From being a lifeline to a harbinger of growth

Meghana S

Today, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), is the only scheme which works in favour of promoting rural development. Every district of Karnataka has finished 100 per cent of the target given to them by the government. The state average of implementation of the projects was around 99.5 to 99.6 per cent, says Ukesh Kumar, CEO of Zilla Panchayat, Kolar district.

MGNREGA Act, passed in 2005, is a labour-oriented program, which intends to give jobs to workers. The work given by MGNREGA is divided into two subdivisions; individual and community wise. The individual division focuses on farmers who work for themselves like people who cultivate their farms. The Community division focuses on a group of people who work to construct amenities like roads and bridges.

Breathing life into dead water bodies

Speaking about the favourable climate for the projects, Kumar says, "For the past two years, there has been good rainfall and we were able to conserve rainwater, and most of our water bodies were filled and overflowed. Even if we have average rain, we are good. But if there is no rain, then we can't do anything."

The Government of Karnataka proposed the Yettinahole project to mitigate the problem of acute drinking water in drought-prone areas of Chikkaballapur, Kolar and other water-scarce areas of Hassan, Chitradurga, Tumkur, Ramanagar and Bangalore Rural districts. "Yettinahole is a long-term project for districts like Kolar where there is no perennial surface water. The people are dependent on rainfall. A project which lifts water from one surface to a place where there is no surface water is very much needed. If a project lifts water from another surface, then we don't have to depend on rainfall

for surface water," he says. Ramanji, taluk IEC (Information Education and Communication) co-ordinator says that the majority of taluk projects were successful. Mission Amrit Sarovar was one of them. It was launched on April 24, 2022 on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day, as part of the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebration to conserve water for the future. It aimed to develop and revitalise 75 bodies of water in each district of the country. Another successful project was LWM (Liquid Waste Management) Gatka, which uses an inline treatment to filter drainage water so that clean water can be absorbed by the ground. **(Contd. in Page 4)**

Rejuvenation of water body at Kolar   Goanconnection

Medical camp organised by MGNREGA team   Special Arrangement

While talking about the healthcare facilities provided by MGNREGA, Ramanji said, "We arrange medical camps for farmers for regular check-ups and if there are more problems we ask them to visit government hospitals."

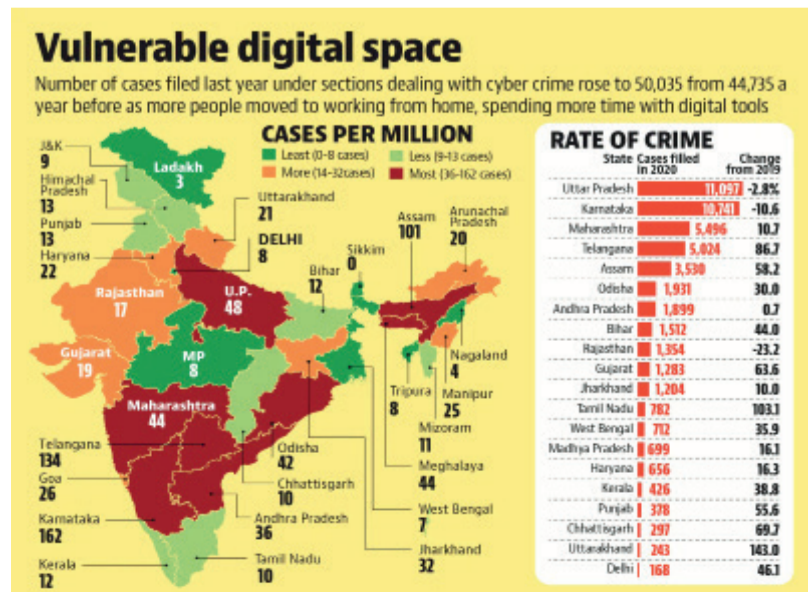Due to an increase in scarcity during the Covid-19 pandemic, people who were working in cities returned to their villages. During this time, MGNREGA provided them with work opportunities. "We want to connect directly with the people so we go to Gram Panchayats and speak to people directly and we are taking multiple initiatives. We are taking tanks in the villages and developing them and people are aware of what's happening and its importance. So we will sustain this for next year too," says Kumar.

The guardians of the virtual realm

Parnika S

Imagine coming home to find your door locked. The windows have been blocked and there is no way that you can get inside your space. What would you do?
You call the police. This is exactly what happens online when an unauthorised source gains access to your personal data.

The advancements in technology have opened doors to a series of cyber crimes in the country. Many firms with an online presence are vulnerable to hacking and other forms of virtual crimes on the internet have increased in the last 10 years. These threats, along with the addition of the pandemic, gave rise to a need for professionals in the field of cybersecurity.

Cybersecurity is the system of protecting computers, servers, mobile devices, electronic systems, networks and data from malicious attacks. It is an area of software development that majorly deals with the protection of online platforms across various industries. A qualified cybersecurity professional has to have experience in major technological domains like user domain and information technology. While these professionals are smaller in

number, they play an important role.

According to Simplilearn, the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) reported that India alone would need one million cybersecurity professionals by 2020, while job portals indeed reported a spike of 150 per cent in cyber security roles between January 2017 and March 2018. Companies like Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) have doubled the size of their cyber security teams in recent years. This year, the industry is predicted to reach US $2.37 billion. Security Services, the largest segment of the industry, has a market volume (the

total number of shares) of US $1.19 billion. It is also predicted to show an annual growth rate of 14.61%, resulting in a market value of US $4.09 billion in the next four years. **(Contd. in Page 4)**

Vulnerable digital space

Number of cases filed last year under sections dealing with cyber crime rose to 50,035 from 44,735 a year before as more people moved to working from home, spending more time with digital tools
Cyber crime rates in India   Hindustan Times

Logo of cybersecurity   iStock

The cause for the spike in demand for cybersecurity can be due to the increase in digital websites, and the necessity for the protection of information and a good defence against hackers who are advancing with technology.

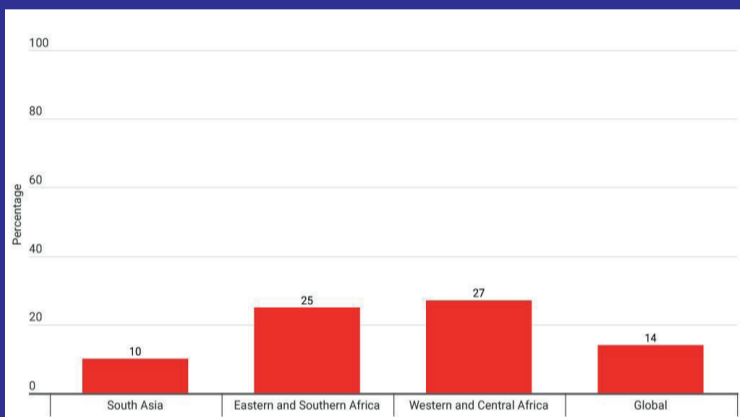# Why is sex education still taboo in India?

Aasline Venitia Dsouza

Representational Image   **Inquirer**

India is the world's most populous country now with 1.4 billion people, with the adolescent population expected to reach 22.9 crores (229 million) by 2031, and an additional 22 crores will be added by 2036.
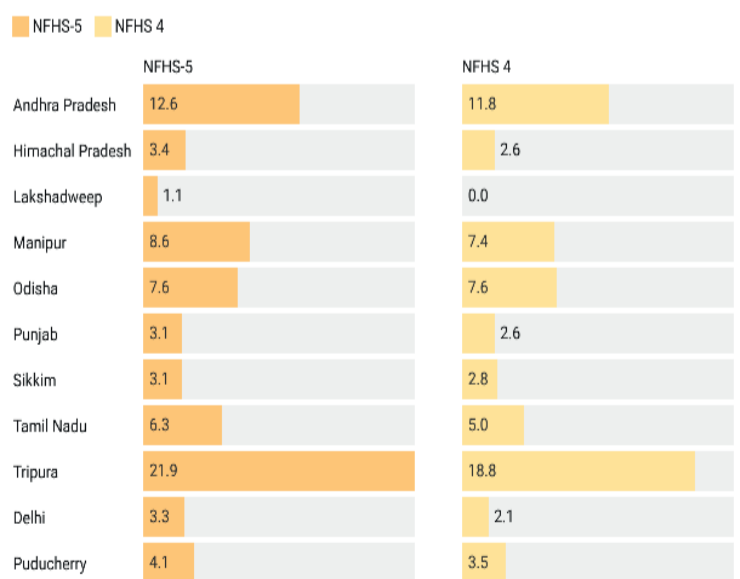

Teenage pregnancies (2015-21)   **UNICEF**

The UNICEF data suggested that an estimated 14% of adolescent girls and young women give birth before the age of 18 globally in 2021. The World Health Organization (WHO) data shows an estimated 21 million pregnancies each year, of which approximately 50% were unintended, resulting in an estimated 12 million births in adolescents aged 15–19 years in low and middle-income countries as of 2019. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), the rate of teenage pregnancy in India has declined only by 1% from 7.9% in the NFHS-4 to 6.8% in the NFHS-5.

States & UTs With Increase In Prevalence Of Teenage Childbearing

	NFHS-5	NFHS 4
Andhra Pradesh	12.6	11.8
Himachal Pradesh	3.4	2.6
Lakshadweep	1.1	0.0
Manipur	8.6	7.4
Odisha	7.6	7.6
Punjab	3.1	2.6
Sikkim	3.1	2.8
Tamil Nadu	6.3	5.0
Tripura	21.9	18.8
Delhi	3.3	2.1
Puducherry	4.1	3.5

MoHFW

Teenage pregnancy derails the healthy development of a girl child into adulthood and thereby results in negative impacts on their education, livelihood and health. It remains a priority area that needs to be addressed in the country, especially since India will continue to have one of the youngest populations in the world.

Sex education is a crucial part of health education and plays an important role in the overall development of a child. Sex education introduced during childhood will provide children with clarity about sex, which if unchecked, may perpetuate myths and misbeliefs.

Speaking about sexuality and sex, especially with children, is still considered taboo in a country of 1.4 billion population, as it is perceived to be against Indian culture. A study on parents' perspectives on sex education reported that childhood sexual exploration is one among many aspects that makes parents uncomfortable. In the Indian scenario, there is a lot of hesitation and discomfort among the parents, the teachers, the children and society to talk about sex education.

Identifying the exact period in which sex education should be introduced for children is disputed among parents. They have divided opinions on the need for the inclusion of sex education in the academic curriculum. Many believe that incorporating topics on sexual health in the school curriculum or discussions at home taints modesty,

destroys abstinence and corrupts young minds. "…. This is not the right age to disclose sex to them. Children will learn it at a proper age. I don't see a need to educate children on sexual health and intimacy. If they (children) explore this path, it may result in a lack of concentration and disturb their focus on their studies. As parents we must tell them that this is not the right age to indulge in such behaviour," opined the parent of a child studying in high school. Meanwhile, some parents were in support of the need to introduce comprehensive sexual health education and emphasised the need for sexual morality as one of the primary aims of education. Many of us believe that concern for children's sexual development should start even from pre-school years by teaching them age-appropriate topics like decency, good and bad touch and so on. This way children will adapt and learn the need to lead a good life, said Sam(name changed), a parent.

Children are born inquisitive and naturally curious about everything they see, hear and observe. As they grow up, at one point, they start questioning and exploring sexuality,
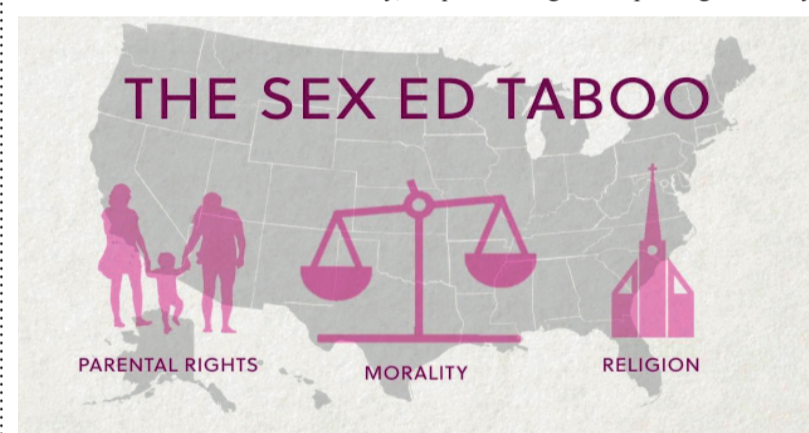

The factors augmenting taboo   **The74**

Representational Image   **Justseeds**

physical changes in the body, pregnancy, birth as well as sexual exploration. If a child's curiosity and questions remain unanswered, they seek out this information through other means, either through peer groups or the internet. This might provide them with unrealistic viewpoints and misguide them.

The emphasis given to sex education in many schools in Karnataka is considerably lower and subjective as well. In the modern age, children at a young age are exposed to sexually explicit content, which could lead to the possibility of teenage pregnancies even among consensual partners. Additionally, trafficking is another scenario where these innocent children are lured in and exploited. "If one is not aware of these various aspects and not equipped to handle these situations at least from an age of 14 years, it could lead to the stigma around menstruation. Sex and relationships need to be handled in a holistic manner," said Aratrika, a member of the All India Students Association of Karnataka.
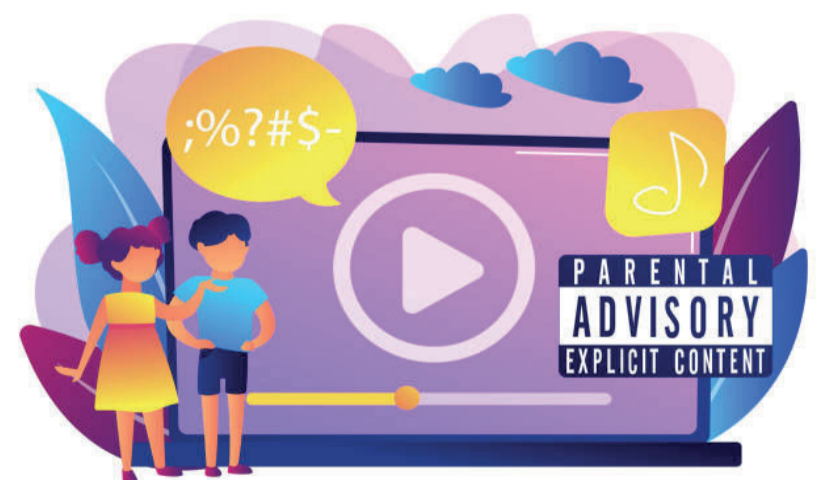
'Lack of knowledge leads to various risks'

In a psychological and societal context, sex education promotes healthy social and emotional development in adolescents. It enhances feelings of self-determination, competence, connection with others and knowing oneself if taught properly.

Children who are not exposed to sex education through their academic or personal lives are deprived of the right information and are prone to depression, low self-esteem and isolation and risky sexual behaviours. "It is of utmost importance now to create awareness and to provide proper education in a comprehensive manner to the adolescents as they are exposed to inappropriate content through the internet and social networking sites which leads to information overload. If the right kind of information is not provided, it leads to a lack of knowledge and various risks," said Dr K John Vijay Sagar, MD (Psy), Professor and Head, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, NIMHANS, Bengaluru.

There is a misconception

that teaching about sexual health motivates children to lead the wrong way, and it taints their morality. It is considered a taboo topic as adults are not comfortable with it, but this education should start at home.

Representational Image   **Stock Images**

Initially, they should be taught not to be ashamed to use the names of private parts. Topics ranging from body anatomy, menarche, physical aspects and changes in both boys and girls should be taught while making sure that the provided information will not overwhelm the children. "Sexual health education should be embedded as a part of

larger health education. Adolescents undergo a lot of bodily changes. They are curious at this age and tend to experiment. They are keen to get this information through health education and overall life

skills programs. The inclusion of a broad range of sexual health topics at some point in the school curriculum should be encouraged, along with the concepts of personal safety and gender sensitisation. The teaching curriculum should not desensitise children to sexual activities or turn into a motive for initiating sexual behaviour," he added.

Portraying pride through art

Anjela Patrick

India has witnessed a jamboree of acceptance through celebrations of the LGBTQ community in the form of 'Pride Parades'. Bihar has conducted one of the biggest pride parades since 2012. The parade has buzzed the streets with rainbow flags, banners and trumpets to symbolise the unity of the community. It has weaved stories of pride, bravery and celebration of different genders and identities. Moreover, it has unravelled buoyant tales that are nothing short of a roller coaster. These stories reinstall the idea that under the pride rainbow, there is no discrimination.

Ankita, a Patna-based graffiti artist and the person who organised the first pride exhibition in Bihar said, "It's sad that even in our history, the art of this society was greatly hidden. Right now, there are social media, so they are showing their art, but very little has been performed in the art gallery." Expounding on the challenges faced by her in organising the exhibition, she says that collecting participants for the event was the biggest hurdle to surpass. "The big queer artists were afraid that people, out of hatred, would ruin their paintings," she recalled. She explained that after a long struggle, she was able to reach out to an artist who allowed her to do body art on him. "I painted his body and it encouraged other artists and then we did that exhibition."

Reminiscing the most memorable moments at the exhibition, Ankita said that everyone at the art exhibition displayed their dreams according to the theme. One painting showcased a person longing for a house and another portrayed a student being harassed in college. Such instances hold a very special place in her heart because the children who never had the opportunity to express themselves were depicting their agony through art, which is the purest form of expression. "They are all saddened by society's behaviour.

Many of the contestants were young and had been accompanied by their parents. Through their paintings, they revealed their identities. Seeing all this, I realized that we can make a difference. It was astonishing or say a magical moment. Earlier people were reluctant to even question their own feelings but now people were accepting it openly," she recalled. In her story of revelation, she said that she was attracted to the same gender when she was in school, but people made fun of her when they found out. This left her perplexed about her gender." This is a very personal topic for me, and if we have to bring change in society, we must come forward and accept ourselves," she added.
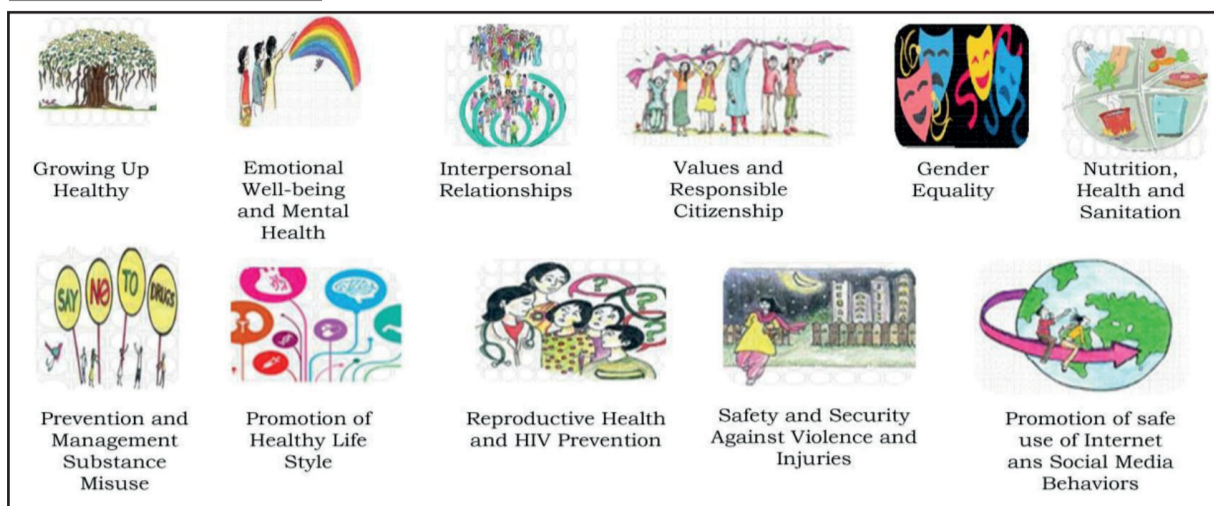
Ankita Raj   @ankita_monet

The need for comprehensive sexual and health education in schools

Aasline Venitia Dsouza

Themes in School Health & Wellness Program   NCERT

Comprehensive sex education is an investment in the health and well-being of young people. It needs to be incorporated as a part of health education and overall life skills rather than treating it as a separate entity in academic teachings. Today's adolescents experience sexual maturity at very young ages and are prone to various risks at every level of their social and sexual life, said Carmen Rebello, an educationist.

"The need of the hour is to design, package and present sex education in such a way that the students will not use it for gratification or misuse it. It cannot be directly plugged into the curriculum, and it must be discernible and comprehensive, taught in an interactive manner with case studies, and if possible, lessons from resource persons so as to cater to the attitudes and concerns of youth, parents and society as a whole," she said.

Under the Ayushman Bharat, the government of India had previously launched the School Health and Wellness Program in 2018, following which in 2020, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) released a 'Health and Wellness Curriculum' for the same. The program, which aimed to teach sex education to students, did not even include the word 'sex' in it.

Three years down to 2023, less than 50% of India's states have started this session with their students.

Sex education should be introduced in schools to children from early ages to gradually introduce the concepts of good touch-bad touch, hormonal changes, menstruation, infatuation, body changes in both genders, and safe and unsafe sexual activities.

"The last thing today's teenagers are willing to listen to is the advice from others on how to live their lives. So, as educators and parents, we have to catch them young and watch them grow. If you try to educate them at age of 15, it's already late," said Rebello.

> "The seed of awareness should be sown from the lower and primary school level itself."

Fostering India's rural development by empowering gram panchayats

Meghana S

Initiatives of MGNREGA

MGNREGA contributes to the infrastructure of Anganwadi. "To build Anganwadi, the government gives a certain amount for which MGNREGA adds a little more and builds Anganwadi with good infrastructure which looks the same as nurseries in cities," says Ramanji.

They focus on Kalyani (water bodies) near temples. They clean and modify it for water conversation. The project has helped farmers to build their cow sheds for which the government gives them Rs 57,000.

"MGNREGA also gives sheep which might help them in silk cultivation and to gain extra profit," he says.

Fair distribution of work and wages

Women are paid less in cities than men, but under MGNREGA, both men and women are paid 309 rupees per day and are not required to work the entire day. MGNREGA allows both the elderly and the physically disabled to work.However, when compared to other workers, they have less work for the same wage. "MGNREGA not only works for farmers but also women's empowerment," says Ramanji.

The migration confusion

Speaking about the migration from Kolar to Bangalore, Kumar says, "In Kolar, there are no fallow lands due to which people go to Bangalore. Other family members continue to do what they are doing because there is no other alternative job for them. In the case of North Karnataka districts like Raichur and Yadgir, people come in masses to Bangalore for menial jobs, but here in Kolar people go for industrial and IT jobs only, so those are two different things. People who go to Bangalore for work from Kolar are travellers because they go in the morning and come back in the evening. So we can't call it a migration." Explaining the difficulties faced by the MGNREGA team,

Mulberry plantation in Kolar   **Special Arrangement**

Kumar said that every plan has requirements; nothing is free. The labour-to-materials ratio must be restricted at 60:40. The task of stone revetment and pitching is materially rewarding, and it typically resembles this ratio. "We are unable to go right away to perform labour-intensive work first and subsequently material-intensive activity. The plan is set up to provide livelihood and prevent escalation in this way," he explains.

"MGNREGA is democratic, it's not something the CEO decides to do, it should come from the Gram Panchayat. It is a very democratic process in which people get to know what's happening and they understand the importance," adds Kumar.

A technological tool

Composite Landscape Assessment and Restoration Tools (CLART), is a Geographic Information System (GIS) based Android tool developed to enhance the planning of region-specific soil and water conservation measures. It helps one to know whether an area is red, green, yellow or purple. The colour red indicates that the land does not absorb water, so ponds are built to conserve water, green area means the land absorbs water, and purple area means the area is good for plantation, describes Ramanji.

'The real value of the work is not being highlighted'

Parnika S

Speaking to Communique, a senior technology professional from a big company, Prakruti* (name changed), stressed the need for professionals from this field. Owing to the pandemic, everyone had to move to a work-from-home platform. With that context, data confidentiality becomes extremely essential. She said, "At that time, privacy and security aspects were required at the next level not only from home but also from the office." These big firms find it essential to hire professionals from this field. They seek people who have the required skills for the job. "They should have basic skills related to cybersecurity, a basic understanding of what this is and how this whole domain works," said Prakruti. The salary package for them ranges from 15 to 50 lakhs per annum from the beginner to the senior level.

A software engineer, Sachin* (name changed), said that cybersecurity goes hand in hand with software development. For software developers, learning to implement their own security measures and using external services is essential. "Every software developer has to be oriented to certain common security breaches. During my training, I was introduced to a few simple yet important methods to secure an application on the software level," he remarked.

Sachin explained that for a backend developer specifically, the involvement in developing software systems and maintenance includes cybersecurity as the security of the system is of top priority. "I deal with code-based security breach prevention techniques such as writing code that is resistant to web penetration," he added.

Meanwhile, the front-end engineers deal with preventing HTML (Hyper Text Multiple Language) injections and the network engineers have to make sure that the system is resistant to attacks.

One of the reasons for these professionals to move overseas could be the personal benefits the individual could receive while they work. The challenge that they face is keeping up with hackers. A cybersecurity consultant, Suresh* (name changed), categorises these into three types: Black, white and grey hackers. Black hackers are those people who try to gain important data from entities, while white hackers check whether the controls, whatever they've applied, are working properly or not. The last type is the students who do it just out of curiosity. He draws attention to the fact that the black hackers attempt to obtain information from the student for their own gain. "This career is very demanding. Every day there are new challenges to overcome," he expressed.

Although this career is reported to have a zero per cent unemployment rate, several professionals still seek employment opportunities. Suresh pointed out the difference in the quality of students graduating from various colleges. However, the main issue that the graduates lack is problem-solving skills which are essential for this field and cannot be taught. Suresh said, "Today, nobody wants to code……….The real value of the work is not being highlighted."

However, this is not the end of the tunnel. There are many opportunities that one can aim at. Suresh provided examples such as building websites, helping with internet building and so on.

"You need to be aware of the functioning of things…… everybody needs a cybersecurity professional and they have to follow different rules as per the field," he added.

Five stages of cybersecurity   **Cimcor**

Cybersecurity ensures that our data is protected from reaching the wrong hands. Privacy is important in the physical and virtual realms equally. The sooner these professionals are employed, the better.

Representational Image   **Security Magazine**

Changing the notions against transgenders

Anjela Patrick

Throughout the history of India, the transgender community has always encountered numerous challenges, ranging from the need for familial acceptance to demanding recognition from others. When it comes to formulating laws to support transgenders, Bihar has always been at the forefront of the movement. However, the custom of asking for money on occasions like wedding celebrations continues to be one of the major reasons for resentment and animosity towards the community. The issue at hand, however, is whether the laws now in place are sufficient to end this practice and educate the public on the reasons for the bone of contention. Various activists and members of the community have unravelled this from many perspectives, and they have explanations for why the act persists.

Reshma Prasad, a transgender activist and a social worker at Dostana Safar, said that this conduct is a tradition. Even if organisations

strive to improve the transgender population, the customs will still exist. Many groups support trans women in India and even offer reservations for employment. Yet, just because some people have the chance to work does not imply that everything in the world is

Representational Image   **Patna Beats**

changing. "I never considered it wrong. It is not appropriate to form a negative notion about transgender people. In the Indian scenario, people's perception depends on their mentality, thinking, and experience. If everyone receives equal respect, then why would anyone do something no one likes? Such a scenario is not actually occurring." she said. Narrating one of her friends' stories,

Prasad said that her friend and her partner's marriage was denied by the latter's parents, who thought, "If the society does not allow you to come into their house, then how can we let you get married?"

However, in a significant step forward, the Bihar government has been one of the first to enforce laws about the LGBTQ community in India.

In 2019, the government became the first to make it illegal to restrict a transgender person's right to rent or purchase a home. In the same year, it announced the creation of a transgender welfare board that will examine LGBTQ issues while also defending their rights. Additionally,

Representational Image   **iStock Images**

it offered financial aid of Rs 1.5 lakh to members of the transgender community who desired to have a sex-change procedure. Until now, organisations such as the Bihar Rajya Kinnar Kalyan Board and Dostana Safar have worked tirelessly to examine the issues of the community while protecting their rights. However, these provisions are insufficient to put an end to the community's harrowing

tale of woe. Ankita, a Patna-based graffiti artist and a social activist, claims that the government is not doing enough. It is critical to change people's mentalities. Before making reservations, the government should educate students about the community and build acceptance. It is crucial to raise public awareness. "First of all, as citizens, we have to do this. Before giving them a job, the government will have to provide a school where they can get a proper education and a good environment. In schools, they teach children how to talk to girls or boys, but nowhere do they teach how to talk to transgender people." She advises that we need to bring about this equality to witness a shift in existing abhorrent mentality.

> *"It is not appropriate to form a negative notion about transgender people."*

The roadmap for change

Anjela Patrick

Paving a way for change, Dostana Safar, a non-profit organisation founded on September 5, 2011 in Bhabua Kaimur, is one of the most significant contributors to the evolution of the LGBTQ community in Bihar. In June, 2012, the Bihar government registered it under 1860 Act Rule 21. Hijra Nayak of Kaimur District, is the president of the association. Reshma Prasad, the secretary, is a qualified transgender woman from Bihar who is passionate about community rights. Following the registration, it organised the first gay pride parade in Bihar on June 1, 2012. Besides that, in collaboration with VHS Chennai and a UNDP-supported programme, many capacity-building programmes and a rights-based approach in health, social welfare and cultural welfare

for the Kothi transgender and hijra communities are being executed. Moreover, the association assisted the Bihar government in establishing a state

Bihar's pride parade   **Patna beats**

transgender and Hijra Welfare Board.
Under the Ministry of Social Justice, Dostana Safar established the 'Garima Greh'

scheme to provide shelter homes to abandoned transgenders. Garima Greh is a three-story building that can house 25 inmates at once. Projects at the shelter home include computer literacy programmes, language courses, and entrepreneurship skills, as well as make-up, dance, and yoga. These skill training programmes are aimed at empowering and exposing them to the mainstream, as well as to make them self-sufficient in order to earn a living.

When asked about the difference such initiatives have brought to Bihar, Prasad said, "A lot has changed in 15 years. It used to be difficult to walk on the streets of Patna, but now the scene has changed. Yes, the conditions outside Patna have not changed yet, so we have to work for them. People are now more open than ever before about transgender people, gay marriages and sexuality."

> *"A lot has changed in 15 years. It used to be difficult to walk on the streets of Patna, but now the scene has changed."*
>
> *-Reshma Prasad*

Inauguration of Dostana Safar   **@lgbtbihar**

Inauguration of Garima Greh   **@lgbtbihar**

Skill training programme   **@lgbtbihar**

'King Momo' enjoys his rule Facebook

Dance during carnival parade Facebook

Carnival 2023 brings fun, joy, happiness

Joyce Rodrigues

Goa is a place popular for celebrating the carnival 'Carnival de Goa'. For four days preceding Lent, the state is swept by the whirlwind of the carnival. People drown themselves in enjoyment as they step into the Lenten season, a solemn religious observance in the liturgical calendar adapting to a simple life, repentance of sins, almsgiving and self-denial towards sumptuous life. This carnival is celebrated mostly among the catholic communities in Goa. However, in the current times, all communities irrespective of religion, caste and race celebrate the festival. Carnival de Goa begins on 'Fat Saturday' which is traditionally known as 'Sabado Gordo' and goes on till Tuesday.

The carnival parade is one of the famous components. Panjim, Margao, Mapusa and Vasco are the four prominent places of Goa which make grand arrangements for it. This year, the curtain raiser carnival parade took place in Porvorim on February 17. On this occasion, the people of Goa dress up in bright colours and a unique style. The men wear brightly coloured loose-fitting shirts and the women wear brightly coloured

sarees or dresses. Apart from this, some unleash their creative side by dressing as famous historical figures or opposite genders.

People wear carnival masks to hide their identity, visit houses and scare mostly young ones. To add to the fun, people throw balloons and buckets of water mixed with colours at each other. On Fat Saturday, during the Panjim carnival parade 'King Momo', who is termed as the king of carnival commands the locals to celebrate the festival by saying 'Kha, Piye ani Mhoja Khor' which means 'Eat, Drink and have fun'.King Momo is selected through competitions based on personality and talent. Out of the ten applicants, Rusell D'Souza, an entrepreneur from Margao was chosen as the 2023 Carnival's King Momo by the Department of Tourism, Goa. 'Khell-Tiatr' is another element of the carnival.

It is an art form which is a mix of music and drama. It is performed in an open space without the use of curtains and a stage like seen in Tiatr. The artists of the Khell (skit) make announcements at various locations in and around the villages, following which the crowd gathers to watch the Khell-Tiatr.

Boosting tourism through carnival

The Department of Tourism considers carnival as an aid to boost Goa Tourism. Jeevan* (name changed), an official said, "As it starts before the Lent season, the carnival has its significance. It's a festival for joy and fun. So we always look forward to the tourists and ensure that they eat, drink and enjoy responsibly."

This year, the department shifted the float (parade) from the ground to air and water. The parade was exhibited on the water with a ship on the Mandovi river. It was also carried out on air for the first time through 'Heli-Tourism', a project launched by the government on February 3, 2023.

Carnival de Goa attracts tourists in large numbers every year.

This requires the deployment of security on a massive scale. "Goa has efficient police departments who handle security concerns. The police and their traffic cells are allotted in different locations all across the state.

There are committees set for each place where the carnival parade is held. The tourism department funds each committee for infrastructure and distributes prize money to the participants. The total expenditure used by the tourism department for the festival amounted to Rs 1.40 crores," said Jeevan.

A lady dressed as fisherwoman Facebook

A man dressed as a bride Gomantak Times

'Intruz' or 'Carnival'

Rajendra Kerkar, a folklore researcher from Goa said that the tourism market loves the Western culture which creates more demand. This demand has to be commercialised. "The Western culture is included in the carnival as the main source to attract tourists. Owing to this, people presume that it is an integral part of Goa," he said.
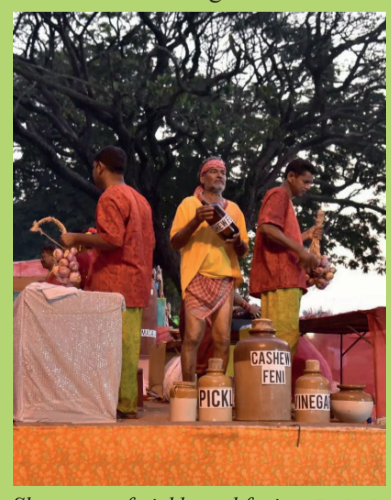
The traces of Portuguese roots are evident in Goa for it was colonised by the Portuguese for centuries. Due to colonisation, Carnival became part and parcel of Goan culture, contradicting the original Goan festival Shigmo. Shigmo or Intruz is a festival where people perform folk dance and sing folk songs based on stories of Ramayana and Mahabharath.

Kerkar said that the Portuguese started converting the natives into Christians. At present, the carnival is also called Intruz or Intrumaz. As it started becoming popular, some of the elements of Shigmo were also

included in the carnival.

"Intruz is considered Shigmo only in Dongrim, Mandur region and Inturmaz is performed by the Christian community, mostly the Kunbi in Quepem Taluka."

Fatima Gracias, a historian from Goa opines that today's carnival is commercialised. "Earlier, when there were no floats, people used to dress up and go to each other's houses throwing dyes and water. Young girls who don't usually wear saree, drape saree during carnivals in Kunbi style. Dances that are performed each day of the carnival include the black and red dance where people wear either black, red or a combination of both colours, a fan dance where the women dance with hand-held fans and also a flower dance for which a place would be decorated in paper flowers. And there were 'cocotte' which are small packets filled with mud or wet mud thrown at each other."

A tableau showcasing 'Stop eating junk food' Special Arrangement

Dance at the carnival parade Gomantak Times

A tableau of a honey bee Special Arrangement

Showcase of pickle and feni Facebook

Carnival decor NewsTimeExpress.com

The rise of an independent folk artist

Chandrasoodeshwar

Naresh is a rising independent folk artist who has successfully trained more than 500 parai (percussion instrument) artists. In addition to providing training and conducting workshops in and around Bengaluru, he writes articles for a Tamil literature magazine 'Kal Kuthirai.' His primary focus is on parai, tribal music research, as well as research on theatre art and music. One of the famous Tamil writers, Konangi, penned Naresh's name as 'Keela Naren' as he entered this art field.

Exposure to percussion instruments during local town festivals sparked his interest in music. He eventually learned to play the instrument himself. He joined a professional troupe called 'Budhar Kalai Kuzhu' which provided him with an opportunity to develop his performance skills and master the nuances of playing the parai. Unfortunately, he was unable to continue with the troupe due to his studies. After completing his schooling, he pursued a career in it.

Explaining his approach towards the artists he came across during his travels, Naresh said that the artist's path is a meaningful journey evolving and filled with opportunities. "To grow as an artist and a member of society, one must look beyond oneself and acknowledge that every person and object holds a lesson to learn. As an artist, everything has a rhythm that can be learned, and everyone is a teacher," he remarked.

Reminiscing the 15 years of his journey Naresh expressed, "In the journey of an artist, there is no fixed destination. To observe new things and communicate numerous thoughts, the artist needs to constantly travel and explore. This is a significant and continuous thing that takes place over time. I used to see things from my own point of view, but now I'm able to understand and value other people's perspectives as well."

Exploring the concept of rhythm on which the instrument parai relays on, he said that it is present everywhere and can be observed in all aspects of life. "Every individual has a distinct rhythm in their movements, which serves as a source of inspiration for creating music. One can find a large number of unique rhythm patterns that are exclusive to each village. By observing and learning from the rhythm present in all objects, movable and immovable, one can create music that reaches beyond cultural boundaries," he said.

Along with writing short plays, Naresh prefers writing fictional stories over reality, particularly for children. His current project involves a play that examines the ideas of unity and equality, "This is the concept that I have been working on. Keeping the five elements in mind: Earth, water, fire, wind, and space. I gave life to these things in

A collaboration that never happened before   **Mani Chinappa**

Grooving with the beats   **Kvscmouli**

"The parai has a rich history and cultural significance in Tamil Nadu. The origin of the parai can be traced back to the times when people went hunting and used the dried skin of animals to create a sound by rubbing it against branches. This sound was used to frighten birds and protect themselves from animals. Before the use of modern methods such as crackers, the parai was used as a means of protection. Overall, the history and development of music in Tamil Nadu are closely connected to nature, and the parai is just one example."
-Naresh

A still from play 'Idakini'   **Shahid Razz**

Naresh interacting with his students   **Aaruthra**

my play as a character about how they perceive this earth. After so many years of destruction, how do they see all these things?" he said.

Naresh aspires to tell stories but feels that we are filled with unwanted baggage. "Instead of telling stories to adults, I believe that sharing stories with children will have a greater impact on the next generation. I see children as a source of hope, and I want to write stories for them. In the future, I hope to write children's literature," he expressed.

Despite facing criticism, he continued to pursue his passion and has made a positive impact on many people's lives. Parai has a remarkable cultural significance in Tamil Nadu, and it is inspiring to see artists like Naresh carrying on this tradition.

A conflict of interest and stability

Naresh experienced a conflict between his passion for art and a stable 9 to 5 job. To pursue his passion for performing arts, he faced financial struggles, emotional distress, and psychological challenges. However, this was a learning opportunity that helped him discover more about himself.

Naresh got an opportunity to work with the theatre director, S Murugaboopathy with whom he always wanted to work for a play called 'Idakini'. He dedicated himself to the play for three years in Manal Magudi Theaterland based in Kovilpatti. Recounting the play as the best experience in his journey, he said, "I wasn't sure if they would accept me during the lockdown. But after seeing their work, I was struck by the messages they convey. Certain dialogues in the play gave me hope and the courage to be in their next production. Working with them has been an in-depth artistic process that has taught me well about each and everything that I always wanted to explore."

Despite all of these obstacles, he never gave up because of the support and encouragement of his three friends Dinesh, Mukesh, and Suseendar who motivated him to continue. He kept pushing himself to improve and deliver the best performances possible and dedicated his first play to his friends as it was important to him and the people who were with him. "Personal obstacles are an inevitable aspect of an artist's journey, but they can be viewed as opportunities for growth and self-discovery. Instead of fixating on future plans, artists should focus on the present moment and the artistic process. Fear and doubt may arise during the creative process but they can be a tool for producing impactful and meaningful art."

The situation of Indian folk artists

Some of the major challenges Indian folk artists face are discrimination and marginalisation due to the prevailing caste system. Despite the government's efforts to encourage folk art and culture, they are often ignored and paid less than modern artists. They are frequently exploited, even in urban areas like Bengaluru, making it difficult for their sustainability.

Recollecting one of the performances that were delivered in January, Naresh said, "Despite calling it a developed city, people still carry casteism in their hearts. Even when we play, some people try to assert their authority over us, as if they own us, just because they have paid us. Similarly in 2017, when I bought a parai in Pondicherry and tried to board a bus with it, the conductor stopped me from getting on because I had the instrument with me. However, with the support of some people who spoke up for me, I was able to manage to take the journey."

Despite this Naresh has collaborated with multiple artists who play different instruments which have never been played together before. Saxophone artist Julius Gabriel from Berlin and a sitarist Navya from Bengaluru, are some of the artists who voluntarily collaborated with him. "When it comes to instruments, there is often a political divide between sitar and parai. The sitar is considered a classical instrument, whereas the parai is considered a folk instrument and even a historically untouched instrument. In contrast, the sitar is considered a pure instrument. Despite this gap, we performed with all three instruments on one stage."

"The government should implement policies that support and promote folk arts and culture. Folk artists are crucial to India's cultural heritage and deserve respect and recognition. Indian society must acknowledge their value and provide them with the necessary support to thrive. By doing so, we can conserve and promote India's rich cultural heritage for future generations," he added.

Padayani: An art beyond folklore

Abhirami Nair

A child is sitting on the premises of a devi temple and is eagerly waiting to see 'Kalan Kolam'. Being an NRI, she has heard stories about 'Padayani'. In a split second, she saw a creature running into the premises with fire and a sword and it made her heart pace rapidly. With a sudden tap on the 'Thappu', the Kalan Kolam turns to the child and looks at her as if he's coming for her. The child hears the sound of kolams anklet nearing her and shuts her eyes. As she dares to open her eyes, the kolam stands just inches away from her. She sits there afraid to let out even a faint cry. The Padayani Pattu (Padayani song) starts playing and Kalan Kolam runs off to perform. The child lets out a sigh of relief.

Padayani (also known as Padeni) is a traditional ritual art form which has artistic value. 'Kolam Thullal' (the dance that the Padayani artist performs) is an important aspect of Padayani. The present-day Padayani has variations and is a modernized version of the ancient Kolam Thullal which was done by the magico-medicine men in Kerala. "In olden times, there were lots of diseases and psychological disorders that had no known cure. It was believed to be induced by evil spirits. Kolam Thullal cured those ailments. It was an offering to the goddess," said Radhakrishnan Nair, the Padayani Aashan (the Padayani master), the key person who trains the Padayani artists.

Padayani is performed in Bhadrakali temples and has various Kolams which have their significance and cures. Kolam refers to the masks and costumes used for Kolam Thullal. Masks are made out of spathe of palm trees. Kari (black colour made from coconut husk) and various colours (chaanthu) that are made organically are used to draw out the unique-looking Kolams. It takes lots of manpower and skill for the craft to create Kolams. Some of them include Marutha Kolam, Yakshi Kolam, Pakshi Kolam, Kalan Kolam, Bhairavi Kolam. Padayani is a unique possession of Central Travancore, particularly Pathanamthitta and parts of Kottayam. Some of the major attractions of Padayani include Naranganam Padayani, Kadammanitta Padayani, Elanthoor Padayani and Kunnamthanam Padayani.

The main instrument used for Padayani is the 'Thappu'. When technology didn't exist, the artists used to drum the Thappu to let people know that Padayani was about to begin. Other instruments include Kaimani and Chenda (Drum). "Songs play an important role in Padayani as the entire story is expressed through them. The Padayani Pattu is more of an anecdotal narration. People who don't even know what each kolam is about will get an idea of what it is while listening to the song. It is passed down by our ancestors," says Harish Kumar, a Padayani song artist and a member of Naranganam Paithruka Kalakalari which is a cultural body that functions for Padayani in Naranganam, a village in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala that is known for their Padayani roots.

Artists performing Kalan Kolam   Rajesh Cheekkolil

Kalan's conflict between duty and devotion

The Kalan Kolam has been a Kolam that has grabbed the attention of the viewers for its valour and jolting appearance. It gives a fierce look with the mask and the weapons used. The Padayani artist holds fire in one hand and a sword in another. Kalan Kolam is also one of the hardest Kolam to perform as it is performed for one hour. The moves are different and sudden compared to other Kolams. The Kalan Kolam creates a fear element inside the viewers as it symbolizes Kalan (Lord Yama, the God of death). Kalan Kolam is based on the story of Markandeya from 'Markandeya Charitham' and how Kalan finally had to spare his life.

Adithyu Manoj, a Padayani artist from Naranganam Paithrika Kalakalari, holds the Guinness World Record for being the youngest person to perform Kalan Kolam at the age of 8. "I used to be fascinated by the way Padayani artists performed. After I started to learn, I was into Kalan Kolam. Usually, the Kolam isn't taught to younger kids as such but Aashan (Padayani master) saw me trying to imitate the steps and taught me," says Manoj.

Rajesh Cheekkolil
Pakshi Kolam that resembles a bird

The legend...

Padayani has an origin that can't be tracked down accurately. But the proof of its existence dates back to the 12th century, says Manoj Kumar, a member of the Naranganam Paithruka Kalakalari. Padayani was performed in 'Kaavu' (sacred groves) where people assembled and performed under the light of stars and Choottu (flames that were lit from dried coconut leaves). The art form was originally performed by the Ganaka community who belong to the Kaniyar caste in Kerala. Padayani is an art form that changed over time. It was an art form that was celebrated as a Dravidian form of worship until the emergence of Brahmanism.

The origin of Padayani goes back to the story of Goddess Kali defeating the Asura Darikan. According to the legends, once the Asuras had to flee to the underworld when they were defeated by the Devas. However, two Asura women did intense penance and got a boon from Lord Brahma that they will give birth to two powerful sons. As per the boon, two powerful sons were born to the women. As the boys grew up into men, their vengeance too grew with them. Darika was one of the two sons. He performed penance and acquired a boon from Lord Brahma that men, gods or demons would not be able to kill him. This made the existence of Devas near impossible and with ahimsa prevailing in all three worlds, Sage Narada approached Lord Shiva. He opened his third eye out of which Kali appeared.

The form of Kali was unseen before. Her body was jet black with eyes that evoked fear, her tresses were unkempt, her tongue was out thirsty for blood and teeth that were alarmingly sharp and her arms possessed deadly weapons. She fought Darika and his army and in the end ruthlessly killed him, but her thirst for blood wasn't quenched. She went on killing everyone in sight, including her army. After various failed attempts to calm her down, Shiva summoned Lord Muruga to find an alternative.

Lord Muruga assembled the Bhoothaganas of Shiva, made them dress up using spathe of palm trees and used colours to change their appearance. Upon watching the Bhoothaganas dance in front of her, Kali finally calmed down and came to her senses. This art form was later known as Kolam Thullal or Padayani.

A glimpse of the Valiya Padayani...

Artists performing the Ganapathi Kolam   Rajesh Cheekkolil
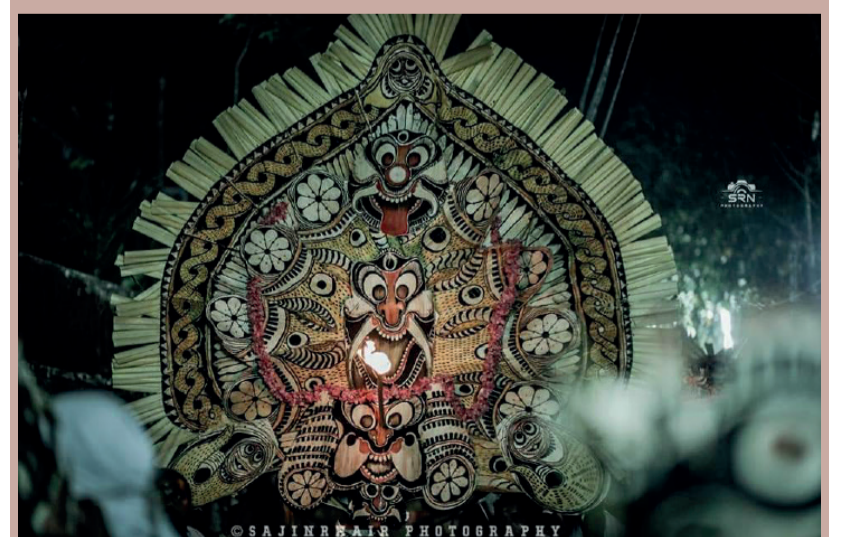
Bhairavi Kolam in progression   Sajin R Nair

Ganapathi Kolam **Rajesh Cheekkolil**

Marutha entering the temple premises **Sajin R Nair**

Paradesi Kolam **Sajin R Nair**

The Padayani village

Naranganam Padayani is very well known for its cultural roots. It is currently performed in Madathumpady Devi Temple, but Padayani was performed in Naranganam even before the existence of the temple. "Padayani is much more than what we perceive, it is more into how nature was worshipped with the ideology of considering 'Amma' (Devi) as Prakrutheeshwari (the Goddess of nature). It is an art form that highlights the aspect of the importance of mountains (nature) and its link to the human race that keeps on stressing the fact that we coexist with nature," said Manoj Kumar, an active member of the Naranganam Paithruka Kalakalari. "Naranganam also has importance concerning its geography and demography. Padayani isn't something that has any kind of barrier. It is an art and a ritual that belongs to every religion, caste or creed. People see Padayani without any prejudice," he said.

Narayanan Nair Valanjilethu is a prominent personality in Naranganam who has redeemed the art (Padayani) during a time when it was on the brink of extinction. He was a Padayani Aashan who was keen on the revival of cultural roots, says Harish Kumar. "We can still feel his presence in the art form. His legacy will continue to breathe through Padayani."

Naranganam Padayani is a 10-day festival. It begins with rituals like 'Choottuveppu' and 'Kottivili'. The ritual of Adavi which brings the ancient ideas of Kaavu back to the modern day is performed on the third day. The rituals of 101 Kalam (a ritual of offerings to Devi), Nelpara, Kalari Aranagettam and Pooja (the stage performance of new Padayani artists) precede the 10-day-long Padayani. "The temples that we see today here were built after destroying the Kaavu," added Manoj.

The Valiya Padayani observed on the eighth day is of great prominence as all of the Kolams are performed on this day. The premises of the Madathumpady Temple will be filled with people, especially on this day. The tenth day marks the end of Padayani with Mangalabhairavi Kolam. The 'Mangalabhairavi' (bhairavi in her joyful form) is the last Kolam performed. It is a Kolam specific to Naranganam Padayani. It refers to the idea of Bhairavi who finally came back to her consciousness after the Darika Vadham. Mangalabhairavi symbolises prosperity and well-being. It is a joyful form of the Bhairavi Kolam but differs as Bhairavi Kolam is a fierce and violent form of Devi. The Bhairavi Kolam is also the biggest Kolam which is made out of 101 spathes of palm trees.

Kalan Kolam **Sajin R Nair**
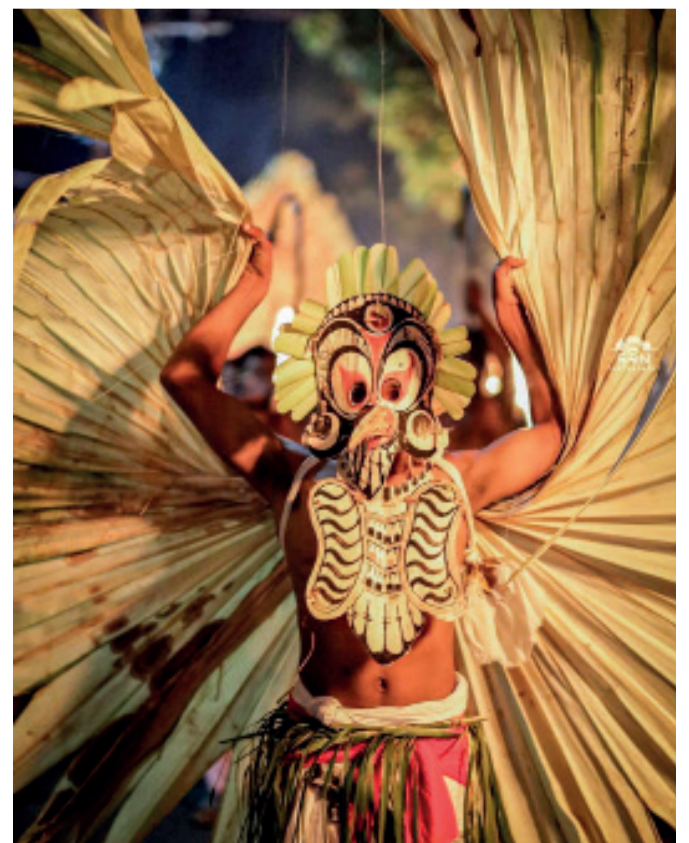

With the beats of Thappu **Sajin R Nair**

Shiva Kolam **Sajin R Nair**

Kuthira Kolam **Sajin R Nair**

Pakshi Kolam **Sajin R Nair**

Layering beats and lyrics to narrate, inspire and express

Jesbilin Manu Joseph

Representational Image   **Gaurav**

A purposive performance   **Special Arrangement**

Rap, a hip-hop music genre, was pioneered by African-Americans and Latin Americans in the 1970s. People in those days were victims of systemic inequality and lacked the means to express themselves. They found a way to communicate it through rap and other forms of art.

A delivery style that includes rhyme, rhythm, and spoken language, typically over a beat, is a subset of hip-hop. The term hip-hop refers to a complex culture that includes four elements:

Codice and Akhil Acid   **Special Arrangement**

Codice giving his best   **Special Arrangement**

Deejaying, or 'turntabling'; rapping, also known as 'MCing' or 'rhyming'; graffiti painting, also known as 'graf' or 'writing'; and 'B-boying' which is a dance, style, that involves specific expression, and a fearless body language.

The beats of rap in India

Rappers in India and other parts of the world encourage the Indian audience to pursue their dreams in this art form. These songs have a lasting impact on them as well. They are memorised, choruses are made into merchandise, and lines are used as youth slogans. Hip-hop is an exclusive medium that offers a Pan-Indian perspective in a country where marks of regional traditions inhibit the creation of a common identity.

The culture that inspired Gully Boy

"Mere Gully Mein," the breakout anthem by Mumbai-based MCs (mic controller) Naezy and Divine in 2015, launched underground rap into the national spotlight. The track was produced by Sez On The Beat, an in-demand producer who scored dozens of hits, proudly portraying residents of the city's urban slums which quickly went viral. It soon caught the attention of Bollywood director Zoya Akhtar, who adapted Naezy and Divine's story into Gully Boy, a big-budget film about Mumbai's rap community.

Budding pioneers of the industry

No Gang, a two-person rap group from Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, have been popular in the underground rap atmosphere for about five years. Gaurav aka Codice, the song producer and lyricist of the group, has been composing music for over ten years. Before thinking about producing beats for himself, he used to produce music for other productions in the industry. After meeting Akhil Parag aka Akhil acid, his second rap collaborator, in 2019, Gaurav decided to work on rap music with him and they began recording together. They are currently working as an independent artist crew and are set to release some new songs this year. No Gang recently launched an album named Parlok, which means heaven. The album speaks about their experience and the journey they have taken and will continue to take and includes seven tracks, each of which is unique from the others. Working as independent artists, they are set to release some new songs this year. According to Gaurav, promotion, patience, and consistency are the keys to overcoming the difficult situation of struggle and not

A performance at Navi Mumbai   **Special Arrangement**

reaching the appropriate audience. Describing his inspiration to be a part of the community, Codice expressed, "To be honest, I used to listen to a lot of rap music from an early age, from school times itself. The way other rap artists from India and other nations used to write and express their stories sparked my curiosity, and I wanted to learn more from them. I try to keep things simple and use slang. My writing has a serious tone, and I strive to make my verses relatable to those who hear them." "When I'm producing music, I'm a different person than when I'm rapping. If it hadn't been for rap, I would have been a software engineer or something," he expressed. To become a part of the community, one must be dedicated, motivated, and passionate about practising rap, bettering oneself, and picking up new skills as they progress, said Gaurav.

The existing bards in the beat

Many popular Indian rappers worked hard to get eminence. They have been signed by record labels who support and promote them. Vivian Wilson Fernandes, better known by his stage name Divine is the first Indian rapper to have his album Punya Paap (2020) which had gained Apple Music India's top spot, featured on a Spotify billboard in Times Square in New York City. He made his Grammys debut at the 64th Annual Grammy Awards in 2022, being the first Indian hip-hop artist to do so.

He is widely known for capturing the street culture of Mumbai. Bilal Shaikh aka Emiway Bantai is renowned for his varied style and use of slang from Mumbai, Altaf Tadavi, popularly known as MC Stan, is one of India's most prominent rappers. Unlike the other rappers on the list, Stan has a distinct style of rapping. His hip-hop style is known as New School Hip-Hop. He is a lyricist, composer, music producer, and mix master engineer in addition.

Like No Gang, many rappers underground strive to attain some amount of spotlight to narrate the tales they have to tell. One hopes these rappers get recognition for their talent and passion for the amount of hard work and dedication. It could be close as this delivery style is gaining momentum as fast as a beat of a song.

> ## "Don't believe everything you hear: Real eyes, realize, real lies ...(sic)."
>
> **- Late Tupac Amaru Shakur**

An adventurous walk into the rhythm of nature

Kavya S

Trekking is more like exploring nature from a technical perspective, but from a personal viewpoint, it's all about rediscovering one's physical and mental capacity while climbing the mountains. Reading a book or watching television can't give a person that level of experience or exploration that trekking offers. It is all about meeting different people, understanding their perception towards life, progressing to different terrains, and getting to know the native people and their food, said Neeraj Malve, a trekker and the founder of the Bangalore Mountaineering Club.

Hiking and mountaineering are part of trekking. Hiking is done for a shorter duration of time say for a day. Trekking is hiking for multiple days in the Himalayas and tropical forests. Mountaineering is technically climbing, where a person climbs higher peaks, say 5000 meters, said Naveen Mallesh, the founder and trekker of Treknomads, Bangalore.

According to Keethan Prabhu, a trekker and the founder of Fitness Gone Wild, Bangalore, the essence of trekking is connecting with nature. The process unveils the significance of the 5 elements (air, water, sky, fire, and earth). It paves a way for the realisation of what is important in one's life. "Imagine, it will be very cold at night, if there is no campfire sometimes, you won't be able to survive. Especially during Himalayan treks, we will understand the importance of fire," said Prabhu. The beauty of trekking lies there, he said.

THE RISE OF TREKKING

Malve recalls that thirty years back, stay arrangements were not feasible for people who trekked, and trekking to multiple places was difficult without internet and electricity. "We used to read some books or newspaper articles about someplace, where you got vague information about the location. So we would just cut that newspaper article and keep it with us whenever we are exploring or trek there." Trekking one day currently is equivalent to 3-4 such exercises of yesteryears. It was a process of self-exploration, where you figure out the exact mountain and how to reach there. This was the biggest challenge during that period. "But now everything is available. It is very easy as you can navigate the places on google maps which shows you the path, and there are lots of clubs available who can help people to reach such locations," said Malve.

"I would say during those days we used to call it an expedition," said Prabhu. This was because it was a time when people carried food and tents along with them. But now treknic(trekking cum picnic) has come into existence. "I would call it treknic because your food is readily prepared by someone else and your tent is already camped. There will be fixed campings and everything, so it has become easier as each and everyone can trek and have access to the peak. This is the evolution of trekking," said Prabhu.

Over some time, the age group and crowd have also changed. "Earlier, people who were younger and under 30 used to be the maximum. Right now we have moved towards professionals and people who have a lot of time apart from their personal or professional work," said Mallesh.

EFFECTS OF TREKKING

"People of different ethnicities and languages are the first thing you see when you travel. You begin to mingle with them. The more you start mingling with people of different ethnicities you start respecting them. The more you start respecting people like that, your mind will become broader and broader," said Prabhu.

Trekking is similar to meditation. In that process, you will begin talking to yourself and become aware of who you are. Understanding the importance of nature, and its creation and respecting them is all part of trekking. "Before I started trekking, I was a pure typical South Indian who couldn't eat chapati or roti. I used to eat boiled rice, but now I can eat any kind of food. I respect every food, religion and caste and I am more curious to know about different ethnicities and tribes. I believe trekking can increase the dimension of how we look at things," he said.
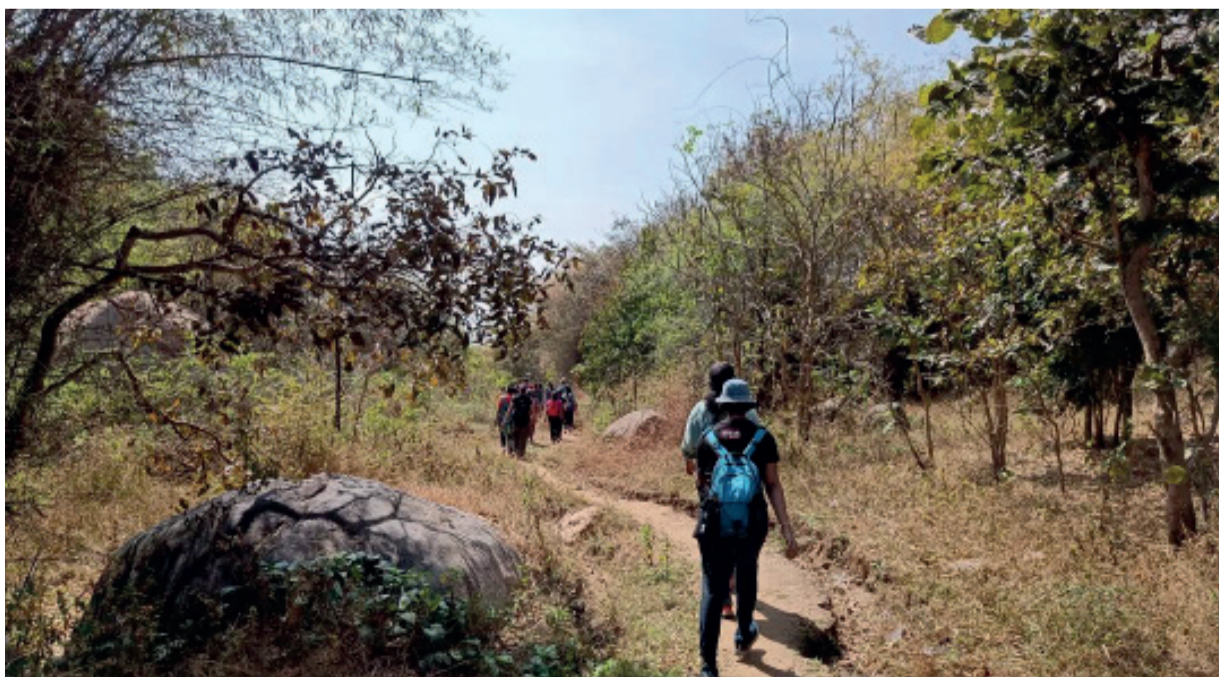
Reminiscing an incident about how trekking changes a person, Prabhu said, "I took one group of people to Kumara Parvatha trek. There was one lady who was extremely wealthy, having crores of money and came to the trek wearing gold and carrying expensive gadgets. While trekking, she understood that all these materialistic things are just momentary and the main thing for survival is the elements. After completing the trek, this realisation led her to stop buying gold and spending money on expensive clothes and things. I have seen these kinds of changes in many of them." The ultimate part of trekking is realisation. The realisation process changes a person and it reflects on their attitude. People start becoming humble and flexible towards life and accept the person the way they are, he said.

According to Mallesh, the effects of trekking changes the way people begin to value and appreciate small things in life. "When you get clarity between your needs and wants, it changes you entirely as a person. And your personality gets into following your minimalistic life or being very kind and humble towards everything. So your approach and entire personality will change over a period of time," he added.

"I have seen people let go of their emotions during the treks. Usually, when you go somewhere you carry your personality as strong, mature, jovial or something like that. Many times what I have seen is that in a certain set of people, once they reach the summit or once they reach the endpoint they let loose all their emotions, they burst out or cry. They feel connected with nature and ponder over their 30 or 40 years of life when they never experienced such a feeling, which they can't put into words. This is very interesting to see and watch," said Mallesh. It's an extraordinary feeling as it's something you can't give a person readily. This can happen when a person goes through that process. The serene and beautiful surroundings during the trek boost one's creativity and problem-solving abilities. The transformative and rewarding process of trekking fosters self-discovery and also improves one's physical and mental well-being, opined Mallesh.

Trekking can be an important aspect and part of today's generation. Taking into consideration the communal division, and boundary skirmishes, Prabhu said, "Imagine if the next generation is exposed to these kinds of activities then there won't be war at all. People will start living in harmony and peace by respecting each other through which everybody's mentality starts changing. And when everybody starts thinking in a multidimensional way, then there will be peace and harmony in the society."

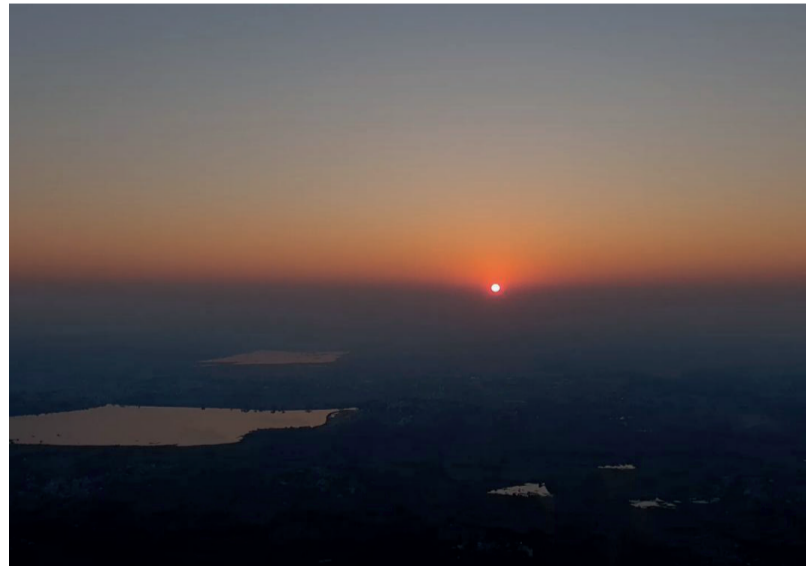*Stillness of the mind*   @thefitnessgonewild

In search of solidarity   @bmcindia

Perspectives of life   @treknomads

A view of triumph   @bmcindia

A trail of passion   @bmcindia

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