he was in a government school and later on moved to an English medium school for further schooling. The scholarly personality of Anna was a fine blend of Eastern and Western culture. However, despite receiving an English education, his family never allowed him to break away from the roots of Indian culture. He studied various Indian scriptures. Anna was an excellent mathematician but had a little problem with languages. He overcame this with the help of his teacher, Soman Guruji. An interesting aspect of his early life is that he used to read a newspaper in front of the villagers, which laid...
the foundation of his social involvement that was to follow.

For all that, though, there were various hurdles constantly blocking his path towards completing his education. Sometimes there were health-related issues or at other times it was the non-availability of educational facilities. But his mission and goals were unwavering and could never be interrupted by such petty matters. When he shifted to Mumbai for further education, he came in contact with cerebral and progressive companions such as Purushottam Damle and Naraharpant Joshi. Anna secured his BA degree from the Elphinstone College and as a student displayed exemplary qualities of self-reliance, self-respect and independent spirit.

Family and Early Social Work

According to the tradition in practice in that period, Anna married at the young age of 15. This was a difficult phase in his life as he had to manage family responsibilities and also further his education. In August 1879, after the death of his father, Anna had to shoulder the financial burden of his family as well. Thus, he started taking tuitions. What also egged him on was the social mission that he had undertaken, for which he kept a part of his earnings aside. And that’s how the Murud Fund Scheme was established through which he encouraged the villagers of Murud to contribute some amount for social welfare. This was also a reflection of his excellent financial acumen. Sadly though, his wife, Radhabai, died an untimely death and Anna, in memory of his wife, started a women’s welfare fund with a contribution of Rs 500, a huge sum in those days.

Influence of the Indian Renaissance

Having finally completed his education, Anna was now in a position to take up a lucrative government job. But his mission was not to seek a life of affluence and comforts. The period was that of Indian renaissance and the priorities of the contemporary society were nationalism and social reform. Reformists such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Pt. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar from Bengal and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Balshastri Jambhekar and Mahatma Phule from Maharashtra were already focusing on the uplift of widows. All this influenced Anna’s course of action in the years to come. Therefore, the plight of the child widows was what Anna devoted his attention to and the weapon he chose for fighting against the evils of society was education.

Maharshi Karve started this exceptional jour-
ney by taking an oath that he would give the child widows their lost dignity and the right to live life with pride. The emotional trigger for taking up the case was a poem he read on June 12, 1883 that narrated the pathetic state of the child widows, and the first step he took towards his goal was his resolution to marry a child widow. He kept his promise and married Godu Joshi in 1893. After marriage, she entered Anna’s life as Anandibai Karve alias Baya Karve. Of course the consequences were not at all pleasant. He was boycotted by the villagers of Murud for marrying a widow. But Anna’s indomitable spirit did not stop here and his next step was the establishment of the ‘Widow Remarriage Society’.

**Educating Women**

Anna had, in the meanwhile, shifted to Pune and started working as a professor of Mathematics in Fergusson College. In his leisure time he continued with his social work and established Anath Balikashram with the help of a prominent social reformist of Pune, Dr. Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, thus laying the foundation for the educational empowerment of women. In 1899, a deadly epidemic of plague gripped Pune and Anna was forced to shift his ashram from Gore Wada to Hingne and it took permanent shape there with both Anna and his wife working hard to provide education to women.

A decade after this success, Anna now desired to take the project further. The goal was to establish a university for women on the lines of the Japanese Women’s University. This he finally did with the help and strong support of many like-minded reformists and influential political leaders. For instance, philanthropist and well-known industrialist Dr. Vitthaldas Thakersey donated Rs 15 lakh to the university, which came to be known as the SNDT University, Mumbai.

**The Banyan Tree Effect**

From what had been planted as a sapling, the Ashram now took on the proportions of a Banyan tree. The earlier rejection that the Ashram faced by the parents of young widows was now replaced by optimism and hope so that not only did the
Maharshi Karve started this exceptional journey by taking an oath that he would give the child widows their lost dignity and the right to live life with pride. The emotional trigger for taking up the case was a poem he read on June 12, 1883 that narrated the pathetic state of the child widows, and the first step he took towards his goal was his resolution to marry a child widow.

Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha, (MKSSS), Pune - the 116-year-old parent body has been committed to “Empowerment of women through education”. The Institution has a century long history of dedicated work towards making women educated and self-reliant. MKSSS, Pune was established in 1896 by the great visionary and social worker Bharat Ratna Maharshi Dhondo Kesav Karve to provide shelter to destitute women.
parents willingly send their girls to the Ashram but also requested Anna to build a hostel for them. With donations for this purpose pouring in from all sections of society, Anna established the Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha. Today, the Samstha can boast of being one of the oldest institutions with a history that dates back 116 years. There are, at present, over 25,000 girls procuring their academic qualifications under the aegis of the Samstha. Geographically too, the Samstha rapidly expanded beyond the peripheries of Pune to cover Kamshet, Wai, Satara, Ratnagiri and Nagpur while its academic expansion led to the Samstha offering professional degree courses in arts, commerce, engineering, architecture, management, fashion technology, nursing, information technology, and so on.

Rewards and Recognition

Anna’s noble task was acknowledged and acclaimed by eminent people like Albert Einstein, Madame Montessori and Rabindranath Tagore. The former president of India, Pratibha Patil, honoured Anna by saying, “The noble mission of great people like Maharshi Karve remains unshaken in the raging tempest of time. It remains like an emblem of human culture and civilisation for ages. The Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha is committed to strengthen the second wheel of society, i.e. women.” The Indian government conferred on Anna the most prestigious award, the Bharat Ratna. Anna continued to be active in his chosen field till the age of 104. And that was an achievement too!

Development:
Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha, (MKSSS), Pune has diversified branches all over Maharashtra in India and about 25,000 girl students are learning at present. Over the period of last 116 years, the Institution has grown like a banyan tree and at present, it is running 60 educational and other institutes. These institutes are located at Pune, Satara, Wai, Ratnagiri, Nagpur, Kamshet etc. All these institutes are meant only for girls or women.
Draping it ‘Pune’ style

The woven sari

Brinda Gill   |   Photographs © Satyajit Gill
Courtesy: Shri Chintamani Silk Mills Pvt Ltd, Theur

From among the many saris that you will find in stores, the ‘Pune’ sari will always stand out for its typical pattern, cloth and weave. Tracing its history, the author finds that this sari also represents daring entrepreneurship that has overcome many an obstacle.
Heritage, transition, fusion. These are the words that come to mind when one feels and drapes a ‘Pune’ (formerly known as Poona) brand sari. It’s after all not just a sari. It has its own unique identity, created by a set of expert weavers who migrated from Andhra Pradesh to Pune in Maharashtra and helped set up a niche line of saris that has found fame across the globe. The ones who achieved this belonged to the Padmashali community – ‘padma’ means lotus and ‘shali’ means weaver. Quickly acquiring a reputation for their superior quality of fabric construction, constant inflow of new designs and reasonable prices, these saris were primarily made by master craftsmen of the Kunden, Methapelli and Vilasagar clan.

Weaving workshops came to be set up in areas like Gunj Peth and Bhawani Peth in the old parts of the city and according to some records, till 1970 there were about 3,000 looms in Pune. Unfortunately, even though the saris continued to be in demand, production challenges related to labour and the fact that they had to be hand-crafted began to take a toll and the weaving houses started to fade out. One man, however, stood his ground. Subhash Kunden (65), whose father, Narsayya Sayyana Kunden, wove saris and went to sell them door-to-door, held the belief that all was not lost and that the production of ‘Poo-na’ saris could continue to be a viable business enterprise.

The idea was to overcome the problems posed by the fact that it was a cottage industry and too dependent on human expertise. Also, with fashion having taken a turn towards western styles in India, the need of the hour was to give ‘Pune’ saris a touch of glamour. And that is precisely what Subhash did. To know more about how he managed to usher in this transformation, you must take the road to Theur, located about 25 kilometres from Pune. Theur is famous for its old Chin-

The saris are woven with an intricate checked field, detailed borders with multiple bands of different designs, striking colour combinations, good quality and fine yarn, and a higher thread count in the weave.
tamani Temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha, the Lord of removal of obstacles. This is one of the ashtavinayakas, one of the eight revered Ganesha temples in Maharashtra with naturally formed images of the deity. On the way to the temple, and taking its name from the shrine, is the Shri Chintamani Silk Mills Pvt Ltd, a modest complex that is credited with being the only weaving centre of these saris.

So what is it about ‘Pune’ saris that gives them such a singular image? The saris are woven with an intricate checked field, detailed borders with multiple bands of different designs, striking colour combinations, good quality and fine yarn, and a higher thread count in the weave. Therefore, when Subhash decided to carry on with the family tradition, the first thing he did was to play upon these primary motifs of this sari to create a further range of eye-catching checks of different dimensions and forms, beautiful plain colours as well as mesmerizing cross-colour effects. A choice of border designs - some broad, some narrow - added beauty to the saris.

Apart from the pure cotton saris that have cotton yarn in the weft and warp, he developed saris of Art silk warp and cotton weft which infused the weaves with a charming sheen, and later substituted Art silk with polyester yarn. These saris gained popularity as they are durable, require low maintenance, can be machine-washed and have eco-friendly colours. Subhash also expanded the product range to include dress materials for the traditional attire of churidar/salwar, kurta and dupatta yardage sets, each of 2.5 metres.

Meanwhile, when the wane of the handlooms started to reflect on his business due to the dearth of skilled handloom weavers in the 80s and 90s, Subhash did not let the looms fall silent. He set up a powerloom production unit with dobby looms where authentic ‘Pune’ saris as well as ‘fusion weaves’ with a difference could be produced. He understood that power looms would speed up the weaving process while retaining the role of the weaver and relieving him of the toil of work. At the same time, this would increase production and productivity while enhancing the quality of the weave. To achieve this purpose, land was acquired in Theur and the company was founded in 1995. The unit presently has 100 looms with a workforce of 100 people. While the men are employed in processing the yarn for weaving and in the weaving process, the women are employed in the packaging unit.

A visit to the factory reveals a variety of textiles for sale lining the open shelves of the retail outlet located in the first room of the production complex. The rhythm of looms at
work that wafts through tells of the weaving process that keeps up the production of the textiles. While Subhash is at the mill every day to keep track of the production and innovations in the product range, his sons Anil, an MBA, and Sunil, a BE in Textile Engineering, look after the production and development aspects respectively as well as the day-to-day smooth running of the mill.

Explaining the process, Subhash says that quality yarn is ordered from different centres, dyed as needed and then brought to the mill. The yarn dyeing is customized to match the demand for different colours and shades. A superior quality of the yarn is a must to lend the weaves evenness of colour and absolute smoothness. Quality zari yarn is also procured. This yarn is wound on large cones and loaded on to the warping machine. There is also a large drum around which up to 6,000 yarns can be wound. The yarn from the cones on the creel is selected and carefully wound as needed for the warp for the colour combination and design to be woven. Once the yarn is wound around the beam, it is taken to the adjacent room. Here every single thread is drawn into the heddles by hand and then into the reed.

In another room, weft yarn is automatically wound around multiple pins which are used for weaving particular designs, such as for the borders, etc. Weaving takes place on the dobby looms with the dobby placed above the loom playing the all important role of creating the designs. The dobby has a lattice on which the pattern is set. As the lattice moves, its pegs come in contact with the dobby, which in turn lifts warp yarns for the pattern. While a maximum of four colours is used for the weft, up to ten colours can be used on the warp. At any time there are cones of 30 to 40 colours in stock. All these factors lend themselves to an impressive number of permutations and combinations for a fantastic colour combination in the weaves.

The employees work one eight-hour shift with one weaver overseeing the weaving of four looms at one time. It typically takes two-and-a-half hours to weave one sari and 30 meters of yardage can be woven over a day’s work. The warp is set for up to 500 metres at one go and each sari length is 6.25 metres that includes a blouse piece. Even if the warp yarns are the same throughout, variations in the look of the sari can be created by changing the colours of the weft yarns. For dress materials, the kurta, salwar and dupatta material are woven on different looms with the capacity to weave 200 dress pieces in one go. The monthly production is about 10,000 saris and suits.

A set of samples of different borders, each
Quickly acquiring a reputation for their superior quality of fabric construction, constant inflow of new designs and reasonable prices, these saris were primarily made by master craftsmen of the Kunden, Methapelli and Vilasagar clan.

Educated in Economics, Brinda Gill enjoys studying the wealth of a nation through its history and living heritage manifest in crafts and textiles.
executed in a variety of colour combinations, with traditional and popular names offers a ready reckoner for retailers who place bulk orders for saris and dress materials. A variety of borders are created by varying the number of bands and their placement in the border, juxtaposing patterned bands with plain bands and featuring different designs of the bands such as rudraksha, floral, diamond and pointed twill, among others. The borders go by names such as Narayan Peth, Poona Zari, Saheli, Alankar Temple, Sujata, Damini, Karuna and Geeta Kota.

The company’s recent value-addition initiatives include block printing of woven materials which blend traditional and trendy design to offer customers something new. So it is that by blending skill, experience and vision, the third generation of the Kunden family is constantly working with tradition to ensure customers and textile lovers return to the stores to check out the latest offering in ‘Pune’ saris and dress materials.

**Buying Tips**

Look out for the SNK tag when you buy a Pune sari or dress material. It tells you it is genuine textile from the Kunden family enterprise!

**Note:**

For further details, visit: www.poonasaree.com
A Region of ‘Immortal’ Connections

Amravati District
Chandrashekhar Gupta
Photographs © Om Pundkar, Pranay Tiwari, Rahul Gupta

Literally meaning ‘the city of immortals’, Amravati has long had its place of honour in both legend and history. We turn the spotlight on its long heritage and many tourist attractions.
Amravati literally means ‘the city of immortals’ i.e. the gods. Tradition links it to the abode of the goddess Amba (mother), whose shrine is located here. It was the traditional capital of the legendary Vidarbha Janapada and the name of the capital city, Kundinapura, is still preserved in the form of a place called Kaundinyapur. It is said that Rukmini, daughter of King Bhima or Bhishmaka used to come here to worship Amba, their tutelary deity, from Kundinapura daily. King Bhima or Bhishmaka or Bhima Vaidarbhi, associated with this land, is found mentioned in various literary sources such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Nala-Damayanti Akhyana and more. According to legend, Rukmini was abducted by Krishna from here. Ekavira, the mother of Parashuram is also enshrined here. Both are in the form of Tandala (oblong lithic representation of head) decorated with precious ornaments on the head, nose, ears and neck ornaments. Kaundinyapur was excavated archaeologically by the state’s Directorate of Archaeology & Museums in the late sixties of the last century, as well as more recently. The results revealed the archaeological importance of the site dating right from the prehistoric period up to late mediaeval times.

The modern-day district Amravati is situated in present day Maharashtra state’s northeastern portion of Berar - ancient Vidarbha.
It is bordered by the districts of Ninar and Betul to the north, Nagpur and Wardha to the east and Buldhana, Akola and Yavatmal to the south. The region is rich in flora and fauna thanks due to adequate rainfall and good climatic conditions, and is famous for the launch of Project Tiger in Dharani, Melghat. It also has a tribal belt housing the Korkus. Semadoh, a forest village, 48 kilometres from Achalpur on Dharani Road, is a silent peaceful settlement with a beautiful resort, a museum, a lecture hall and camping hut managed by the Forest Department.

Purna, Wardha, Chandrabhaga and Shahnur are the important rivers. Sirpan, a tributary of the Chandrabhaga and the Bichan, which flows through the town, had an aqueduct through which water was supplied to Achalpur, the remains of which can be seen near the Dullah Daravaza. In fact, the region has many remains of its past, one such being the ruins in the vicinity of village Datura. Called Satabudaki, this was a multi-storied construction situated in the midst of a tank on the Dharani route. Also of interest is a sculpture of Karttikeya at Achalpur, as well as several Vaishnava icons in Vadner-Bhujang, a Yadava inscription on the wall that is now illegible, a temple at Lasur, etc. These ancient ruins trace the origin of the Mahanubhava sect.

History

The name Vidarbha has gone through various changes such as Vidabha, Vedabbha, Varadatata, Varhada, Varada, Barar, Berar, etc. These are mostly the ‘prakritised’ form of Vidarbha or Varadatata. The latter name shows its connection with the river Varada as mentioned in the Ain-e-Akabari (Varada rude asta va tata kinara asta). The meaning of ‘Varhada’, given as a bridegrooms’ marriage party member, in the old district gazetteer of 1911 seems rather mischievous.
The Vakatakas ruled over this area between the third to the sixth centuries of the Christian era. Though they followed the Vedic-Puranic religion, they gave equal patronage to other faiths. One Buddhist vihara and some incomplete rock-hewn caves were carved during their reign at Salburdi in the Morshi tehsil of the district. Buddhah seated in Pralambha padasana and the Dharmmachakra pravarttana mudra with the nagas Sunda and Upasunda supporting the stem of the lotus seat is the only carved sculpture here besides the Dvarashakha with Chaitya motifs as seen in the caves of western India. The cave houses Panchaparameshwaras of the Mahanubhava sect which originated in the district in the 13th century. Riddhpur is the most holy place of the Mahanubhavas. Salbardi and Riddhpur, both in the Morshi taluka, are places of importance known for their rich historical and cultural background along with a picturesque landscape. Annual fairs are held here which attract a great number of people from in and around the district.

Chikhaldara – The Hills of Legend
Chikhaldara, situated at an altitude of 3,664 metres above the sea level, is full of natural, historical and mythical treasures. It is associated with the killing of Kichaka by the Pandav Bhimasen as mentioned in the Mahabharata.

As per the terms laid by Duryodhana, the Pandavas had to spend a year in exile without exposing their identity. They took refuge in the city, ruled by King Virata, in various disguises. Draupadi, while serving the queen as her hairdresser (Sairandhri) was harassed by Kichaka, brother of the queen. Kichaka was killed by Bhima. Chikhala and Kicha being synonymous with mud, it is said that this valley was earlier called ‘Kichakadara’ which subsequently turned into Chikhaldara. Bairat, the highest place in the Melghat division of the Satpura range, is close to this place and is connected with King Virata’s capital. It was a capital place during the Mughal period. After conquering Vidarbha, Akbar issued coins with the mint name Barar. Some of the silver coins bear the figure of a small bird, which appears to be a migratory fowl.

The Chikhaldara plateau is considered the sanitarium of Vidarbha. During the British period, it was converted into a civil station. The Melghat area, comprising Chikhaldara and Dharni, enjoys good climate and rainfall. The picturesque landscape, hilly and plain tracts, rivers and rivulets make for a great landscape. The presence of a linear bird on

Cotton plant
Emperor Akbar’s silver minted at Barar reflects the fact that this place was associated with migratory birds, which continues till today. In the old Central Provinces District Gazetteers of Amraoti district, we find a reference, as noted by naturalist Lt Col McMaster in May 1870, that states, “In the Melghat, as might be expected, are many varieties not common in these parts of India.” Most of the migratory birds can be found at the tanks of Javala, Shahpur, Malkhed and Bhanvar villages.

Some of these birds sighted here include:

- Ochromela Nigrorufa, the black and orange fly-catcher, otherwise only found on the Nigiris and in Ceylon.
- Cyornis Tickelha, tickets blue red breast common in Central India.
- Myiophomus Horsheldii, the Malabar whistling thrush, found near Chikalda.
- Hypsipetes Ganeesa, the Ghat Black Bulbul.
- Oriolus Ceylonesis, the southern black-headed oriole.
- Corvus Culminatus, the Indian Corby (the familiar serial pest of the plains is Corvus Splenders, the grey crow).

Both varieties of the green pigeon Crocopterus Phoenicopteryx and C Chlorigaster, and both the grey and red jungle fowls, Gallus Sonneratii and Gallus Ferruginess.

Varhadi Cuisine

Jowar, urad, bajra, masur, wheat and gram are the main cereal crops of the district. Sesame, linseed, sunflower, turmeric, chillies, onion, potato and melon are produced here. Earlier, coffee and tea plantation was also practiced. Bhakri made of jowar or bajra and jhunka made of besan was a favourite dish in Vidarbha, which was often accompanied by bharit, thecha and yoghurt. Now it has become very rare due to the non-availability of jowar and the changing tastes of the people. Wani, a particular species of local jowar used for preparing a special type of hurda, is a memorable classical dish. Pudachi sambar vadi, chirdi, thalipitha are the typical snacks. Vange (brinjal), potato stuffed with spices and all types of leafy vegetables are prepared and liked here. Saoji mutton and kombadi rassa are non-vegetarian preparations.

Fairs & Festivals

The Amravati district has a mixed population of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, among others, besides Korkus, the tribals who have mainly settled in the Melghat region, especially around Dharni. Apart from the festivals of their individual faith, fairs and festivals have been taking place here since ancient times, some of which are:

Bahiram Jatra

A big fair running a month long is held at Bahiram during the winter (Paush-Phalgun). Bahiram is situated in the Ghat about 20 kms from Achalpur. A big rock slab is enshrined here, which was earlier worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims. Nowadays, an idol of Bahiram be-smear ed with ver-

Did you know?

- Cotton was the main agricultural produce of the district in the colonial period. It was exported to England through Mumbai and used by the handloom weavers.
- Paan (betel), kharbuj (melon), ratalu (sweet potatoes), san (jute) etc. were some of the other cash crops grown here. Iron ore of laterite origin, manganese, coal, murrum, sandstone and trap are the minerals of the district.
- Gawilgarh is a fort popular with the tourists. It is credited to the Abhir (Gawli) kings. Farista, a Muslim historian, attributed its construction to Ahmed Shah Wali, a Bahamani king. It was repaired and also improved upon by Fateh-Ullah Imadul Mulk, the founder of the Imadshahi dynasty (1488 AD). Of notable interest are the gates (fort arches), mosque and the guns of Gawilgarh. After the fall of the Bhonslas in the battles of Sitabardi and Nagpur, Gawilgarh too was conquered by the British.
- Sant Devdas Gadge Baba, Tukdoji Maharaj, Achyut Maharajji, Sarvashri Bhide and Dadasaheb Khaparde are some of the sons of the soils related to this district. The Sufi poet of repute, Gulam Hussain Eilichpuri, who wrote in Dakhini Hindi, is rightly called the ‘Khusro of the Deccan’.

River Sipna, Kolkas

Mahaganapati, Bahiram

Shri Kshetra Bahiram
Tales of The Past

Traditionally, Amravati district forms part of the great forest Dandakaranya, which is still being mentioned during the ‘Sankalpa’ ritual. The story of Dandakaranya is interesting and is not merely a myth but the exploration of a scientific phenomenon, which took place several thousand years ago. The episode is narrated in Valmiki’s Ramayana and its references are echoed in subsequent works e.g. ‘Jataka Katha’, Kautiya’s Arthashastra, etc. It is stated that a king named Dandaka ruled over a big empire comprising the kingdoms of Vidarbha, Atthaka, Dandaka, Kalinga, etc. Once Dandaka was cursed that his empire would be ruined, by his guru, Ushana Bhargava. A lot of ash, earth and fire fell upon the entire area so that the land was destroyed and abandoned. A huge thick jungle grew on the land subsequently and was named after the king as Dandakaranya.

There is also another legend associated with this region. This we find in the treaties of Malavikagnimitra written by the great poet laureate Kaldasa. The drama describing the Shungan time (2nd century BC) is based on a contemporary plot. In the play, Agnimitra, the son of Pushyamitra and the governor of Vidisha, the then capital of Dasharna Janapada, divided Vidarbha amongst two brothers, Yajnasena and Madhavasena, with the river Varada (modern day Wardha) as the border between the kingdoms.

Amravati enjoyed the rule of a branch of the Rashtrakutas who probably ruled from Achalpur in the post Vakataka period. Through the imperial Rashtrakutas of Malkhed, Chalukyas, Yadavas of Devagiri, Abhiras, Nizam Shahis of Ahmednagar, Bahamanis, Itmadshahis of Gawilgarh, Mughals, Nizams of Hyderabad and Bhonslas of Nagpur, it fell under various crowns at different periods. A significant role was played during the freedom movement by the region’s local leaders. Additionally, the Nawabs of Elichpur (Achalpur) have added shades to the culture of the region. Their copper coins bearing the figure of the galloping tiger are impressive. They are known as ‘Wyaghrambari’.

The Vaidarbhi maidens were famous for their beauty and virtue. Princes eager to marry them used to come here to try their luck in ‘swayamvara’ i.e. a bride’s selection of her groom. For this reason Vidarbha was called Sabharashtra. To name a few, Keshini, Indumati, Damayanti and Rukmini may be mentioned here who were married to Sagara, Aja, Nala and Krishna respectively. The romance of the last two couples is well adapted by some poets of Sanskrit and Marathi languages. Kaundinyapura, Amravati and Bhatakuli are the places associated with the Krishna-Rukmini story. Bhojakata and Sabharashtra are also found mentioned in the inscriptions of the Vakatakas, who too ruled over this region.

The Vakatakas were senior contemporaries of the imperial Guptas. They were also their relatives. Prabhavatigupta, the daughter of Chandragupta, was given to Rudrasena Vakataka in marriage. This has been established through a copper plate inscription found at Riddhapur in Amravati district. Another copper plate grant was found from the village Charmmaka, also in this district. This interesting thing is that the village Charmmaka is called Charm nka in the grant, which was issued by Pravarasena, the son of Prabhavatigupta. The village name Charm nka is significant as it literally means a place well known for leather. In reality also this area is famous for its fauna – especially the domestic bovine breed viz. Umarda, Khamgaon, Melghat and other breeds. Naturally the hide (leather) produce is comparatively quite good from this area.

Excursions:

• Narnala (fort), Karanja, Sirpur (Jain temples) in Akola district, Maharashtra.
• Shegaon (temple of Sant Gajanan Maharaj) in Buldana district, Maharashtra.
• Gurukul Mozari (Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj ashram) in Amravati district, Maharashtra.
• Also interesting are the archaeological excavations at Tulajapur Gadhi near Chandur which confirmed proto-historic (chalcolithic-neolithic) evidence of the site.
million, resembling Hanuman or Bhairava, is installed against that rock. All sort of things, edible, artistic and handicraft items, cattle are brought and sold here. Touring talkies, amusement stalls, roller-coasters and rides are the main attraction.

**Urs of Chilam Shah Wali**

An urs (festival) is held in memory of a local Muslim saint, Chilam Shah Wali, annually, to celebrate his birth and demise days. His tomb lies to the east of the old Amravati Civil Station, Maltekdi.

**Salbardi Shivaratri Jatra**

On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, a big jatra is held at Salbardi, situated on the bank of the river Maru. Mythology relates the place with the Ramayana of the desertion of Sita by Rama, the birth of Lava and Kusha and the Uttara Kanda story. Col. Meadows Taylor, stationed here in 1857, has recorded his anecdotes. The annual jatra for Mahashivaratri...
is held here when the cave temple with a dark underground narrow passage gets packed with devotees and adventurers alike.

Kartika Paurnima Mela of Kaundinyapur
The place represents the mythical capital of ancient Vidarbha mentioned as Kundinapura in the epics and the puranas. Archaeological excavations of the site prove its antiquity in remote proto-historical period and excavations have revealed coins and a seal of a dynasty with Bhadra-ending names who ruled between the Shunga-Satavahana dynasties. On the habitation mound locally known as Bhima-Tekdi, a medieval temple enshrining Vitthala and Rukmai is situated. It has been built using the Islamic style of architecture. Kaundinyapur is located on the bank of the river Varada (modern Wardha). The Deulwada village is on the opposite bank and an annual mela in honour of Vitthala and Rukmai is held here on Kartika Pournima.

Riddhapur Fairs
Riddhapur in Morshi taluka is quite an ancient place, which is known for the Vakataka and Nala dynasties’ copper plates, found in the collection of a Mahanubhava Mahant. The Mahanubhavas treat it as equally pious as Kashi. It is associated with two saints of the faith, namely Govind Prabhu and Chakradhar Swami. Fairs are organised on Chaitra Pournima and Ashad Pournima. There are 22 major annual or bi-annual fairs recorded in the old district gazetteer. Marki, Ganoja and Rimbhal are some more besides those described above.

Distance from Mumbai: 844 kms
Other distances:
• Amravati-Chikhaldhara: 100 kms
• Amravati-Wardha: 113 kms
• Amravati-Akola: 97 kms
• Amravati-Badnera: 10 kms
By Air: The airport nearest to Amravati is at Sonegaon, Nagpur which is connected with Mumbai and Pune.
By Rail: By train, one can reach Amravati from Badnera on the Mumbai-Howrah line. Now Amravati is also connected directly to Nagpur, which is 153 kms by train.
By Road: A number of state transport and private luxury buses connect Amravati to Nagpur, Akola, Aurangabad, etc. From Nagpur, Amravati is at a distance of 180 kms by road.

Travel Tips
Plan your trip well and don’t miss a visit to Melghat, Chikhaldhara and Semadoh.

Sunset point, Kolkas

Resorts at Semadoh
May the Tiger burn bright

Project Tiger
Anirudh Chaoji | Photographs © Sameer Raut, Anirudh Chaoji, Naresh Chandak

Tigers in India would long have become extinct due to the sport of hunting but were fortunately saved in time when the government stepped in to create protected tiger reserves that helped their numbers increase. Wildlife expert Anirudh Chaoji spells out the background of Project Tiger with a focus on the tiger reserves that have been established in Maharashtra.
It was late evening; the sun was fast going under the blanket for the night. In the little light that could show faint outlines in the summer forest of Melghat, I could see a tiger slowly approaching a water hole. I could sense the tension mounting as my colleagues exercised their shoulder muscles to pick up their equipment. The shot had to be taken well. The alert tiger would not give a second opportunity. Just as the sound of the lapping of water filled the forest – I could hear almost simultaneous clicks and a burst of shots followed... Got him!!

Nothing would be too out of place in this sequence – They would expect good photographs of the tiger lapping up at a water hole. But if we rewind back in times to more than

Tigers have always captivated Man’s imagination – from the caveman’s rock paintings to modern man’s digital photographs... alike

Project Tiger was one of the most successful conservation projects ever. It helped in the revival of the tiger in the Indian forests from near extinction. Read on about the highs and lows in the life of the Indian tiger.
40 years from now – there would be a difference in the situation. The clicks would be of telescopic rifles instead. In the pre 1970 era, though it might sound ridiculous to the present young generation who shoot wildlife with cameras and zoom lenses, India was actually a major shikar destination. So instead of great photographs, people would be thrilled to get a nice trophy for their living room.

The post independence period also saw our fast ‘progress’ towards self reliance in agriculture and industry. Large tracts of forests were cleared to make way for civilized India to march on. Forest covers depleted as never before. Agricultural encroachments caused major fragmentation in the original contiguous forests. One animal that specifically suffered in the process was the tiger. Tigers need good forests and a strong prey base. In our race for development we did not realise that humans and tigers do not co-exist. One of them has to go. It was the tiger that almost vanished.

In 1972, the first ever nationwide tiger census stunned the country from its slumber. From an estimated 40,000 tigers at the turn of the century, we were left with just around 1800... We were actually staring at a complete annihilation of the tiger.

**Project Tiger**

Fortunately however, partly because of the strong international pressure and also more
Tigers spend substantial time cooling off.

Tigresses bring up the cubs for over 18 - 24 months.

Sharing a moment of affection.

Tigers hunt by stealth and not by chase.

Ever alert.
importantly because India had a nature lover Prime Minister in Indira Gandhi—the Royal Bengal Tiger made a comeback—from what could realistically have meant extinction. The planet in the meanwhile had already lost the Caspian tiger in the 1950s. The Bali tiger vanished in 1937 and the Javan tiger disappeared at the same time that we could have easily lost all of ours... around 1972. Today, the South China tiger is almost gone. It’s only in India that we have managed to protect the last remaining tigers.

Mrs Gandhi immediately set up a task force to formulate a project for tiger conservation with an ecological approach. And very soon, in 1973 India saw the launch of the prestigious Project Tiger movement in 9 tiger national parks across India. These tiger reserves were created on the principle of a totally protected core area, which would be surrounded by a Buffer Area, where certain conservation based land use would be permitted. Simul-aneously habitat repair works also began to facilitate recovery of the badly damaged tiger forests. This process was funded by our Central Government with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF – now World Wide Fund for Nature) making a generous contribution of a million dollars worth of equipment, expertise and literature.

Very heartening results were soon visible, with many tigresses being spotted with little cubs. The main achievement of this project was the excellent recovery of the habitat in all those 9 tiger reserves and consequent increase in the tiger population. Over the years, the number of tiger reserves has increased and the overall picture had improved for the other wildlife too.

Project Tiger was based on the simple fact that since tigers are at the apex of the food chain, their numbers are a good indicator of the health of the forest. For a good tiger population to exist, the forest would have to possess a good prey base, which in turn would depend on the excellent vegetation available. This meant, by protecting just one species of animal, an entire habitat could be conserved—thereby eliminating the need to launch separate efforts to protect individual species. Thus saving the tigers would amount to saving the entire ecosystem, which was so crucial for man’s own survival.

Tigers need good forests to survive. Very soon people noticed that many of the tiger forests were actually some of our most im-
important watersheds—sources of many of our important rivers. This specifically meant that saving the tigers was extremely important for ensuring India’s water security and hence the agricultural independence.

In the following years many more tiger reserves were created by including not just the prominent national parks but also their adjoining sanctuaries and reserve forests. This was to extend protection to the tigers in their total ranging forest habitats. Results were impressive. India’s Project Tiger was seen as the best conservation movement worldwide. From a measly 1800, the tiger numbers went over a healthy 4000. Many neighbouring countries as well as Russia and China expressed keen interest in wanting to replicate the Project.

In the subsequent Five Year Plans, the government provided the much needed impetus to enlarge the core and buffer zones in many tiger reserves in addition to carving out new ones. This was also accompanied by intensified protection and strengthening of the research activities.

**Maharashtra's Tiger Reserves**

*Let the Sipna mesmerise you... Melghat Tiger Reserve*

Melghat tiger reserve, located close to Amravati is around 225 kms west of Nagpur. Its 1,674 sq km of mountainous forest spreads over the south Satpura Range and provides excellent habitat for wildlife. Apart from the glamorous tiger, leopard and sloth bear, it is the home to the second largest population of the Indian gaur. Melghat is a beautiful forest. You will easily fall in love with the scenic beauty of this place watching the Sipna river meandering—with lofty Jamun, Arjun trees and an occasional ghost tree on the banks. Don’t be saddened if you can’t sight a tiger in the mountainous forest here. But rest assured—it will have seen you!!!

*The best place for birds and tigers... Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve*

Tadoba, Maharashtra’s oldest national park, and its adjoining Andhari wildlife sanctuary were clubbed together to form the Tadoba—Andhari tiger reserve. One of the most prominent locations here is the central lake that supports the great diversity of this forest. The lake has a strong population of crocodiles and the location also provides excellent photo opportunities as grey headed fish eagle competes with crested serpent eagle and crested hawk eagle to take control of the skies here.

*Kipling was inspired. You too will be... Pench Tiger Reserve*

The third tiger reserve declared in Maharashtra was Pench on the Maharashtra—Madhya
to protect the remaining wilderness areas. The National Tiger Conservation Authority was established. New tiger reserves were declared. In many tiger areas, armed guards were brought in.

Hotbed of Diversity...
Sahayadri Tiger Reserve

Maharashtra too benefitted from these moves. Two very strong tiger habitats were given their due recognition. In the dense Western Ghats, along the Koyna and Chandoli reservoirs, the Sahyadri tiger reserve was established. Most areas in this forest are inaccessible and are hence very well protected. The high rainfall here has meant excellent floral growth and diversity. In fact, this area also received another feather in its cap when recently the UNESCO conferred it with World Heritage Site status.

All time favourite...
Nagzira – Navegaon Tiger Reserve (Proposed)

Another similar tiger stronghold waiting to be declared as a tiger reserve is the Navegaon national park and its adjoining Nagzira wildlife sanctuary. Nagzira sanctuary incidentally has had its neighbouring forests also being upgraded as the New Nagzira wildlife sanctuary - thereby bringing additional forests under protection.

Pradesh border. In fact this continuous forest, named after the beautiful Pench River is separated by political borders that are not identified by the animals. However, the protection provided by the forest departments of both the states has ensured a very stable predator and prey population. Pench was brought into limelight by Rudyard Kipling’s famous Jungle Book. Today, Mowgli and his animal friends have become household names not only in India but abroad too. Many of the locations in the story can be located around Pench.

Ups And Downs

Even as the nature lovers of the country were toasting to the success of what could have been termed only as a Mission Impossible – just a couple of decades ago... came a bombshell. There were widespread reports in news papers about the dwindling numbers of tigers. A dream had been shattered. The nation woke up to the demons of poaching. This was the second crisis for the Royal Bengal tiger. The Wildlife Institute of India’s new research put the tiger numbers at around 1400, numbers which had dipped even lower than those during the first crisis. The government swung into action. There were raids across the country and many poachers were finally arrested. But the damage was already done by then.

However, the positive change that took place as a result of this crisis was that the Forest Departments received a fresh mandate.
As William Blake’s words of wonder at the tiger stand true even today:

**TIGER, tiger, burning bright**
In the forests of the night,

What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

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**Maharashtra Forest Department holds hands with the local community to start Eco-Tourism**

In order to make the forest communities the stake holders in conservation, the Forest Department in Maharashtra has initiated a bold new step of helping them earn a livelihood through eco-tourism. You can go on a trek with these locals, stay in their simple homes and learn about their lifestyle. It is a wonderful experience indeed. These locals are now finding that it pays to conserve.

Today the tiger and other wildlife need a more compassionate approach from the exponentially growing human population. Tiger reserves are no doubt a good way of sustaining tiger populations. But what is more important is to establish corridors between the islands of conservation to ensure that we do not end up with in-bred and genetically poor tigers. Forests in the Eastern part of Maharashtra and the Western Ghats are the last remaining tiger strongholds. If the human civilization seeks to remain on this planet for long, it has to ensure that such good forested watersheds that give us our precious water should remain in a good health.

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**Travel Tips**

Melghat, Tadoba, Pench & Nagzira:
Summers are the best times for wildlife watching. But you must be prepared for the heat of Vidarbha. Otherwise, post monsoon period and winter months are a great time to explore these forests.

Sahyadri: This area receives torrential rainfall. You cannot possibly explore this area during monsoons, unless you have ‘gills’...

How to reach:

**Melghat:** Train head: Badnera (110 kms) on Mumbai – Nagpur track. Airport: Nagpur (225 kms)

**Tadoba:** Train: Nagpur (140 kms) / Wardha (80 Kms) on Mumbai – Nagpur track. Chandrapur (35 kms) on Delhi – Chennai track. Airport: Nagpur (140 kms).

**Pench:** Train head: Nagpur (80 kms). Airport: Nagpur.

**Sahyadri:** Train from Mumbai: Satara / Karad (70 kms). Airport: Pune (240 kms)

**Nagzira:** Train: Nagpur (105 kms). Airport: Nagpur.

Where to stay:

**Melghat:** One could stay at the spectacular rest houses at Semadoh or Kolkas. Resthouse Booking: Forest Department (Wildlife) Office at Amravati. Ph: 0721-2662792. Basic rooms and catering available. Alternatively, you can stay at the MTDC resort or private resorts at Chikhaldara hill station, 50 km away.

**Tadoba** - Beautifully located MTDC resort at Moharli or private resorts at Moharli-Khuntwanda/Kolara/Navegaon gates.

**Pench** - Forest resthouse at Totladoh/ Irrigation resthouse - MTDC resort at Sillari. Booking at Forest Department (Wildlife) Office Nagpur or private resorts on the Madhya Pradesh side at Khawasa.

**Sahyadri** - Forest rest-house or Irrigation Rest-house at Chandoli. Booking at Forest Department (Wildlife) Office Kolhapur 0231-2542766 or private resorts at Koyanagar

**Nagzira:** Forest resthouse at Nagzira/ Pitezari and Youth Hostel at Navegaon. Booking at Forest Department (Wildlife) Office Gondia. or private resorts at Pitezari.
Jawhar

I chanced upon your excellent magazine during our 10 day holiday of Maharashtra covering Jawhar, Bhandardara, Malshej Ghat and Satara. We felt that the Maharashtra tourism tag line of Be surprised to be very apt and had a great time in Maharashtra.

From the minute we stepped into the Shantisarovar resort facing a picturesque lake and meadows, we fell in love with Jawhar. The meadows with the local adivasi girls grazing their cattle, wearing tarpaulin raincoats and ready smiles and the shores of the lake with the local boys fishing patiently was a pastoral sight like no other. The Dabhosa waterfall is twelve kms away and the route to the waterfall via lush countryside every frame of which was a photographer’s dream. The waterfall itself is spectacular and one can enjoy the waterfall from a distance or trek 45 mins down to get to the base of the waterfall.

There are couple of very nice view points in Jawhar. Sunset point is one of them which has good views and some developing infrastructure in the form of parks. Hanuman point is by far the best view point with its grand flat grounds offering many vantage points to the lush green plains below and the Raj Mahal palace to the right. An afternoon in the Palace is worthwhile with its sprawling orchards and view points behind the palace. Jawhar town itself is a friendly little town which is worthwhile walking around and exploring. Overall a very nice place for a small break.

Shankar
shankarsan@gmail.com

Tarkarli

Holidays are special to each one of us! It’s our get away from mundane life. Our family holiday is always preferred at beaches as we all are water lovers. Our favorite beach destination is Tarkarli in Maharashtra’s Konkan belt. Tarkarli with its white sands, crystal clear beaches and lush green palms welcome you to discover a perfect holiday destination. Whether you just want to let the waves wash over your stress or get adrenalin - rush with variety of water sports, it is a perfect vacation option for the whole family!! Scuba diving and Snorkeling floored us as we dived into deep blue water. The amazing corals and marine life is awe inspiring!! The MTDC resort is the perfect location to stay there!!!! Located right on the beautiful beach, the place is picture perfect!! The Bamboo boat house in which we stayed is nice and cozy and well maintained. Definitely, this is one place you can recommend to anyone for the sheer beauty and plethora of activities available!!

Mansi Shah
mansi@2mtours.com
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Where Esoteric Buddhism Flourished

Buddhist Caves at Ellora

Suraj Pandit   |   Photographs © Prachi Chaudhari, Manjiri Bhalerao, Suhas Asnikar

The caves and the artistic images that are found at Ellora tell a rich story of how esoteric Buddhism reached its pinnacle here. Through this article and subsequent ones in the forthcoming issues, Suraj A. Pandit walks us through these amazing caves that represented Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism – religious and cultural affinities that also defined the social environment of those times.
One of the unique features of Indian culture is its religious character. More importantly, the centres of pilgrimage in India are not just religious axes but focal points of economic and social movements. As such, the term ‘tirtha’ is used in a very wide sense across the country. This is the story of Elapura or Ellora, one such place, that was considered sacred around 1,500 years ago and continues to enjoy that patronage even in modern times. Ellora is, in fact, one of the most important places on the tourist map of India and its Cave 16, popularly known as the Kailash Temple, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ellora has a total of 47 caves numbered from 1 to 34 by the Archaeological Survey of India. In this article, we explore the first 12 caves which are Buddhist.

At Ellora, it is not just the collection of caves but also other archaeological remains that reveal the presence of three major Asian religions, viz. Buddhism, Hinduism and Jain-
ism. To begin with, Ellora has a very strategic location because a trade route from North India to the Deccan region passes through this town. Ellora also served as a halt on the trade route linking the coasts of east and west India. This must have brought prosperity and patronage to the site in its early years, while the caves drew their religious and artistic legacy from the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, Aurangabad and Kanheri.

Looking back through history, there is no evidence to prove any royal patronage for the Buddhist caves at Ellora. The caves most likely benefited from the donations of traders and local merchants. Many monastic sites of the period had their own agricultural lands and perpetual endowments, Ellora probably being no exception. Ellora emerged as a Mahayana centre and continued its journey towards the esoteric faith of Buddhism. Apart from Kanheri and Panhale Kazi, Ellora is the only place in western India where material evidence about the existence of esoteric Buddhism has been found. Most of the Buddhist caves at Ellora can be dated to the 6th-7th centuries CE on the basis of their art styles.

Exploring the Caves
Cave 1 is a residential cave (vihara) for monks. This is believed to be one of the earliest caves at Ellora and can be dated to the beginning of the 6th century CE. Caves 2 and 3 follow the typical Ajanta pattern of vihara architecture with the main shrine and the image of the Buddha set against the back wall. Cave 4 is comparatively smaller, and with a simpler plan. This cave has a verandah with the main shrine and two side chambers, one on either side of the shrine. One of the most important panels in this cave, on the path leading to Cave 3, is of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara who is depicted as a saviour god.

Cave 5 is one of the most important, large and unique caves in Maharashtra. There are only two other caves in India with this unique plan and it can be dated to the mid 6th century CE.
while a similar one at Kanheri (Cave 11) can be placed chronologically at a slightly earlier period, though it was excavated in the 6th century CE itself. It is a long hall with two benches running for over 18 meters in the centre, parallel to the side verandahs. This hall is a unique feature of the monastic establishment and was most probably used for group recitation of various Buddhist sutras like Sadhanamala, Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, Amitayurdhana Sutra, Prajna Paramita Sutra and other Vaipulya sutras popular in Mahayana Buddhism. In its heyday, the cave was probably plastered and painted, though only fragments of the same can be seen today. There are meditation cells carved into both the side walls along with larger-than-life images of the Bodhisattva on either side of the main shrine.

The grandeur of the cave can only be compared with two other Buddhist caves from this site, viz. Vishvakarma (Cave 10) and Teen Taal (Cave 12). A path leading to the cave 10 from cave 5 goes through the other Buddhist caves. The most interesting panel appears on the rock surface exposed of the cave 9. It is placed on facade just above the towering sequence 6 miniature chaitya arches. In this panel (popularly known as Litany of Tara) the goddess is placed in the center with all her ‘grace’ and there are miniature depictions of episodes where she is portrayed as savior of
devotees on the either side of the goddess. Another note worthy panel on the same rock mass is of Hariti and Panchika which is very prominently placed. This panel reminds us of their depiction in the Ajanta cave 2. The main Chaitya (Cave 10) is popularly known as Vishvakarma’s cave because of its intricate carvings, Vishvakarma being the architect of the gods. Conceived as the palace of the gods, it follows a religious and artistic legacy from Ajanta in the true sense. There is a huge Buddha image placed in front of the stupa covering the base and the drum part of the stupa, which reminds us of Cave 19 and Cave 26 at Ajanta. The Buddha is seated on a lion throne and attended by Bodhisattvas Padmapani and Vajrapani. As part of the decoration motif, there are rows of devotees, patrons and musicians along with the siddhas proceeding to the hall.

One of the unique features of this cave is its rock-cut balcony. Though few of the early chaityas had balconies made in wood, this is the only specimen where such a balcony has survived. There are many sacred panels in this cave carved at numerous places which can be identified as Buddhist Mandalas, mainly those of Bodhisattvas. Most of the Buddhist caves here have sculptural decorations, some of them quite contemporary. These sculptures are mainly of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas (Padmapani, Maitrya, Majushri and Vajrapani), Hariti and Panchika and various forms of Tara. These sculptures fill the void (shunyata) in the stone and create a completely evolved Mahayana Buddhist pantheon. Ellora seems to be the link between iconographic depictions from Ajanta, Kanheri and Aurangabad to later Buddhist schools of northern Buddhism.

The other two important caves are 10 and 11,
known as Don Taal and Teen Taal respectively. Both are three-storied caves and serve as prime examples of esoteric monastic Buddhist architecture as was practised in western India. The three-storied plan is mainly designed for three different types of groups of people. The ground floor, which was easily accessible, was for lay followers who occasionally used to visit the temple and give alms and the second floor was restricted for those who had been initiated to the Buddhist monastic order. Complex iconographic depictions and sculptural schemes begin here. There are schemes of sculptures which are the symbolic representation of the cosmic order as conceived by the school, i.e. Mandala.

In the shrine of the second floor of Cave 11 and the third floor of Cave 12 there are depictions of the Buddhist deity, Aparajita, accompanied by a miniature depiction of the goddess Pruthvi in Cave 11. Aparajita is a goddess who
is always shown riding on an elephant-headed male. They appear very frequently in the later art of Nalanda, Pala and in the region of Orissa. Cave 12 is more elaborately carved and the most interesting feature of this cave is on the third floor where you will find a specific sculptural scheme of different Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Taras, thus converting the entire architectural scheme into a Mandala. A devotee was supposed to place himself in the centre of the Mandala and install the essence of the desired deity (ishta devata) in his body. This architecture most probably was designed for such type of rituals.

According to studies, these esoteric rituals were performed in isolation and no lay follower was allowed to witness it even silently. The entrance to the third floor of both the caves (11 and 12) was designed in such a manner that it could be locked from the inside, thereby restricting entry from the second to
the upper floor. These caves therefore highlight the popularity of Ellora not only as a Buddhist religious centre but also as a major Buddhist esoteric centre. These are the only caves in Western India where such esoteric practices are evident in architecture and art. They must have been in every sense the most popular tirthas - the place of residence for learned Buddhist monks in Mahayana and esoteric traditions - and also mark a transition from early Mahayana Buddhism into esoteric Buddhism.

The last cave in this series is known as Dashavatara or Cave 15. This is a Shaiva temple and is an indicator of the decline of Buddhism at this site. This is a two-storied cave of which chronologically the upper floor is earlier than the lower one. The pillars of the verandah of the second floor provide evidence of the cave having started off as a Buddhist cave. There are figures of seated Buddhas on the outer surface of the pillar. This cave was originally planned as a Buddhist cave similar to Cave 12, but was finally completed in the Shaivite form. The transition of Buddhism to Shaivism is reflected through these artistic remains. This was the peak of prosperity and glory at the monastery.

However as the monastery rose high in eminence, its fall was becoming imminent. Slowly Buddhism lost its patronage due to various internal and external factors. There was a decline in local as well as distant patronage. The socio-cultural scenario was changing. Buddhism lost its roots and its popularity gradually faded away.
Where a Sikh Warrior, Poet and Philosopher Breathed His Last

Sachkhand Shri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib

Satpal Singh Gill | Photographs © Sachin Naik

The Takhat Sachkhand Shri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib is where Guru Gobind Singhji, the tenth of the eleven Sikh gurus, held his final congregation and passed on the Guruship to the Guru Granth Sahib.
Nanded in Maharashtra is not just one of the oldest cities of the state or home to many sufi shrines. It is also where one of the most important gurudwaras of the Sikhs, the Takhat Sachkhand Shri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib, is located. It is in fact one of the five high seats of authority of the Sikhs. This is the place where the tenth guru of the Sikhs, Shri Guru Gobind Singhji, breathed his last on October 7, 1708. Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib is the principal shrine which is about half a kilometer from the left bank of
the river Godavari. It marks the site where the Guru had held his court in 1708 CE after the departure of Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah. The site marks the place where his tent was erected to help him convalesce after he was attacked by assassins. It is from here that the tenth Guru rose to heaven along with his horse Dilbag.

The Legend

It is said that Guru Gobind Singh arrived in Nanded with Bahadur Shah towards the end of August 1708 and while the latter went on to Golconda after a few days’ rest, the Guru decided to stay on here. It appears that he had followed the emperor through Rajasthan to Deccan in the hope that justice would be meted out to his persecutors and murderers of his young sons and numerous Sikhs, as perhaps promised by the emperor at Agra. But finding that for over one year the emperor had been avoiding the issue and had shown no inclination to punish the culprits, the Guru was disappointed and decided to part company with him.

Here he found a man of destiny and promise in a ‘bairagi sadhu’ whom he baptized with ‘Khane di Pahul’ (renaming him Banda Singh) and commissioned him to go north, marsh the Sikhs in Punjab and dispense justice as deserved by the perpetrators of crime in the past with Wazir Khan, the fajdar of Sirhind, being the most deserving among them. This was just before Guru Gobind Singh was stabbed by two Pathans who had been commissioned by Wazir Khan to assassinate him. According to ‘Sri Gur Sobha’ by the contemporary writer Senapati, Jamshed Khan, one of the attackers, stabbed the Guru in the left side below the heart while he was resting in his chamber after the Rehras prayer. Guru Gobind Singh killed the attacker with his sword, while the attacker’s companion tried to flee but was killed by Sikhs who had rushed in on hearing the noise. The European sur-
geon sent by Bahadur Shah stitched the Guru’s wound. However, the wound re-opened and caused profuse bleeding, as the Guru tugged at a hard strong bow after a few days. Foreseeing that his earthly stay was near its end, the Guru told the rest of his retinue to retire to their homes if they so wished, but he bade Bhai Santokh Singh to stay on here and keep the Guru Ka Langar going. Many others also chose to remain. Together they built a room over the platform where he used to sit while holding his court and installed the Guru Granth Sahib on it. They called it the Takhat Sahib. Guru Gobind Singh had himself named Nanded as Abchalnagar (meaning steadfast city) after the first word of a hymn read at random (Hukumnama) on the occasion, which reads, “Abchal Nagar Gobind Guru Ka, Nam Japat Sukh Paiya Ram”, as found on page 783. Sachkhand, implying region of truth, had been used by Guru Nanak Dev to mean the abode of God.

The Holy Complex
The present building of the Takhat Sahib was constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh with money, artisans and labour sent from the Punjab during the early 1830s. He decorated the Gurdwara with marble and gold plating during his regime. The complex of the Takhat Sahib is spread over several hectares. Besides the Takhat Sahib proper it also includes two other shrines. One is called Bunga Mai Bhago Ji which is a large room where the Guru Granth Sahib is seated and some historical weapons like steel quoits, a broad sword, a steel bow and an arrow, a gilded dagger-sized sword, a few swords and a mace are put on display. The other is of Angitha Bhai Daya Singh and Dharam Singh, two survivors of the battle of Chamkaur who were among the Panj Piare.

The structure is built at the place of the death of Guru Gobind Singh. The inner room of the gurdwara is called the Angitha Sahib and is built over the place where Guru Gobind Singh was cremated in 1708. This site is now one of the five Takhats which are places of primary importance to the Sikhs, the other four being the Akal Takhat at Amritsar, Takhat Keshtgarh Sahib at Anandpur, Takhat Patna Sahib in Bihar district and Takhat Damdama Sahib in Talwandi Sabo, Bhatinda, Punjab. The control of Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib, which had formerly passed into the hands of the Udasi Sikh priests, was regained by the Sikhs under the influence of the Singh Sabha Movement of the late 19th century. Some of the rituals and ceremonies are peculiar to this Takhat Sahib. In 1956 an Act was passed by the legislature of Hyderabad under which the management of the Takhat Sahib and other historical gurdwaras was legally placed under a 17-member Gurudwaras
Gold plate embossed door and doorframe, one from the four doors of Angitha Sahib

Distance from Mumbai: Around 650 kms

How to reach:

By Air: GoAir Airlines service from Delhi to Nanded and Mumbai to Nanded every Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday at 8:40 hrs

By Rail: Sachkhand express is a special super fast train running from Amritsar directly to Nanded. Currently Nanded railway line is connected to Mumbai via Manmad and Hyderabad via Secunderabad.

By Road: Nanded is 650 kms east of Mumbai by road. It is about 4-5 hours drive from Aurangabad and 11 hours from Pune. Nanded is about approximately 250 kms from Hyderabad. Several passenger bus services operate out of Nanded providing easy overnight connectivity with all most every major city in Maharashtra.

The author is a devotee from Nanded running coaching classes - GLOGIC, for computer languages
Board and a five-member managing committee.

In the two-storey building, the interiors are artistically ornamented in the style of Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar. The walls of Angitha Sahib have been covered with golden plates. On the first floor, recitations from Sri Guru Granth Sahib go on day and night. The dome is polished and on the pinnacle is a ‘kalash’ made of gold-plated copper. Some of the sacred relics of Guru Gobind Singh are also preserved here. These include a golden dagger, a matchlock gun, an archer with 35 arrows, two bows, a steel shield studded with precious stones and five golden swords. The complex also has a 300-room rest house for pilgrims, an ongoing Guru Ka Langar and office blocks of the Gurudwara Board besides a press and publishing house as well as a school to teach the scriptures and ‘kirtan’.

Value Additions

In 2008, the 300th ceremony of Shri Guru Granth Sahibji (Guruta-Gaddi) and the 300th death anniversary of Shri Guru Gobind Singhji were observed on a grand scale at Hazoor Sahib, Nanded. The congregation was addressed by none other than Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. To publicize the event a ‘Jagriti Yatra’ was arranged which travelled through different cities across the country as also some places abroad. Recently a laser-ray show has been started at Gobind Bagh near the main gurudwara. In this show the lives of the ten Gurus are briefly but very beautifully described. The show has been conceived and directed by Jasbir Singh Dham while the music and commentary is by ghazal singer Jagjit Singh. The show timings are 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm daily.

Where to stay:

All the devotees visiting Takhat Sahib are provided free as well as rented rooms during their stay in Nanded. There are currently around 650 rooms. These are available in the Gurudwara complex as well as outside. There are both air-conditioned and non-air conditioned rooms available. Accommodation can be booked (subject to availability) at the reception of these Sarai Niwas. Advance reservation is possible by on-line booking through the website.

What to eat:

Devotees can partake of ‘Guru ka langar’ for free meals. Langar express the ethics of Sharing, community, inclusiveness and oneness of all humankind. There is quality check on the food served. It has a langar Hall, in which thousands of people can be accommodated. Besides the langar attached to Gurudwaras, there are improvised open-air Langar’s at the time of festivals and Gurpurabs. Langar is also served to devotees at the railway station at Nanded.

Excursions:

Nandgiri Fort: Just 4 km away from railway station, this fort is located on the river bank in Holi area.

Kaleshwar Temple: This is a Yadav heritage structure, situated on the banks of river Godavari at Vishnupuri.

Bhaveshwar Temple: Bhavatirth, one of the tirthas on the banks of river Godavari.

Kandhar fort: A “Bhukrot Killa” - land fort, 52 km to the south of Nanded, it is one of the ancient forts of Maharashtra, well connected by road.

Badi Darga: This is a typical mediaeval heritage structure built in black and lime mortar.
G B Deglurkar visits the famous Koppeshvara temple, located just about 60 kilometres from Kolhapur, where he is mesmerized by the detailing of the sculptures of beautiful damsels along with gods and goddesses that together present a vivid visual recreation from the pages of Indian mythology.
Lush green sugarcane fields dotted with the odd sugar factory surround you on the 60-odd kilometre route from Kolhapur to Khidrapur. A small town on the Maharashtra-Karnataka border, Khidrapur is best known for its magnificent Koppeshvara temple which dates back nearly a 1,000 years to between the 11th and 12th centuries CE. It is remarkable for its Shilahara style. Legend has it that the temple was built to placate Shiva’s rage (kop) after his consort Sati immolated herself, giving the temple the name Koppeshvara. However, inscriptions found carved in the temple appear to mention a village called Koppam, thus logically making Koppeshvara the local deity.

Further enhancing the prestige accorded to this temple is its auspicious location. It is situated at the confluence of the rivers Krishnaveni and Kuweni. Krishnaveni, which flows from east to west, bends unusually towards the east at this point, thus making it even more auspicious according to the shastras.
The first thing to strike you as you approach the temple is its stunning plinth base. Standing on this intricately carved base or adisthana are 92 carved elephants, roughly a metre high each. The plinth and the elephants together form the base for the entire temple. These majestic creatures are shown shouldering the burden of the superstructure and also serving as mounts to various gods who are seated on their backs. Each elephant is separated from the next with a carved figure of a surasundari, each beauty standing on her own plinth. This kind of plinth or jagati of a structural temple is rare. Some consider Koppeshvara as a miniature replica of the plinth of the world famous Kailasa at Ellora in Aurangabad district.

As your eye moves upwards from the base, it is hard not to be amazed by the intricacy of the pillars. Supported by the pillars, the main portion of the external wall or mandovara is also carved. Certain pilasters protrude, while others recede, giving the temple wall a stunning star-shaped appearance. The intricacy of the mandovara is breathtaking, every part of it is filled with alternating carved figures of women and gods and goddesses. Each one of them is shown standing on a separate pedestal below its feet and a small canopy above the head specially tailored for it. There are small figures of minor deities at the foot of these pilasters as well as at the top of the celestial figures, all in separate decorated frames. No detail is too small to escape attention, the minor deities too are shown seated on their carriers (vahanas).

Most eye-catching of all though are the carved figures of the surasundaris or celestial beauties like Mardala, Patralekhika, Chandravali, Rati, Torana, Ketakibharana, Narataki, Chamara, Padmagandha, Putravallabha, Karpuramanjari, and above all Marichika. This lone figure of the surasundari is unparalleled in Maharashtra. Marichika stands in an atibhanga pose, leaning backwards. She puts her weight on her left leg while the right one is bent at the knee. In her left hand she holds a bow with the string hovering above her head and an arrow in her right hand which is stretched up to the ear. Her shapely thigh (revealed because of her ardhoruka apparel), voluptuously carved figure and concentrated gaze have all been very sensually carved.

On the south plinth of the mandapa Rati and Madana (the god of love) are strikingly presented. The artist, taking advantage of the corner of the plinth, has depicted Madana with a bow of ikshudanda (sugarcane) in his left hand and arrow in the right, to one side of the corner, and Rati facing him on the other side with both her hands suggesting fear. She appears to move away from him in order to get rid of him.

On the mandovara of the temple a monkey is shown dallying with a beautiful young woman. Here the glamorous surasundari and the fickle monkey are very effectively represented. She is youthful, standing in an attractive pose with her right hand raised to drive the
monkey away. She is shown gracefully turning back, her curvaceous figure being carved to its full advantage. The suggestion of movement and pulsating life conveyed by the gestures of her hands and the body’s posture is

Excursions:
Visit the bustling city of Kolhapur, famous for its chappals and spicy food. The Mahalakshmi temple at Kolhapur attracts devotees from across the country. Enjoy a walk by the Rankala lake, or for the more adventurous, many treks to nearby forts such as Panhala can be organised.

G. B. Deglurkar is an expert on temple architecture and iconography. He is the President of Deccan College Post-Graduate Research Institute, Pune
appealing. There are many more such beautiful 
surasundaris on the mandovara. These
celestial beauties add to the aesthetic appeal
of the temple building. They are role models
of physical perfection and portray the many
faces of beauty. On three sides of the 
mandovara amidst these surasundaris are three 
bhadras equipped with all the required fea-
tures of a temple.

Apart from the enticing figures of surasunda-
ris there are a considerable number of images
of gods and goddesses on the exterior of the
temple. They are of Ganesha, Brahma, Visha-
nu, Shiva, Bhairava, Surya, Indra, Saraswati,
Lakshmi, Uma, Chamunda, Mahishasura-
mardini, and others. The garbhagriha (sanct-
tum) is square with three unusual smaller
chambers, the entrances of which are flanked
by female doorkeepers. The Shivalinga with
shalunka, the warimarga of which faces
the north as per the shastric requirement, is
known as Koppeshvara.

Koppeshvara is worth visiting not only for its
aesthetic aspects but also for the well-inte-
grated imagery of its sculptural scheme. The
architect has achieved a balance between the
southern and the northern side of the struc-
ture by pairing two opposite or complemen-
tary deities such as Ganesha and Saraswati –
both related to learning or Brahma flanked
by Savitri and Gayatri and Vishnu with Lak-
shmi and Bhudevi on two sides of the hall,
both facing the east honouring the main de-
ity Shiva in the centre, i.e. in the sanctum.

Further, the selection of two scenes - one
from the Ramayana and the other from the
Mahabharata indicate the artist’s depth of
knowledge and the symbolic importance of
the temple. The former depicts Hanuman
handing over the ring of Rama to Sita, sug-
gestng a very important event from the epic
and the latter depicts Draupadi with her di-
sheveled braid reminding Bhima of his vow
to destroy Duhshasana’s thigh, giving the
epic a devastating turn.

And so, the multi-dimensional temple of
Koppeshvara is more than a beautiful sacred
structure, encapsulating as it does a richly
layered religious and cultural experience.
Art, architecture and spirituality converge
to create a full-bodied living experience. The
next time you drive through Kolhapur, take
a short detour and see the wonders of Kop-
peshvara for yourself.

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Travel Tips

You can travel in summer too if you take precautions against the heat.
Avoid dehydration and heatstroke by planning your journey well.
Always make sure to drink lots of fluids.

Distance from
Mumbai: 417 km

How to reach:

By Rail: Miraj and Kolhapur are the nearest railway stations.

By Road: Khidrapur is approximately 60 kilometres from Kolhapur and 32 kilometres from Miraj.

Where to stay:

There are several hotels to choose from in Kolhapur. For a more relaxing get-away, try the MTDC Holiday Resort at Panhala.

What to eat:

The south of Maharashtra is famous for its fiery spices. Try some mutton curry or misal pav.
Based on the philosophy that a scientific theory is never significant till it is put into practice, the Vigyan Ashram located at Pabal in Maharashtra has opened a new chapter in the lives of rural youth who have learned from here the basics of technology that have helped them not only improve their lives and those of others but also turned them into successful entrepreneurs, writes Ranjeet Shanbag, its deputy director.
In the rain-shadow zone of the hinterland of Pune district lies a village called Pabal. With a population of 10,000, one could say that Pabal is a typical Indian drought-prone village. And this was precisely why in 1983 the late Dr. S S Kalbag, a scientist-turned-educationist chose to use Pabal as a laboratory for his ideas on education and rural development. ‘Vigyan’, meaning the search for truth, and the ancient educational system of the ‘ashram’, evoking simple living but high thinking, came together in his organisation named ‘Vigyan Ashram’.

Vigyan Ashram conducts training programmes for rural youth, particularly for those who prefer to learn by doing things by hand rather than through books alone. Its unique ‘Diploma in Basic Rural Technology’ is aimed at those who want to launch their own enterprises, while its course ‘Introduction to Basic Technology’ has been introduced in 122 high schools across four states in India. Another unique feature of the Vigyan Ashram is its ‘FabLab’ in partnership with a service provider.
with the world-renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA. The FabLab aims at helping people find their own solutions to problems they face in their fields by making technology and processes available to them, and allowing them to design and create their own solutions. Vigyan Ashram has the very first FabLab set up outside of MIT.

**Founding Vigyan Ashram**

Born in 1928, Dr Shrinath Kalbag was the youngest of the children of Shesgiri N. Kalbag, who founded the ‘Popular Pharmacy’ in Mumbai. His interest in both science and activism was evident from an early age and he frequently conducted experiments at home as a schoolchild. Later on, in his college days, he gave talks to make mill workers aware of their rights. In 1952, after completing his MSc (Tech) in Oils & Fats from UDCT, Mumbai, he moved to the University of Chicago, Illinois for his Ph.D in Food Technology. Living in Chicago, he soon got into the habit of visiting the farms and ranches in the surrounding areas on the weekends. These visits proved to be eye-opening as he witnessed first-hand
how farmers used science and technology in their daily agricultural practices. This, perhaps, sowed the seeds for the foundation of Vigyan Ashram.

Upon his return to India in 1955, Dr. Kalbag worked at the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) at Mysore, and later on as the head of the Engineering Sciences Department at the Hindustan Lever Research Centre, Mumbai. In 1982, he took voluntary retirement to fulfil his dream of
helping rural development through accessible science and technology. His goal was to help rural youth, especially those who dropped out from school. Pabal, as the site for this new institution, was picked after careful consideration. Dr. Kalbag toured Maharashtra, and finally settled on Pabal in the Shirur taluka of Pune district because of its typical drought-prone climate and perennial water shortage.

Vigyan Ashram was finally started in 1983 in a defunct oil mill in Pabal, in association with the Indian Institute of Education (IIE), Pune. Dr. Kalbag himself moved from Mumbai to Pabal and encouraged the villagers to break down caste barriers and focus on development instead. Eventually, the government donated some land to his cause, and the current campus was built by the students themselves. Dr. Kalbag passed away in 2003 - a loss that was keenly felt, but did not deter his many students, rather strengthening their resolve to carry out his vision.

**A New Dimension**

The Vigyan Ashram philosophy of education is to teach by doing. Their policy is aimed specifically at those who work best by actually practicing what they do, and for students who drop out of school. In the ‘Introduction to Basic Technology’ course, students learn by trying out different methods one day of the week. At Vigyan Ashram, it is firmly believed that the aim of science is to demystify things, and not over-complicate them. As a part of this, all students are encouraged to keep records of various things. Record-keeping is the basis of any scientific project, and thus is a part of student practices. One can see here how records are kept for small things such as even the food intake of students staying on the campus, their health data, weather changes, feeding of animals and their milk yield, watering of plants, etc. Costing and recording are practiced in the smallest of activities at the Ashram.

Vigyan Ashram also provides training in different technologies in the fields of engi-
neering, energy, environment, agriculture, animal husbandry and electronics. This is a multi-skill programme in which students learn by providing different community services to their villages. This enables students to earn while they learn business skills, and the local community benefits from the services provided.

At the same time, Vigyan Ashram is also a centre for the development of appropriate technologies. Research work is carried out regarding various new projects and ideas. The FabLab, for instance, contains a set of advanced machines for doing electronics projects and prototyping. ‘You can make almost anything!’ is the motto of FabLab. And true to its open doors policy, Vigyan Ashram welcomes innovators and doers and invites them to turn their ideas to reality.

Technology at Work

Farmers, students and all those interested can get first-hand information by visiting the Vigyan Ashram. For example, one can see a live demonstration of the following technologies at the Ashram (VA):

It has developed a kit for the construction of geodesic domes. This is very useful in earthquake-prone areas and during natural disasters.

VA makes use of solar energy for its kitchen, agriculture and food processing units. It has installed devices like parabolic cookers, different types of solar dryers, solar concentrator, etc.

Different technologies are applied in nursery, irrigation, polyhouse, farm tank and modern agriculture techniques such as aquaponics, etc.

It also has a weather station, biogas plant and complete food processing set-up.

VA manufactures various agricultural tools in its fabrication workshop like low-cost 10 HP tractors branded ‘Mech-Bull’.

Some of the technology projects developed by VA students include the pedal power cycle, different LED lamps and batteries, innovative food processing recipes and products, small domestic poultry solar egg incubator for rural farmers and self-help groups, different electronic gadgets like humidity sensors for agricultural application, solar mobile charger, motor controller, data loggers, etc.

Distance from Mumbai: 170 kms

How to reach:
Pabal is located 170 kms from Mumbai. From Pune, Pabal is roughly 63 kms along the NH 50, Pune-Nashik Road.

By Air: The nearest airport is at Pune.

By Rail: The railway station that is closest is Chinchwad. Pune Railway Station is 63 kms from Pabal.

By Road: From Mumbai, take the Mumbai-Pune Expressway till the exit for the old Mumbai-Pune Highway at Chakan and then take the Pune-Nashik Road, NH 50, towards Pabal.

Excursions:

• Malshej Ghat, known for its stunning waterfalls, is about 80 km from Pabal.
• The Ashtavinayaka Temple at Ranjangaon is roughly 35 km from Pabal.
• The historic Shaniwarwada Fort in Pune has a daily sound and light show in the evenings.
One of India’s leading industrialists, Madhur Bajaj is no stranger to the challenges that face any industry aiming to develop. Here he would like to share his expert opinion on the tourism industry and what it should aspire to.

An interview with Shri Madhur Bajaj, Vice Chairman, Bajaj Auto Ltd.

**How do you see tourism within the context of the Indian economy, which has focused a lot on industries in the past?**

Tourism can be effectively leveraged with its multiplier effects to increase our country’s GDP, increase sectors of employment (direct & indirect) and put India on the priority list of business visitors and tourists.

In fact, India has been extremely fortunate to have the best tourism wealth in the world. It has history, culture, monuments, rock temples, caves, heritage sites and so much more. The state of Maharashtra itself has a wealth of natural, architectural and cultural heritage which is immense.

What do you think the tourism industry needs to do with regard to marketing?

We need to leverage our tourist sites with good packaging and effective marketing. By packaging I mean making the places interesting and comfortable by providing proper amenities like pure drinking water, clean toilets, trained guides, appropriate souvenirs and Indian snacks, supplemented by audio cassettes in different languages, such that a visitor truly has a memorable experience and recommends the place to others as a ‘must visit destination’.

For marketing, we can develop videos, that could give a glimpse of the important tourist sites, so that the flavour is enough to tempt any tourist/visitor to these sites. It should enable a potential tourist to select items of his interest just like we select our choice dishes from an a la carte menu at a restaurant. He may choose from eco, bio, or adventure tourism or simply visit heritage sites or a combo/medley which a tour operator or travel agency can weave into an interesting garland of experiences tailor made for each tourist.

And to promote India abroad?

There are millions of visitors at the Epcot Centre, which is a part of the Disney World at Orlando, Florida, USA, where many countries have pavilions to promote tourism. We should have an India Pavilion at the Epcot Centre with a beautiful replica of any of our magnificent monuments and great Indian cuisine, dance, music and souvenirs, typically Indian handicrafts, jewellery and textiles, including saris. We would be interested in a joint venture (a private-public partnership) in this respect that could be the harbinger of other Government-Private Sector projects in the tourism sector.

What would you propose as a private-public partnership in the tourism sector? What would you suggest?

There are many possibilities that can be explored. The Private Sector could be handed over some of the significant tourism sites/monuments. Maintenance of these sites can be done by the Private Sector on a B.O.T, lease or some such basis. We (the Private Sector) could invest in upgrading tourist experience via sound and light programmes and the like, besides doing marketing. We could give the visitor a truly enchanting experience.
I am particularly desirous of launching a project of ‘Gandhi on wheels (or Gandhi Darshan)’ on the same lines as the ‘Deccan Odyssey’, but where the theme would be on Gandhiji’s life and work and the take home benefit for the tourists/travellers would be ‘VALUES OF LIFE’. The train journey could be made interesting by having Gandhiji’s photographs, artefacts, documents and documentaries displayed at strategic places within the train, create an environment by having bhajans in the morning or evening, supplemented by plying of the Charkha or the spinning wheel with its significance in the freedom struggle and even in today’s context. Simple but tasty food would be provided, different Gandhiji related documentaries would be made available, which the travellers can see within their respective cabins, via TV and video arrangements.

Apart from video cassettes/DVD, the library would have written literature which the travellers can buy and take away. These facilities could keep the travellers engaged while they are in the train.

Each bogey could be sponsored by an industrial house and we could put their name on individual bogeys to respect their contributions.

This project could also be replicated at the Aga Khan complex at Pune. We could supplement it with a theatre-cum-cafeteria-cum-village scenario to enhance the visitor’s experience.

**Hopefully this plan will come to fruition some day soon. One last question, we must ask you what do you think of ‘Maharashtra Unlimited’?**

Your publication “Maharashtra Unlimited” is a veritable treasure trove of information on our culture and heritage tourism. The publication is of international quality with splendid photographs and write-ups and is showcasing the wealth of the state beautifully. I sincerely hope that people respond to this unique initiative of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation.

The tourism industry is growing by leaps and bounds. This requires us to build our support system and infrastructure to match up in order reap the harvest. The number of tourists goes up by a million every year. These figures are knocking at our door. Let us together strive to make this industry boom!

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**Maharashtra Quiz**

1. What was the name of the agreement which led to the formation of Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960?

2. In the accounts of which famous 7th century Chinese traveller does Maharashtra feature?

3. Which city in Maharashtra was the temporary capital of Muhammad bin Tughluq?

4. Which peak near Nashik is the highest point in Maharashtra?

5. On account of its numerous college what is Pune known as?

6. Which city near Pune was the capital of King Vedishri’s kingdom?

7. Which is Maharashtra’s longest river?

8. Approximately how many forts are there in Maharashtra?

9. Which city south of Ahmednagar attracts pilgrims from all over the world?

10. Who was the first Governor of Maharashtra/Bombay State?

Yazad Dotivala

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**Answers**

Pink masterstrokes

- The word “flamingo” comes from the Spanish and Latin word “flamenco”, which means fire, and refers to the bright color of the birds’ feathers.
- Flamingos are monogamous birds that lay only one egg each year. If that egg is lost or damaged, they do not typically lay a replacement.
- A flamingo’s diet includes shrimp, plankton, algae and crustaceans.
- Flamingos have a wild lifespan of 20-30 years.
- The most prominent threats to flamingos include predators, habitat loss, manmade obstructions in their migratory pathways, poaching for decorative feathers, etc.
- During migration, they prefer to fly at night through a cloudless sky and favorable tailwinds. They can travel approximately 600 km in one night at about 50 to 60 km per hour.
- Flamingos rest standing on one leg.

The author is a wildlife enthusiast and photographer.
For those of you interested in the winged variety of our planet’s wildlife or fauna, the best place to observe some of them at close quarters in their natural habitat is Bhigwan. More importantly, what comes as a surprise is the absolutely harmonious relationship shared by the town’s residents with the birds that come here in huge numbers.

The Eurasian Spoonbill is a migratory bird, which breeds in Europe in summer and visits South Asia in winter. The bird uses its spoonbill to stir the water to hunt for fish and aquatic insects.

The Woolly Necked Stork derives its name from its white wooly neck. The extent of white wool on its neck varies with its age. The younger birds have more wool than the elder ones.
If there ever has been an ornithologist budding within you, the best place for you to go to would be Bhigwan. Nourished by the backwaters of the Ujani Dam, Bhigwan may just be a small town but it is on the global birding map. It is located at a distance of 110 kilometres from Pune and is in central Maharashtra. The backwaters of the Ujani Dam, which is built on the river Bhima, replenishes wetlands spread over an area of 18,000 hectares, where nature-lovers can sight and photograph 104 bird species which migrate from South America, Canada, Siberia and Eastern Europe. The Ujani Dam with its large reservoir provides several benefits such as of irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, industrial water supply, etc.

The best way to reach Bhigwan is by a private vehicle. You can strike your base camp at Kumbhargaon, which is just 10 kilometres from Bhigwan and the ideal way to observe the birds that congregate on the backwaters and its adjoining land is to approach the local fishermen in Kumbhargaon for a boat ride. And yes, one thing to remember is that such a visit should be set for early in the morning or in the evening.

Bhigwan Beckons

The mandibles of **Asian Open-bill Stork** do not meet except at the tip, hence the name.

The top of the head of **Black Winged Stilts** is normally white. However, only during breeding season, the top of the males’ heads turn black.
The Demoiselle Crane is symbolically significant in the culture of North India and Pakistan, where it is known as the Koonj. The name Koonj is derived from the Sanskrit word Kraunch, which is a term for crane itself. Beautiful women are often compared to the Koonj because its long and thin shape is considered graceful. Metaphorical references are often made to the Koonj for people who have ventured far from home or undertaken hazardous journeys.

Mating pairs of Demoiselle Cranes, engage in unison calling, which is a complex and extended series of coordinated calls. Valmiki, the composer of the Hindu epic Ramayana, composed his first verse when he saw a hunter kill the male of a pair of Demoiselle Cranes that were making love. And upon learning that the lovelorn female was circling and crying in grief, he cursed the hunter in verse.

Bhigwan is believed to be the best wetland in Maharashtra because the semi-waste water in this backwater area has fabricated a very good eco-system, where birds not only thrive but also nest.

A Sanctuary In The Making

During the 1980s UNESCO had formulated a scheme to create bird sanctuaries all over the world. Under this scheme, one of the ten bird sanctuaries that were to be created in India was chosen to be at Bhigwan. This ambitious UNESCO project to set up a bird sanctuary was shelved two decades ago, but today on account of the sheer diversity and richness of bird life at Bhigwan, the project is all set to be revived.

The most unique feature of Bhigwan is that the backwater area is shallow and vastly spread out. The area around Bhigwan is believed to be the best wetland in Maharashtra because the semi-waste water in this backwater area has fabricated a very good eco-system, where birds not only thrive but also nest.

Heads down means feeding time

Flamingos hold their bills upside down while feeding, to filter out their food while skimming the water. Through slow-motion photography researchers discovered that flamingos pump water through their bills 20 times a second to filter their food.
It is indeed extremely heartening to see how the migratory birds bring life to the otherwise small dusty town of Bhigwan. But what is more comforting is the attitude that the locals have developed towards these winged beauties. When the migratory birds touch down at Bhigwan, they provide an additional source of income to the fishing communities in and around the area till their stay. During the winter season each year many wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers visit Bhigwan and choose to approach the local fishermen to get a boat ride to observe such a variety of birds as flamingoes, storks, gulls, geese, ducks, kingfishers, herons, cranes, stilts, spoonbills, terns, etc. Also since many of these enthusiasts decide to spend a couple of days in Bhigwan, villagers arrange home stays for people who wish to do so.

Example of Sustainability

Across the Himalayas in a day

- Bar-Headed Geese migrate over the Himalayas to spend the winter in parts of South Asia.
- Bar-headed Geese, one of the world’s highest flying birds, cruise at an altitude of 29,500 feet, nearly as high as that of a commercial aircraft and cross the Himalayas in a single day.
- To fly so far at such a great height, the bar-headed geese must sustain a 10 to 20-fold increase in oxygen consumption.
- Bar-Headed Geese consistently fly at night or during early-morning hours, when air is cooler and denser; this helps the geese generate greater lift. Cooler air also helps to regulate body heat and contains more oxygen, enabling the geese to fly even as the air thins at higher altitudes.

The River Anglers

Plunge-Divers:
Brahminy Kite and River Tern.
The villagers take a long-term view of how their actions will affect future generations and make sure that they do not voluntarily or otherwise deplete the existing resources or cause pollution at a rate faster than that at which nature is able to regenerate. The villagers do understand the importance of sustainability, are compliant and command tremendous knowledge of birds. They row the boats themselves instead of employing engines to their boats, practice sustainable fishing and do not pollute the environment in any way. The local communities’ sensitive approach to bird life and environment has helped Bhigwan retain its prime spot on the global birding map and will eventually drive the concerned government officials to declare Bhigwan a bird sanctuary.

The herons are long-legged freshwater and coastal birds, such as the Grey Heron and Little Egret. These are known for using bait (seeds, insects, etc.) in order to lure fish to within striking distance.

Kingfisher scans the water for its prey.

Gulls and Painted Storks pick up their fill.
The code of conduct to make love in the flamboyant world of Flamingos

- Flamingos perform ritualized stretching and preening when courting begins. Males group together and often run with bills pointed toward the sky and necks held straight out.

- A female will most often initiate copulation by walking away from the group. The female invites the male by lowering her head, and spreading her wings. Mating occurs in the water, the male jumps onto the female’s back, firmly planting his feet on her wing joints. After mating, the male stands on the female’s back, then jumps off over her head.

- Flamingos build nest mounds made of mud, small stones, straw and feathers. These mounds can be as high as 30 cm.

- The chick breaks through the shell using a growth on its bill called an “egg tooth”. The egg tooth is not a true tooth and falls off soon after the chick hatches.
Demoiselle Cranes have to take on one of the toughest migrations in the world. They gather in flocks of up to 400 individuals and prepare for their flight to their winter range. The flock flies at altitudes of 16,000-26,000 feet to cross the Himalayan mountains and generally flies in an inverted 'V' formation. The aerodynamics aspect of this formation helps them overcome the force of the opposing wind and helps them fly faster.

The flying formation of the Koonj during migrations also inspired infantry formations in ancient India. The Mahabharata epic describes both warring sides adopting the Koonj formation on the second day of the Kurukshetra War.

Tips: The birds start arriving in November-December. But the best time to watch them is in January. If you miss the birds in Bhigwan, catch them in March against the lush Mangrove backdrop at the Flamingo festival in Sewri, Mumbai organised by the Bombay Natural History Society.
Elephanta Festival

The two-day cultural extravaganza held on March 2 and 3, 2013 at the heritage site of Elephanta caves organized by the MTDC mesmerized music and art lovers from the city and the world alike.

The festival offered a grand treat from stalwarts of music, Indian classical dance and western fusion. A painting competition organized in association with the reputed J.J. School of Art was also held for professionals as well as amateurs and the theme of the competition was to paint the magnificent Elephanta caves, sculptures, etc… at the location on both days. Eminent judges short listed top three prizes comprising cash amounts of Rs 50,000, Rs 25,000 and Rs 10,000 respectively.

For history and heritage enthusiasts, a special treat was in the offing. Dr. G.B. Deglurkar, President - Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute and Deemed University took visitors on a guided tour of the caves and shared his rich knowledge of the caves and of Elephanta Island.

Noted artist, Chandrajit Yadav made cave sculptures with mud during the Festival.

The festival was a grand success in its aim of promoting Indian culture and exposing it to the world and the nation. The participation by international artists in Indian art forms will position the festival as a leader in promoting Indian heritage not only in the state but across the nation and in the international circuit, putting the Elephanta Festival on the international tourism map.

The first ever colorful Dolphin and Turtle Festival

MTDC recently celebrated a spectacle of nature – the nesting, hatching and the first journey to the sea of the Olive Ridley Turtles. The pristine beaches of Murud, Harnai and Velas hosted this unusual phenomenon and a plethora of attractive activities that enthralled visitors from 15 to 17 March, 2013. Many entertaining and participative activities like celebrity beach Cricket, beach sports, sand sculptures and Dolphin spotting added excitement and colour to the main event of witnessing the hatching and inception of the Olive Ridley Turtles that migrate thousands of miles to lay their eggs on the shores of the Arabian Sea at Maharashtra.

Cultural programmes organized by the State culture department made the visitors dance to folk music and the local Malwani cuisine with the best quality fish served along with relishes like Modak and Solakadhi satiated the taste buds.

Aiming to promote the unexplored marvels of Maharashtra, this festival, held in association with the Kasav Mitra Mandal and the Suvarna Durga Paryatan Vikas Bahu Udeshiya Seva Sanghatna, is a positive step in the direction of boosting an emerging breed of tourists who are nature lovers. The locals of Murud, Harnai and Velas gave whole hearted and proactive support to the event.

Chikoo Festival

A unique ‘Chikoo Festival’ was organised by the MTDC in collaboration with the Kokan Bhumi Pratishthan and partnered by INTACH - Chapter Dahanu, Dept. of Agriculture - Govt. of Maharashtra, Maharashtra Rajya Chikoo Upadak Sangh (MRCUS), Dahanu Municipal Council
& Dahanu Taluka Environment Welfare Association (DTEWA) in Dahanu on February 9-10.
This beachside town bordering Gujarat is famous for its vast chikoo farms. The Chikoo Safari took guests on a journey along orchard-lined roads to get a feel of Chikoo Farming hands-on-experience and appreciate the level of difficulty it actually entails.

The festival was held at the Camping Ground in Bordi under the swaying coconut palms. Events ranged from a small fun-fair with stalls to showcase tribal art and craft of the Warlis, agricultural products, fresh fruits and their byproducts, a photo exhibition on the region as well as outdoor attractions like the Warli dance, not to forget Parsi and Irani cuisine. Tourists could visit the weekly bazaar, join a sand castle competition, make and fly kites or enjoy a bonfire to the accompaniment of local cuisine at the beach. All in all, a weekend filled with fun and frolic.
How Vidarbha confronts social evils through its festivals

Marabats and Badgyas
Chandrakeshkar Gupta | Photographs © Rahul Gupta

Most festivals in India always have a social or religious connotation. In Nagpur, the festival of Marabats and Badgyas go a step further and directly confront social evils and criticise their perpetrators through a procession with effigies, writes Prof. Chandrakeshkar Gupta.
On Bhadrapada Shukla Pratipada (approximately August – September) of the Indian lunar calendar, a unique festival, popularly known as Marabat, is celebrated in the eastern part of Vidarbha. It is held on a somewhat larger scale and in a rather unique way in Nagpur where huge male and female effigies are taken out by various people and institutions while shouting slogans and beating the drums. In the evening a festival of toy bulls, called ‘Tanha Pola’, is celebrated by children. Marabat and Badgyas are female and male representations respectively. Marabats are of two main types, viz. Kalee Marabat and Pelee Marabat. These, and various smaller versions, are in fulfilment of some vow or desire.

The Badgyas are male figures personifying crime or nuisance, for example dowry, bribery, corruption, scams, scandals, encroachment, load-shedding, smuggling, etc or as a way to disgrace or condemn someone associated with any similar social problems.

Marabats are also considered to have the power to do away with ailments and the processions are accompanied with such slogans as “Khansee, khokhala, ida, peeda, mase, murkute, rog, rai - gheoon ja ge Marabat” (“O Marabat, take away cough, cold, pain and sufferings, insects like flies and mosquitos, deceases and epidemics”).
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Marabats and Badgyas are made of bamboo, paper and foil. Kalee Marabat is in the form of a bust of a lady with hands stretched sideways. She is bareheaded and has a dark complexion, bulging eyes, and her tongue stretches out of her sharp-toothed open mouth. She stands with open palms. In a way she is like the goddess Kali or a tribal deity. As against this, Peelee Marabat has a graceful body shown seated on a seat with her right leg folded and placed vertically. Her right arm is shown resting on the raised right knee. Of a yellow complexion, she wears a sari bedecked with jewellery like a nose ring, earrings, necklaces, bangles, etc. All this suggests that the effigy of Peelee Marabat appears to be a royal lady or a queen.

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There is an oral tradition in Nagpur which identifies Peelee Marabat with Bakabai, the widowed queen of Raghiji II Bhonsle, who played an important role in contemporary politics. This theory is indirectly supported by literary and archival documents. It is further suggested that due to Bakabai’s pro-British policy, the people of her region were against her and their anger was vented by taking out her effigy in the form of a Marabat.

The tradition of celebrating Marabat coincides with the mid-monsoon season when the environment turns unhygienic and begins to fester due to the earth becoming marshy and the stagnant pools of water turning into a breeding ground for insects, flies and mosquitoes that lead to diseases like cough, cold, fever, malaria, pneumonia, etc. The festival is thus targeted at keeping the environment clean and free of ailments, which is why garbage and filth is collected in various areas and burnt. The first day of Bhadrapada Shukla (August – September) is selected for this occasion. A day or two earlier, branches of Palash (Butea monosperma/ frondosa) are bought and kept in the corners and at the sides flanking the door. On the day of the Marabat, people take these branches and join the procession. These branches of Palash, also called Mendhi and Badgyas, actually represent a baton. A mock drill is observed to drive away all forms of nuisance by beating the ground with Palash batons and then burning them at the junctions where four roads meet.

The procession with Marabat and Badgyas effigies are taken out before noon from the old city area. Kalee Marabat and Peelee Marabat are the two historical ones that start from the Nehru Putala Grain Market and Tandapeth respectively. They are said to be 130 and 128
Peeli Marabat

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years old respectively. The other Marabats viz. Chhoti Peelee Marabat, Chhoti Kalee Marabat, Laal Marabat, etc are spin-offs from the original form of the Marabat and their various postures are the fancy of some imaginative people. A small Peelee Marabat with her hands stretched sideways like a Kalee Marabat was recently taken out by the Peelee Marabat Tarun Mandal of Navi Mangalwari in Nagpur. The Matang Samaj of Juni Mangalwari came up with a Laal Marabat with suspended hands while another new Marabat was displayed by the Vidarbha Kisan Samiti and Rameshvri Mitra Mandal.

The new Marabat was depicted as a youthful maiden seated on a seat in European style with her left hand in a resting position and the right hand in a boon-giving posture. She was adorned with ornaments like bindiya, nathani, karnafool, mala, bangdyas, etc. Originally Marabat effigies were made of earth and this practice has been continued in some parts of Vidarbha.

Badgyas, the male effigies accompanying Marabat, are personifications of the Palash possessing great historical value. It is said that when the effigy of Rani Bakabai was taken out as a Marabat by people to express their anger, an Englishman’s effigy representing the East India Company too was taken out simultaneously. History has it that the way the British got hold over the Nagpur Kingdom was a heinous act on their part. At this time, Bakabai was in poor health and in a strange coincidence she expired on the day the Marabat was taken out. Whether this was out of ill-health or shock will never be known.

Meanwhile, the Badgyas have always had interesting reflections of what is wrong with Indian society. For instance, one such Badgyas was of K M Veerappan, the sandalwood smuggler. The effigy had him in his typical dress and trademark moustache with a banner in Marathi stating, “I have the support of several leaders. I am Veerappan, the sandalwood smuggler.” Other such effigies have been of Pakistani leaders like Ayub Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Pervez Musharraf as well as terrorists like Osama Bin Laden, Hafeez Sayed, Ajmal Kasab etc. for their anti Indian activities. Indian culprits like Harshad Mehta, Karim Telgi, too, have not been spared too. The objective is to show that these are people who have cheated the common man with false promises or scams.

What probably began as a way of social awakening many decades ago has now also taken on a religious form so that there are many who worship Marabat as a deity. They offer her prayers and prasad while aartis and bhajans are sung in her favour. A married woman, for example, will pray to Peelee and Kalee Marabat to bless her with a child. Interestingly, the local event is now attracting people from outside the state and even from abroad so that it has now given the Vidarbha region an additional tourist value.

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Travel Tips

Combine your visit to Nagpur with a weekend in some of India’s most beautiful forests. Look up our article on the tiger in this issue for more details!

Distance from Mumbai: 842 kms
How to reach:

By Air: Nagpur airport has frequent flights to major cities across India.

By Train: The Nagpur railway station is one of the biggest junctions in India, with trains from across India stopping here, and frequent connections to big cities.

By Road: Nagpur is situated at the junction between the National Highway 6 and National Highway 7. MSRTC runs both intercity and inter-state bus services to Nagpur.

Where to stay:

There are many hotels in Nagpur, accommodating a variety of budgets.

What to eat:

Don’t miss the Santra Barfi, Saavji Mutton.

Excursions:

The Sevagram ashram set up by Mahatma Gandhi is a couple of hours out of Nagpur.

Look out for tigers at the Tadoba-Andhari reserve, a few hours from Nagpur.

The Deekshabhumi Stupa, located in Nagpur itself, is an important Buddhist site of pilgrimage, famous for Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar’s conversion to Buddhism.
A Window Through Time

The Town Hall Museum, Kolhapur

Text and Photographs © Yogesh Prabhudesai, Courtesy: Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Maharashtra

The Town Hall Museum in Kolhapur not only offers an exciting glimpse of the relics of the Brahmapuri settlement, but houses the paintings and portraits of some of the best known artists of the country.
Mention the city Kolhapur, and images of its lakes and temples, the most famous being the historical old Mahalakshmi Temple are immediately conjured up. However, there is yet another facet of the city which is sometimes not explored by the tourists, the Town Hall Museum. Located down the Bhausingji Road opposite the Chhatrapati Pramilaraje Rughnalaya, the city’s civil hospital, the museum is housed in a structure that the British built in their typical style. Of great value to those interested in architectural history, it was constructed by Major C Mant, a British engineer, over a span of four years from 1872–76.

**History**

The museum’s history can be traced back to 1946, when distinguished archaeologist Dr. H D Sankalia along with Dr. M G Dikshit from Pune were appointed to carry out excavations on a hillock called Brahmapuri. They
eventually proved that the Brahmapuri settlement flourished during the sovereignty of the Satvahana kings. The excavation unearthed so many relics that it became necessary to find a place to store them safely. A basic make-shift museum of sorts was set up in the ashram of a Jain swami, which was later shifted to the house of Mr. Sankpal. Considering the fact that the collection would grow over the years, it was finally decided to find the treasures a more permanent home and this led to the establishment of the Town Hall Museum.

From 1949 till 1953, the Town Hall Museum displayed only archaeological remains as exhibits. Local artists however persuaded the municipal authorities to create an art section. Visitors could now see not only the remains of the past in the form of weaponry, pottery, etc but also appreciate the works of distinguished artists from Kolhapur and elsewhere. Eventually, with the increase in the number of exhibits, in February 1968, the collection was classified into seven precise sections namely portraits, paintings, archaeology, sculpture, metal, weapons and miscellaneous.
Main Sections

At the entrance of the museum are two impressive 18th century cannons kept at lateral positions behind which are placed a pair of mediaeval elephant sculptures obtained from the Mahalakshmi Temple. The first section is marked ‘Miscellaneous’ which now also houses the archaeological discoveries. However, before you can view the exhibits of this section, you must move through a corridor that has some beautiful sculptures carved out of stone. From amongst the ancient sculptures, the one that draws maximum attention is that of Vishnu, obtained from Raibaug in Karnataka. The figure of Vishnu is flanked by a canopy of a scroll with ten incarnations carved on the stone itself. Another popular exhibit is that of Chandra, depicting the moon god seated on a chariot drawn by an animal resembling a deer. Some of the other equally bewitching works are those of Narada, Yakshi and Surya.

This section leads to the one marked ‘Weapons’ which has a myriad collection ranging from Stone Age axes to guns used in World War I. Also on display are swords of different types from the Mughal and Maratha empires. Further ahead, along with the shields made from the hides of rhinoceros and tortoises are some historical weapons such as the Gurj, Madu and Gupti. There also are various kinds of pistols, small cannons, German helmets and bayonets. Moving on, we come to the ‘Metal’ section where you can see iconic brass idols of Vishnu and Mahalakshmi along with that of Garuda, which is believed to belong to the 11th century CE. Some of the copper-plate inscriptions displayed here are worth a study, especially one made by Gandharadiya, a Shilahara king, in the second half of 11th century CE. This section also includes utensils, cauldrons, pitchers, tumblers and other metal items used in households from the 11th to the 15th centuries CE.

And so it is that we arrive at the main section, flanked by the busts of British royals sculpted by artist Ganpatrao Mhatre in 1904. The most charming statues among them are those of Queen Mary, Queen Victoria, George V and Edward VII. Besides these, there are many other specifically assorted items on display that include beautiful idols made of ivory and sandalwood, porcelain dishes, dice, decorative pots painted with a layer of lac,
terracotta musical instruments dating back to 1888, etc. Some of the exhibits that are most appreciated are a chain carved out of a single stone, a typical Maratha ‘durbar’ jacket with turban and shawl, hand fans, Marathi almanacs, and so on.

But it is the Portuguese bell that inevitably attracts the visitors the most, especially because of the story behind it. It is said that the bell was taken away by Chimaji Appa in an attack against the Portuguese and was eventually offered to the Mahalakshmi Temple in the year 1901. Later on, this bell was replaced due to some cracks on it caused by its incessant use. Among the other interesting relics of the past is a bronze idol of the Greek god Poseidon which was discovered during an excavation led by Prof. Kundangar of Kolhapur’s Rajaram College. Also, the evidence of the Brahmapuri settlement is firmly established by items such as a tiny terracotta sculpture of Matrudevi (mother goddess), glass beads, pendants, bangles, Roman amphorae, a terracotta image of a man feeding a parrot, cart and lion in bronze, Roman medallions and

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colourful Bahamani bangle pieces that date back to 13th century CE.

**Showcasing Art**

Having completed the main sections of the museum, our way now leads to two cells marked ‘Portraits’ and ‘Paintings’. As you enter, you realise why Kolhapur is also known as Kalapur, or the city of art. The city has been the birthplace of many a famous artist, filmmaker, sculptor and so on. It is here then that you will find the paintings of Kalamaharshi Baburao Painter, better known for his pioneering work in the evolution of Indian cinema. The paintings also include the works of Kalatapsvi Abalal Rahiman (1856-1937) whose ‘Still Life’ and ‘Horse’ are considered masterpieces in the world of art. Among the other artists whose paintings have been mounted are those of Ganpatrao Wadangekar, Ravindra Mestri, Bal Gajbar, R S Gosavi, Chandrakant Mandaray, etc.

The section comprising portraits is equally mesmerising, providing an introduction to the skills of such great artists as G Wadangekar, Bal Gajbar and Ravindra Mestri with the display of ‘Michel’, ‘Pandit Nehru’ and ‘Sudha’ respectively. Of the portraits created by Baburao Painter, the one titled ‘Korgaonkar’ is easily the most charming, and also helps us understand his technique and style. Children can often be found drawn to a portrait titled ‘Madari’ that depicts very subtle emotions on the face of a man who stages road shows with his monkey. What adds to the liveliness of this portrait is the gesture of the monkey. Shivaji Maharaj slaying a boar is yet another masterpiece with finely detailed depiction of the movement of the horse, the position of the wounded boar and the attacking stance of the king.

**Timings**

The museum is open from 10.30 am – 1.00 pm and 1.30 pm - 5.30 pm on all days except Monday. Visitors must note that photography is strictly prohibited. However, notebooks or sketchbooks are allowed. To know more, call 0231-2540481.
Close to Mumbai, a 15 kilometre long stretch of white sand beach bordered by fragrant chikoo orchards, at the foothills of the lushly vegetated Western Ghats lies peacefully removed from the chaos of city life. The region Bordi-Dahanu, located at a three-hour drive along the picturesque Sahyadri mountain range in Thane district, is known for its quaint beaches, fruit orchards, green mountains and content population.

Maybe Bordi-Dahanu has escaped the clutches of urban chaos partly thanks to the blessings of Mahalakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, whose temple is located at Charoti. Charoti is a left turn and a short drive away from National Highway 8, a few kilometers before reaching Dahanu. A colourful array of shops selling puja items and souvenirs, including women selling lotus flowers, line the entrance lane of the temple. What is impressive here is the temple’s sandstone architecture which includes a Warli painting that highlights the region’s tribal culture and its strong links with nature.

A Green Zone
Dahanu welcomes you on a ‘fruity’ note. It is a small town with historical links to the Warli, Portuguese and the Parsi communities. Frequent on the weekends by Mumbaikars looking for a getaway, it is best known for its lush chikoo plantations along with mangoes and coconuts. As a ‘green zone’, it was the first among such regions in India to be declared ‘eco-fragile’ by the government. This has fortunately curbed unplanned development and maintained its serenity. The Warlis are its indigenous tribe and though quintessentially forest-dwellers, they have now become a pastoral community. They continue
to live in their tribal hamlets and are known far and wide for their decorative mural paintings. As for its Portuguese influence, the remnants of a fort in the town centre continue to be a reminder of its earlier rulers. The fort now houses administrative offices.

**Bordi Beach**

The beach of Bordi is the most captivating feature of the region’s landscape, extending for a good 15 kilometres from Dahanu. Moreover, it is clean and its shallow water level doesn’t rise above the waistline for upto half a kilometre into the sea. This is what makes it ideal for walks and picnics. Casuarinas and chikoo (sapota) orchards line the beach, adding to its picturesque setting.

**Warli Art**

Many tourists come to Dahanu to study the Warli tribe’s simple lifestyle, a result of their age-old knowledge and wisdom. Shunning outside influence in all its forms, they have managed to survive for more than 2,500 years, passing down traditions orally and keeping their identity intact. This intimate knowledge of their surroundings is displayed in their paintings. In fact, one of the greatest contributions of the Warlis is their art that was brought into limelight three decades ago. The monochromatic paintings express various ordinary tasks, beliefs, rituals and customs. Originally these were painted in white on the brown earthy surface of the walls of
their huts, occasionally dotted with yellow and red colours during weddings or festivals. Warli paintings comprise a variation of three basic forms of the square, the triangle and the circle. What makes them remarkable is the symmetric depiction of their lives.

As a tribe and as individuals, the Warli way of life is deeply entwined with nature. Their gods are chiefly derived from elemental nature’s icons such as the sun, moon, thunder, lighting, wind and rain. These are represented in the Warli pantheon and the ‘gavo devos’ or village gods are carved out in wood and/or stone, represented in animated forms.

For those interested, the Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has marked at least ten ‘gavo devos’ in and around Dahanu to help tourists understand this unique culture and November is when the Warlis display a full range of their art and lifestyle with a festival that includes the playing of such instruments as the tarpa, dhol and gauri for their acclaimed ‘Tur Dance’ which is full of rhythm and vigour.

**Home to Zoroastrians**

The Zoroastrians or Parsis, known for their huge business enterprises in India and charity work, hold the Dahanu region as historically important. The Bahrot caves at Dahanu served as a temporary home to the Holy Iranshah Fire for 12 years. The Parsis’ holy city of Udvada, which houses the Holy Iranshah Fire permanently, is only a two-hour drive away. Dahanu’s neighbouring areas such as Davier, Nargoi, Zai and Tarapore also have Parsi settlements. These migrants from Iran developed agriculture in the region. They tilled the soil and turned this town green with their vegetable, fruit and flower gardens. And what is most evident here is their characteristic way of living and cuisine.

**Exploring Dahanu**

On a drive into the villages and along the Sahyadri ranges, one can enjoy the beauty of Gambhir Gadh, Aseri Gadh and Bhim Bandh. Many creeks, backwaters and rivulets make the region a green, soothing sight. Guava, mango, litchi and rose gardens abound in this area. Fishing is an obvious profession for the locals of this coastal area and watching their activities as they launch their boats into sea at the crack of dawn and return at sunset with the day’s catch make for a visually arresting spectacle.

The Asavali Dam near Bordi was built painstakingly by hand. It has a mosaic of paddy fields on one side and the tranquil water on the...
The beach of Bordi is the most captivating feature of the region’s landscape, extending for a good 15 kilometres from Dahanu. Moreover, it is clean and its shallow water level doesn’t rise above the waistline for up to half a kilometre into the sea. This is what makes it ideal for walks and picnics. Casuarinas and chikoo (sapota) orchards line the beach, adding to its picturesque setting.
other, with scenic hills for a backdrop. A walk along the stone-laid bund is exhilarating. The area leading to the dam is dotted with tribal colonies. Cows, chicken, children and ladies can be spotted near their neatly built mud-laid bamboo huts, some with white paintings on the front. Many of the tribal people now work in the fields, picking chikoos or tilling land. The women make for a cheerful sight in their colourful wrap-around saris with bright red ribbons and flowers adorning their hair.

Farm Stays
The Tarpa Agri Eco-Tourism Centre at Gholvad near Bordi, approved by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), has an agriculture and environment-related museum and offers many activities for visitors. The 35-acre model farm with 400 varieties of plants and trees is a good place to learn about certain interesting facets of agriculture such as organic farming, agro food processing, rainwater harvesting, vermiculture, bee-keeping, fish farming, and more. The Tarpa farm is itself a destination and one can avail its traditional farm stay options to explore and enjoy its many natural hues.

The Chaudhari Baug Farmhouse, recognised by the MTDC, at Borigaon on the Bordi Station Road is yet another option, offering simple farm stay and eco-friendly activities. Its machans (raised platforms) and tree-houses add to the fun on this sprawling property of 13 acres. Bordi has a total of 350 hotel/resort rooms. The Bordi tour can also be enjoyed with a stay at one of the many Parsi homes that offer this service. The MTDC’s beach resort is currently under renovation.

Adventurous Outings
Dahanu offers many adventure sport activities like gliding, trekking and venturing out into the open seas. The surrounding mountains of Bahrot (1,760 feet), Mahalakshmi (1,549 feet), Gambhirgad (2,270 feet) and Asherigad (1,680 feet) are good for trekking. Amateur trekkers can also avail of services provided by experienced guides. Tarpa is also a base for some professional adventure activities like rappelling, rope-walks and rope-climbs. The zip-line here is a unique experience that goes across a huge pond amidst thick woods.
The India-Parsi Connection
At the end of the seventh century, Arab invaders had defeated the mighty Sassanid Persian Empire in present-day Iran. Zoroastrians were targeted and persecuted. Those who survived set sail for the friendly shores of India. The ship was caught in a storm and passengers were washed ashore of Nagrol in Western India. Legend says that their leader, a Parsi priest (known in the community as a Dastur), led his people to the courts of the King of Sanjan, Jadhav Rana. The Dastur requested permission for his people to settle down in Sanjan. The king called for a pot filled with milk to demonstrate that the place was full and couldn’t take in more. The Dastur took the milk pot in his hand, sprinkled sugar into it and returned it to the king.

The vessel didn’t spill over and the milk had only become sweeter. The king was impressed with the metaphor and gave them permission to settle down in Sanjan and the Persian immigrants came to be known as Parsis in India. The Parsis later built their first sacred Fire Temple in Sanjan. The Sacred Fire, according to their religious texts, is the son of Ahura Mazda, or the Eternal Light, and is made from 16 fires. The Sacred Fire was moved to the Bahrot caves on the hills of Bharda during the Mughal invasion of Sanjan. After burning for 12 years in the caves, it was then moved to Vansda, Navsari, Surat and Valsad and finally settled in Udvada in the neighbouring state of Gujarat, where it continues to burn even today.

Bordi’s Academic Pursuits
Bordi is also known for its education. The academic complex of the Gokhale Education Society is an ideal centre of learning, providing an opportunity to study in Marathi, Gujarati and English up to the secondary level and also continue higher education for post-graduation and diploma courses in engineering. Until the 19th century, the tribal area around Bordi-Gholvad lacked educational facilities. In 1918, Mumbai-educated teacher, Govind Ganesh Churi, and an enthusiastic youth, Atmaram Vithal Save, came to Bordi to establish an English medium school.

In 1919, Trimbak Appaji Kulkarni, the founder of the Gokhale Education Society, impressed by the desire of the locals to avail of education, started a high school. He was helped in his efforts by Shankar Ramchandra Bhise, a life member of the Society, and the school went on to receive talented, dedicated and idealistic teachers and staff. In 1921, Krushnarao Mahadev Chitre joined the school as a teacher and later became the headmaster and in-charge of the school’s Sharadashram Hostel for 65 years. The high school was named after Soonabai Pestonji Hakimji after a donation of land and money by her daughter to construct the school building.

Later, Acharya Bhise started ‘Mulodyog Shikshan’ to offer business-oriented education along with the regular academic curriculum. He made handlooms popular and students were taught to weave towels, bed-sheets and blankets. Agricultural education was also included. The Bordi School also nourished nationalism and its teachers and students participated in the freedom struggle of 1942. The school also set up a wing for technical education with funds from Sorabji Dhirozshah Godrej in 1962. A science college was started in the late 1990s and a B.Sc course of the Mumbai University along with other courses such as M.Sc in Chemistry and graduation courses in IT, Computer Science and Commerce were started in 2005. The Katgara Polytechnic offering a diploma in engineering was started in 2011.
Forget your daily gym workouts for a while. Keep your long walks on hold. Do your yoga another day. It's time to indulge in one of India's increasingly popular sports – rock climbing. Samir Patham guides the reader through the details of the sport and how to go about making your first climb.
Fingers tightly grasping a tiny crack just a few millimeters deep, the weight of your body perfectly balanced on your feet wedged into a natural rock fault, your eyes desperately seeking your next hand-hold, the sound of your heartbeat thundering in your ears, the force of gravity pulling at you, while you cling high above the ground on a vertical rock face. The only safety preventing you from plummeting to the ground far below; an 11 millimeter thin safety rope attached to your seat harness. Welcome to the world of rock climbing!

Rock climbing, once defined as a technique to ascend rock faces while climbing mountains, gradually evolved into an athletic sport in its own right. Though pioneered in countries like England, Germany and Italy, over the last century it has spread across the world to gradually evolve into one of the most popular mountain-related sports. From the daunting crags of Mont Blanc in Europe, rock climbing in the past 15 years has now become a sought after sport even in India, especially in the Western Ghats.

The popularity of rock climbing can be majorly attributed to an instinctive human desire to climb. At some point in our lives especially during childhood, having scrambled up a wall or a tree, our natural desire to climb is extremely alluring. As a result, rock climbing has mass appeal, from the professional mountaineer preparing to scale the heights of Everest to an absolute amateur, presumable wary of heights. Contrary to popular perception, rock climbing is not about brute strength. Rather, it is all about balance, technique and mental determination. The ability to overcome your inherent fear of heights, the unquestionable trust and faith you must have in a person holding on to your safety line and the desire to reach the top of the wall, even when you can’t hold on to the rock face any longer, are mental attributes that must be honed and developed.

Like most other sports, though a gymnast’s physique is not required to attempt a climb on a rock face, the fitter you are, the higher you get. This sport often provides the right impetus to get fit, especially if you are seriously considering it as a long-term hobby. Strong forearms definitely help but the major muscle groups required to be good at climb-
Rappelling at Plus Valley

Telbaila Fort

Climbing Telbaila right wall
ing are the core ones. Increased endurance, fitness, muscle tone and enhanced stamina are just some of the attributes of this hugely popular sport.

**Rock Climbing In Maharashtra**

In Maharashtra, the Western Ghats present a beautiful backdrop for adventure enthusiasts who dare to indulge in rock climbing. The variety of rock formations and geological sites provide a plethora of locations for both amateurs and professionals to test their skill and endurance. Exceptionally popular are the Kanheri Caves within the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai as well as the Mumbra Boulders and Manori Rocks on the outskirts of Mumbai city. The scenic hill stations of Lonavala and Khandala also make for popular locations. The hills of Karla, located 16 kilometers from Lonavala, are home to a cluster of caves with sheer rock faces which provide an ideal terrain for more seasoned climbers.

One of the most sought after sites for professional rock climbers is the much coveted Konkan Kada cliff located near the Harishchandragad Fort. The cliff face is not just vertical but has an overhang resembling the distinct shape of a cobra’s hood. Commanding a panoramic vista of the Konkan with majestic views of the sunset, an amazing phenomenon of this site is the cloud burst in which the low clouds approaching the cliff get forced up vertically as a result of the winds pushing against the unusual geological feature of the cliff, thus forming a mystical cloud wall rising straight up from the cliff edge without passing over the top of the ridge. This truly is a surreal experience.

Moreover, the sheer beauty of the Sahyadris coupled with the experience of rock climbing acts as an elixir of life. The best season to set out for rock climbing in Maharashtra is from the month of October right through the winter when the weather is at its best and the surroundings are lush with vegetation. Though rock climbing is possible from February to May, adequate precautions must be taken against the scorching sun to avoid dehydration.
Artificial Rock Climbing

Rock climbing, by virtue of necessity and an ever-increasing demand, has gradually branched from 'natural rock faces' to 'artificial wall faces'. The age-old adage, 'If you can't go to the mountain, bring the mountain to you', today literally comes to life with this sport. Artificial walls have gained tremendous popularity, especially in metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Pune, thereby increasing the accessibility of this sport.

Unlike in natural rock faces where a wide variety of anchoring tools are required to establish routes on a wall or a cliff, in artificial walls the routes are pre-set. Built to order, with various pre-existing hand and foot holds, the technical equipment is greatly reduced to just a rope, seat harness, carabiners and at the most, a descender. Often, novices can make an attempt on the artificial rock wall without even worrying about wearing rock climbing shoes. The introduction of artificial rock walls in cities has had a major impact, popularizing the sport like never before. Used as a testing ground to train proper technique and balance to young and amateur climbers, it is also used just to encourage people to partici-

Samir Patham is a trained Mountaineer having climbed several high altitude peaks in Nepal and Ladakh region as well as led over seven teams to the Everest Base Camp. An MBA, he left the corporate world to pursue his passion in mountaineering and is one of the Founder Directors of Adventure-Pulse.

Telbaila Fort - side view

climbing Teibaila left wall

Rock Climbing Workshop by Adventure-Pulse in Pune

Telbaila Fort - side view
Some of the most popular artificial rock walls located in Mumbai are the Gold Gym Rock Wall located at Bandra, the Arun Samant Climbing Wall located in Goregaon and the Hakone Rock Wall located in Powai. In Pune, the Pimpri PCMA Sports Climbing Wall located in Annasaheb Nagar Stadium, Nehru Nagar, Pimpri is the highest climbing wall in India. The Raje Shivaji Climbing Wall in Shivaji Nagar was one of the first artificial walls built with the sole intention of encouraging young aspiring mountaineers. Private firms like Solaris Fitness World at Kothrud, Della Adventures at Lonavala and Adventure Plus Resort near Mahabaleshwar have also set up artificial rock climbing walls where adventure enthusiasts can pit their might against the forces of gravity.

With the advent of adventure sports in India, rock climbing has truly emerged as a preferred passion for not just adrenaline junkies but also for fitness enthusiasts eager to try something else than the daily workout at the gym. With easy accessibility, reasonable rates, high energy and drive, rock climbing is truly a ‘must do’ activity.

Check List
- Check the credentials of your climbing instructor before signing up for a workshop or a climb.
- Start on an artificial wall before graduating to a natural wall.
- Always pay attention to the safety drill.
- If there isn’t a safety drill, insist on one.
- Remember to hydrate. Rock climbing is a physically intensive sport; Dehydration often leads to cramping.

For further information
- The Adventure Plus Resort facilitates rock climbing for novices as part of their plethora of adventure activities. Visit: http://www.adventureplus.in/.
- There is an online blog dedicated to mountaineering in India, designed specifically to encourage young and budding climbers. It is also a one-stop information shop to find out sites to visit and places to climb. Visit: http://indianmountaineers.com/.
- Adventure Pulse is a high-altitude and trekking company based in Pune that specializes in adventure programmes in the Nepal Himalayas and Ladakh region. Its staff is trained at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering and the Himalaya Mountaineering Institute. Visit: www.adventure-pulse.com.
Indulge Your Sweet Tooth
Puranpolis and Shrikhand

Radhika Ghate | Photographs © Sachin Naik

Maharashtra is known for two very typical preparations that can be enjoyed either as desserts or proper meals – puranpolis and shrikhand. These are not only reserved for festive occasions but also comprise a part of a regular meal on the not-so-special days, always looked forward to by those who have a taste for sweet things.
When it comes to desserts, every region has its own specialty. For instance, halwa is typical to North India or payasam to the South while Maharashtra is synonymous with puranpoli and shrikhand. Unlike in western cuisine where the dessert is served as a separate course at the end of the meal, serving the sweet dish along with the main meal is unique to Indian culture. It has its place on the same plate. In fact, in Maharashtra many sweet preparations almost take the position of the main course and the rest of the meal is then planned around it. Two such sweet preparations that are considered main courses are puranpoli and shrikhand. Though puranpoli is traditionally made for Holi and shrikhand for Dassera, these two delicacies need no occasion. Be it an auspicious celebration, social dinner or merely a craving for something sweet, puranpoli and shrikhand are always popular.

Rightly called puranpoliche or shrikhand-puri che jevan (meal), along with their simple accompanying dishes like varan bhaat (plain rice and dal), potato bhaji and green coriander chutney, these meals satisfy even the fussiest eaters. From the cook’s perspective too, all the ingredients required are conveniently stocked on most kitchens shelves or...
available in grocery stores all year round. A high demand among consumers and a long shelf life of both dishes if stored appropriately has also promoted the vast commercialization of these products.

Puranpoli

“Holi re Holi Puranachipoli”. The festival of colours also brings with it the sight and smell of puranpolis in kitchens across Maharashtra. Puranpolis are offered to the bonfire on Holi Pournima night. The whole family eagerly waits to feast on the sweetmeat after the ritual. The outer covering made of wheat is called the poli while the stuffing made of jaggery and Bengal gram forms the stuffing called puran. Depending on personal tastes, the puran is flavoured with cardamom or nutmeg. Puranpoli is also made in other states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Goa with some variations like a different size or substituting Bengal gram with tur or moong daal or alternating sweetening agents and is known by names like holige and obbattu.

Even so, puranpoli is known chiefly as a very traditional Maharashtrian recipe. The high production of jaggery in Maharashtra also justifies its preparation in the state. The harvest of the sugarcane crop and the production of fresh jaggery close to the Holi festival naturally makes it the offering of the festival. Jaggery is alternatively substituted by sugar in many parts of Maharashtra, thus giving it a different texture and flavour. Commonly served with melted ghee (clarified butter) and milk, occasionally flavoured with dry fruits, cardamom and saffron, many places on the Konkan coastal belt serve it with flavoured sweetened coconut milk. A tangy curry called katachi amti is also a typical Maharashtrian accompaniment.

Recipe

Ingredients:

For the puran (the stuffing)
1 cup split Bengal gram / harbara dal
½ cup grated jaggery plus ½ cup sugar or
1 cup grated jaggery
5-6 cardamom (elaichi) pods
¼ teaspoon nutmeg (jaiphal) powder if you like

For the poli (the covering)
1 cup whole wheat flour (atta)
1 tablespoon refined flour (maida)
¼ cup refined oil
¼ teaspoon salt
Rice flour to roll

Method:

Boil the split Bengal gram in approximately four cups of water in a heavy
In the Indian system of cooking, there is very little scope and respect for wastage. Considering all the nutritive values, effort is made so that every ingredient or cooking element is put to optimum use before discarding it. Like the strained water from cooked rice is used as starch, the strained water from cooked Bengal gram for puranpolis is used to make a very tasty curry called katachi amti. Kat is the strained water while amti in Marathi is the name given to any tempered thin soup lentil preparation. The aroma of roasted cumin, cinnamon, cloves and coconut along with goda masala or kala masala helps in evoking the appetite. Boiling hot katachi amti served over steaming rice and ghee is a perfect gourmet complement to the puranpoli meal.

**Recipe**

**Ingredients:**

- Strained water (from boiling the Bengal gram to make the puran) or four cups kat
- Lemon-sized ball of tamarind (imli)
- 2/3rd cup jaggery
- 1 teaspoon red chilli powder
- Salt to taste - approximately 1 teaspoon
- 3/4th teaspoon kala (goda) masala (also available in market)
- 3/4th teaspoon cumin seeds (jeera)
- 1/4th cup grated dry coconut
- 1 inch cinnamon (dalchini)
- 3-4 pods cloves (lavang)

**For tempering:**

- Oil
- ½ teaspoon mustard seeds
- ¼ tsp hing (asafoetida)
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 4-5 curry leaves

**Method**

Soak tamarind for some time in a little warm water and extract pulp.
Shrikhand

As the summer approaches and the heat rises, there is no sweet as soothing as shrikhand. Closely related to flavoured yoghurt, this cold, sweet dish is a richer form, made with sugar and hung yoghurt colloquially called chakka. Even though chakka today is readily available in the market, it is better to make it at home by setting milk curd to get the perfect sour quotient. The abundance of milk and curds in Maharashtrian households makes it an easy preparation. The curd or yoghurt tied in a clean white cotton cloth hanging in the kitchen is a common sight preceding the festival Dassera in Maharashtra. Shrikhand with combination of hot puris (round fried Indian wheat bread) and potato bhaji is a hot favourite amongst children. Elaichi (cardamom), saffron and nutmeg still remain the preferred flavourings.

To enhance its simplicity, dry fruits like pistachios and a special nut called charoli can also be added. A very popular variation of shrikhand is amrakhand made by adding mango pulp to unflavoured shrikhand. While shrikhand is regular feature all throughout the year except winters, it is a good change to have amrakhand during the mango season in summer. Other variations gaining popularity would include adding chopped fresh fruits, chopped fresh mango and strawberry pulp.

Charoli are lentil-sized light brown seeds of Buchanania lanzan or Almondette tree grown in Asian countries. The seeds, flat on one side, are crushed and used as a spice in Indian cooking. Considering its distinct flavour, it is used in desserts as well as curries, sauces and stews. Charoli seeds have specific use in Ayurveda and Unani system of medicine.

Recipe

Ingredients:
- 2 litres milk for hung yoghurt (chakka)
- Equal amount of sugar as of hung yoghurt
- 1/4th teaspoon cardamom powder
- 2 pinches of nutmeg powder (optional)
- 5-6 sprigs saffron
- A pinch of salt

Method

Boil, cool and set the milk to make the yoghurt or curds. Tie the curd in a cloth and hang overnight to drain all the water content. The next morning, the hung yoghurt (chakka) is ready to be made into shrikhand. Add an equal quantity of sugar (can be adjusted according to required sweetness). Mix and keep aside for an hour. When all the sugar has blended, mix well and pass through a shrikhand sieve to form a smooth and even mixture without lumps. Warm the saffron sprigs, pound lightly and mix a tablespoon of milk for even flavouring and color. Add saffron milk, salt, cardamom and nutmeg powder to the chakka. Mix well and serve.

Tip:
Hung yoghurt (chakka) is available in the market. A little milk can be added to adjust the consistency if the shrikhand is too thick.

Recipe

Ingredients:
- 2 litres milk for hung yoghurt (chakka)
- Equal amount of sugar as of hung yoghurt
- 1/4th teaspoon cardamom powder
- 2 pinches of nutmeg powder (optional)
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