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Whenever the history of Maharashtra is recounted, the district of Satara always finds more than a passing mention. This is primarily because of its rich historical tapestry as also for the fact that some of the most ancient temples and rock-cut caves are to be found here. Moreover, it is in this district that the charming hill stations of Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani lie, not to forget the world famous Kaas Plateau which is known for its amazing bloom of flowers every year. Aditya Phadke and Shreyas Deshpande explore the district to find all this and more.
Satara, a small district in western Maharashtra, has an incredible historical background. Places like Karad, Pateshwar, Mahuli, Rajpuri Caves, Bavdhan and Yerawadi reveal its antiquity. Forts like Pandavgad, Sadashivgad, Vasantgad, Vasota and Ajinkyatara are very popular tourist sites. It is home to places like Adalatwada, Rajawada, Bansapuri-Math, and Char-Bhinti. Furthermore, 97 temples and seven lakes add to the beauty of this region. The other attraction in the city is the Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum. This museum holds artefacts like weapons, clothes and glass paintings from the 17th and 18th century. It also has the original throne of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Satara is also nicknamed as the ‘district of power’ because of the giant Koyna hydroelectric plant along with smaller dams like Dhom, Kanher and Urmudi. The district is also famous for a sweet delicacy known as ‘Kandi Pedhe’. Another claim to fame is the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the very famous Kaas Plateau. Also known as the ‘valley of flowers’, Kaas attracts thousands of tourists each year after the monsoon thanks to its stunning fields full of rare flowers.

**Historical Antecedents**

Satara, the headquarters of the district with the same name, is famous for being the seat of Maratha power. The district itself is much older, dating back to the 2nd century CE. The oldest known place in the district of Satara is probably Karad, referred to as Karhakada in the inscriptions on the railings of the stupa at Bharhut. Groups of Buddhist caves found approximately 3 miles southwest of the town of Karad confirm this inscription, which dates from around 1st century CE. Caves at Shirval and Wai also indicate Buddhist settlements.

After the disintegration of Mauryan rule, the region came under the rule of the Satavahanas and they were followed by the Chutus in Maharashtra and Kuntala (the traditional name for this territory). The Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas and the Shilaharas controlled this territory from 6th century CE to 13th century CE. The evidence for this comes from the inscribed stone and copper plates found in the neighbouring districts of Ratnagiri and Belgaum as well as the state of Kolhapur. In fact, recently discovered copper plate inscriptions indicate that the early Rashtrakuta rulers were ruling at Manpur in southern Maharashtra.

Along with the above mentioned dynasties there were many Muslim dynasties that ruled over this region, the Adilshahis and Kutubshahis being the more prominent among them. The principal Maratha chiefs in Satara under the Adilshahi rule were Chandrarao More of Javli, about 56 kilometres northwest of Satara and Bajaji Rao Naik Nimbalkar of Phaltan, about 56 kilometres northeast of Satara. During the 17th century, Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha Empire, had begun to establish himself in the hilly parts of Pune in the north. By 1648 he obtained control over some parts of Satara and even stayed in the fort of Ajinkyatara for a few months. Under the rule of Chhatrapati Shahu, Satara became the main...
About 5 km to the east of Satara city is the confluence of the rivers Krishna and Venna where the village of Mahuli is situated. On the banks of river Krishna lie the beautiful temples of Bilweshwar, Rameshwar, Sangameshwar, Bhairav and Krishnamai. The temple of Lord Rameshwar has an incredible ‘ghat’. The ‘samadhis’ of historical dignitaries such as Yesubai (the wife of Sambhaji Maharaj), Maharani Tarabai, and Shahu Maharaj are present here.

**Mahabaleshwar**

A major attraction however is the hill station of Mahabaleshwar, known for being the origin of rivers like Krishna, Koyna, Venna, Gayatri and Savitri. The temple of Krishnamai is also a big draw for the faithful. Along with Kshetra-Mahabaleshwar, there are 33 different view points that can be visited, including Wilson Point, Bombay Point, Arthur’s Seat Point, etc. The Venna Lake is a favourite tourist destination for boating and pony rides.

One of the highlights of Mahabaleshwar is a visit to the Mapro Garden, famous for its strawberries with cream and sandwiches. Panchgani is a small town a little lower down than Mahabaleshwar. The flat hill-top called Table Land is popular for pony rides and picnics. Various view points such as Sidney, Parshi and Dosa are also well-known. There are sights to be seen beyond Mahabaleshwar as well. Tapola, 26 km from Mahabaleshwar, is where the rivers Solashi and Koyna merge into the huge Shivasagar Lake. Boat rides on the lake is what attracts the tourists here. And if you happen to be there at the crack of dawn, it is quite likely that you would get to see herds of bison and deer.

**Forts, Caves and Temples**

Fort Pratapgad is located 71 km from Satara. It has a place in history for the meeting between Shivaji Maharaj and Afzal Khan which resulted in Shivaji outwitting and killing his foe. The fort houses a memorial of Afzal Khan along with many temples. Fort Vasota is located in a dense forest behind the Shivasagar Lake. There are a few other places to visit like Babukada, Vinchukata, Nageshwar Cave and a couple of temples. Babukada is the second deepest canyon in Maharashtra, with a depth of approximately 1,800 meters.

**Gondavale**

Gondavale, an extremely important pilgrim place for the devotees of the
Gondavalekar Maharaj, is located 71 km from Satara. It is the ‘samadhi’ of a saint who lived in 19th century CE. He preached the importance of devotion to god and believed in feeding the poor and hungry.

**Wai**

Wai, a historical town, is about 35 km from Satara and is also known as ‘Dakshin Kashi’ (Kashi of the south). The antiquity of Wai is evident from the presence of the Buddhist rock-cut caves that have been dated to 2nd century CE. On the banks of the river Krishna stand the temples of Lord Kashi-Visheshwar, Ganga-Rameshwar and Govind-Rameshwar. The main attraction is the temple of Lord Ganesha, locally known as ‘Dholya Ganpati’. The special feature of this town is the festival of Goddess Krushnabai when thousands of lamps are floated in the river Krishna.

**Menavli**

Near Wai, at a distance of just 3 km, is Menavli, famous for Nana Fadanavis’ ‘wada’. The wada has a number of murals that are still preserved. The ghats and the temple constructed behind the mansion on the banks of the river are popular tourist destinations thanks to having been featured in several Bollywood films.

The village Dhom, 6 km from Menavli, has the temples of Lord Narsimha and Dhomeshwar (Lord Shiva) which are worth visiting. The Nandi shrine in the Shiva Temple is a unique piece of art, placed on the back of a tortoise kept in a lotus-shaped structure carved in stone. Aundh is located 43 km from Satara and is famous for the temple of Goddess Yamai on a small hill near the village. Aundh is also very well-known for ‘Shri Bhavani Chitra-Sangrahhalaya’, a museum that houses the paintings of Raja Ravi Verma, Baburao Painter, Francisco L. Goya and G. Walter along with sculptures and more.

**Shikhar Shingnapur**

Yet another place of religious importance is Shikhar Shingnapur which has a temple dedicated to Lord Shankar situated on the Mahadev mountain range located on the boundaries of Satara, Pune and Solapur. This temple, 91 km from Satara, is the site of the family deity of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Further, Chaphal is famous for the temple of Lord Rama, built by Swami Samartha Ramdas. Out of the 11 Hanuman temples established by him, three are found here. There is also a meditation center near the temple of Rama.
Karad
Karad, 51 km from Satara, is located at the confluence of the rivers Krishna and Koyna called Priti-Sangam. The temples of Lord Narsimha, Vyankatesh, and Saint-Sakhu are on this river bank. In fact, this was a very important archaeological site and excavations carried out here revealed settlements belonging to the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Today there is a garden and a ‘chaupati’ near the sangam. To the southeast of the garden is a step well known as ‘Naktya Ravala-chi Vihir’ belonging to 13th century CE.

Karad is also known for more than 70 Buddhist rock-cut caves in the nearby hills dating from the 1st to 4th century CE. They are known as the caves of Agashiv and Jakhinwadi.

Thoseghar
Thoseghar is situated 25 km from Satara. There is an incredibly beautiful, semi-circular, approximately 1,000-feet deep waterfall named after the place. During the monsoon, the road to Thoseghar and the valley are covered in a thick blanket of fog, making the road trip an unforgettable experience.

Nomenclature:
Satara gets its name from the fact that it is nestled within seven hills i.e. ‘Saat’ meaning seven and ‘Tara’ meaning hills. The seven hills from which it gets its name are Ajinkya-tara, Sajjangad, Yawatshwar, Jarandeshwar, Nakhicha Dongar, Kitiicha Dongar and Pedhyacha Bhairoba.

Aditya Phadke and Shreyas Deshpande are history enthusiasts and avid trekkers.
Travel Tips

- Kaas is a very popular tourist place but one should appreciate the beauty by looking at it and not by plucking the flowers.
- Strawberry with fresh cream is the most popular delicacy of Mahabaleshwar and is a must for the visitors.
- Thoseghar waterfall is a scenic place but it becomes slippery in the monsoons and one needs to be careful.
experience. Chalkewadi, 4 km from Thosegarh, is famous for its windmills with the wind blowing at a speed of 1 to 8 km per hour. To make the most of the natural winds, a windmill project was set up in the year 2000. Now there are more than 1,500 windmills at Chalkewadi.

**Pateshwar**

Pateshwar is a beautiful temple which belongs roughly to 17th century. It is located 14 km from Satara. There are temples here of Lord Shiva and Lord Nandi, both serving as examples of splendid architecture. The temple of Lord Nandi has ‘Shiva Lingas’ of various sizes ranging from the size of a human thumb up to 2 meters. The temple also has a water tank which is used as the prime source of drinking water. There are eight caves here containing the images of deities and Shiva Lingas of different types.

**Phaltan**

Phaltan is primarily known for being the birthplace of Saibai, the first wife of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This town has an incredible historical background. There are temples of Lord Rama and Lord Jabareswar. The wada, which belonged to the Nimbalkar family, is another ‘must visit’ site. The ruins of the wada are but a fading testimony to the impressive construction work of those times. There are numerous hero stones lying in the town indicating its lineage to the Yadava period i.e. 12th century CE.

The temple of Lord Jabreshwar, which belongs to late 13th century, is the prime attraction of this town. At first glance, it feels as if the temple has been carved out of a single rock. Originally dedicated to the Jina sect, it was later converted into a Shiva temple and is known for the superbly carved sculptures of different dancers such as Sarpakanyas, Vishkanyas, etc.

**Shirwal**

Shirwal is a small town on the borders of Satara and Pune districts. There is an important group of Buddhist rock-cut caves nearby dating to 2nd century CE. There is also a medieval fort near this town. This district boasts of some prominent ancient temples dating back to 12th century CE at places like Katarkhatav, Gursale, Kikli, etc. The numerous dams in the district have led to the formation of the backwater lakes which are now the Mayani, Koyna and Dajipur bird sanctuaries.
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Tourists come to the twin hill-stations of Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar not just to escape from the depressing clutches of urban chaos and find a soothing transition into the natural beauty and the invigorating climate that they find here. Many of them time their holidays with the strawberry season so that they can add some sweet flavour to their sojourn by literally feasting on the bright red fruit that has so many health benefits too.

Sweet Sensations in Strawberry Land

Strawberries

M. Kshirsagar
Photographs © Sachin Naik
Long before travellers who zigzag their way up the Pasarni Ghat en route to Mahabaleshwar arrive in the British-era hill town, make-shift stalls that begin to appear on either side of the two-lane road provide a glimpse of things to come. The not-so-distant hills, rusty red of the laterite soil emerging a perfect foil for the copious, emerald foliage, and the exhilaration of the winter air make for a picture-postcard setting. Given this, first-timers to the territory could be forgiven if the only immediate recall of the first few encounters with such season-driven salesmanship is that of a blur of red whizzing past.

As you go past Panchgani, 20-odd kilometers short of Mahabaleshwar and a charming hill town in its own right, the vendors appear more frequently, hands a-flail, urging motorists to pull over. And that, most will discover, can be quite a rewarding stop over. The ‘red blur’ turns out to be a mound of just-picked strawberries. Firm, luscious, glistening in the mid-morning sun, diamantine droplets of the dew still sitting on the leaves, an inviting, scintillating sculpture of conic symmetry.

There’s a lot more colour on the palette; juicy, purple mulberries, turgid with freshness; finger-sized carrots in an appealing explosion of orange, and plump radishes, magenta on the outside and white on the inside, just bursting with health. It takes no great intelligence to figure that the elements of the visual and papillary treat are products of the yonder fields.

Feature

Harvesting the fruit

Ready for the market
The small, largely rain-fed fields of Mahabaleshwar that are at other times of the year irrigated by mineral-rich ground water yield a wide variety of fresh produce. Potatoes, cylindrical runner beans for instance, not forgetting the aforementioned carrots, mulberry, radish, and honey to boot— all making for great takeaways. But it is strawberry that has given the town a special identity.

**The Strawberry Story**

Based on local accounts, Mahabaleshwar’s strawberry story can be traced back to the late 19th century when the English residents, yearning for a taste of strawberries and cream from back home, began growing them in their kitchen gardens. With soil and climate conditions that emerged ideal for the plant’s proliferation, the seeds were sown, so to say, for more serious cultivation. “Till the 1960s cultivation of the fruit was restricted to the area around the Venna Lake, and the plants were procured from Bangalore,” recalls Panchgani-based Mayur Vora, Managing Director of the 50-something Mapro Foods (P) Limited, which is today the largest processor of strawberries in the country.

The fruit, Vora remembers, was particularly delicate and so the variety did not gain any significant ground. The next major event of relevance happened in the early to middle 1970s. Some enterprising visitors to the Mor- nal Rearmament India in Panchgani brought with them some plants from Australia, and Peter Patrov, a school teacher, began cultivating them in the villages around Mahabaleshwar. The events gave the idea more momentum. But what became a real game-changer in Mahabaleshwar’s strawberry story was a pilot project by Ambarish Karvat, proprietor of Yuppa Farms, using Californian varieties. With yields nearly four times that of the earlier plants, and sturdier fruit that had better shelf life, the Australian strawberry was pushed off the stage. Today, Mahabaleshwar’s strawberry is such an attraction that no trip to this part of the Sahyadri ranges is complete without carrying away a box full of the delicious fruit that has as much appeal for its taste as its health benefits.

**Reaping Profits**

Balasaheb Bhilare, a resident of Bhilar village, which was amongst the earlier ones to go the strawberry way, and now president of the All India Strawberry Growers’ Association, explains, “Once we realised that it could be grown commercially, we have made great efforts
to bring in improved farming techniques as well as to market the crop.” Though there is no authentic data, with over 2,000 acres believed to be under its cultivation at current count, Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani are estimated to produce nearly 85 per cent of the strawberry grown in the country. “As of now American varieties like Sweet Charlie, Winter Dawn and Camarosa are the most popular, and more recently, Italian varieties like Nabila and Rania are, literally and figuratively speaking, beginning to gain ground,” Bhilare informs.

Every year, mother plants imported from overseas suppliers, mostly based in Italy and the US are multiplied in the rainy season at nurseries in lower lying areas like Wai. Planting of the runners in the fields begins by September and the fruits begin to appear by November. The strawberry season which peaks in January lasts till March, and many visitors...
make it a point to time their visits to the hill station to coincide with this season.

Typically, most of the fruit is sold for table consumption in the early part of the season. “Practically nothing before January 15 is processed,” Vora explains. Processing of the fruit begins to gain momentum as the season advances, and after March, almost all of it is processed, he adds, attributing this to the beginning of the summer where high temperatures do not make transportation to distant places a viable proposition.

While export of the fruit, both in fresh and processed forms, has been happening for some time now, one of the more recent developments is the annual Strawberry Festival that happens in the last week of March. With package deals that include a weekend stay in the midst of a farm, and tour and a pick-and-eat-what-you-can proposition, nearly 50,000 tourists are believed to have landed up last year. And for those who miss this bus, there’s always the option of frozen desserts. Or then there are bottles of strawberry crush and tins of strawberry jam - sweet reminders that may just entice you to keep the date the next year around.

Fast Facts
- Strawberry plants belong to Rosaceae, the rose family.
- It is the only fruit that has its seeds on the outside. Every heart-shaped fruit has around 200 seeds. To be more specific botanically, every ‘seed’ is actually one of the ovaries of the flower with a seed inside it.
- A serving of 100 grams of the fruit adds up to just 50 calories.
- Eight average-sized strawberries have more vitamin C than an orange.
- Strawberries contain significantly high amounts of phenolic flavonoid phyto-chemicals called anthocyanins and ellagic acid. Scientific studies show that consumption of the fruit may have potential health benefits against cancer, aging, inflammation and neurological diseases.
- In addition, strawberries are good sources of folic acid, potassium and fiber, and the acids in them can help remove stains and whiten teeth.
- The ancient Romans thought strawberries had medicinal powers. They used them to treat everything from depression to fainting to fever as well as kidney stones, bad breath and sore throats.
- In France they are believed to have aphrodisiac properties and strawberries are served to newlyweds as a thin soup.

Distance from Mumbai: 247 kms

How to reach:
- By Air: The nearest airport is at Pune, 120 km away.
- By Rail: The most convenient railway station is Pune.
- By Road: One can travel from Pune-Wai-Panchgani-Mahabaleshwar or Panvel-Mahad-Poladpur-Pratapgad-Mahabaleshwar.
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Koyna Dam

Jyoti Rane
Photographs © Amit Rane, Sunil Gokarn

The rugged beauty of the Western Ghats reflected in an endless pool of shimmering waters, Koyna is a landscape photographer’s dream come true. Situated in the Satara district, the backwaters of Koyna form the massive Shivasagar reservoir.
The largest dam in Maharashtra, Koyna was considered a feat of engineering when it was constructed in 1956 and finally completed in 1962. Today, it provides a large amount of irrigation water and also generates electricity by damming the Koyna river.

The catchment area around the Shivasagar reservoir was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1985, and is today known as the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary. The 50 kilometre long Shivasagar and its environs are home to a variety of wildlife like sloth bears, leopards, dhols, barking deer, spotted deer, giant squirrels and even tigers! In May 2007, the entire Koyna sanctuary along with the Chandoli wildlife reserve to the south of the reservoir, were declared part of the Project Tiger, by the National Tiger Conservation Authority. Chandoli lies between the Koyna Wildlife sanctuary and Radhanagari wildlife sanctuary.

One of the best ways to explore this beautiful lake is by boat. This will allow you to take in the vast expanse of waters with the forested hills all around. If you’re in luck, you might even spot some wildlife. The boat ride starts from a point near Nehru Park. Nehru Park is a landscaped garden near the Koyna dam. The park gives a bird’s eye view of the Koyna dam and its backwaters. A documentary on the “Making of Koyna dam” is shown in the Nehru Park.

If you would like to explore the area around Koyna further, you’re in for a treat. The Navja and Ozarde water falls are not very far away.
Tall and imposing, the milky white streams of water thunder down an imposing height. The Navja waterfall is closer to Koyna, near the Navja village. Ozarde is a bit further ahead, 3 km from Navja and about 10 km from Koyna. The Ozarde waterfall has two approaches, one can either walk right up to the base of the waterfall with a little trek or reach a vantage point on the opposite hill through a fleet of 100 odd steps and enjoy the full glory of the waterfall. The waters of Ozarde fall from a height of 800 feet, spreading a gentle mist dappled with sunlight all around. Driving around Koyna, the backwaters keep you company on one side, while the forests, hills and waterfalls call for your attention on the other. In certain parts, entry is restricted as it forms the core area of the sanctuary, especially after Ozarde.

How we planned our Koyna retreat!

Koyna dam is a mere 120 kilometre drive from Pune on the Pune – Bangalore highway. We took a diversion at Karad and a 60 kilometre drive from there led us to a stunning landscape with forests, hills and waterfalls with their shades of green softly lit up by the sunshine.

The Shivasagar reservoir appeared huge and branched out from the hill top where the MTDC Koyna Lake Resort and other resorts are put up. The MTDC resort holds a commanding view of the dam and the backwaters. The dam waters were gently twinkling under the occasional sunshine, the sky was a darker shade of grey forecasting the coming rains, the ground was a blanket of green and the majestic dam wall stood witnessing this all. I caught an amazing sight where, half the landscape was bathing in sunshine and the other half was washed with a big rain shower. Nature, fresh air and solace can be found here.

Initially, we explored the resort and took a boat ride on the reservoir from Nehru Park. We also visited the Park and watched the documentary on the construction of the Koyna Dam.

We then decided to scan the area further, moving on to explore some villages around. The green terraced paddy fields made the landscape resemble a chequered patchwork quilt with each field with its furrowed boundaries a distinct patch. The village children threw surprised looks at us, having strangers around. The women folk carried on their daily chores balancing water pots on their head and yet walking elegantly. The tinkling of the cow bells could be heard from distant rolling green hills and the gurgling streams kept their pace as we absorbed everything around.

Koyna has some known resorts like Gursale Resort and the Koyna Lake Resort(MTDC), but an advance booking is mandatory. Monsoons are the best time to witness the glory of Koyna Nagar. Once you are here, don’t forget to taste Tambda Rassa (Red Curry) a spicy local cuisine which comes in vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes.

We went back to our routine lives happily refreshed by this easy to reach getaway destination.
Terrace Farming with Koyna backwaters in backdrop
Excursions:

The hill stations of Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani are a 2 hour drive from Koyna Nagar.

The water falls of Ozarde and Navja are wonderful to visit, particularly in the monsoons. Wildlife enthusiasts can also head to the Chandoli reserve, south of Koyna.

Jyoti Rane is a HR professional and an active Travel writer.
Travel Tips
During monsoon boating services are not available, due to increase in water level.

Distance from Mumbai: 322 kms

How to reach:
By Air: The nearest airport is at Pune, 172 km away
By Rail: Karad is the closest railway station.
By Road: Take the NH 4 from Pune till Umbraj and turn off on the Umbraj Patan road, or alternatively turn off at Karad, 57 Km from Koyna Nagar.

Where to stay:
MTDC Resort, Gursale Resort (for both resorts please book in advance).

What to eat:
While at Koyna Nagar don’t miss the Tambda Rassa (Red Curry) and Pandhra Rassa (white curry) which are spicy delicacies. They are available both in veg and non-veg.

Countryside

Local resorts
The Daulatabad Fort remained the focal point of all political activities in Deccan from 10th century C.E. till the 20th century C.E. It bears testimony to the massive architectural activity which continued for almost a 1000 years and is visible in various forms such as rock-cut caves, a structural temple, a rock-cut passage and moat, defence walls, palaces, royal baths, havelis, residential structures, bazaars, stepped wells, tanks and so on. It also remained an active centre for Hindus, Jains, Muslims and followers of the Nath sect for centuries. Today its massive and silent walls are no longer threats but an attraction for the history-seeking tourists.

A Thousand Years of Might
Daulatabad Fort

A.M.V. Subramanyam and Tejas Garge
Photographs © Vijay Satbhai and Tejas Garge
A trip to Aurangabad, for most tourists, would remain incomplete without visiting the Ajanta and Ellora caves. And for those who plan it well, the Daulatabad Fort is included as well. A fort is a fort, you would be tempted to assume. But then there is something special and different about this one, particularly so because of the history behind it. Few are aware of the fact that at one particular time during the rule of the Tughlaqs, the capital...
was shifted from Delhi to Deogiri which was renamed Daulatabad. It was from this fort then that the rulers governed.

In 1323 C.E. Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the eldest son of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq and the Sultan of Delhi, took the drastic step of moving the capital and a new name was coined for Deogiri because Daulatabad meant the ‘city of wealth’. His courtiers and other nobility made the arduous journey of more than 1,200 kilometers to take up residence in the heart of the Deccan. There are several theories regarding the motives behind the move. Some believe that he did it to secure the court because Delhi was vulnerable to invasions. Others hold that Daulatabad, being in the heart of the country, would be a base from which Tughlaq could extend his dominion over the rest of the country.

Whatever his reasons, the move was not a success and four years later in 1327 C.E. the court moved back. As is known from the records of traveller Ibn Battuta and another contemporary, Barani, this move caused much devastation to the prosperity of Delhi. More recently, playwright Girish Karnad immortalized the monarch - better known as “Pagal Tughlaq” or “crazy Tughlaq” - and the march to Daulatabad in his play ‘Tughlaq’.

**History**

Daulatabad Fort is an impressive monument, dominating the surrounding landscape as you approach it by road from Aurangabad to Ellora. Founded in the 11th century C.E. by King Bhilama V, a Yadava ruler, the city was called ‘Deogiri’, or the ‘Hill of Gods’. King Bhilama V led victorious campaigns against the Hoysalas, Paramaras and Chalukyas of Kalyani. The Yadava rulers retained their capital at Deogiri until 1296 C.E. when Alauddin Khilji defeated Ramachandradeva, son of Krishna, and held sway over it, reducing the Yadava king to a vassal. Later, Malik Kafur led his armies in 1306-07 and 1312 C.E. against the recalcitrant Ramachandradeva and his son Shankaradeva successively, subdued them, and killed the latter. Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah Khilji also campaigned successfully against Deogiri and annexed it to the Delhi Sultanate.
However, after Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq tried his best to use Daulatabad as a nodal base for expansion of his rule, a quick succession of political events led to the city being wrested from the Tughlaq authority. The Bahmani rulers under Hasan Gangu now extended their control over Daulatabad as well. By 1499 C.E. the Nizam Shahis of Ahmednagar not only captured but also made Daulatabad as their capital in 1607 C.E. By 1633 C.E. Daulatabad was finally captured after a prolonged siege of four months by the Mughals. It was during this time that Aurangzeb was placed as viceroy of Deccan who led his campaigns against Bijapur and Golconda from Daulatabad. For a short period Daulatabad was under the control of the Marathas before the Nizams of Hyderabad took control of it in 1724 C.E.

**The Fort**

Built on a 200-meter high conical hill, Daulatabad was one of the most powerful forts of the medieval Deccan. The defence system consists of two moats and three encircling fortification walls with lofty gates and bast-
tions at regular intervals. The entire fort complex, together with all the fortification walls, consists of an area measuring approximately 95 hectares.

The fort was enlarged and structures were added subsequently as the fort passed on from one hand to the other and from one dynasty to another. Today the Daulatabad Fort, besides the moat and fortification wall, consists of various structures like stepped wells (baolis), the court building (kacheri), the Bharat Mata temple, the elephant (hathi) tank, the Chand Minar, the Aam Khas building (hall of public audience), the royal baths (hammam), Chini Mahal, Rang Mahal, Baradari on the hill top, water cisterns, rock cut structure and Andheri (dark passage). A group of 10 unfinished rock-cut caves to the south of the Rang Mahal belong to the Yadava period.

The vestiges unearthed from time to time in the fort complex reveal the existence of multi-cultural religious activity at Daulatabad.
thanks to various sculptures of gods and goddesses of the Brahanical pantheon; the Jaina tirthankaras; architectural elements of secular and non-secular character; copper utensils; etc. The excavations carried out within the fort complex between 2003 and 2007 have also laid bare the lower city complex consisting of main lanes and by-lanes.

**The Segments**

**Ambar Kot:** The exterior wall surrounding the fort is popularly known as Ambar Kot and is believed to have been constructed by Malik Ambar, the Abyssinian commander of Sultan Alauddin Bahamani (Ahamadshah-II) constructed this minar in memory of his victory over Gujarat in 1435 C.E. It is constructed with stone, decorated with coloured tiles and has four floors with spiral staircases inside. Small windows are provided at regular intervals for light and air ventilation. On one side of the minar is a mosque and on the other side is a Nagar Khana.

**Royal Bath:** The hammam situated within the Mahakot area was constructed during the Tughlaq period for an affluent class of society. The chambers were used for massage, hot water bath, caldarium hot room (steam-bath) and bathtub, and also the requisite menial services needed for these. The water was connected from one room to another by earthen pipes through channels. Each chamber was planned and designed very carefully, with well-laid tanks, water channels, pipes, ventilators, etc.

**Mahakot:** The next unit of defence inside Ambarkot is Mahakot. Four distinct lines of enclosing walls, dotted with 54 silent, brooding bastions surround the fort for a length of nearly 5 kilometers. The walls are between 6 to 9 feet thick and 18 to 27 feet high with ammunition depots and granaries built along the interiors. Thick timber gates with iron studs and long spiked nails protect the entrances, which have beautiful carved designs.

**Saraswati Stepped-Well:** Known as Saraswati Bawdi, it is a beautiful well located near the main entry gate (30 x 30 x 12 meters) built of dressed stone blocks with a narrow flight of steps leading to the water level. An inscription on the outer wall of the tomb of Qattal Shahid refers to Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in 1332 C.E.

**A Walk in the Dark**

The only entrance to the citadel is through a devious tunnel called ‘Andheri’, a dark passage. This subterranean passage is a long ascending tunnel which rises rapidly and tortuously along steps that are uneven in width and height, difficult for climbers in the absence of light. The labyrinthine passage and the darkness led to fatalities among the enemy army. A long tunnel containing numerous chambers cut out of the solid rock were used in the olden times as guard rooms and store houses. At one point the tunnel turns and opens out on to a rough window, now covered with grills. This was originally a trap set for enemy intruders, which ended in a ditch. The tunnel was impassable when obstacles such as scalding oil, iron spikes and smoke barriers were laid out in the darkness.

**Hathi Tank:** Known as Hathi Haud and measuring 38 x 38 x 6.6 meters, it is gigantic in proportions. Malik Ambar, an expert in water management, had made arrangements to construct this tank. There are steps from three sides of the tank to reach the bottom and only gravitational force was used to bring water to this system. The capacity of Hathi Haud is estimated to be about 10,000 cubic meters.

**The Bharat Mata Temple:** This temple dedicated to India is one of the oldest and most important structures, which follows the classic plan of a mosque with access from three sides and buttresses (pseudo minarets) on its four corners. The architectural remains used in construction of this mosque clearly indicate that they are derived from the temples of the Yadava period, circa 10th –11th C.E. By reusing pillars, brackets and capitals as well as the stone debris of temples a mosque was built during the reign of Qutubuddin Mubaraq Khilji (1318 C.E.) known as Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque). Now the central rear wall contains the statue of Bharat Mata, and hence is known by the same name.

**Chand Minar:** Sultan Alauddin Bahamani (Ahamadshah-II) constructed this minar in memory of his victory over Gujarat in 1435 C.E. It is constructed with stone, decorated with coloured tiles and has four floors with spiral staircases inside. Small windows are provided at regular intervals for light and air ventilation. On one side of the minar is a mosque and on the other side is a Nagar Khana.

**Distance from Mumbai:** 350 kms

**How to reach:**

**By Air:** The nearest airport is Aurangabad, which has daily flights to major Indian cities.

**By Rail:** Aurangabad Railway Station is well-connected to most cities. The Aurangabad Jan Shatabdi Express is a daily fast train to Mumbai. There is a small station near Daulatabad itself.

**By Road:** Daulatabad is 16km from Aurangabad. Buses,rickshaws and taxis ply regularly between the two. Aurangabad is on National Highway 211 and MSRTC runs buses from major cities to Aurangabad. Daulatabad is on the MTDC Ellora tourist circuit and hourly shuttle buses going to Ellora also go via Daulatabad.
A Voice from Heaven

Bal Gandharva

Abhiram Bhadakamakar
Photographs © Anuradha Rajhans

Some are born to greatness, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust on them. If that is true, Marathi theatre’s legendary Bal Gandharva qualified in every way for the heights of fame he rose to while enacting female characters in plays and giving music and singing an altogether new spin in those days. Abhiram Bhadakamakar pays tribute to a genius who changed the face of Marathi theatre and created a new identity that is now referred to as the golden age. Sadly though, Bal Gandharva’s life was also like a script full of drama that had as much of happiness as tragedy.
One day, Lokmanya Tilak heard a child artiste singing as part of a theatre troupe. He was so impressed by the performance that he declared that the singer was a ‘Bal Gandharva’, ‘bal’ meaning child and ‘gandharva’ referring to the mythical musicians of heaven. Little did that young boy, Narayan Shripad Rajhans, know at that moment, that he would be referred to as Bal Gandharva for the rest of his career.
Bal Gandharva was born on June 26, 1888 in Pune. His career was long-lived, spreading across a span of 45 years. He would usher in a new age in the history of Marathi musical theatre, becoming a legend during his own lifetime. He entered the world of Marathi theatre at a time when it was in dire need of fresh blood and energy. Bhaurao Kolhatkar, the lead singer-actor of the Kirloskar Natak Mandali, a prominent theatre company, had died rather suddenly. The company desperately needed a new singer-actor who could match his caliber. Finding their new star was a question of existence for the company, and their success depended on finding a male lead who would be good looking and sing beautifully too. Back in those days, women did not perform on stage; all female roles on stage were played by men as well.

Bal Gandharva was hired by the company and he began his career with them by playing the character of Shakuntala. He rose to fame with the play ‘Manapman’ (Honor and Humiliation) by Kakasaheb Khadilkar in 1911. For the next 44 years, until 1955, he continued to mesmerize audiences with his unsurpassed acting skills and heavenly voice. His mannerisms, costumes and hairstyles were imitated by his fans and we could call him Maharashtra’s earliest fashion icon. As he frequently played female roles, his attire and jewellery were copied by women too, and also by boys who found it fashionable to be photographed in Bal Gandharva-style female costumes.

Gender Bender
His depiction of women in his female lead roles went beyond fashion. While he brought a new aesthetic to the female roles he played, he also tried to inculcate the idea that women had lively minds, and that although a woman’s role might be limited to the confines of a house, she too had the
right to an intellectual life and the right
to love herself and express her feelings.

In total, Bal Gandharva played about
20 female roles including Shakuntala,
Bhamini, Rukmini, Draupadi, Sindhu,
Kanhopatra, Vasantasene and
Sharada. These roles in particular
brought him a lot of critical acclaim,
each of them portraying varying facets
of womanhood – Bhamini chooses to
marry a brave man over a rich man;
Sindhu holds to the traditional values
of a poor but self-respecting and
devoted wife; Shakuntala values love
above all; and Draupadi places self-
respect as the guiding light to her
actions. Bal Gandharva’s depictions
of these roles created an image of the
ideal Marathi woman in the popular
imagination.

Spirit of Showmanship
In the meantime, Bal Gandharva
started his own theatre company
which gave him a higher degree of
artistic control over the productions.
His plays were visual treats – he would
bring in real ornaments, imported
wigs, sarees woven with gold threads,
rich carpets and scenes painted with
great skills. The theatres too would
be filled with fragrances. The idea
behind the show was not to parade
wealth, nor was it an artistic whim.

He believed in a complete sensory
experience, and recreating the world
in which his play was set. If the play
portrayed a mythological figure or
royalty, he felt that the theatre should
represent it to draw the audience into
this world. And so he rarely hesitated
to spend money on sets and paid
keen attention to every detail.

His backdrops were painted by artists
who lived at the frontier of undivided
India at that point in time, and his
directions were conveyed by his art
directors. He would stand for hours
rather than sit to avoid changing the
creases and folds in the saris he wore
when he played the female lead. In
an era when realism was unknown in
Marathi theatre, Bal Gandharva was
immersed in its pursuit. He went to
the extent of bringing in a yearling for
‘Shakuntala’, and he invited the noted
artist Baburao Painter to create the
set of the Mayasabha for the play
‘Draupadi’.

A Singing Sensation
It was not acting alone that brought
him acclaim. Bal Gandharva was
a highly trained classical singer
and his experiments with classical
singing laid the foundation of Marathi
musical theatre, today referred to as
the ‘Gandharva School’ of music.
His trademark was including a note
(swara) that might not be a part of the
original raga without disturbing the
harmony but in fact, making it richer.
He would sing ragas one after the
other, and return to the original raga
so subtly that the precise moment
of the shift between the ragas could
not be determined. A great musician
and music critic, Govindrao Tembe,
opined, “When Gandharva changed from one raga to another it used to give the impression that he has sung a new raga.” Thus was Bal Gandharva’s notable experimentation with music and singing.

Furthermore, Bal Gandharva once heard an organ playing in a church and brought it to the theatre. Today it is an inseparable part of theatre. He was taught singing and mentored by stalwarts such as Bhaskarbua Bakhale and Master Krishnarao. Kakasaheb Khadilkar and Govind Ballal Deval taught him acting. Accompanied by the likes of actors such as Ganpatrao Bodas, Govindrao Tembe, Ram Ganesh Gadkari as he rose to fame, one could say that Bal Gandharva ushered in a golden era. His popularity reached record heights. People flocked to watch him play female roles even when he was well past his prime.

Social Conscience
However, fame always leads to rumours, and there were often stories spread about him. Some claimed that he had attended a ‘kumkum’ function, then meant exclusively for women, in a female disguise. But the truth is that he did not cross-dress off-stage. Meanwhile, the influence of Lokmanya Tilak who first brought him to public attention and Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj is undeniable. They sowed the seeds of social action in the great thespian and he came to realise the force that theatre had in order to mobilise public conscience. This prompted him to produce plays like ‘Sharada’ which spoke about child marriage. Additionally, he also supported the Tilak Fund raised by Mahatma Gandhi and made a large contribution. To raise funds, he organised a special run of the play ‘Manapman’ along with another theatre stalwart Keshavrao Bhosale. The entire profit of the show was donated to the Tilak Fund as homage to the great man.

Sorrows Aplenty
Later on in life, he struggled with poverty himself. Fans and friends gave him money, which he donated to dock workers affected by a bomb explosion.
obstacle. Having been in the lap of luxury, he then went on to suffer from poverty and lingering ill-health.

His personal life also stirred up controversy in a society that held to highly traditional ways of life. He chose to live with Goharbai, a singer actor of another religion. Bal Gandharva, who believed passionately in everything he did, ignored the voices of objection and continued with this relationship. Their life together was full of art and had many ups and downs - a remarkable love story in itself. To change with the times, he tried to play male roles as well. However, the audience was unwilling to take to his new 'avtaar'. In those days, the very first films appeared on the scene and producer-director V. Shantaram tried to rope in Bal Gandharva into this new medium. Unfortunately, he could not adapt to it and found it artificial and lifeless.

during World War II. Sadly, he was not the most astute money manager and he accumulated a large debt, also because he trusted the wrong people. His property was attached. His fans and friends resolved to help him clear his debts by generating a fund, but he refused the offer. He cleared his debts by acting again, keeping his self-respect intact.

Bal Gandharva had a complex personality. He was at the once an artist completely immersed in his art, and also distanced from himself, viewing his own life and performance like a sage in renunciation. His life was full of extremes – he had extremes of success, wealth, honour and popularity contradicted by extremes of frustration, poverty and failure. One could describe his life as a mixture of a Shakespearean and Greek tragedy. Like a Greek tragedy, destiny had its own share in his tragic end. He had to face the death of his own kin and supporters. His beloved daughter died in her infancy on the day of the first show of his first play. Taking to heart the idea that the show must go on, he masked his sorrows and went on stage nonetheless. Like in a Shakespearean tragedy, he was a victim of his own virtues and vices. Impractical and obstinate, his own attitude was sometimes his biggest obstacle.
A Final Curtain Call

During his lifetime, Bal Gandharva was praised by Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Babasaheb Ambedkar. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan and received an award from the Sangeet Natak Academy. By this point in his life though, he had distanced himself from his former glory and remained unmoved. A close colleague of his, Ram Ganesh Gadkari had written that one must play the role conferred upon oneself by destiny. Bal Gandharva took his plight along these lines and faced his ups and downs stoically.

On June 4, 1955 he enacted the role of Sindhu in the play ‘Ekach Pyala’ for the last time to bid farewell to theatre. Bal Gandharva passed away on July 15, 1967, and the Gandharva era faded away. Marathi theatre moved from musicals to prose plays, and incorporated the realism that Gandharva had sought to establish. The audience also accepted that a play could go beyond mere entertainment. Despite the passage of time, he remains a beacon for Marathi theatre and music today and his age is still remembered as the golden age.

Abhiram Bhadakamakar is a playwright and the script writer of the feature film 'Bal Gandharva' as well as the author of a novel on Bal Gandharva. Translation: Dr. Jayant Gadgil, researcher in science and writer-translator.
Sandcastles **unlimited**

Sriwardhan

With 720 km of coastal line, the majestic blue sea and the white sands, this is what you would call nature’s art. With unlimited reasons like these, it’s only fair to say one trip is just not enough.
Jejuri is situated on a hillock some 80 km away from Pune in Purandar taluka. There is a huge temple complex with the shrines of various deities on this 758-meter high hillock, and the chief shrine is that of Khandoba. It is this shrine that has brought recognition to Jejuri. The hilltop on which the temple of Khandoba stands is called Jejurigad. This tiny town does not go very far back in antiquity. Its history is known from 1688 when it was included in the fiefdom of Manaji Shankar Nilkantharao along with Shikali, Chamili, and Narayanapur. Kanhoji Angare and Shahu Maharaj were not on good terms as the former was in Maharani Tarabai’s camp. But after peace was concluded among them they met at Jejuri.

Shahu Maharaj being a great devotee of Khandoba had asked Bajirao Peshwa to construct a big tank (37 acres in area) at Jejuri for the benefit of the devotees. This circular tank is ringed by a massive stone wall and is named after Bajirao himself. Again, in 1764, a revolt of the Ramoshis was crushed down by the army of the senior Madhavrao Peshwa in the vicinity of Je-
Shrine

Shriyal Shashthi
In 1795, Tukoji Holkar camped at Jejuri and in 1800 he took revenge on the Peshwas for the heinous assassination of Vithoji Holkar by destroying the mansion of the chief of Jejurigad. Ahalyabai Holkar built a square stone reservoir called Holkar’s Reservoir, which occupies a land of 20 acres. Between this and the village stands a temple of Mahadeva erected in the memory of Malharrao Holkar built in about 1770.

A well known revolutionary of the 20th century, Umaji Naik, used to pay homage to Lord Khandoba on every dark moon night that fell on a Monday. When the British came to know this, they tried to arrest him at Jejuri. But all their attempts were in vain. In the pre-Independence period, a group of freedom fighters from the Praja Parishad of Kolhapur state were short of funds. Working under the leadership of Ratnappa Kumbhara, they planned a raid and looted the treasures of the temple. They were caught, put on trial and jailed. They were freed in 1946. History is silent about to whom the construction of the temple should be credited. It is known that the colossal compound wall was constructed by the ancestors of Krishnarao Khatawkar. And it is believed that when Shahaji returned to his ‘jagir’ at Pune in 1661-2 CE he met his son Shivaji at Jejurigad. The temple walls were later repaired on a very large scale, creating aisles on its all sides in 1765-97 CE by Ahalyabai Holkar.

The Temple and the Deity

In fact there are two temples of Khandoba at Jejuri, one older than the other, both built at the end of the outlying spur of the Purandar range which sinks into the plains here. The newer one is larger and stands about 84 meters above the town. The smaller temple is believed to be more sacred. It is built on a small plateau called Kadepathaara 3 km away from the town and is at a height of 133 meters. The old village site, now deserted, was to the east of the hill on which the new temple stands.

The plateau of Kadepathaara is about 11 acres in area and is the more popular Khandoba temple of the two. It is 6 km to the southwest of Jejuri. It consists of a three-arched verandah, octagonal ‘mandapa’, and the ‘garbhagriha’ which is almost square and has a niche in the centre of a wall to the west. In this niche is installed a seated four-armed image holding a sword, a trident, a kettle drum and a bowl. He is flanked by the goddesses Banai
Gathering of people for Somavati
and Jogeshwari. A huge brass effigy of a tortoise is placed in front of the temple in the courtyard.

One has to cross seven arches and descent several steps to reach the popular temple of Khandoba. Its very extensive courtyard has a walled compound within which are 63 verandahs. This style of architecture is probably the main reason why villagers refer to it as a ‘kot’ or fort. It has three entrance gates and devotees have to approach the temple from the northern gate as the one to the east has been presently closed by the temple authorities. As the temple is situated on a high hillock, devotees have to climb 385 uneven steps along which 150 ‘deepmalas’ have been erected haphazardly. This gate facing the north shoulders the ‘nagarkhana’ (musical gallery) The tower of this magnificent temple is domical betraying influence of late medieval architecture. It has four minarets - two in front and two at the back. Besides these there are five subsidiary shrines flanking the main one. The courtyard in which the huge brass tortoise with a diameter of 3 meters is located is also used as a ‘rangashila’ - a stage for performances like dances or discourses. In one of the verandahs are two huge bells, of which one is of foreign origin. There is also a large sword popularly known as ‘khaanda’ which is more than a meter long and three centimeters wide.

The temple itself consists of a ‘mandapa’ and a ‘garbhagriha’. It contains, along with three pairs of the images of Khandoba and his consorts, a square Shalunka with two ‘lingas’ representing Khandoba and Mhalsa. These are covered with silver masks. Of the aforesaid three pairs of images, two are of silver while the third is of impure gold. All these are seemingly alike with little difference in height. Khandoba holds a sword, a trident, a kettle drum and a bowl. The images of Mhalsa are shown holding either a lotus bud or lotus in the right hand, the left being in the ‘gajahasta’ pose (imitating an elephant trunk with an outstretched hand).

Khandoba being a form of Shiva, he ought to have ‘naga kundalas’ (ear rings made of snakes) in his ears; instead they are ‘makarakundalas’. On the basis of the legends carved at the back of the ‘prabhamandala’ (the elliptical halo around the head) made of brass it seems that the one with a silver plate is of 1934 CE. The nimbus around one of them carries an inscription giving the genealogy of Yekoji Raje beginning with Maloji, his father. The ‘Poona Gazetteer’ records three such pairs, one of which is of gold, the other one of silver, and the third one of stone. At the moment only the silver one is seen at the temple.

There is a broad niche in the wall behind these pairs containing a stone image of seated Khandoba who has four arms. He is shown holding sword, trident, drum and bowl. Of these, the first is missing and other two are of brass, and the bowl is carved along with the image. The two figures of deities flanking him are known as Jogeshwari. A horse is seen carved on the pedestal. According to the iconography, there should be a dog with Bhairava and a dog and horse with Martandabhairawa. In this shrine, the horse is shown

Dr. G. B. Deglurkar is an expert on temple architecture and iconography. He is the President of the Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute, Pune.
with the stone image and a dog is placed with the metal image. Since the images are not very ancient - maybe just a couple of centuries old – the iconography is not strictly followed.

A God for All

Khandoba is also known as Mallari, Mailara, Mhalasakant, Bahiroba, etc. He probably is the only god in Maharashtra who is considered as the family deity of almost all ‘varnas’ and castes unlike that of Mahalakshmi who is mainly of upper castes and Shri Vitthala of a few Warkari families. In view of this it can be said that Khandoba is truly the deity of the masses or a ‘lokadeva’. As per the ritual, devotees go around the temple chanting ‘Yelkot ghe, Yelkot ghe’ and ‘Jaya Malhara’. His popularity is also attested to by the fact that his major temples are at various places across three states, namely Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, while those of Shri Vitthala and Mahalakshmi are few and far between.

There are four main festivals celebrating this deity, which fall in the months of Margashirsha, Pausha, Magha and Chaitra. Lakhs of pilgrims attend these festivals. There are two festivals comparatively of lesser importance and attended by people from the neighbouring regions - Somawati-Amawasya (new moon Monday) and Dasara. The priests of the temple are Guravas and not Brahmins. The deity here has two types of devotees. Both of them are known as ‘waghya’. The one who worships him for one’s welfare is of a separate group known as ‘gharawaaghya’ and the other one who works as a mediator for the devotee is called ‘daarawaaghya’.

According to the prevalent custom, after the fulfillment of his wish, a devotee offers his first child to the deity. If the child is a son then he is known as ‘Waghya’ and if a daughter is born, then she is called ‘Murali’. In the old days, they would be considered the devoted servants of the God, and perform songs and dances in his praise on festivals and occasions. The practice of offering daughters, i.e. ‘devdasis’ or ‘servants of God’, has now been made illegal as many young girls were being exploited. Social organisations are working to rehabilitate ‘Muralis’ and break age-old superstitious practices. ‘Waghyas’ continue to be offered, though the numbers are falling. Jejuri has been a source of inspiration in the history of the region, with the spirit of Khandoba emboldening the Maratha troops under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

For more information login to www.jejuri.in
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The forest fires we have in Maharashtra are ‘ground fires’ where basically the ground flora and some dried trees burn and the live trees get scorched. There is damage to wildlife especially to the ground-nesting birds. One experiences devastating ‘crown fires’ in resin-rich coniferous forests where everything is turned to ash. In Melghat, the traditional method of combating a forest fire is still followed. Here the forest is divided into a number of small parts with the help of ‘fire lines.’ During fire-fighting, efforts are made to ensure that the fire does not pass from one patch to another by beating down the fire. Sadly, most forest fires are man-made. The reasons are varied—getting an early flush of grass, increase in the yield of gum or Tendu leaves, poaching and vandalism among them. I remember an entire night that we spent extinguishing 10 forest fires along the road. The culprit was walking about two km ahead of us and wanting to feel safe from a tiger, supposedly staying in that patch of forest, was walking around setting fire to the forest.

Traditional fire fighting methods

The common practice is to declare the fire season around the 15th of February. This season continues till the onset of monsoons. During the fire season, fire detection towers are erected at high points (generally hill tops). At these points ‘fire-watchers’ are deployed who are equipped with walkie-talkie and who keep a close vigil on any incident of fire and pass on information to the field staff who rush to the site immediately and extinguish the fire. Before the fire season in November-December fire-lines are cut and burnt. This divides the forest into smaller patches. In case of fire, attempt is made to restrict the fire to these small patches. The fire is extinguished by literally beating it down with the help of brooms made out of bushes or barks of certain tree species. For this purpose the fire-extinguishers engaged are the local villagers of the village forest protection committees. They are paid suitable wages by the Forest Department.
Areas most susceptible to fire

Forest fire occurs in entire Maharashtra except some patches of evergreen forests in the Western Ghats. In dry deciduous forests of central India the severity of forest fire is felt most because of the plenty of leaf litter present on the forest floor. Also, in May the temperature in these areas soars upto 47 degrees centigrade.

Precautions

While the forest department takes precautions like educating local Forest Protection Committees, taking care that the local villagers ensure that no fire from their farm enters the forest, and keeping extra vigil during fire season to ensure that no illegal gum-tappers or tendu leaves collectors or grazers (who light fire for extra yield) or poachers are active in the forests; the tourists too have a big responsibility towards protection of the forests. They must ensure that fires lit by them are totally extinguished before they shift the camp and ensure that burning cigarettes, beedis or live torches are very carefully disposed off.

Once lit, a forest fire can cause large scale destruction. Wild life gets scorched and killed. Bird life, especially the ground-nesting birds, their eggs and young ones get roasted. Tender floral species get wiped out. Useful soil-micro-organisms in ecosystem get parched. Fire causes hollowness in precious timber species. So the next time you set off on a forest trail, be conscious about the priceless treasure that nature is gifting you and take real care of it while you enjoy its beauty.

Let me narrate one experience to give you an idea of what combating a forest fire is like. It was March 1979 and I was nearing completion of my Range charge at Tarubanda. Around 7 pm, I was three km beyond Kund village, patrolling the border of the core area of Project Tiger on the banks of the dry river Sakhari when I discovered a small fire.

That night I had a jeep with a trailer and my brave driver, Hasan, as my only companion. Had we both gone to Kund to collect a force to combat the fire, we would have lost precious time and the small fire would have become unmanageable. So, despite protests from Hasan, I decided to get down alone from the jeep to combat the fire and sent Hasan to Kund. He promised to return in 10 minutes, but I was prepared for 30.

Before Hasan left, he had handed me a makeshift broom as a fire fighting tool which could both be used for sweeping as well as beating down the fire. I occupied a fire line and got down to sweeping and clearing it of debris. The fire was still about half a km away in a valley and the light emitted was just enough for me to see. The first thing that I saw was a shiny long snake slithering away from the fire passing me at bitable distance.

Slowly the intensity of the wind had increased and the fire was divided into three parts. One patch, about 50 feet wide was fast climbing towards me and had flames about 15 feet tall. I quickly cleaned up the fire line and stood firmly on it with a resolve to stop it. Suddenly a big hairy sloth bear rushed away from the fire, right by me.

In a span of 15 minutes I had encountered two most avoidable denizens which made me slightly nervous and I started praying for Hasan’s early arrival.

As the fire came closer, the wind velocity also increased resulting in the formation of a mini whirlwind which helped the fire jump the fire line which I had cleaned. I quickly rushed to the spot and extinguished that patch. The rest of the fire came upto the fire line and stopped which made me happy and I quickly put it all out.

However, my happiness was short-lived as it soon became totally dark and I had no torch. My dazzled eyes refused to see anything and I was forced to remain glued to a spot listening quietly to various jungle sounds. I was hungry, thirsty and very scared in the pitch darkness in tiger country. I prayed hard for help.

Soon my prayers were answered. I heard the faint sound of a jeep followed by some rays of (hope!) light. It had taken Hasan almost an hour to return with a mixed bunch of 15 youngsters and oldies, a barrelful of water and some food for me. We had the other two fires to attend to and got on to the job.

Around 1 am, the water was exhausted. The fire fighting continued till 4 am. I reached Tarubanda around breakfast thinking about the person who must have lit the fire. Incidentally, there is a monument at Harisal to commemorate the efforts of one Range Forest Officer who laid down his life combating a fire.
The best way to enjoy a vacation is to explore nature in all its resplendent glory. And for those who cannot resist the intermittent lull and fury of the sea waves while spreading out on fine sand, there can be nothing better than a visit to Diveagar. As travel enthusiast P K Ghanekar describes in this article, Diveagar also provides a window into Konkani lifestyle and culture, not to forget the chance to dig into sumptuous meals of fish curry and rice with some solkadhi and kokam serbet.

Quintessentially Konkani

The Silver Sands of Diveagar

P K Ghanekar | Photographs © Dhanashree Bapat
With silvery sands that stretch for nearly 5 kilometers flanked by orchards, Diveagar is one of Konkan’s finest beaches. Take an early morning walk along the beach, and you will be treated to the sight of flocks of seagulls and other sea birds. Let the waves lap gently over your feet and let go of all the stresses and concerns of city life. By the evening the beach becomes a bustle of activity. Coconut and fruit vendors, camel rides, and parasailing take centre-stage. By nightfall though, the beach is deserted as everyone returns home to enjoy delicious fish curries made from the catch of the day.

About Diveagar
Legends talk about how Diveagar came to be. One day, a ship that was off the shore got caught in a storm. The sailors aboard the ship despaired for they thought that all hope had been lost. They prayed that they may be saved, and much to their surprise, they saw a light shining in the distance. They sailed towards that light and were saved. The place where they were saved came to be known as Diveagar, ‘Dive’ meaning ‘light’ and ‘agar’ meaning orchards. Subsequently, Diveagar gained popularity with tourists for its beautiful beach and serene orchards. More recently,
on November 17, 1997, it was once again in the spotlight with the discovery of a golden mask depicting the face of Ganesha in the coconut grove of Dropadi Dharma Patil.

The mask was not the only find though; it was discovered in a copper trunk. The copper chest perhaps might be the more valuable find historically as it dates back to the 11th century C.E. The Ganesha mask, made of pure gold and weighing 1.3 kilograms, drew a lot more attention, but is relatively much newer, dating from the 16th or the 17th century C.E. The discovery of these treasures created a ripple of excitement among historians and tourists alike and the tourism industry in Diveagar received a boost. Sadly, despite security measures, the golden mask was stolen on March 24, 2012. The theft came as a great blow to the villagers and also briefly affected tourism.

Roopanarayana Temple

The Roopanarayana Temple could be said to be the chief sight of Diveagar after the beach. The prime attraction of the temple is its beautifully carved 900-year-old image of Vishnu that was carved during 12th century C.E. Although the temple and idol are referred to as ‘Roopnarayan’ it must be pointed out that technically the idol is a depiction of Lakshmi Keshav. The carvings of the ten incarnations of Vishnu i.e. the Dashavatar along with the carvings of Brahma and Mahesh are particularly noteworthy. The Roopnarayan Temple and the temple of Uttareshwar Mahadev have both been recently renovated. Other remains from antiquity include stone inscriptions.

Around Diveagar

Diveagar is a part of a cluster of three beach towns in the Raigad district – the other two being Shrivardhan and Harihareshwar. A beautiful drive along the coastal road via the village of Shekhdari takes tourists to Diveagar. Apart from a pretty beach, Shrivardhan is also famous for its Jeevaneshwar Temple. The temple is a tourist attraction for its intricately carved wooden pillars. The Kusumeshwar Temple is a bit more remotely situated, and is also worth a visit. If you have a little more time in Shrivardhan, visit the old home of the Bhat Peshwa family that has a charming old Laxmi Narayan Temple.

From Shrivardhan, you can drive on to Harihareshwar along a scenic coastal road. The drive also gives you the opportunity to see the mangroves along the coast. The constant ebb and flow of the waves create beautiful natu-
ral patterns along the sands of Harihareshwar and the rocks have been weathered into a honeycomb pattern. The lush green carpets of *ulva lactiluca* and other marine algae also attract researchers.

This strip of the coast is also abundant in flora and fauna. The fiddler crabs, starfish, sea shells and rich marine life draw nature lovers. The screw pines (*kevada*), ipomoea biloba (*maryaadvel*), and plantations of casuarinas are homes to several species of reptiles and birds. Another interesting site in the area is the ‘Gangasthan’, 3 kilometers from Vakalghar, off the road to Borlipanchatan.
At Gangasthan you find underground springs that emerge from five cisterns at specific intervals. Water springs forth intermittently thanks to an underground siphon system. Devkhol is another small village near Diveagar. It has an old temple with carvings of gods and goddesses. The surroundings of the temple though are better known for the rich avian life they attract and the place is popular with bird-watchers.

Further ahead, Madagad is where the avid trekkers arrive. This lesser known fort is hidden amidst thickets and big trees which offer a good hiding place for wild boars and panthers. Rare vultures too have taken shelter in this forest. The climb to Madagad provides for excellent views of the Bankot Creek to the south and of Murud Creek to the north. It is best to climb Madagad in the company of an experienced local guide and one must also be on the alert for boars and panthers. A day trip to the sea forts of Janjira and Padmadurg near Murud can be made via Dighi, 15 kilometers from Diveagar.

Where to stay:
Diveagar has a few hotels but only the MTDC Exotica Resort, Mauli Resort and Ambience Cottages offer full-fledged hotel type of facilities. There are also several families offering home-stay options in traditional wadas. The rooms tend to be sparsely furnished but often have the traditional jhula (swing).

What to buy:
Pick up typical Konkani products like potato or poha papads, mirgundas, kurdayas, papadyas, and phanas gare (jackfruit wafers), amba and phanas poli (mango and jackfruit delicacies), amla candy and kokam syrup. Eco-friendly locally made bowls and dishes made from the leaves of betel nut trees are also interesting gifts to buy.

What to eat:
Vegetarians must try Shri Suhas Bapat’s modak, dalimbya and solkadi. For seafood lovers, Potnis, Rane and Patil’s food joints are definitely worth tasting. Try the tender coconut ice-cream at Vaasav, an ice-cream parlour at Mangaon.
Distance from Mumbai: 230 kms

How to reach:

By Air: The nearest airport is at Pune.

By Rail: Rail is not the best way to reach Diveagar. From Mumbai catch a train on the Konkan Railway and get down at Mangaon. Then proceed by local bus to Diveagar via Mhasala.

By Road: Take NH-17 from Mumbai through Nagothana, Kolad, Mangaon, Mhasala, Vadavali, and Borli Panchatan. From Pune drive through the picturesque Tamhini Ghat, Vile, Mangaon, Mhasala, Vadavali and Borli Panchatan. Diveagar is 170 kilometers from Pune. There are ST buses that go directly to Diveagar from Mumbai and Pune.

Travel Tips

It is best to explore the coastline in a car as buses are not very frequent and rail connectivity is low.
The Nilakantheshwara temple at Nilanga, Dist. Latur is one of the most fascinating for the various motifs it highlights, including the appealing sculptures of Surasundaris (divine beauties) who signify various cultural and ethical norms that devotees must practice.

Dr. Maya J. Patil (Shahapurkar), Deputy Director, Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Maharashtra State, takes you on a journey of the myriad art forms that the temple showcases and explains the meaning of what they represent.

A Song in Stone

Nilakantheshwara Temple, Nilanga

Maya Patil (Shahapurkar)
Photographs © Ram Jeurkar, Dhanashree Bapat
Divine architecture and sculpture is what embodies the Nilakantheshwara Temple, Nilanga. It is situated in the heart of the town, a taluka in Latur district. The temple faces the east and is profusely decorated from within and outside. Its outer walls are covered with religious imagery and the enchanting figures of surasundaris. The walls, pillars and door frames are richly wrought. The temple consists of three shrines, rendering it a triple shrine or tridala temple. Of the three shrines, the principal one is larger in size than the two subsidiary shrines. They are arranged around the three sides of a closed hall (gudhaman-dapa) and a long porch in front of the hall forming the main entrance. The cross-shaped hall is 10x10 square meters excluding the antechambers to its three sides.

**Overall View**

The plans of the shrines are stellate which have many angles or points, thus making these very attractive. The principal or main shrine chamber is 3 square meters and has its floor at the same level as that of the hall, unlike other Shiva shrines. In the centre of the shrine is a linga which is the main object of the cult. The doorway is intricately decorated with seven jambs (shakhas) on each side. The doorways of the subsidiary shrines have five door jambs (vertical bands) each, thus belonging to the Nandini variety of door frames. Below these vertical bands are the carved figures of Shaiva doorkeepers and the figures of Ganga and Yamuna as well as of the flywhisk bearers. On the top of the door frame in the center is seen Ganesha seated in ardhapary-ankasana (one leg folded and another dangling).

In the niches to the left and right side wings of the antechamber are placed the images of Ganesha and Vishnu and in those facing south and north is seen a frieze containing the saptamatrikas and Mahishasuramardini respectively. The main hall admeasuring 10x10 meters accommodates 16 pillars in the centre of which is a raised nave with a rangashila (dais). It is surrounded by aisles. The entrance to this hall has on either side a dwarf wall surmounted with a perforated screen wall. The ceiling of the mandapa (hall) is trabeated and of the navaranga variety, i.e. dividing it into nine parts. It is richly decorated with sculptures of saptamatrikas, kritimukha, etc. However, much of the original parts have disappeared.

**Pillars**

The pillars in the temple constitute an important unit. They indicate the style as well as period of construction of the temple. Here there are 28 pillars of which 16 are in the sabhamandapa. These well-proportioned elaborately carved pillars of the hall are 2.40 meters in height. The general plan of these is square all the way up with recessed corners. The brackets contain the four-armed kicha-kas with a four-faced member on their heads. The square members of the shaft bear various
figures and designs, including kinnaras.

**Second Shrine**

This is dedicated to Vishnu and faces the south. It is fronted by an antechamber. Being a subsidiary to the main shrine, it is comparatively smaller. The entrance door has five vertical jambs, the lower parts of which bear the figures of flywhisk bearers and Vaishnava doorkeepers, indicating that the deity inside belongs to the Vaishnava cult. Inside the shrine is an artistically rendered beautiful image of the Keshava form of Vishnu who is holding a lotus in the lower right hand and a conch in the upper one. He holds a disc in the upper left hand and a mace in the lower one, adorned with various ornaments which supplement his beauty.

**Third Shrine**

The image installed in the third shrine facing the north is of Hara-Gauri seated in alinganamudra. It has a special significance. This image depicts Parvati’s steadfast love and keen desire to marry Shiva. That is why she is shown with her mount the lizard (Godha) underneath her feet (Shiva has his own mount, Nandi). In this form, she is known as Gauri (godhasana bhave Gauri). When depicted in the company of Gauri, Shiva is known as Hara.

And according to the prevalent practice, the composite name should be Gauri-Hara. In Maharashtra, a bride is generally supposed to offer worship to this deity prior to the acceptance of bridegroom as her husband. The implied intension is to suggest that the bride should follow Gauri as a role model. In every other respect, this shrine resembles the one described above. However the Shaiva figures are on the lower parts of the shakha of the door and a devi is seen befittingly on the top (latatabimba) since the shrine is dedicated to a Shaiva deity.

**Exterior**

The exterior of the shrines and that of the closed hall are quite similar and have the same horizontal mouldings. The pitha, upa-
na, kumuda, etc. are the mouldings which are worth a study. The exterior wall proper, technically known as mandowara, begins with a moulding, over which are the pilasters imitating the pillars in the interior of the hall in design. The decorations comprise circular rosettes, decorated triangular fillets, and the kritimukhas usually in pairs. The stellate plan of the temple provides a large numbers of offsets on the exterior walls. This presents a multiplicity of angles and thus forms a zone of chiaroscuro, interplaying with light and shadow because of the projections and recesses. Unlike the other temples in Maharashtra, here the recesses are studded with

Dr. Maya J. Patil (Shahapurkar) is Deputy Director, Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Maharashtra State.
eye-catching figures. Out of 83 extant figures, only three are of males while the remaining are of females, mostly of the surasundaris.

The impressive feature of this temple is the depiction of the surasundaris of enchanting beauty. These charming apsaras are shown engaged in music, dance, sport, etc. They epitomize the concept of female beauty and at the same time are suggestive of some behavioral norms or ethical themes. It appears that they are there because of the popularity of the Bhakti movement. There is much to be said for them, though they have remained neglected so far.

Temples are the sacred places where one goes to accrue punya. Obviously one has to go with a pure mind, devoid of desire, ego, malice, etc. These surasundaris suggest to the devotees that they should discard desire, lust, temptation and prepare them to be worthy of god’s blessings. They are 16 according to Shilpa Prakash and 32 as per the Kshirarnava list. Many of these are seen depicted on this Nilakantheswar Temple. Those which are shown carrying a pitcher (Jaya by name), flower (padmagandha) etc. suggest how one should approach the deity, for the dictum of the scriptures is that the devotee should not go to the temple with empty hands. Some of these ladies of captive beauty are danseuses (nartika), musicians (mardala), etc. They are expected to perform on the dais (rangashila) in the hall. This type of offering is known as ‘Rangabhoga’. Besides them there are more who point out ethical and other

Excursions:

• Ter is approximately 60 km with ancient temples and a Museum which connects India with Rome.
• Tuljapur is at a distance of approximately 90 kilometers from Nilanga.
• Explore the attractions of Latur, including its old city centre with the famous structure ‘Ganj Gola’. The caves of Kharosa and the ruins of Udgir Fort are the other local attractions near Latur.
qualities which a devotee should follow.

**Darpana**

She is believed to have been very popular among the *surasundaris* and is depicted holding a mirror in her left hand on which her sight is riveted. The meaning to be derived from this is: one should look towards oneself not outwardly but inwardly i.e. introspection of one’s own self. No one else can be a better judge in recognising you than you yourself. That is why she is shown with a mirror, which stands for one’s own mind. One should enquire with one’s self while going to a temple whether one goes with an unstinted mind and a soul filled with devotion.

**Matrimurti or Putrawallabha**

There is a *surasundari* displayed here with a baby on her hip. This is to convey that the relation between god and his devotee is like that of mother and child. That is why Sant Namdeo in his metric song addresses god with the line, “O God you are...”
shown struggling to drive away the monkey with a twig (consciousness) or with a raised hand about to slap it.

In brief it can be said that the Nilakantheshwara Temple presents not only impressive architecture and the carvings of surasundaris of captivating beauty but it is successful in conveying that the art here is skillfully as well as subtly utilised to give a message pregnant with philosophical and ethical norms to be followed by men and women.

Lady and a Monkey
Also seen here is a surasundari whose robe is being snatched by a monkey. Here the unsteady mind of a devotee is compared metaphorically with fickleness, which is embodied in a form of a monkey. The purpose of such a theme on the exterior of temple is to indicate to the devotee that she or he should draw the mind away from lustful and sensuous thoughts. That is why the surasundari is my mother and I am your child; please do not go way from me; cuddle me instead."

Distance from Mumbai: 497 kms
How to reach:
By Air: Although Latur has a small airport, it does not have any commercial flights. The nearest airport is at Pune.
By Rail: Latur Railway Station is well-connected to several cities, including Pune, Nagpur, Aurangabad and Hyderabad.
By Road: The quickest route to Nilanga from Mumbai is via the Pune-Solapur Highway. One can turn off at Osmanabad and reach Nilanga via Tuljapur. Alternatively, drive to Latur first and then head to Nilanga. Nilanga is 43 kilometers south of Latur.
Experience
Tribal Tapestry in the Lap of Nature

Jawhar

Text and Photographs © Ranadeep Bhattacharyya and Judhajit Bagchi

This may sound unbelievable but undeniable is the fact that just about 180 kilometres away from the chaos and congestion of Mumbai is the absolutely tranquil and rather quaint region of Jawhar where the unique Warli art has flourished for hundreds of years and the tribals continue to remain untouched by the corruption of urbanised living. It is here that Ranadeep Bhattacharyya and Judhajit Bagchi experience the soothing effect of connecting with their own selves even as they trek through lush forests, get mesmerized by a sunrise and soak themselves under the gushing force of a huge waterfall.
How often is it that when we watch a movie, we wish we could visit the stunning locations shown in it? It’s not that easy to find winding mountain roads or waterfalls without hordes of camera toting tourists clogging them. Not to mention all the breathtaking sunsets and sunrises that seem to be found only on film and not in reality. All of these are not mere dreams on film, but can be found in Jawhar, only three hours away from the chaos of Mumbai. An erstwhile tribal capital, Jawhar is nestled within the green hills of the Sahyadris in the Thane district of Maharashtra and has a lot to offer for the explorer willing to go off the beaten track.

Today it is almost a luxury to find unspoilt getaways with hill stations being either commercialized or overcrowded, Jawhar, referred to as ‘Mahabaleshwar’ of Thane district, is a rare exception. What adds an edge to its picturesque beauty is its thriving tribal life with centuries of history that remains till date untouched by urbanisation. Driving down to Jawhar from Mumbai is in itself an adventure. The entire landscape changes once you turn right from Manor on the NH8 on to the state highway that leads to Jawhar. There are so many scenic locations on its coiling biking trails amidst thick greenery and gushing streams that one is spoilt for choices.

This tribal town can be visited almost all round the year though the best time would be from October to February. Diwali is especially celebrated with great pomp and show, as the locals believe it is on this auspicious ‘Deva-ali’ day that gods (deva) come (ali) to visit their humble abodes. Monsoons are also a treat here for the rain lovers as the entire area transforms into a lush green carpet dotted with numerous waterfalls.

**Ancient Lineage**

Jawhar was the capital of the ancient Warli tribes who find mention in the 3rd century BCE annals of the Greek traveller Megasthenes’s accounts while he visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya. In fact, scholars opine that the association of Warli tribes to their present homeland goes back to 2,300 years. The British accounts of 1885 describe the Warlis as “members of one of the wildest aboriginal tribes in Thana district who lead a nomadic life, constantly wandering from place to place.” It was a result of their shifting agricultural practices that the Warli tribes today are scattered all around Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Later, in the 14th century, Jawhar was founded as a capital of the area by the tribal king Jayaba Mukne. The ruins of the old palace can be seen in the heart of the town even today. During the time of British rule, this princely state had its own revenue and fiscal stamps issued by the Mukne royal family. The last ruler of Jawhar at the time of India’s independence was Raja Patang Shah V ‘Yashwant Rao’ Mukne.

**Home to Warli Art**

Today, this small town is an absolute favourite with art enthusiasts. In its quaint villages, you can see Warli art taking shape in front of your eyes. Sandeep Madhav Boir, a third generation Warli artist, says, “These extremely rudimentary wall paintings originally done...
by women to decorate the interiors of their house bring out the rich tapestry of their social life and important events in a rhythmic pattern.” The elements of Warli paintings use a very basic graphic vocabulary inspired by their close association with nature in the form of circles (representing sun and moon), triangles (trees and mountains) and squares (sacred enclosure or a piece of land). Traditionally, the central motive in each ritual painting is the square (chauk), inside which sits the mother goddess, symbolizing fertility.

Even human beings are represented with two inverted triangles on each other with a circle on top. Though originally drawn with rice flour on mud walls, artists now prepare paintings on various canvas sizes as souvenirs to sell them to tourists. You can either shop for these paintings from the local market where they are sold in elegant bamboo frames or even better, buy them directly from the artists in the village. The paintings range from Rs 200 to Rs 10,000 depending on the size and the intricacy of work.

But apart from this attraction for art aficionados and a place where you could simply laze through the hours in the tranquil ambience of Jawhar, the travel enthusiast will find here many other spots to fill the itinerary.

**Jai Vilas Palace**

Famously known as the Raj Bari by the locals, the Jai Vilas Palace is an absolute man-made marvel in Jawhar. Cars are not allowed inside and one has to get down the main road and walk through the vast 550-acre stretch of cashew plantations leading to the entrance of this magnanimous structure that is owned by the royal Mukne family. Built by Raja Yashwant Rao Mukne in the early 19th century, this masterpiece in pink stone is sprawled on the top of a hill, providing the king at that time a splendid view of his kingdom. Even today, the landscape of hillocks and forests is a sight to behold. With an ancient cannon placed right beneath the portico, the palace invites one to explore its plush interiors.

The ground floor consists of a huge hall which is adorned by portraits and paintings of the royal family. A robust staircase leads one to the first floor for a glimpse of the drawing room, children’s room, royal bedroom and lobby. The riveting architecture along with the antique furniture brings to life the culture and lifestyle of tribal kings in its bygone era. This eighty roomed palace has been featured in several Bollywood films over the years, like the Akshay Kumar-starrer ‘Khiladi’ and even in the horror televisions series ‘Aahat’.
Once you have visited the palace, take time to walk around its well-maintained garden leading to the grounds behind for a breathtaking view of the valley below. It is an idyllic place to spend several hours with the wind whispering sweet nothings in your ear. The Jai Vilas Palace has a quaint tribal mood attached to it - something that you will rarely experience anywhere else.

**Hanuman Point / Sunrise Point**

The road from the Jai Vilas Palace leads straight towards the Jawhar bus stand, adjacent to which is a natural pinnacle. A small temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman sits on the center of this tableland with its three sides sloping down to the 500-feet deep valley. According to local legend, Lord Hanuman on his way to meet Lord Ram stopped here to relax at this beautiful place - a perfect spot for photographers. From an angle one can see the domes of the Jai Vilas Palace almost like a silhouette painting and adding some more magic are the trains rumbling away through the Kasara Ghat and the historical fort of Shahapur Maholi beneath. This impressive panoramic valley is called Devkobaacha Kada and is the birthplace of the famous Marathi poet, playwright and freedom fighter Veer Savarkar. A popular picnic spot with the young and old alike, it is most visited to see the sun rise in all its majestic glory from behind the mountains.
Shirpamal

Jawhar is also blessed with the footsteps of the great Maratha warrior Shivaji, who on his way to raid Surat forged an alliance with the Warli kingdom at Shirpamal on the Nasik Road, some three centuries ago. Located at the pinnacle of the highest hill to facilitate unobstructed observation of the movement of enemies through the kingdom, the red welcome arch stands as a gateway to the humble memorial. In front of the fluttering flag post of the memorial, a commemorative plaque describes Shivaji’s halt at this place. Walk a few steps behind the memorial and you will be gifted with a grand view of the Sahyadri Mountains and a lake. It is as if time comes to a halt here.

Dabhosa Waterfall

Just about 18 km away from Jawhar is the magnificent and energetic Dabhosa waterfall nestled within the forests - an ideal place to camp and have a good time with friends and family. Contrary to most of the waterfalls in the Western Ghats, Dabhosa is an all-year-round waterfall and one of the highest in Maharashtra, descending down a whopping 300 feet from the Lendi River and taking the shape of a perfect tumbler. To access the waterfall, one has to walk into the forest and reach the placid lake beneath it. Both the sides of this waterfall are surrounded by straight mountains of height not less than 600 feet and covered with thick vegetation that, according to the locals, mainly consists of medicinal plants. Camp along the waterfall or just swim in the lake. The best thing is there is hardly anyone around to disturb you.

Sunset Point

About half a kilometer west of the main town lies this vantage point facing a valley with a ribbon-like waterfall where one can witness the sun go down for the day in Jawhar. This...
cool and calm place has a beautiful garden with a proper enclosure from where you can see the changing hues of the setting sun. The best time to visit this place is 6 pm.

Thus, if you really are looking for a peaceful weekend getaway with an unhurried pace - a place where you can connect with yourself in the silence of nature with only the birds chirping around and the cool breeze ruffling the trees - then Jawhar will not fail to enthral and enchant you.

Travel Tips

• Reach Jawhar before it is dark. There is absolutely no nightlife in Jawhar for the tourist. It’s a place to relax and connect with your inner consciousness.
• The best thing to do is travel early as mountains and waterfalls surround the entire route to Jawhar, mostly during monsoons.
• For those interested in trekking, please be sure to be accompanied by a local guide from the tribal community as most of the routes are quite dangerous and require a good knowledge of the place.
• If you really want to have a taste of tribal culture and life, spend a night at the local tribal village in exchange of a nominal amount and get a first-hand experience of their cuisine and hospitality. Also witness the Tarpa dance by the locals.
• The Jai Vilas Palace is private property and you may not be allowed to enter the place on the first go. Request the caretaker to take you around in exchange for a fee.
• Be very careful with your belongings at the Jai Vilas Palace and the surrounding garden. There are lots of crooks and pickpockets around.
• Jawhar does not have adequate tourist infrastructure which the reason why it still has been able to hold on to its exquisite charm and natural beauty. So it’s advisable to carry your own entertainment along with you such as books, badminton rackets, board games, etc.
• Carrying light woolens in winter is important as after sunset the entire place becomes chilly.

Shopping

• Buy authentic Warli paintings from the artisans themselves or at the local shops.
• Bamboo vessels, handicrafts and articles made out of waste paper are a few of the other interesting things.
• On Saturday, the main town of Jawhar has its weekly market where you can buy tribal jewelry made of metal, glass and stones.

Food

• Ankur Lake View Dhaba in front of Jai Sagar Dam is a decent place for tourists to stop by for food. You will get good vegetarian and non-vegetarian food here.
• In the village, tribal women teach tourists how to cook with local forest produce. It’s truly a lifetime experience!

Accommodation

• Shanti Sarovar Resort, Near Jaysagar Lake, Silvassa Road, Jawahar. Tel.: 09270656666.
• Sajan Nature Club, Off Jawahar Road. Tel.: 02520-231044.

Distance from Mumbai: 180 kms

How to reach:

By Air: At 80 km, Nashik is the nearest airport from Jawhar next to Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport of Mumbai, which is 161 km away. Taxis ply to Jawhar from both the airports.

By Rail: The nearest railhead is Igatpuri, 61 km on the Central Railway line. On the Western Railway line, the nearest railhead is Dahanu at 67 km.

By Road: Driving down to Jawhar from Mumbai could take about three hours on NH8 to Charoti Naka at Kasa via Shirsad and Manor. Then take the state highway to Jawhar via Sava and Balkapra. From Pune, it takes about five hours. Take the Mumbai - Pune Expressway to Panvel and from there the Thane-Bhiwandi Road to Wada straight to Vikramgad. From Vikramgad, Jawhar is just 20 km away. If you wish to use public transport, an ST bus leaves from Parel in Mumbai at 5:45 am and another one leaves from Thane at 8 am everyday.
Various role-plays, witty and humorous exchange of words, dancing, singing, playing a musical instrument or two and above all, exhorting people to tread on the path of truth and honesty without succumbing to the temptation of earthly pleasures is what the Maharashtrian folk culture bharood is all about. What makes it all the more interesting and enchanting is the myriad range of characters – from the person who whips his own back to the one who dances ferociously with a drum in his hand – who together evoke deep faith in the power of the omnipresent. Surprisingly, the bharood continues to retain its age-old popularity even today.

Bharood

Ramchandra Dekhane,
Translated by Sunil Ganu

Photographs ©
Dhanashree Bapat,
Sunil Gokarn
The nightly performance of the keertan started up, and slowly but surely, the young and the old; the men and the women; the kids and the youth - all draped in cotton quilts - gathered in the temple courtyard. By the time the preamble of the keertan had reached its end, the temple and the courtyard were bursting with villagers. Today, the spectators were really abundant… the keertan came to an end and the local group of musicians started their performance of the bharood.

Seated in a circle at the centre of the courtyard were all the musicians – successively, there were loud exhortations of Pundalikwarda and a bhajan to Vithoba-Rakhmaai. About 10 to 15 men with taal (cymbals) surrounded the veena player in the centre. A harmonium player sat to one side, and a percussionist with a mrdang (percussion) on the other. The bhajan died down, and a narrator stood up slowly. Pundalikwarda was hailed loudly once again. The spectators participated lustily. The entire neighbourhood was filled, it seemed, by the loud hailing of Pundalikwarda. Those who had nodded off to sleep were jerked back to reality. The narrator started to declaim: “Friends, ….”

The pleasant pre-dawn was soon to see the sun rise. Birds twitter in the trees; a cool dawn breeze blows across the land; and the cock, covered by a woven basket, is crowing in full voice. The bird insists that the day is nigh; the cattle in the shed chew cud placidly; the calves search their mothers in order to drink. Women, now awake, start grinding grain to be used during the day, singing traditional songs while at the grindstone.

“My grindstone is beautiful; it goes round and round, let us sing songs in praise of Viththal,

My two parents-in-law and my brother-in-law a third; may they be blessed, my brother,

Won’t you come now, O Viththal?”

Slowly, the quilt-wrapped village comes to life to the song of a Vasudev. Keeping time with the taal in his hands and the bells at his ankles, a peacock-feathered headdress adorning his head, the Vasudev ambles along, chanting “To alms, to alms.” At the break of dawn, he awakens villagers to the name of Lord Rama repeated over and over. Which is why, of course, he begs in His name, too. It is the same Vasudev who is now arriving, so let us all sing bhajans for a while.

And the strains of the bhajan “Viththal ….. Viththal ….. Viththal” start up. To the rhythm of the taal and the mrdang, Vasudev dances his way forward.

He is clad in a voluminous waistcoat, a colourful scarf wound at the waist, the head covered by a peacock-feathered headdress, a streak of sandalwood paste across his forehead, a flute strung around his neck, and a sling bag under his arm. The Vasudev starts a circular dance to the bhajan “Vitthal ….. Vitthal …. Vitthal”. The tempo increases, making his dancing faster. The spectators watch him with curiosity. The dancing and a pirouette in a flourish - the arrival of the Vasudev is a spectacular affair. The Vasudev’s bharood is made interesting indeed, for it is an amalgam of narration, song, and dance. Now, to a chorus of the oft-repeated “Vitthal ….. Vitthal …. Vitthal” the Vasudev makes a stately exit.

The bharood of the Vasudev has ended. Now, to the music of a bhajan, a walking stick in
hand, arrives the Joshi. An elaborate headgear, forehead streaked with sandalwood, a pearl earring dangling from one ear, and round Gandhiji glasses, a shirt and a jacket, a scarf around his neck, a dhoti covering his nether limbs. The Joshi reads palms, foretells futures in humorous ways, and utters wisecracks. Yes, the Joshi’s bhaarood is definitely a favourite with this crowd.

The Joshi leaves and the crowd cranes its neck, wondering who will turn up next. Cracking a whip around a lithe naked torso, gnarled hair askew, it is now Kadak-Lakshmi who arrives. Dressed in a colourful skirt with a string of ankle-bells around the waist, this performer with the hefty moustache has his forehead smeared with turmeric and vermilion powder. He cracks his whip around himself resoundingly, calling to the Mother loudly. “Open the door, lady, open the door,” he urges, dancing in frenzy. His furious dancing seems to fill the entire surroundings. “I am so innocent, johaar, muka, blind.” Once this repertoire of songs is completed, the gondhal begins. With garlands of shells on the body, a headgear of shells on the head, Ghosts start dancing holding flaming torches in their hands. They beseech goddess Ambaa’s benediction (jogwaan).

Thus, the bharood holds sway until sunrise. The various role-plays, funny exchanges of words, songs, typical dance steps and stances, not to forget the simple way of bringing “the thoughts of the Vedas” to the simple village folk - therein lies the attraction of the bharood form of folk art. And no one sees the entire long, dark night dissolve into dawn.

Origins and Role of the Bharood

Philosophical thought and spiritual reflection are found in classically accepted forms of expression: poetry, verse, abhangas, rhyme, and the sort. However, it is not everybody who has access to these forms of literature. The spiritual teachings and reflections of the saint poets of Maharashtra have percolated down to the rural masses through the ‘spokespersons’ or characters taken from daily life in villages. Through various forms of folk art like the bharood, it has become part of the daily lore of villagers’ lives everywhere.

There was a very large community of travelling artists in Maharashtra, who, through their con-
stant meandering among the state’s villages, brought important, ‘sacred’ contemplation to the daily, unremarkable life of the people. The language used was the everyday idiom, easily identifiable by all. The list of ‘characters’ roaming in the countryside included Waghya/ Murali, Bharadi, Gondhali, Bhaaldaar, Chopdaar, Vasudev, Joshi, Darveshi, Malang, Fakir, Pangul, Saroda, Jaaglya, Potraaj, Bhutya, Kolhati, and others. These public personae had incredible public relations skills. They were popular in the society they lived and travelled in. And they depended on public support for their sustenance, not on any political patronage. The Marathi-language saints used these representative ‘roles’ to the hilt: they were used as fronts and metaphors to bring to the people philosophy that preached ethics and morality. The use of the ‘well-established’ personas (bahu-roodh in Marathi) gave rise over the years to the folk art form we call bharood.
Bharoods by Different Saints and Religious Groups

The first saint-poet to write in the Marathi language was Sant Dnyaneshwar. Along with this leader of the Warkari sect, the following saints have contributed their talents to this tradition: Namdeo, Eknath, Tukaram, Janabai, Chokhamela, Bahinabai, Nilobarai. From the Samarth sect came Sant Ramdas, Rami Ramdas, Keshavswami, Ramanand, and Achyutayashram. And from the Nath sect were Narharinath, Mahipatinath, Shvindkesari, Anantabodh, and Devnath. The Naagesh sect was represented by Bhujangasoot, Vitthalnath, Adnyaansiddha, Naagnath, and Uddhavchidghan. The Dutta sect gave Dasopant, some from the Mahanubhav sect, and Ramavallabhadas, Sheikh Mohamad, Krushnadayarnav, Madhwanunishwar, Jogaparmanand, Keshavdas, Dastuka, Manikprabhu, Krishna, Kinkar, Shyamatmaj, and Narayanbuwa have all written bharood.

Bharood by Sant Eknath

The name of this saint-poet is perhaps the most associated with this art form. His compositions are numerous; they deal with various subjects; they use popular language most effectively; they are easily put to music; they have inherent musicality; they can be humourous, yet spiritual; they expound principles of ethics and morality; they have lessons to be learnt about life. These features have made these bharoods immensely popular with all strata of society, thereby earning Sant Eknath the sobriquet of being the true champion-proponent of the art form.

His work rises above entertainment—his characters deal with serious, spiritual topics but make them accessible, and hence, this folk art form achieves a social awareness and social education in the religious and philosophical field that is second to none. The topics range from spiritual homilies and meditations to lectures on ethics and from lessons in social equilibrium and equality and brotherhood to the expunging of enmities between groups - the entire corpus served to shake up the listeners, and insist that they think about these issues and bring them into practice in their simple, everyday lives. For this purpose, Sant Eknath used snippets of everyday, ordinary life, and used similies and metaphors for ease of understanding. This is also why his work is considered a corner-stone of Maharashtra’s saint literature.

Lalit and Bharood

There are many similarities between lalit and the bharood. The use of metaphors and similes to explain difficult philosophical truths is a chief feature of the bharood. Just as the tales of the Panchatantra and Jatakakatha were also meant to be vehicles for similar teaching, the saint-poets too chose to speak of difficult concepts by garbing them as descriptions of God’s creations in easy-to-understand language, and they wrote the bharoods in such a format. The bharood is not just to be rendered in front of the audience through song; there is an editorial procedure that needs to be performed on the texts as well (for the personae will ‘speak’ dialogues and have conversations that appropriately set up a commentary on the text).
The Joshi of the bharood is here now, ready to speak of the future: “Here I am, the Lord’s Joshi, listen to your future now. For all these days now, you were wandering around blindly in ignorance and faithlessness. You had, thus, strayed from the True Path, and you had given yourselves up to wrong ways. You allowed yourselves to be divided and you fought incessantly. However, if you will now surrender to the Lord and Master, He will dispel the darkness of ignorance, He will illuminate your life with the light of wisdom, and you will see prosperity and harmony.”

“Lady, O Lady, Open the Door”

During the days of Sant Eknath, society was in shambles. There was ignorance, there were superstitions, and there was political instability. The concepts of dharma, ethics, and justice were shaken. Sant Eknath recognised the need of the hour. He created the Kadak Lakshmi persona, who became the spokesperson beseeching the Almighty for guidance back to the True Path. “Come to our aid in the form of an avatar that can rid the world of evil, O Lakshmi!” Thus, it was to request this that the bharood consists of the text “Open the door, lady, open the door.” He cracks his whip around himself resoundingly, calling out to the Mother loudly, dancing in frenzy, requesting that she open the door to him without delay. His ferocious dancing seems to fill the entire surroundings.

“I am Vasudev”

The Vasudev is a typically saintly persona from the saint-literature of Maharashtra. This Vasudev walks around in the village at daybreak, waking up the population with his melodious songs dedicated to Lord Ram. He expounds on...
the need to spend time in repeating Lord Rama’s name, and then asks for alms in His name. Vasudev is dressed appropriately: the peacock feathered headgear symbolises alms. With a pirouette, he starts his song, and in the path of righteousness. The people bring him ensure that the villagers will be brought back to house to house, begging for the alms that will ensure that the villagers will be brought back to the path of righteousness. The people bring him alms. With a pirouette, he starts his song, and in a litany, accepts that the alms have reached var-
alms. The symbols of purity are the garlands around his neck, the cymbals in his hands, and bells at his ankles. He plays the celestial flute, and thus representing that duality.

It is through the mouthpiece of this persona that the saint-poets sought alms and cooperation from the villagers, describing to them the joys of salvation. They insisted that only renouncing the wrong ways of life and the acceptance of the principles of piety could ensure peace, prosperity, and a rewarding life. Illusion, ignorance or absence of reason blind the true nature of the individual soul, and prevent it from realising itself. This in turn leads to mistaking this earthly body for the True Self. There is an increased tendency to start indulging the body and disregarding the mind and soul. This then leads the individual to the path of excess – and the evils that are all-too-familiar to us. The Vasudev of the bharood implores the villagers to kindly desist from earthly pleasures, to take up the correct path, and thus ensure their salvation. And, when they do his bidding, he is delighted. With a pirouette to show his joy, he starts singing “I have received the alms, I am replete!”

“ I Am Bit By a Scorpion!”

The saint-poets chose to tackle important philosophical issues and concepts by relating them to the people’s everyday existence. If, the argument goes, the individual soul has given up the path of reason, he is bound to lose himself in earthly pleasures. To dissuade such behaviour, the saint-poet Sant Eknath turned to an excruciating experience which was all too common in the villages of Maharashtra: a scorpion-bite! When a scorpion bites, the pain is unbearable, causing the patient to roll about wantonly on the floor. This common experience serves as a metaphor for the excruciating pain that the soul feels trapped in a body given to pleasures of the flesh!

Metaphor and Philosophy

In order to popularise philosophical tenets and bring them to a rural population deprived of education, the saint-poets relied on an entire star-cast of personae taken from the everyday life of Maharashtra’s villages. The representative list of this battery of speakers includes:

- **Vasudev**, who awakens the people every morning, reminding them to cast aside their wrong-doings and to take up chanting the Lord’s name and give him alms;
- **Joshi**, who cautions the villagers that their actions may lead them to disaster, that they must surrender to the Lord, and who foretells a bright future for the villagers who do;
- **Potraaj** or **Potraaj**, who beseeches the Lady to open her doors to him, to take earthly shape to rid the world of evil, and who lashes his own back with a whip to cleanse the evil inside the individual;
- **Gondhali**, with his drum in hand, who dances ferociously to rid the world of evil;
- **Waghya-Murali**, who exhort villagers to spend time in prayer;
- **Bhutya**, who chases away the darkness of ignorance with his torch of knowledge;
- **Kolhateen**, who is an earthly form of the formless;
- **Kolhati**, who beats the drum, reminding villagers that they are one with the Lord, that He is an indivisible part of them;
- **Andhala**, who has ‘lost’ his eyesight because he is blinded by ignorance;
- **Pangaal**, whose crippled body has surrendered to earthly pleasures, thus handicapping him terribly;
- **Bhateen**, a witch-like creature deformed by ignorance and wrongdoing;
- **Jaaglya**, who comes around to awaken all those who sleep the sleep of ignorance and ungodly behaviour.

**Origins of the Word ‘Bharood’**

The word bharood comes from bahu-roodh, is the explanation offered by the authority on Marathi saint-literature, the late Shri H. B. Pangarkar in his book ‘Marathi Vangmayacha Itihaas aani Mayabolichi Kahani’, a literary history of Marathi and the spoken idiom. Bahu-roodh refers to ‘a popular song’, and the word bahu is transformed into bha-bho to give bharood, is his argument. Bhaar is ‘a crowd’ and aaroodh is ‘riding on’: thus, a song ‘about a crowd’ is a bharood. Bha is ‘intelligence’ and that which is riding on this intelligence is the bharood, an extempore creation on a serious theme. This is another explanation of the etymology of the word.
The Caves of the Coast: Kuda

M K Dhavalikar | Photographs © Prachi Chaudhari

Rock-cut caves in Maharashtra offer an interesting glimpse into how the monks of both Hindu and Buddhist faiths lived centuries ago. They are also of academic interest in terms of their architectural design and as M K Dhavalikar discovers, some of these caves are also set in beautiful and natural surroundings, thus making them all the more appealing to tourists. The caves at Kuda which are quite close to Murud Janjira overlook the Arabian Sea and are among those that provide this dual pleasure.

Of the 1,200 rock-cut caves in India over a thousand are in Maharashtra and of these some 600 are Buddhist. They usually consist of chaityas containing a stupa or a Buddha image or both and viharas, which served as residences for monks. They have been referred to as varsha vasa, meaning ‘abodes during rainy season’, when the movement of the monks was restricted. The Buddha had asked the monks to stay a little away from human habitations but not far from trade centers where patronage was available. This is evident from the locations of these rock-cut caves. Kuda, a sleepy village in district Raigad, 21 km southeast of Mangaon and 130 km from Mumbai has a group of 26 caves carved in a low hill on the sea coast, thereby making them caves with a view.

The early phase of Buddhist architecture starting from about 200 B.C.E. came to an end by about 230 C.E. when decline set in because of political instability and dwindling trade with Mediterranean countries, which caused a loss of patronage and resulted in a hiatus of about three centuries until the artistic activity picked up again in the 5th century at Ajanta. In the 3rd century, a few modest caves were excavated among which those at Kuda make for an interesting study. They were first reported in 1848 but largely remained unknown to the outside world because of the creek of Rajapuri which one had to cross to visit them. Now that communications have improved and there are buses from Mumbai to Kuda, the caves are visited more frequently.

The caves are quite close to Mandad, which
Caves

Buddha with his attendants in Cave 6

General view of the caves

Cave 6 with the elephant at the entrance

Scenic view of the creek from the caves

Buddha with his attendants in Cave 6
can be identified with ancient ‘Mandagora’ referred to by Roman writers as a port on the west coast. Ancient bricks and pottery have been found at Mandad, indicating its 2,000-year-old antiquity. It was probably the headquarters of the Mandava family, the Mahabhojas of the Satavahanas. The Kuda caves have been excavated in two levels; 1-15 in the lower and 16-26 in the upper level. They belonged to the Hinayana faith when stupa worship was in vogue. The images of Buddha were added later in the 6th century C.E.

**Chaityas**

Of the 26 caves, four are chaityas (prayer halls), a close examination of which reveals their evolution. Chaitya 9 was the first to be excavated as is evident from its plan. It marks a clear deviation from the early Hinayana Chaitya which is apsidal in plan with a row of pillars dividing it into a central nave and side aisles. It also has a vaulted roof. However, the
change is noticed for the first time at Junnar, where in the 2nd century, the chaitya becomes quadrangular in plan and flat-roofed, and its further development takes place at Kuda, as in Chaitya 9 which also has a verandah in front with a cell at the right end. On the right end wall of the verandah is an inscription, which records that the chaitya griha was the gift of Bhayila, wife of Ayitilu, a lay worshipper.

Chaitya 15 is identical with 9, the only difference being the addition of pillars in the verandah and cells in the side walls. The pillars in the verandah are decorated with half lotus medallions. Moreover, the stupa has roll mouldings at the base while the drum is a little elongated and the harmika over it touches the roof. An epigraph on the left wall of the verandah states that it was donated by Ramadata who belonged to the Adhagachchhaka sect. The grant was made during the rule of Mahabhoja Mandava Kochhiputa.

Chaitya 1 marks further development and resembles a temple with a hall (mandapa), vestibule (antarala) and the stupa shrine (garbhagriha). The new feature is the vestibule joining the wall with the stupa shrine. The vestibule has benches along its walls. The record engraved on the back wall of the verandah states that the donor was Shivabhuti, the son of Sulasadata and Uttaradata. He was a writer to Mahabhoja Mandava Khandapalita, son of Sadageri Vijaya, together with his wife, Nanda. It is noteworthy that the donor

Inscription in Cave 6 recording the donation of Mahabhoja family
himself was the writer, which explains its beautiful calligraphy.

Chaitya 6 is the largest and the best chaitya at Kuda, and is also finished properly. It probably had a forecourt if the projecting roof is any indication. On either side, at the front, are projecting elephants as at Karla, but are now in ruins. The verandah has octagonal pillars emanating from low benches. These are decorated with an hourglass motif and the external surface of the bench bears the rail pattern above and dentils below. The square-patterned hall (8.78 x 8.96 meters) is entered through a door cut in the back wall of the verandah and is flanked by windows.

The hall has running benches, which is a new feature that was first noticed at Junnar. The vestibule is separated by two pillars, which rise from the benches in the hall. They are ornamented with a frieze of dwarves (ganas) and a floral pattern.

There are elegant couples (mithunas) carved on either side of the entrance to the vestibule. The couple on the left is shown standing, the female in a flexed posture with her left hand on the head of a dwarf who is seen adjusting her anklet while her right hand is akimbo. She wears a complex headdress, heavy ear pendants, a jewelled girdle (mekhala) and bangles; her lower garments resemble short drawers (ardha-janghika). The male wears a dhoti secured at the waist by a sash (udara bandha) tied in a looped knot and its front ends, collected in pleats, are left hanging like an elephant trunk in the hasti-shundaka fashion. His hair is gathered in a ball-like protrusion, which is secured in a bejewelled turban. His left hand is upraised and touches the ceiling. The other couple on the right is almost identical.

Stylistically the sculptures are in the Satavahana tradition typified by the Karla examples, but are rather coarse in treatment. Yet they are marked by elegance, and are not as dumb or earth-bound like those in Kanheri’s Chaitya 3. This chaitya was the last to be excavated at Kuda as its donor, Shivam, was the younger brother of Shivabhuti, the donor of Chaitya 1. The inscription also further states that the sculptures were gifted by his wife Vijaya, and the pillars by his daughters-in-law and all his family members.

Viharas

Of the 26 caves at Kuda, four are chaityas, one is a mandapa, while the remaining 21 are viharas. They are altogether different in conception than the earlier chatuhshala viharas comprising rooms on all sides of a square hall or open space. The reason is not far to seek. The political instability and economic decline owing to loss of long distance trade with the West resulted in decrease in patronage. The new vihara was therefore a modest structure consisting of one or two rooms with a verandah at the front and a cell in the wall for meditation. They were small single room units, devoid of any ornamentation. But all said and done, Kuda caves stand as a mute testimony to the flickering glory of the Satavahanas.
Postcard Moments *unlimited*

Ellora

This is not simply architecture it’s a heritage that is born out of culture. It’s prestige that’s born out age. This is the language in which artist once spoke. With unlimited reasons like these, it’s only fair to say one trip is just not enough.
Easily accessible from Mumbai is an old fort that was built by the ruler of Gujarat but taken over by the Portuguese invaders who turned it into a compact city of sorts with living quarters, garrisons for soldiers, stores, places of worship, and so on. Now, although some of these structures have turned into ruins, the fort continues to impose its majestic presence and makes for a perfect one-day getaway.

**Portuguese Fort**

**Vasai**

Text and Photographs © Pascal Roque Lopes
On the outskirts of Mumbai is a low-budget one-day travel destination which has historic lineage, a wonderful beach, a mesmerizing landscape and a Buddhist ‘Stupa’ close to which is situated the five century-old Portuguese fort named the Bassein Fort. This is Vasai, which was known as Bacaim by the Portuguese and Bassein by the British. Bassein Fort, dating back to 1532, is about 55 kilometers from Mumbai and was built to provide protection to the entire province of Bassein. This was a territory controlled by Bahadur Shah, Sultan of Gujarat, who ceded it to the Portuguese on December 23, 1534. Thereafter, Nano da Cuna laid the foundation of the city and fortified it further. In the 18th century, the fort was taken over by the Maratha army under Peshwa Bajirao’s brother, Chimaji Appa. The British shortly attacked and took over the territory from the Marathas as the price for supporting one faction of the Marathas against another.

The Fort

Unlike other forts which are built to strengthen strategic points having warfare material and the presence of soldiers, Vasai Fort was actually a fort city complete with churches, hospitals, learning institutions, and other administrative and community places. It was for this reason that the Portuguese used it as their commercial and military base on the northwestern coast in India. Surrounded on three sides by the sea and only accessible by land on one side, Vasai Fort proved tough to conquer. A very high and strong wall on the land side made it one of the most impenetrable forts. The Portuguese were known to be fierce seafarers and they had a large fleet defending the fort from the sea side, thus making this fort completely invincible. The fort was also used as the official residence of the Portuguese governor when he made his visits to the northern region.

The main gate of this large fort leads to a small courtyard from where one can climb the ramparts to take a look at the old structures. The ramparts, although overgrown with vegetation, continue to stand in their original state and overlook what is called the Vasai Creek. Locals also call it the Bhayander Creek. Several watch-towers too have survived the ravages of time and weather and you can climb up on staircases that are still safe. The Portuguese buildings inside the fort are in ruins, although there are enough
Excursions:
Vasai Fort has historic, scenic views surrounded by Beaches. The Buddhist Stupa at Sopara has been built by Emperor Ashoka. The village of Nirmal was believed to have been set up by Lord Parshurama, and has a Temple of Shankaracharya known for his visit. Along with the oldest church built in 1557, St. Michael’s Church in the village of Manickpur was built in 1606. The Fort in the Village of Arnala built by Marathas is worth a visit. The 400 years old Jain Mandir at village Agashi is visited by lots of followers. Sruchi garden and the beaches of Suruchi, Arnala, Rangao, Kalamb are famous. The First Indian Christian Saint Gonsalo Garcia hails from Vasai and Fr Stephen Thompson Who wrote the Bible(Kristapuram) in Marathi Lived in Vasai in the 17th Century.

Portuguese Fort Church Door at Ramedi Church Vasai
standing walls to give a good idea of the floor plans of these structures. Some have well-preserved facades. In particular, many of the arches have survived. These are decorated with carved stones, the markings on which have now become indecipherable.

Three chapels inside the fort are still recognizable. They have facades typical of 17th-century Portuguese churches. The southernmost of these has a well preserved barrel-vaulted ceiling. The fort is often used for shooting Bollywood film scenes, including ‘Josh’ and ‘Khamoshi’. The fort also provides a great vantage point to observe butterflies, birds, plants, and reptiles. A little further from the fort is the Vasai village where you will find a community of fishermen who speak Marathi. Put together, the entire region in and around the fort presents a vivid and colourful picture. Recently the Archaeological Survey of India has started restoration work of the fort.

Accessibility
You can take a Western Railways’ train bound to Virar from Churchgate and get off at Vasai Road. If you are coming from the Central Railway or Central Railway Harbour Line then you have to switch to the Western railway line either at Dadar, Bandra or Andheri. Another railway line connects the Central and the Western Railways’ lines from Vasai Road Railway Station to Diva, a stop just beyond Thane on the Central Railway line, and long-distance passenger trains travelling this route also carry commuters between the two lines. A new railway station named Kopar has been set up, which is between Diva and Dombivli. Passengers travelling from Thane or Kalyan can alight at Kopar from where they can catch the Diva to Vasai train. The railway station of Vasai Road is only one hour by train from Kopar.
Portuguese Time Church Bell in Bhimashankar Temple

Distance from Mumbai: 62 kms

How to reach:

By Air:
The nearest airport is at Mumbai

By Rail:
The closest major junction is at Mumbai. From Mumbai’s Churchgate Station, take a local fast train to Vasai Road. Then proceed by autorickshaw or bus to the fort.

By Road:
Take the Western Express highway (NH8) to Sati- vali road and turn off for Vasai.

The Author is thankful to his:

Professors Mahesh Kalra & Kurush Dalal - Numismatic & Archaeology, Mumbai University Campus

Mentor K. K. Maheshwari, Founder Trustee Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies.

Coach Roque Lopes, motivated to study the field academically.

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Portuguese Court Of Arms

Portuguese Time Church Bell in Bhimashankar Temple
Quilts

Geeta Khandelwal

Photographs © Geeta Khandelwal, Charu Gupte
My life has been an amazing journey in discovering myself through quilt making and fabric. I have always been instinctively drawn towards fabrics. I delight in feeling the textures - even when blindfolded - of a handspun cotton cloth or the feel of the smoothness of silk. Having made quilts in western designs for many years, it was a natural outcome of this affinity that drew me to research the rural quilts of Maharashtra, my home state.

To understand better about quilts and quilt making in my state, I set out to researching quilt making in India. To my surprise, I found that the simplest quilts were made in Maharashtra, in comparison to the decorative ‘Bengal Kantha’ or the embroidered ‘Punjab Phulkari’. In Maharashtra, these quilts are commonly called ‘godharis’, and also as ‘vakals’ in some areas. A very simple technique is used unlike the quilts of other states in India.

**Technique**

The *godharis* are essentially made from everyday worn pieces of cloth, patched together to reinforce the torn parts. They add layer upon layer of saris to give durability and warmth. Born out of necessity, the materials are stretched to their limits, reinforced with stitches. This is a free style of art, as they use whatever material is available and intuitively a unique design appears. The in-between layers are filled with used trousers and shirts ripped open and laid out flat. Using a heavy gauged cotton thread, a running stitch is hand-stitched through the multiple layers of cloth. Each *godhari* is therefore unique in its own way.

They are often edged with woven borders, usually the sturdiest part of the five-and-a-half, sometimes eight-and-a half meters of flowing sari fabric, either by way of decoration or fortification. However, in recent times, changing tastes and practical considerations have made saris produced from synthetic and other blended fabrics a more desirable and cost-effective option.

The rural women of western Maharashtra rarely own sewing machines. Indeed, they often do not possess even a measure-tape or a pair of scissors to make their work easier. They most often use a razor blade to make a small slit in the fabric, which is then torn. Their tools of measure are their own hands and the language of measure is also not meter, yard or inch. In most Maharashtrian *godharis*, the rows of stitches are ‘two-fingers’ apart. Rarely do we see fine quilting, with five to six rows of stitches within the width of one finger.

The technique employed by the quilter is very simple. The women start sewing from the outer edges of the *godhari* and move inwards, ending the quilting in the centre, thus creating puckers as they stitch. This method is unlike the western style of quilting, where the quilter starts from the centre of the quilt and works outwards,
flattening the puckers out towards the edges to achieve an even and smooth finish.

Figurative and floral motifs are generally absent, and the only decoration comes from the sari pallu and its woven border. Yet in their haphazard design and simplicity, Maharashtrian godharis possess vitality and a certain spontaneous charm. The patterns evolve as the women work along, and now and then the quilter introduces some new element into the design. Frequently the traditional auspicious swastik symbol is appliquéd on to the quilt. Even the most ordinary pieces of cloth, plain or printed, when cut up and re-arranged with other fabrics seem to take on new life and magically, a startlingly different-looking quilt is born.

Untold stories by unknown women
Maharashtrian godharis are purely functional, and meant for personal use, whether as blankets or floor spreads, coverlets and cradles for babies. Sometimes they are used as coverings for domestic animals such as cattle or horses. Smaller godharis, made from old saris, are traditionally used by a mother to cover and protect a newborn child. Thus the smell and feel of the mother’s old saris gives the baby comfort and an added sense of security and the mother’s presence is palpable for the child.

A woman’s contribution to be able to recycle food and clothing in everyday life needs an innate intelligence to create something as beautiful as a godhari. Each godhari tells an interesting story - untold. Change, however, is inevitable. Over time, new methods of quilting, like the wider use of sewing machines may be adopted. Cotton fabrics, which are commonly in use now, are already being replaced with synthetics. Wider exposure to markets both within India and abroad will throw up more creative possibilities, and the traditional godhari may well be adapted and modified to meet modern needs.

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This article is an excerpt from the writer’s book ‘Godharis of Maharashtra, Western India’ published by Quiltmania Editions, France, August 2013, edited by Tulsi Vatsal with photography by Mangesh, Tobias and Charu Gupte.

This was the first attempt to research the humble Godhari.

Close up of the centre of a vakal. When the vakal is near completion, a slit-like pocket is made in the centre. It is called the pote or ‘stomach’ of the vakal. Inside are placed a bhakri, kum kum, turmeric powder, and some rice grains, as an offering to Annapurna, Goddess of Plenty, in the belief that the goddess will ensure that the user will always have a full stomach.

A child’s godhari made by a woman in Lonavala. Four swastikas have been placed around a red circle symbolizing the sun, and are intended for the protection and welfare of the child.

A striking feature of this godhari is the use of woven zari (gold-thread) sari borders, to create a grid over unequal patches of red, green, orange and brown squares.
Maharashtra has a beautiful coastline of more than 700 kilometers and it is but natural that you will find on this stretch some of the most beautiful beaches. But if you are a resident of Mumbai or Pune and want to take a quick weekend break from your routine humdrum, plan an itinerary that touches Murud, Harnai and Anjarle. Not only are these the perfect getaways for complete relaxation but offer a wonderful gastronomic experience too with the region’s Konkani cuisine. Here is an account of a trip that will make you pack your bags right away.

Murud, Harnai and Anjarle

2 Nights, 3 Days around Dapoli

Text and Photographs © Rajiv Nashikkar
Maharashtra is blessed with a long seashore. In particular, the blue sea, golden sand, red soil and fresh seafood at a fraction of the price elsewhere in the state will draw you to the beautiful Konkan belt. Most of the villages are about 200 to 300 kilometers from Mumbai and Pune, perfectly located for a long weekend getaway. A drive of four to five hours will take you to many charming coastal towns. We took the opportunity to get away with the whole family to Murud, Harnai and Anjarle, all within a few kilometers of one another.

One Friday morning, we started from Pune via Bhor and Varandha Ghat. People say that Varandha is one of the toughest ‘ghats’ to take you from the Deccan Plateau to Konkan. And so naturally, we decided to climb down by this road. Just after crossing Bhor, we stopped at a small roadside place for breakfast. All of us gorged on typical Maharashtrian ‘misal pav’.

Just before the start of Varandha Ghat, you will set your sights on a breathtaking view of the Nira-Deoghar Dam on your left. I would
recommend that you spend a few minutes to enjoy the view and take some good photographs. The backwaters of the reservoir will remain on your left for quite some time. Once you start your descent, after few minutes you will see a small road on your right going towards Shivthar Ghal. If you have some time at hand and if you are travelling during the monsoon, you must visit this place to see a pretty waterfall.

By lunchtime, we were at Dapoli where we feasted at Aaryavart and then started for Murud. Within half an hour, we were at the Naad Beach Resort on the beach of Murud. By the
View from West
Main Entrance in Mahakot
View from North - East
Another Gate in Mahakot
Harnai lighthouse
Beach fish market at Harnai
time you get to the resort, you are already on the beach. You can spend the whole day in the water and relax on the beach. After watching a beautiful sunset over the Arabian Sea, you will be able to enjoy a typical Konkani seafood dinner.

The next morning, we got up early and started for Harnai. Harnai is a well-known fishing harbour. Bird watchers can see seagulls on the Harnai beach early in the mornings. The same beach holds one of the biggest fish markets in the evening. Once you reach the harbour, you can hire a boat and visit a 400-year-old fort known as Harnai Fort or Suvarnadurg i.e. the Golden Fort. On the way you can also see a lighthouse near the village. If you decide to go for a boat ride early in the morning, you might also be lucky enough to spot dolphins on your way to the fort.
Long view of the Kadyavaracha Ganpati temple

A natural sculpture

Kadyavaracha Ganpati temple

Kadyavaracha Ganpati temple
After returning from the fort, we started for Anjarle. This place is famous for an old Ganesh temple known as ‘Kadyavarcha Ganpati’. The route is quite scenic. On the way you have a beautiful panoramic spot from where you get a complete view of the sea, the creek and the bridge that takes you to Anjarle. The Ganesh Temple at Anjarle is ancient, originally built using wooden pillars and later renovated. After visiting the temple, we went to the local eatery (‘khanaval’) in the village of Anjarle for an authentic Konkani lunch. We returned to Murud late in the afternoon and relaxed on the beach. You can also do some water sports along with enjoying a picturesque sunset.

On our last day, we got up early and hired a boat at Murud beach to go look at dolphins. You can spot the dolphins playing just a few hundred feet from the shore - an amazing sight indeed. After a good breakfast, we set off on our return journey via Mangaon and Tamhini Ghat. We had one last good Konkani seafood lunch at Mangaon and then started the ascent of Tamhini Ghat. Before reaching Pune, we stopped at a resort next to the Mulshi Dam backwaters. We had the afternoon tea with a lovely view of the Mulshi reservoir. By evening, we were back in Pune, refreshed and ready to get back into our weekly routine from the next day onwards, after a much-needed break.
Distance from Mumbai: 152 kms

How to reach:
By Air: Mumbai is the nearest airport.
By Rail: The closest railhead is at Roha, Konkan Railway.
By Road: Take State Highway 97 from Pune or the Mumbai-Goa Highway from Mumbai.

Where to Stay
There are several resorts and bed and breakfasts (B&B) arrangements in and around Murud.

What to Eat
Murud is a seafood lover’s paradise, gorge on the local cuisine and other specialties like ‘Sol Kadhi’.
A Treasure Trove for Numismatists

Dinesh Mody Museum

Text & Photographs by Mahesh A. Kalra
Photographs © Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum

There are many among us who are often tempted to preserve coins and banknotes that have either been removed from the currency market or are of foreign origin. But this, at best, remains a mere hobby and a sporadic indulgence. However, at the Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum in Mumbai, the collection and study of currencies of different periods and countries is serious business, so much so that it also offers a Master’s program for those who want to take up numismatics as a professional calling, writes Mahesh A. Kalra, the museum’s curator and an assistant professor with the institute.
Remember the time when amongst your many other teen pursuits, collecting coins of bygone eras fired your passion, creating a fantasy of an India which was at one time a land of kings and queens with a pageantry of maharajas and nawabs, and ranis and begum sahibas. You kept badgering your NRI relatives for foreign coins and banknotes. Well, you can relive that hobby by visiting the Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum which is located right at the centre of the Kalina campus of the University of Mumbai.

The Dinesh Mody Numismatic Museum was established in 2002 by Dineshbhai Mody, a senior Mumbai-based advocate and an eminent numismatist with a large collection of coins from India and other countries of the world most of which adorn the museum’s twin galleries of Indian and world currencies. The museum building is also home to the Dinesh Mody Institute for Numismatics & Archaeology which conducts the only Masters program in numismatics in India, a dream come true for coin collectors and an obligation which is dear to the founder’s heart.

A Unique Collection

The museum and the institute are spread over a sprawling 15,000 square feet area and house two large galleries of 3,000 square feet with a grand display of Indian and foreign currencies. The collection of Indian coins ranges from the most ancient (punch-marked coins) to the most modern proof sets of the Republic of India, providing the visitor a kaleidoscopic view of the entire range of Indian coinage, including the coins used during the reigns of the Satavahanas, Kushans, Guptas, Cholas, Pandyas, Delhi’s sultans, Mughals and the colonial coinage series along with those from the Vijayanagara empire. New additions to the Indian gallery include a set of coin dies of the Mughal rulers like Akbar, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb which were used to mint silver rupees and gold mohurs during their reigns.

Additionally, the foreign gallery houses coins and banknotes from various foreign countries, these being listed alphabetically with
the currency of each country displayed with its flag and map location. Interestingly, this also includes some rather remote countries, including the now non-existent ones like Imperial Russia’s Rouble 1,000 banknotes with images of the last czar of Russia. These had flooded the Indian markets on the collapse of the Russian empire in 1917.

The latest addition to the foreign gallery is a new set of Euro coins from 16 member countries of the European Union. This category of uncirculated coins (UNCs) has a set of eight denomination coins each (Euro coins are issued in €2, €1, 50c, 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, and 1c denominations) from Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain with the sole exception of Estonia.

The Master’s Program

Numismatics, though a very important research tool in social sciences, was till recently a neglected field in India as no university offered a structured course imparting the necessary skills for expert numismatists. The biggest advantage of trained numismatists is in archaeological expeditions where old coins found in excavations can help in the dating of other objects or structures found at the sites. Additionally, Indian coins are collected and traded as highly valued objects of art amongst modern collectors and dealers spread across the country. Thus, catering to this need, the Dinesh Mody Institute for Numismatics & Archaeology has been conducting a Master’s course in numismatics and archaeology under the aegis of the University of Mumbai for the last six years.

The syllabus of the course ambitiously covers the entire gamut of Indian coinage right from the ancient punch-marked coins of the pre-Buddhist era (8th - 6th century BCE) to coins of various Indian dynasties as mentioned...
above, covering the history of a period of over 2,500 years! In addition, the students are encouraged to learn numerous scripts ranging from the oldest Indian scripts such as Ashokan Brahmi and Kharosthi to Nagari (the precursor of Devanagari) to Greek, Arabic and Persian as Indian coins are inscribed in these indigenous and foreign scripts. Lastly, the students are instructed about the basics of archaeology, its methodology and various findings to give them an idea of how the various coin hoards are discovered and catalogued during archaeological excavations.

Numismatics is an upcoming field for research in Indian history and there is a burgeoning market in the trading of Indian coins both nationally and internationally. Thus, students can expect to be absorbed by the increasing number of auction houses for coins as resource persons and by the numerous museums both in India and abroad that require expert numismatists to catalogue their collections of Indian coins. Additionally, students can pursue their doctorates in the field to churn out original research content in this yet unexplored system of historiography. The course also opens avenues for a host of scholarships at foreign institutions with collections of Indian coins, such as the British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge University), Ashmolean Museum (Oxford University), etc.

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Timing: 11 am to 5 pm (Monday to Saturday except public holidays).
Walking the Extra Mile

Jaipur Foot

Harish Thakkar | Photographs © Amit Thakkar

Ever since Dr. Pramod Karan Sethi, a surgeon from Jaipur, invented the Jaipur Foot to help the physically disadvantaged regain normal movement, there have been thousands of beneficiaries who have started life anew. In Pune, the Bharat Vikas Parishad is a socially committed organisation that has undertaken the task of providing the Jaipur Foot free of cost to those who need it. With nothing but donations helping it to carry out this noble task, it has over the years helped more than 5,500 people step out of their misery on their own two feet.

The Nehru Memorial Hall in Pune’s cantonment area is almost full to its capacity. A middle-aged man comes out from the wings riding a bicycle. A man in his thirties then walks on to the stage carrying his two children on his shoulders. Both these events may appear to be quite ordinary. They are, however, extraordinary for both of these men as they are physically challenged with only one leg of their own and the second one being an artificial limb recently fitted on to them. There is immense joy on the faces of both these men and also on the faces of their families. For the audience, it is almost as if they had witnessed a miracle. And this miracle is nothing but the ‘Jaipur Foot’ that enables them to resume normal movement once again.

The applause is continuous, bringing tears of joy to the eyes of the two men on stage. Some members of the audience are so moved that they spontaneously go up on stage to give the two men hugs of support and encouragement. Donations to the cause are announced instantly. By receiving an artificial Jaipur Foot a new chapter has begun in their lives. They will be able to do their everyday errands on their own now without being dependant on anyone for every small thing. They will also be in a position to do practically everything that a person with both his limbs can do. In fact, they already are thinking about getting new jobs and there is in their eyes a dream of shaping a better future despite the physical challenge.

A Smooth Replacement

The Jaipur Foot is an artificial limb that is provided to someone who has lost a leg or whose leg has been amputated due to some unfortunate incident. And credit for this invention must go to Dr. Pramod Karan Sethi,
a surgeon from Jaipur, who envisioned the need to develop a low-cost prosthetic limb that would allow for easy movement. As a token to his home city he baptized it as the Jaipur Foot instead of giving it his own name. He was subsequently awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1981.

The Jaipur Foot has distinct advantages over other prosthetic limbs since it is affordable, lightweight and quick as well as easy to manufacture. Each Jaipur Foot is manufactured individually by a technician after taking the specific measurements of the patient and also taking into account the needs of the individual patient. Moreover, the manufacturing process being simple, even a non-technical person, when provided with proper training, can become proficient in manufacturing a Jaipur Foot in a simple workshop.

**Limbs For Free**

The Bharat Vikas Parishad (BVP) is one such organisation that has been providing the Jaipur Foot to people in and around Pune since the last 20 years. So far it has provided prosthetic limbs to approximately 5,500 people in this region. The cost of one foot is approximately Rs 2,000 but the organisation provides it free of cost. This is their form of service to the community. Interestingly, one of the expert technicians who make the Jaipur Foot for the BVP is someone who has been fitted with the Jaipur Foot himself.

In 1993 when the Bharat Vikas Parishad started functioning in Pune there were a few social organisations in the city who would sometimes hold camps to provide the Jaipur Foot. Along with that was the Artificial Limb Centre run by the defense services. However, there was an acute need for a permanent centre in Pune that would provide services to needy people as a social commitment. This need was pinpointed by the BVP. When an announcement to hold its first camp for the Jaipur Foot was made by the BVP in 1993, the local newspapers gave it wide publicity. Very soon a large number of people who required a Jaipur Foot or callipers (for those suffering from polio) registered and more than a 100 people benefitted from acquiring the prosthetic limb.

It was this encouraging response and donations received from well-wishers that drove the BVP to turn this into a long-term activity. Now the BVP functions out of a permanent outlet in Subhash Nagar and its aim is to make Pune district ‘vikalanga mukta’ i.e. no one should remain disabled for want of a Jaipur Foot. But then the question arises as to how does the organisation manage to meet its financial needs? Just as the Bible says, “Ask and thou shalt receive”, the BVP’s entire funding comes out of donations received from patrons on special occasions such as someone’s birthday or any celebratory event. There are many who believe in the joy of giving and that is what keeps the BVP going.
Be it French, Chinese, Italian or Indigenous like Pujabi, Gujarati, South Indian, each cuisine has its own set of special accompaniments to go with the main course. Likewise Maharashtra too has its own variety of side dishes. Though the most commonly known is PAPAD, as it also forms a popular part of other Indian cuisine, papadi, kurdai, mirgunda, talni marchi, sandge are typically Maharashtrian makes.

Treats with a Crunch
Papad, Kurdai, Mirgunda and more

Radhika Ghate
Photographs © Prutha Kulkarni
Compared to other Indian cuisine the daily Maharashtrian food is simple and flavoured with minimum spices. These special accompaniments thus satisfy the zing of eating something spicy. A Maharashtrian wedding meal cannot be complete without papad, papadi or kurdai. When a steaming hot meal of khichadi (light preparation of rice and lentil) and kadhi (tempered buttermilk curry) is cooked, it is common to hear 'jara papad and mirchi tala' (please fry some papad and stuffed dry chilies). All these fried or roasted crunchy tidbits are made from the dough of easily available ingredients like rice, lentils, sago and local fruits and vegetables to add a variety in flavour. They are dried under the hot sun which gives them the term ‘waalwana’ meaning dried. One can also called them eco friendly as they are dried under natural sunlight even today. Traditionally making
these dried snacks was a time consuming activity of each household. With the inset of summer in March, this activity would resume on every terrace after the festival of colours ‘Holi’. One could get only three months of intense summer to prepare the entire stock which would last the large families for a year. The full force of ladies including teenage girls would get engaged in this activity. In fact it was like a healthy competition between ladies of neighbouring households to discuss and display the variety, while preparing them on the terrace or open courtyard. While this activity was on full fledged, the young kids simultaneously flying kites, would quietly pick pocket a few tasty dough balls. The teenage girls too would quietly gulp down some tasty dough as they would have less papads to roll. Over the years this enthralling scene has faded away. With fast pace of life and easy market availability, today two percent of the ladies engaged in this activity have given it a commercial angle. It has developed into small scale industry with cooperatives engaging women from lower income groups in the manufacturing and helping them run their households. However this activity runs in full scale in villages and towns. While most of the cooperatives are more into manufacturing a variety of papads, Pen in Konkan region is famous for making and supplying a variety of traditional dried snacks. So while relishing these crunchy and light tidbits of a Maharashtrian meal next time, do remember that their actual preparation is not as light.

Papad
Round shaped snacks can be served fried or roasted. Papads are made from variety of ingredients. The most common ones are made from urad dal. Other popular varieties are potato papads, sabudana papad and the coastal belt even makes banana and jackfruit papads as these fruits are in abundance there.
Ingredients:
Urad dal (Shelled Split black gram) 1kg
Udad dal flour 250 gms (for rolling)
Papad Khar 30 grams
White peppercorns 70 grams
Hing (asafoetida) 25 grams
Salt to taste (approximately ¾ cup/120 grams)
Oil ½ cup if required
Water ¾ the quantity of flour

Method:
Grind the urad dal. Grind papad khar, hing, white peppercorns in a mixer and mix in the udad dal flour. Boil water (3/4 the quantity of flour) with salt, strain and cool the water. Add the flour mix to the water and knead to a hard dough. Apply little oil to the hands if the dough is sticky. Cover and keep aside for 1 day. Pound the dough well before using. Roll the dough into thick round strips and cut the strips into ½ inch equal parts (latya). With a rolling pin roll each ball into a flat round shape (4 inch diameter chapatis). Use flour while rolling to avoid sticking. Papads are ready. Place the papads on plastic sheets to dry in the hot sun for approximately two days. Store in an airtight container. Papads can be served deep fried or roasted as and when required.

Note:
Papad Khar is the Indian term for alkaline salt- Sodium Benzoate and is readily available in any Indian grocery store.

Ready Latya (round papad dough balls) are available in special Maharashtrian stores and are enjoyed by kids as small snacks.

Ready papad flour mix is also available in the market.

Musal: Traditionally a wooden stick called musal was used to pound huge quantities of papad dough.
Kurdai:
Kurdai are typically noodle like circular shaped dry snacks which puff on frying, specially served along with Maharashtrian festive and wedding meals.

Recipe
Ingredients:
- Raw Rice 2 cups
- Salt to taste
- Hing (Asafoetida) powder 1/2 teaspoon

Method:
Wash and soak the rice grains for three days. Change the water every day. Drain the water, grind in a mixer and pass it through a sieve for a smooth paste. Add water to the flour paste so that it is completely soaked and keep aside for one day. Remove the excess water from the top. The mixture which remains is called satva. Boil equal quantity of water to the satva. Add salt and hing to the water. Remove from the gas stove; add the satva to the water stirring it continuously to avoid lumps. Cook for approximately 2 minutes on a medium flame stirring continuously to make soft dough. Put the hot dough in a mould (sourya with kurdai plate) and pipe out in a circular shape on a plastic sheet. Let the kurdai dry completely in the hot sun for approximately two days. Store in an airtight container. Fry in hot oil and serve as required.

Variation: Kurdai can even be made from Wheat Flour.

Sourya: Is a typical Maharashtrian piping mould with changeable plates attachments to make various types and shapes of Maharashtrian savouries like chakli, shev, kurdai etc.
Talnichi mirchi:
These Stuffed Dried Chillies are fried and is a traditional accompaniment with Curd rice (Dahi Butti) and Moong Dal Khichadi

Recipe

Ingredients:
- Green chillies (specially available) : 250 grams
- Coriander seeds ¼ cup
- Methi seeds (fenugreek seeds) ¼ cup
- Til (sesame seeds) ¼ cup
- Hing (Asafoetida) powder 1 teaspoon
- Tamarind paste approx ¼ cup
- Salt to taste

Method:
Wash the whole green chillies with the stem. Make a small vertical slit. Coarsely grind the coriander seeds, methi seeds, til and hing in a mixer. Add salt. Add the tamarind paste (as required) to the powder and mix well. Stuff the mixture in the slit of the green chilies and dry them in the hot sun for a few days. Store in the air tight container. Fry in hot oil and serve whenever required.

Note:
-Curd or lemon juice can be used instead of tamarind paste.
-Special short stout green chillies are available in the market for making talni mirchi.

Variation:
Mirchiche Sandge
(Green Chili):
Another typical Maharashtrian accompaniment can be made using the above recipe. Coarsely grind the green chillies separately instead of slitting them and mix with the stuffing mixture made with the seeds and tamarind paste. Place small teaspoon sized dumplings and dry in hot sun. Fry in hot oil and serve.

Mirgunda:
A unique Maharashtrian preparation from the coastal belt. A flat rectangular shaped dried snack with a zing made from pressed rice (poha) which puff on frying.
This is the second consecutive year that the MTDC in association with the Konkan Bhumi Pratishthan has organised the Chikoo Utsav. The Chikoo Utsav 2014 aimed at promoting the North Konkan belt in Maharashtra along with the tribal Adivasi culture including Warli paintings and the Tarpa Nritya. Agro-farming is also an essential part of this festival, which is named after the popular fruit crop in the area of Gholvad, Dahanu.

This festival carried out activities to celebrate the local adivasi dance ‘Tarpa Nritya’, kite flying, and Warli painting with performances and workshops on Warli painting and kite flying. There were also camel rides for visitors.

The Chikoo Safari was a special feature of the festival as tourists got to get their hands dirty with practical lessons in chikoo farming. Tourists were given the opportunity to plough Chikoo plants by their own hands and were taught how to grow Chikoo and they ate the Chikoos during that Safari by plucking it from the trees by themselves. Beach cricket was also very popular during this festival.

One can never forget the most important aspect of any tourist destination which is the local cuisine of that destination. There were wide varieties of food stalls as Dahanu is famous for its cosmopolitan culture comprising of Parsis, Maharashtrians, Gujaratis and “Adivasis”. This place offered varieties of local non-veg cuisine especially the very famous Chicken Dhansak Dal and Mutton Dhansak Dal. There was also a very famous stall for Herbal Green tea which has lots of health benefits.

Since the festival was named after the fruit, it was only natural for the fruit to be the star. There were twelve different types of innovative Chikoo products during the festival like Chikoo Pickles, Chikoo Murabba, Chikoo Halwa, Chikoo Powder for Chikoo Milkshake preparation, mouth watering Chikoo shakes, Chikoo Kulfi and Chikoo Shakes topped with Chikoo ice creams, Chikoo chips to name a few.

For animal lovers there was also a stall where reptiles including the Cobra snakes were put on display, thus giving a great platform to NGOs working for the rescue of reptiles.

One festival, but filled with many activities. From celebrating the fruit to enjoying its many products and then learning about the local culture, tourists got a glimpse into the life of north Konkan beyond the usual sights. The footfall alone speaks of its success. More than 8000 tourists including local as well as tourists from out of Maharashtra had turned up for this two day festival. If one has missed Chikoo Utsav 2014 this year, you can enjoy all the foods and lot more fun filled activities next year in Chikoo Utsav 2015.
India possesses a distinct identity, not only because of its geography, history and culture but also because of the great diversity of its natural ecosystems. In India we have 1300 species of birds i.e. 13% of the total birds found in the World. We have many types of Habitats which support different bird species. The panorama of Indian forests ranges from evergreen tropical rain forests in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Western Ghats, and the north-eastern states, to dry alpine scrub high in the Himalaya to the north. Between the two extremes, the country has semi-evergreen rain forests, deciduous monsoon forests, thorn forests, subtropical pine forests in the lower mountain zone and temperate montane forests. But unfortunately people know very less about our rich bird diversity. “BIRD FEST” is an innovative attempt to explore nature, specially the rich birdlife of our country. It presents an opportunity to evolve a common platform to work towards providing effective and meaningful communication material for preserving our great natural heritage. The aim of the festival is to make people aware at large about the species of birds and about their status. Through this fest we will also be educating people on various aspects of Birds like Nesting, Behavior, Migration, Displays etc. The major highlights of this festival were:

- Interaction with renowned birdwatchers from Maharashtra
- Bird Photography Exhibition
- Good Educational Inputs for Birdwatchers
- Interaction with Bird Photographers
- Books on Birds will be made available
- Bird watching sessions
- Audio Visual Talks by Experts
- Presentation of various bird sanctuaries

MTDC in association with Nature Walk Charitable Trust and Maharashtra Forest Department had organized BIRDHEST in various places like Pune, Chiplun, Nashik, Kolhapur, Aurangabad, Tadoba and has organized the same at Shriwardhan in March. Birdfest was organized with an aim to develop the hobby of birding amongst the masses and also involve people in Bird Conservation. The Birdfest 2014, started from Pune in Jan and was organized in a big way. After Pune it traveled to other places. All birdfests received an overwhelming response. Birdfest also involved activities like Early Morning birding sessions, Interactive sessions, Audio Visual Talks by Experts, film screenings and bird quiz were some of major activities of the fest. Films on Birds produced by renowned Wildlife Film makers were screened which involved films made by the famous Bedi Brothers, Suresh Elmon, Asima Narain, Rita Banerjee, Shipa Sharma. Films covered birds from various parts of the country. All films were first introduced, screened and based on each film an interactive session was organized. Birdwatching sessions at Pashan, Kawadi, (Pune), Jayakwadi (Aurangabad), Gangapur Dam Backwaters (Nashik), Irai Dam (Tadoba), Gandhareshwar area, and Golkot (Chiplun) received tremendous response. People like Bittu Sahgal, Dr. Vibhu Prakash, Dr. Dilip Yardi, Dr. Girish Jathar, Dr. Avari Persi, Hemant Dhadnekar, Shriniwas Ghaisas shared their expertise. Forest Minister Dr. Patangraoji Kadam and State Forest Minister Mr. Udau Samant also attended the Birdfest and appreciated the efforts by MTDC & Nature Walk Charitable Trust. Workshops on Bird Photography as well as Artificial Nesting were also organized during the same. Expert Mr. Vishwajeet Naik also demonstrated Artificial Nest Boxes. In Tadoba in a span of 2 hrs of Birding, 40 species were seen and were appreciated by the participants. In Jayakwadi, people could see a flock of Flamingos. A bird quiz was also organized wherein students participated and the winners were given Books on Birds. Like minded organizations like Wetlands International, CMS Vatavar, BNHS, IBCN, WWF India, Maharashtra Pakshi Mitra also supported the organization. Many NGOs also came on this common platform and helped a lot to make this festival a great success. Next year we plan to again organise this festival to the regions mentioned above and involve more and more people and strengthen the network which will be helpful for conservation of these feathered friends.
Souvenirs

Maharashtra is a state with varied culture, traditions and festivals. Throughout the year thousands of tourists visit different parts of Maharashtra from across the globe. Although Maharashtra is highly industrialized, the historical monuments, destinations, traditional clothing, cuisine and folk arts are still conserved and maintained.

The Souvenir branch will be responsible for developing new products which directly and indirectly represent Maharashtra. MTDC has identified different products across India which is related to Maharashtra. In order to give a platform to small artists, NGO’s and commercial vendors to source the product, MTDC plans to start franchise stores at various destinations in and around the world.

We have a varied range of products like wax food articles (foods of Maharashtra), Textiles of Maharashtra, destination specific products. Festival specific products for occasions like Gudi Padwa, the Ganesh festival, Holi, Dahi Hnadi etc have been designed. MTDC is also tying up with schools/training centre for special children to develop articles and give them source of engagement. MTDC has started working closely with the craft sectors to develop customized product range. Some products are destination specific, focusing on beaches, places of religious significance as well as the wildlife of Maharashtra, particularly because the state is home to many rare species of birds, animals and amphibians.

The Souvenir department has been developed to create a brand presence for the MTDC. The products for souvenirs could be direct or indirect representations of Maharashtra, its culture, arts and crafts, festivals, food, forts etc. We plan to launch these products on both national and international levels. Entrepreneurs or consultants or craftsmen interested in either developing or marketing these products please contact us at souvenir.mtdc@gmail.com
Strawberry festival

The MTDC had organized a Strawberry Festival at different sites this season. One such festival was held at the Phoenix Market City Mall, Kurla (West) in Mumbai from the 1st to the 9th of March 2014.

Mapro had displayed a variety of products, from the fruit to strawberry crush, strawberry toppings, jam, syrup, falero and much more for sale.

Various activities were conducted on stage by an anchor, where games were played to promote strawberry products as well as destinations in Maharashtra.

The response to the festival was specially good at weekends and the sales of the fruit on weekends as well as weekdays was very encouraging. Samples of products were also given to customers.

Apart from this, Strawberry souvenir items like strawberry kitchen, strawberry bags, strawberry envelope and strawberry pouch were also showcased.

‘Greeny- Winner at the 7th CMS Vatavaran Film Festival

Pune – ‘Greeny The Great’- a mascot of environment that was featured in the series category, based on environment and wildlife, was declared the winner at the 7th edition of CMS Vatavaran Film Festival, that concluded on 3rd Feb, 2014, in Delhi. The Jury appreciated the crisp but important messages centering on everyday issues of civic sense through these films. The films were produced by Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). MTDC uses ‘Greeny the Great’ as the mascot of sustainable tourism and it produced these films to create awareness about the subject.

In this edition of the film festival there were 541 entries from all over the world and in all 86 films were nominated - 34 international films and 52 from India.
Fourth Durg-Sahitya Sammelan,
The Fourth Durg-Sahitya Sammelan

The great Late G.N. Dandekar (Go.Ni. Dandekar), alias ‘Appa’ and Babasaheb Purandare trekked through the hill forts of Maharashtra extensively and researched documents of the era in depth. Approximately 6 years ago, the readers and followers of these two historians formed a group called ‘Gonida Durgpremi Mandal’ and came up with the idea of holding a ‘Durg-Sahitya Sammelan’ or conference of hill fort lovers, writers, poets and trekkers who contribute to literature on the hill forts of Maharashtra. The main idea, conceptualised by Dr. Vijay Deo and Mrs. Veena Deo (the daughter of the Late G.N. Dandekar) immediately received an warm welcome. The first festival was organised at Rajmachi fort, near Lonavla, 6 years ago, with Babasaheb Purandare as the president of the event. Last year, it was organised at the Vijadurg sea fort in Sindhudurg and focused instead on the naval forces of Shivaji Maharaj. This meeting was presided over by Retd. Vice Admiral Manohar Awati and was attended by over 600 fort enthusiasts.

This year, the sammelan was held at Sajjangad fort near Satara, which is also famous for being the site of the Samadhi of Swami Ramdas. This sammelan was organised largely by the ‘Kille Sajjangad Durg-Sahitya Sammelan Samiti’ led by the Ravnata Nature and Environment Conservation Society, Satara. This year’s gathering focused on the literature of the Sahyadri forts, their environment and sustainable tourism. Noted archaeologist and Vice-Chancellor of the Deccan College Deemed University, Pune, Dr. G. B. Deglurkar presided over the meeting.

Held over a period of three days, from the 7th to the 9th of February 2014, the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation was chief sponsor along with LIC, India. The three day sammelan was full off lectures and debates. In addition, there were kirtans held, a tour of the Sajjangad fort, sales of books and souvenirs as well as three exhibitions. The exhibitions displayed the forts of the Satara district, rare black and white photographs taken by the Late G.N. Dandekar, and posters showing conservation work carried out by various NGOs in Maharashtra respectively. In addition, there were adventure sports for the brave, and classical dance performances as entertainment and a drawing competition and quiz for children. There were also roughly 20 stalls displaying books on forts, nature, tourism and environmental conservation. MTDC’s stall showcasing the tourist sites of Maharashtra was one of the leading stalls and was well appreciated by visitors.

During a debate held on the second day of the sammelan, Dr. Jagdish Patil, MD, MTDC stated that tourism to forts was increasingly popular and that what was important was to convert this tourism into a responsible and sustainable form of tourism. He said that there were many places in the world where tourism is the mainstream source of revenue and that it was important to organise such activities. Dr. Maya Patil agreed that the department of archaeology is short-staffed to work towards the conservation of forts, particularly given the growth of tourism. She appealed to NGOs to lend a hand in this difficult situation.

The evening was devoted to an interview of one of the stars of the festival, Dr. Babasaheb Purandare. Mr. Abhijit Belhekar interviewed Babasaheb Purandare, a 92 year old legend, for close to two and a half hours, whose depth of knowledge kept the audience mesmerized.

Undoubtedly, the history buffs in Maharashtra will be awaiting the next chapter of the gathering next year again.
MTDC and MEHAIR start amphibian plane services from Mumbai to boost tourism

Mumbai, 24th February, 2014: The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) and Maritime Energy Heli Air Services Pvt Ltd (MEHAIR) launched the first seaplane service of Maharashtra in Mumbai today. The amphibian planes will eventually connect Mumbai with tourist destinations adjacent to suitable water bodies even when there are no runways at these destinations.

In the first phase of its operations in Maharashtra, the services will be launched to destinations like Aamby Valley lake, Mula Dam (Meherabad/Shirdi), Pavna Dam (Lonavla), Varasgaon Dam (Lavasa) and Dhoom Dam (Panchgani/Mahabaleshwar). Fliers can book seats on http://www.mehair.in/ from 5th March 2014. The service was launched by Hon’ble Minister (Tourism) Shri Chhagan Chandrakant Bhujbal and present dignitaries during the event included, Shri Ranjit Kamble, State Minister for Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, Mr Sumit Mullick, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, Dr Jagdish Patil, Managing Director, MTDC, Mr Satish Soni, Joint Managing Director, MTDC and Mr. Siddharth Verma, Director and Co-Founder MEHAIR and Mr. Vivek Kumar, CEO Aamby Valley City.

Shri Bhujbal said, “This is a one more feather in the cap of Maharashtra Tourism. We are constantly offering best and innovative services and concepts to the tourism in the state. The Seaplane service will add a lot to the tourism and help unlock the vast potential.” Similarly, Shri Kamble said that it was the need of hour to have such a service. “We have to keep up our pace with the global tourism standards. Maharashtra Tourism has been moving aggressively in the directions of making the state as one of the most favoured destinations in the country.”

The amphibian plane service will be priced to suit all pockets as it will be for the mass market and not for a premium niche. MTDC has partnered with MEHAIR to extend its support and engulf the vast vision and encumbrance of this venture.

Dr Patil, said, “These services will boost tourism greatly. Seaplanes will turn vacation destinations into weekend destinations. The fatigue and expenditure involved in reaching your destination will also come down drastically.” Speaking on the occasion Mr. Vivek Kumar said, “Seaplane services will add to the attraction of the Aamby Valley and will cater to the resident and property owners within Aamby Valley by offering a quick, economical and exciting mode of transport from Mumbai” MEHAIR plans to soon have a full-fledged commuter service from Juhu to Nariman Point which is the star attraction and is much awaited by the people jostling with the heavy traffic of Mumbai.” The first flight is being flagged off to the tourist destination of Aamby Valley which becomes the first seaplane destination in the mainland of India.

The seaplane service is being launched in Maharashtra with a Cessna 206 Amphibian and another Cessna 208 Amphibian aircraft will be inducted by Apr ’14 and these two models can accommodate 4 to 9 passengers respectively. “We want to charge our customer affordable rates. A journey from Juhu to Nariman Point could cost Rs 800 in a radio cab, and take at least an hour. We plan to charge an inaugural price of Rs. 750 for our service, which will complete the journey in less than ten minutes. This venture was only possible with the tremendous support from the MTDC” Siddharth Verma said.
Philips, India’s leading lighting company in partnership with Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) gave a lighting makeover to Mumbai’s iconic archway Gateway of India on January 24, 2014. The campaign ‘Mumbai in a new light’ is an initiative taken up to address the need to add to the magnificence and grandeur of our heritage monuments and spread the message of using energy in an efficient manner. Shri K. Sankarnarayanan, Governor of Maharashtra inaugurated the lighting of the landmark monument. Beginning at sunset of 24th January, the iconic Gateway of India’s lights dazzled the Mumbai city skyline with a vibrant, celebratory lighting makeover, showcasing the dynamic special effects of the magnificent LED lights. What makes this visual enhancement more special is that this year marks the 100th year of the foundation stone laying of the Gateway of India which was undertaken in 1913.

In line with Philips’ and MTDC’s commitment towards sustainability practices, the Gateway of India transformed its colours as it got a new energy-efficient LED lighting system called Philips Color Kinetics. Utilizing this one-of-a-kind lighting system, the lighting scenes on the façade and mast of the iconic Gateway of India will now change in real-time. This technologically-advanced LED lighting system, offers a palette of 16 million shades that can be programmed to create dynamic and unique lighting shows. With the new LED fixtures, the beautiful monument can be easily automated in real-time by a computer control system to create unique light shows with varied effects like ripple, cross-fade, particle and burst. The system will also simplify the maintenance schedule, as well as monitor unforeseen issues such as power outages.

Shri K. Sankarnarayanan, Honourable Governor of Maharashtra was delighted with the lighting makeover of the beautiful monument and said, “It is as much a matter of pride as is a responsibility to help maintain and revive our historic structures and such initiatives will only further promote tourism in Mumbai.”

Shri Chhagan Bhujbal, Honourable Minister of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra said, “Being a place of great tourism interest, this makeover only seems befitting to the grand structure. Using a one-of-a-kind lighting system, the façade and mast of the iconic Gateway of India now have lights complementing its existent architecture and adding to its glory. I hope more and more tourists and Mumbaikars come forth to enjoy this spectacle.”

There are various products from the Philips Color Kinetics and LED street lighting family which have been used to light up the monument and the adjoining landscape. In all, approx. 132 light points have been created to bring the right kind of lighting effect. The new lighting system is 60% more energy efficient than the older lighting system which was installed at the monument which means that the energy consumption by lighting at the monument and surrounding landscape has been reduced to 13KW now from 32KW earlier, while the light output is clearly much brighter and aesthetically more appealing. The lifecycle of this LED lighting is about 15 years.

Mr. Nirupam Sahay, President, Philips Lighting India said, “It is overwhelming to see our efforts transform into such an impressive show at the
Gateway of India, after we enhanced the lighting at India Gate in 2012. We hope that our Gift of Light to the people of Mumbai has given them another reason to visit this wonderful monument. The LED lighting system used provides color and spectacle, and is energy efficient. On behalf of Philips, I would like to take this opportunity to thank MTDC and all the government authorities who hugely supported this initiative and made this lighting makeover possible.”

Sumit Joshi, Head – Marketing, Philips Lighting India, added, “Philips is extremely proud to have partnered with MTDC for the designing of lighting of the Gateway of India. Counted among the architectural heritage of India, this structure is of greater historical importance to the city of Mumbai. This initiative reiterates our commitment towards enhancing the magnificence of towering monuments in India with energy efficient lighting solutions. With our range of dynamic LED solutions and our expertise, we hope to enhance the architecture of this city and create an inspiring public space that attracts more and more visitors.”

MTDC and Philips India organised a painting competition for the children of an NGO Akanksha on 20th January 2014, four days before the lighting makeover was to be inaugurated. This was an effort to get the young generation excited about the new development in their city, help them fuel their imagination and make them a part of the ongoing celebration of the campaign in the city. The best paintings from the painting competition held with children from Akanksha NGO were exhibited at the venue.

To commemorate the event, MTDC and Philips reached out to Mumbaikars and all the admirers of this city through digital platforms to share their love for Mumbai by suggesting inspiring ideas that make the city better and brighter at night. A special microsite www.MumbaiInANewLight.com has been created where people can read up about this special initiative and share their unique ideas. The unveiling of the new lighting was also live-streamed on this microsite.

The digital outreach count last stood at 1.2 crore people. On 22nd January, 2 days prior to the grand unveiling ceremony, ‘Mumbaiinanewlight’ trended on micro blogsite Twitter for Mumbai city. The microsite recorded more than 37,000 visitors, out of which 8,000 were on the day of the event alone. Philips also came up with an app of Facebook where visitors can play and design their own lighting for the monument; the app was visited by nearly 1000 people.

Philips India aims to bring a change in lives of consumers through its meaningful innovations. The lighting of Gateway of India was one such effort — transforming the aesthetics of the monument with energy efficient and technologically superior lighting solutions! This new lighting of the Gateway of India not only makes it a visual treat for citizens and tourists alike, but also drives the message of choosing environment friendly LED lighting solutions so as to get the best of lighting and consume the least of energy!
Mumbai: Immortalized by the camera, the wildlife of Maharashtra has been captured better than in any zoo through the lens of the noted photographer Shri Prakash Thosre. His painstakingly accumulated photographs have been compiled into a coffee table book called ‘The Wild Mammals of Maharashtra’. The book was released at the hands of the Honourable Governor of Maharashtra, Shri K. Sankaranarayanan, on March 21st in Mumbai.

The book showcases the forty-two wild mammals found in the forests of Maharashtra – some in abundance and others, sadly, endangered. Targeted at wildlife enthusiasts, the book carries a brief description of each animal featured, its physical traits, habitat, food habits, food gathering mechanisms, relations with human beings and its current status in the fight for survival.

One is left wishing that Thosre’s lens had not confined itself to the wild mammals of Maharashtra alone. The forests are alive with plenty of other species, and the reader would relish their being immortalized in images by the likes of Thosre.

Guten Tag South West Germany!
Maharashtra’s gets a new tourism partner

Expect more guests from India to SouthWest Germany

SouthWest Germany, the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg, and Maharashtra, the popular Indian holiday destination, have signed an agreement providing for increased co-operation between their respective tourism industries.

This historic accord took place when tourism leaders from both regions met at ITB, the important annual international tourism fair in Berlin.

Alexander Bonde, Baden-Württemberg’s Minister of Tourism and Andreas Braun, Managing Director of Tourismus Marketing GmbH Baden-Württemberg (TMBW) met at the India Pavilion at ITB for talks with Sumit Mullik, Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism) of the Government of Maharashtra and Manasi Kothare, Officer International Relations of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). Both sides agreed to co-operate in future on tourism marketing in the two regions.

This co-operation between SouthWest Germany and Maharashtra builds on the long-standing partnership between the capitals of the two regions: the cities of Stuttgart and Mumbai. The two have already been working together for 46 years. In addition to its cities and cultural attractions (especially the Buddhist and Hindu temples), the state of Maharashtra offers overseas visitors 720 km of a glorious coastline along the Arabian Sea.

In recent years, India has grown into the second largest Asian market (after China) for tourists to Baden-Württemberg. Between 2006 and 2013, the number of Indian overnight guests has nearly doubled. In the most recent survey, the number of overnight guests from India rose sharply by 7.1 percent to 157,000 in 2013.
The Elephanta Festival of Dance and Music was organised by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) on 15th. The main aim of this festival was to commemorate the rich heritage of Indian music, dance and other performing arts. This year it celebrated its Silver jubilee and it was a grand success. The event took place against the fabulous backdrop of the landmark of Mumbai- Gateway of India. Full moon at the backdrop of Gateway of India created an ideal atmosphere for the mesmerizing performances. A Tribute to Lord Shiva through dance and music, nothing more would have anyone asked for on the auspicious occasion of Holi.

Started in 1989, various world renowned artists have performed for this festival till date. This year the list of artists were Kirwani Quartet (Hariprasad Chaurasia, George Brooks, Gwyneth Wentink and Vijay Ghate), Ms. Kavita Seth- Sufi Singer, Ms. Prachi Shah – Kathak; Pandit Raja Kale – Vocal, Ms. Anu Sinha, Ustad Nishat Khan – Sitar and Ms. Tejaswini Lonari – Marathi Actress. There was an enthralling response from the spectators not just from Mumbai but also international travellers. There were more than 2000 visitors on each day for the event.

Allied activities as Painting and Sculpting competitions were conducted at Elephanta island with technical co-operation from J.J. School of Arts – Mumbai. It had an overwhelming response of more than 500 artists from around Maharashtra. Shri. Suraj Pandit and Shri. Sandeep Dahisarkar (Historians) enriched visitors into the ancient world of Elephanta caves through their activity of Heritage Walk.

MTDC for the very first time launched its Souvenirs stall – “Kala Maharashtra” at Gateway of India, in order to promote the rich handicrafts culture of Maharashtra. It was greatly admired and welcomed by the various visitors at the monument.

In Managing Director, Dr. Jagdish Patil’s words, “The festival saw maximum number of foreign tourists. There was a tremendous response for the allied activities of sculpting and painting and so did the newly launched “Kala Maharashtra”. As a matter of fact, audiences were quite inquisitive of the price tag of the painting and sculpting artifacts”.

Overall, it was the most delightful experience for the audience as well as the participants to be a part of the Elephanta festival 2014.
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for details log on to www.maharashtratourism.gov.in

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Panshet
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**Multiple avenues at Amanora Park Town** • Gateway Towers 1: 2 BHK Ultra-luxurious Apartments to 5 BHK Penthouses ₹1 crores onwards • Aspire Towers 1-12: 2 BHK Lifestyle Apartments ₹80 lacs onwards & Ready-possession 4 BHK Royal Apartments ₹2.3 crores onwards • Future Towers: 1 to 5 BHK Apartments ₹50 lacs onwards • Sweet Water Villas: Regal Villas ₹7.5 crores onwards  
• Amanora Chambers: ‘A Grade’ Scalable Offices ₹70 lacs onwards Amanora Park Town, Amanora – Magarpatta Road, Pune – 411 028
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