

# PR SENSE

Spreading Positive Vibrations  
Issue No 203 – Jan 2024  
Published by Prime Point Foundation

## Cover Story



**Ayodhya Ram Temple**

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## From the Desk of Managing Editor

Dear Readers



On behalf of the Editorial Board, The Editorial Board conveys the greetings for the 75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day to all our readers. I am also pleased to release the 203<sup>rd</sup> (Jan 2024) edition of PreSense with rich content.

### Highlights of this issue:

Prince cartoon

Editorial: Aditya L1 Mission

Cover Story: Consecration of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya and the history of 500-year dispute, ending in communal harmony and economic growth.

Susan's Musings – Eating with the hands

Announcement about Sansad Maha Ratna Awards

Review of PreSense Jan 2009 issue

Exclusive interview with Divya Miglani, Professional Car Racer.

Freedom Fighter: U Kiang Nangbah

I am happy to share with our readers that the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of Sansad Ratna Awards will be held at New Delhi on February 17, 2024. This Award Scheme was started by Prime Point Foundation and the eMagazine PreSense on the suggestion of Dr Abdul Kalam to honour the top performing Parliamentarians.

I am confident that readers will enjoy reading this edition too. Kindly send your feedback to [editor@corpezine.com](mailto:editor@corpezine.com) so that our Editorial Board can examine your suggestions. Please share this edition with your friends. I will catch up with you next month with more varied content.

Jai Hind

*K. Srinivasan*

# PRINCE

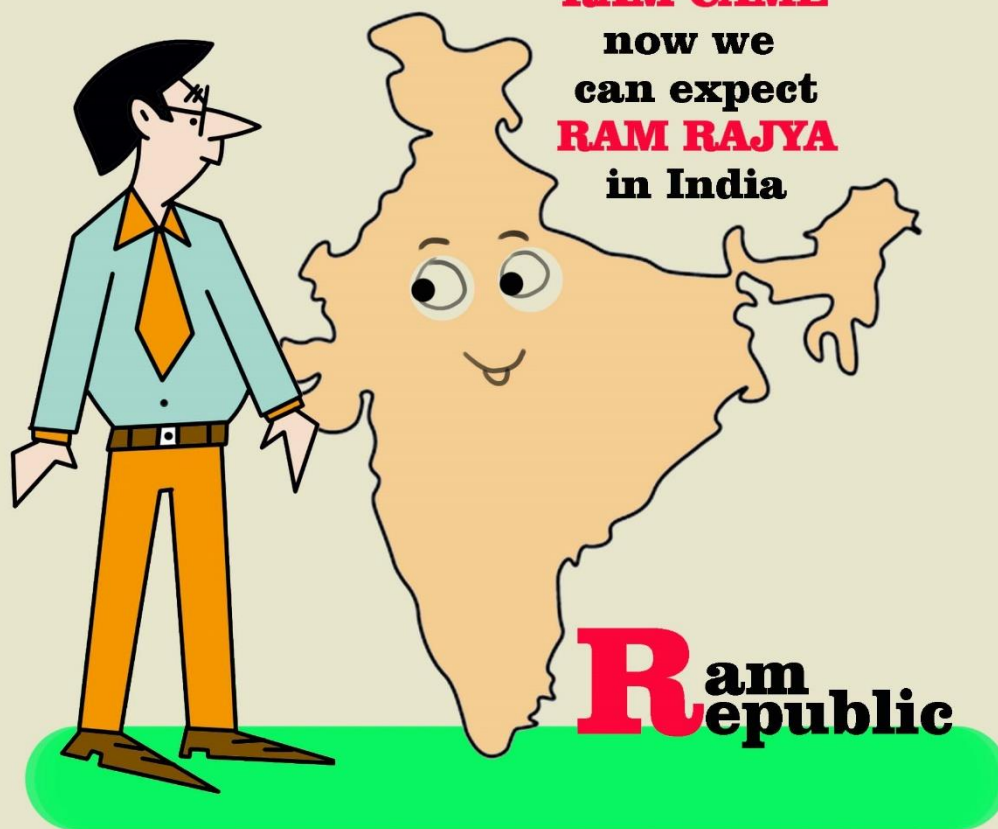
By Triambak Sharma



Four days before  
75th Republic Day,

**RAM CAME**

now we  
can expect  
**RAM RAJYA**  
in India



TRIAMBAK SHARMA

## Editorial

### A milestone in ISRO's Space Odyssey: Unveiling the Sun's secrets

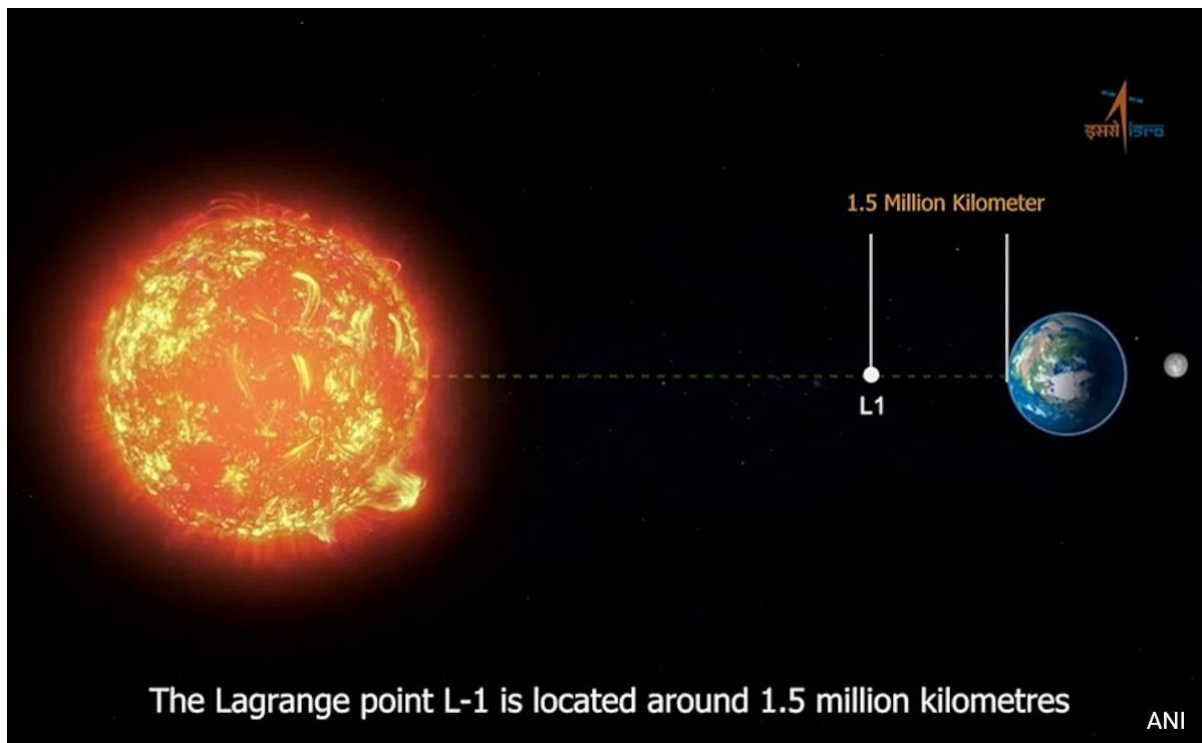


*By Ramesh Sundaram, Editor in Chief*

***(ISRO's Aditya L1 mission at L1 Lagrange point observes the sun, enhances space weather understanding globally.)***

Successful launch of Aditya L1 mission – On January 6, 2024, the halo-orbit insertion of the Aditya-L1 Solar observatory spacecraft was successfully accomplished. The Spacecraft was precisely placed in L1 Lagrange point. It marked a milestone in ISRO's space missions. The mission was launched on September 2, 2023 and aims to provide valuable insights into solar activities. The mission enjoys an uninterrupted view of the sun. This is because it is positioned at a distance of approximately 1.5 million km from the Earth, at the first Lagrange point (L1), a perfect spot between the Earth and the Sun, where there is almost zero gravitational pull either from the sun or the Earth. (At the L1 point in space gravitational forces from both the Sun and the Earth are counteracted by the centripetal force necessary to maintain an object's equilibrium)

#### The advantage of L1 Point



The L1 point is a unique location in space where gravitational forces from both the Sun and the Earth are counteracted by the centripetal force necessary to maintain an object's motion under the influence of gravity. This equilibrium at L1 will keep Aditya-L1 stable, allowing it to orbit effortlessly in the halo orbit without expending significant fuel.

## **The heat shield**

The Aditya-L1 spacecraft is also equipped with a heat shield, which will reflect most of the Sun's heat away from the spacecraft, keeping it cool enough to operate. This strategic positioning and protective shielding allow Aditya-L1 to monitor the Sun and carry out scientific studies continuously.

## **The Sun**

The Sun is the closest star to our earth and it is around the sun our planetary system revolves. The Sun may look like one simple mass of fire. But beneath its surface, there is a gamut of activity – that which imparts a great influence on our planet in many ways. The solar flares, a steady stream of charged particles, and coronal mass ejections can affect our satellite communications, bring to a standstill power grids, and even affect spacecraft and astronauts.

Hence Indian Space Agency ISRO launched the Aditya L1 Mission to unravel these mysteries and find a way to shield the Earth from harmful radiations like solar flares.

The best Celestial point to observe the sun: While the ground telescopes are affected by the Earth's rotation and atmosphere, Aditya L1 spacecraft enjoys a privileged and uninterrupted view of the Sun. Its viewing is not affected even during the eclipse.

## **Aditya L1's scientific pay-load**

The Aditya L1 spacecraft is loaded with seven instruments. Four instruments scan the Sun's fiery expanse by dissecting its emissions. The other three instruments analyse the environment by measuring the energetic particles, solar winds, and magnetic fields. In toto, these instruments provide a deep insight, crucial for the study and observation of solar activity. The mission seeks to forecast coronal mass ejections thus providing much-needed early warning for potentially disruptive space weather incidents. The life span of Aditya L1 mission is expected to be around 5 years.

## **Ambitious space programme**

The Aditya L1 mission is a cornerstone in India's ambitious space programme while symbolizing significant advancement in its astronomical research. It has not only positioned India as a major leader in solar physics but has also paved the way for future space missions dedicated to understanding in a better way other celestial bodies and their impact on our planet.

The expectations and aspirations: The Aditya L1 mission carries the hopes of a planet that is eager to know about the sun and to protect the planet in the face of unpredictable cosmic flare-ups from our nearest star.

## **Conclusion**

Aditya L1 mission marks a significant milestone in India's space research programme. The data collected from this endeavour will not only enhance our knowledge about the Sun and its activities but also contribute towards international scientists understanding of space weather and its effects on the Earth.

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## Cover Story

### From Dispute to Harmony - Resurgence of Ayodhya

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor



*(Ayodhya's historic Ram temple consecration, ending a 500-year dispute, signifies India's communal harmony and economic potential.)*



On January 22, 2024, the world witnessed the grand consecration ceremony and 'Pran Prathista' rituals of the Lord Sri Ram temple in Ayodhya, broadcasted through various television and digital channels. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was observing an 11-day Vritha, was present and offered the first prayers. The entire country commemorated this 'historic' event. The Ayodhya dispute, which had lasted nearly 500 years, ended on a happy note. Soon, Muslims will also have a grand mosque in Ayodhya, transforming this town into a symbol of communal harmony.

#### Brief History

Ayodhya is considered one of the six holy places in India for Hindus and is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram. Ayodhya is mentioned in the Valmiki Ramayana and various other Indian literatures of all languages, including Kamba Ramayanam. Lord Ram is an invisible spiritual force that resonates within the minds of Hindus worldwide, similar to how Christians and Muslims each hold their spiritual beliefs in their hearts. It is reported that Babar, the first Emperor of the Mughal regime, visited Ayodhya in 1528 and constructed a mosque,

demolishing the Ram temple that existed there. This temple is believed to be the birthplace, or Janmasthan, of Lord Ram by Hindus over centuries. This triggered the Hindus in that locality to restore the temple. It is reported that 76 wars took place between 1528 and 1850 when the British started ruling the country. It is also reported that during these wars, thousands of people died on both sides. Due to the continued struggle to recapture the Janmabhoomi temple, the mosque was not completed as per Islamic tradition. At the time when Babar demolished the temple to construct the mosque, one Pandit Shyamananda Maharaj was believed to be in charge of the temple, and he removed the Ram Lalla idol from the temple and kept it in a safer place. During this period, Namaz was not held regularly in the mosque. On the other hand, during Akbar's period, Hindus were allowed to use a portion of the area for their Bhajan.



### Struggle during the British Period

In 1858, one year after the First War of Independence, Mahant Baba Ram Charan Das, a highly respected Hindu Sadhu, and Maulvi Amir Ali, another highly respected Muslim scholar, discussed and decided to end the war between Muslims and Hindus and bring communal harmony. They signed an agreement that since the mosque was not regularly used by the Muslims, both communities decided to end their fight and permit Hindus to use this site for their worship. In all the ancient records and the revenue records of the British period, this site was mentioned as 'Janmasthan'. Later it was known as 'Janmasthan - Babi Masjid'. Since Ram Janamasthan is a sacred place for Hindus, in 1858 both communities came forward to amicably settle the issue.

Unfortunately, the British Government was not interested in allowing them to settle the issue and wanted the 'divide and rule' policy by making both communities fight against each other. The British Government arrested Mahant Ram Charan Das and Maulvi Amir Ali under false pretexts and hanged them on a tamarind tree. The tree became a symbol of communal harmony, and both communities made this tree a monument and wanted to erect statues for their revered leaders. The British Government removed the tree. Even some of the civil suits filed in the Faizabad court at that time were not taken up.

### Post-Independence Era

In 1949, suddenly a Ram Lalla idol was placed inside the mosque. This created a significant law and order problem in the city between Hindus and Muslims. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru advised Chief Minister GB Pant to remove the idol from the place. However, District Magistrate KK Nair refused to obey the orders. KK Nair was suspended for his refusal to obey orders. Despite this, the idol remained in the mosque, and the site became a point of contention between Hindus and Muslims. The government declared the area as disputed and locked the gates, allowing neither Hindus nor Muslims to enter. Only the priests were allowed to perform rituals.



Shah Bano

### Turning Points

In 1985, a Constitution bench of five judges ruled in the 'Shah Bano' case that Muslim women were entitled to maintenance from their husbands after divorce under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Although the Rajiv Gandhi Government initially welcomed the judgment in Parliament, it later diluted the judgment by limiting its maintenance through an

Act under pressure from various Muslim leaders. This action was criticized as yielding to fundamentalists by amending the CrPC, a secular law, to favour religion, while the Constitution was in favour of the Uniform Civil Code.

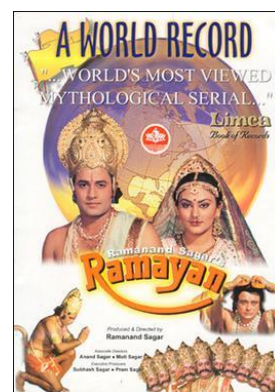


Umesh Chandra Pandey

Originally, the Ayodhya Ram Mandir movement was locally managed and confined to that district. However, after the Shah Bano case, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu organization, took up this issue. In January 1986, Umesh Chandra Pandey, a lawyer and journalist, filed a plea before the District Magistrate to unlock the Janmasthan – Babri Masjid site for worship. The site had been under lock since 1949. Under pressure from Hindu leaders, as he had already yielded to Muslim leaders, Rajiv Gandhi unlocked the site. The Janmasthan site was unlocked and opened to the public on February 1, 1986, through a Court order.

Meanwhile, the VHP launched a nationwide campaign in favour of building a large Ram temple on the same site. "Vaheem Banayenge" was the main slogan.

In 1987, a Ramayana serial was telecast every Sunday morning on Doordarshan. To date, that serial holds a record for the largest viewership. Every week, 650 million people used to watch that serial. At 9 am every Sunday, the whole country would come to a standstill, like our lockdown days. In many places, when Rama's character appeared on the screen, people used to perform 'Mangala Aarthi' and offer fruits and flowers. Readers can imagine the frenzy and check with the elders in the family on how that serial had an impact on the whole country.



The Ramayana serial also helped the VHP to create awareness about the Ram temple. Meanwhile, many suits were filed in the courts for restoring the site.

### Rajiv Gandhi permits Shilanya



1989 Shilanya

The VHP wanted to conduct a 'Shilanya' (the foundation ceremony) for the new Rama Temple. The Rajiv Gandhi Government permitted the Shilanya in 1989 to be performed in the adjoining site of the disputed area. Rajiv Gandhi deputed Buta Singh, then Home Minister, to participate in the Shilanya. Rajiv Gandhi started his Parliament election campaign from Ayodhya in 1989, promising 'Ram Rajya'. Seeing the influence of Ram among the electorate, all the political parties wanted to take advantage. The BJP passed a resolution in its National Executive Meeting to involve itself in the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute.

During the 1989 elections, Rajiv Gandhi started appeasing both minorities and Hindus simultaneously without clarity. The Congress, which had more than 400 MPs in the 8th Lok Sabha, came down to 197 seats in the 1989 elections. The BJP improved its tally from 2 seats in the 8th Lok Sabha to 85 seats in the 9th Lok Sabha. The Ram temple issue was also one of the major vote catchers for the BJP.

## Advani's Rath Yatra and Demolition of Babri Mosque



In 1989, VP Singh formed the Government with the support of the BJP and the left parties. In 1991, then BJP President LK Advani started his Rath Yatra from the Somnath temple to Ayodhya to create awareness about the Ram temple at the disputed site. The Rath Yatra was stopped by Lalu Prasad Yadav, the then Chief Minister of Bihar, when it entered the State, and Advani was arrested. Narendra Modi, the present Prime Minister, was the coordinator of that Yatra. Earlier, the VP Singh

Government introduced Mandal Commission reservations for backward classes. A section of the people opposed this decision, which led to clashes. Those days were turbulent days with Mandal and Masjid clashes. Advani's arrest provoked more Hindus to enter Ayodhya in large numbers. Around 2 lakh people were reported to have entered Ayodhya. Advani's arrest led to the withdrawal of support by the BJP to the VP Singh Government.

### The Legal Battle

The legal battle for the site began in earnest in 1950 when Gopal Singh Visharad filed a suit in the Faizabad court seeking permission for Hindus to offer prayers at the site. Over the years, several other suits were filed by different parties, both Hindu and Muslim, staking claim over the site. The legal battle continued for decades, with the Allahabad High Court finally pronouncing its verdict in 2010. The court ruled that the site should be divided into three parts, with one-third going to the Sunni Waqf Board, one-third to the Nirmohi Akhara, and one-third to the party representing 'Ram Lalla'

### Supreme Court Verdict

None of the parties accepted the verdict, and all appealed to the Supreme Court of India. The Constitution bench, consisting of five judges chaired by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, including a Muslim judge, heard the case in detail. In 2019, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the mosque was built after destroying a Hindu temple, relying on the ASI survey and other evidence presented by the Hindu group. The Court also observed that the Muslim side did not prove that regular Namaz was held in the Babri Mosque. However, they condemned the demolition of the Masjid by the Hindu group. Finally, the Court ordered that the disputed site be handed over to Ram Lalla, the deity. They instructed the Indian Government to create a Public Trust and hand over the site to them for the construction of the Ram temple. Simultaneously, they also ordered the Government to allot 5 acres to Muslim groups for the construction of a Mosque.

The Indian Government created a Trust and handed over the site. They also allotted 5 acres to the Sunni Waqf Board.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone in August 2020, and the Pran Prathishta was conducted on January 22, 2024, in the presence of the Prime Minister.

It is also reported that a grand mosque would be constructed shortly and inaugurated.

### Political and Economic Implications

Before the 1980s, the Ram Temple movement was confined only to Ayodhya and the neighbouring districts. After the VHP and BJP took over this issue in the 1980s, it became a



national movement. Ram is an invisible spiritual force behind the entire country. In North India, people used to greet 'Ram Ram', instead of 'Good morning'. In the name of 'secularism', many political parties started ridiculing the movement and rejected the ASI findings. At one stage, during Dr Manmohan Singh's regime, the Government submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court saying that 'Ram was an imaginary character', against the strong belief of Hindus. In the process, they ended up displeasing the majority of the country and embarrassed even the minorities. The Supreme Court based its verdict relying on the evidence produced by ASI and on the 'faith' that the people had that the site was the Janmasthan of Lord Ram. The stand of the Congress to appease Muslims and Hindus alternatively did not go well with the sentiments of the people. They got reduced from 400 plus seats to less than 50 in Lok Sabha. Even now, during Pran Prathishta, the Congress boycotted the consecration ceremony of Ram Mandir, accusing the BJP was politicizing the Ram temple. Rajiv Gandhi first started his campaign from Ayodhya in 1989 promising 'Ram Rajya'. In a way, all the parties were politicizing this issue either in favour or against the Ram temple to suit their convenience. Many of the Congress leaders did not like this boycott decision, as they would be facing the public for elections soon. The Ram Mandir issue was also one of the main factors for the BJP's growth from 2 seats in the 8th Lok Sabha to 303 seats in the 17th Lok Sabha.

Various economic reports indicate that Ayodhya would attract nearly 10 crore people every year as tourists. When the Mosque gets inaugurated, the numbers will grow. According to K T Jagannathan, a Senior Economics Journalist, this would boost the economy of the district and UP very well, benefiting all the communities. According to Professor K Prabhakar, Former Vice Chancellor and senior economics professor, the temple economy in India is more than 3 lakh crores in the GDP. Ayodhya is likely to generate immediately more than 25,000 employment opportunities in different segments. He also added that Ayodhya and UP would attract more than 300 billion dollars in investment.

### **Lessons to be Learnt**

The British regime believed in a 'divide and rule' policy to stabilize their rule. Unfortunately, even after Independence, many of the political parties adopt the same 'divide and rule' policy in the name of protecting secularism and disrespecting the invisible sentiments of the people across the nation. The Indian Constitution ensures that all citizens are treated equally. Instead of triggering a 'divide' through false narratives, the political parties in India should focus on unity and communal harmony with the economic development agenda. Ridiculing and hurting the sentiments of the popular faith of the people will be always counterproductive. It is to be remembered that the people who opposed the Ram temple, created more awareness among the silent majority, than the people who supported it. They should keep in mind that our traditional mantra "sarve janaha sukino bhavanthu" ("May all beings be happy") is always the tagline.

### **Conclusion**

The Ayodhya dispute, which had been a source of contention for centuries, finally found its resolution. The peaceful resolution of the dispute and the subsequent construction of the Ram temple and the proposed mosque, stand as a testament to India's secular fabric and the spirit of mutual respect and harmony that characterizes its diverse society. As we move forward, it is hoped that Ayodhya will continue to symbolize unity in diversity, serving as a beacon of communal harmony for the rest of the country.

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## Time Capsule Chronicles: Revisiting PreSense - 15 Years Ago – Jan 2009 Capturing Cartoons' Communicative Charm

*Reviewed by Sakthi Prasanna, Consulting Editor*



The January 2009 edition of eMagazine PreSense focuses on the theme of "Action 2020 - UnConference" and youth empowerment in India. Guest edited by Poornima Premchandran, this edition highlights the Action 2020 UnConference held in Chennai in January 2009. The event brought together over 33 youth organizations and 100 young professionals and students to discuss strategies for contributing to India's development.

In her guest editorial, Poornima argues that youth are often underestimated as irresponsible, but events like Action 2020 demonstrate their commitment to nation-building. She calls for greater empowerment and synergies between youth creativity and senior expertise. The PR-e-FACE column also discusses the energy, lack of inhibitions, and desire to prove themselves that characterizes today's youth in India.

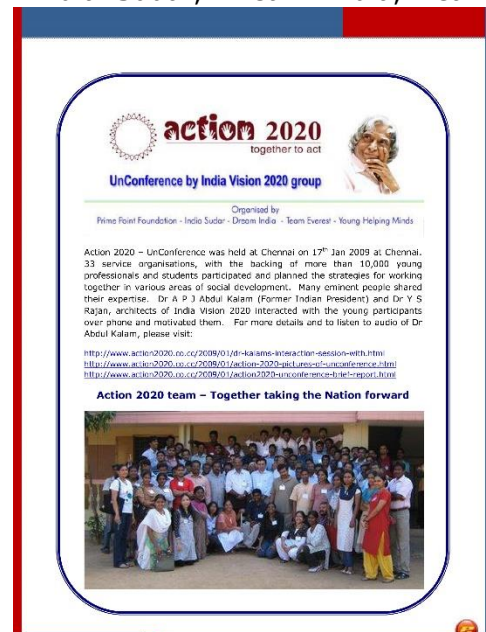
The edition includes brief profiles on four of the core organizing teams - India Sudar, Dream India, Team

Everest, and Young Helping Minds. It summarizes some of the key stats, focus areas, and projects completed by these groups. There is also a full-page list of the 33 participating organizations in Action 2020.

Other highlights include photo glimpses from the UnConference event, a report on the discussions and interactions with special guests like Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, global round-up columns from communicators in Indonesia and the US, health tips, and a humorous column on understanding girlfriends.

Overall, this edition provides inspiring examples of Indian youth social engagement and leadership. With its focus on youth empowerment, coverage of Action 2020, and practical columns, it is an interesting read for those interested in India's development.

<https://www.prpoint.com/ezine/presense0109.pdf>



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## Susan's Musings

### Embracing Tradition: The Science and Culture of Eating with the Hand



By Susan Koshy, Former Editor in Chief, PreSense

"I heard some Indian people eat with their hands *STILL?*" This question was posed by Oprah Winfrey, a popular American TV hostess, to her Indian hosts with whom she was dining, in 2012. Her remark drew criticism for the implied primitiveness of the habit when compared to the Western cutlery-dominated dining.

Yet, eating with the hand blends scientific wisdom, sensory connection, and cultural heritage.

#### Scientific Wisdom



According to Ayurvedic practice, the five fingers symbolise the five elements of fire, air, space, earth and water. Eating with the hand stimulates these five senses, stimulating digestion. Besides, when we touch our food with our fingers, signals are sent to the brain that we are ready to eat. This triggers our digestive organs to prepare for the process, facilitating better digestion and nutrient absorption.

#### Sensory Connection

Our hands have an intricate network of touch receptors. When we use our hand to eat, we tactilely experience the food texture, temperature and consistency. This can create a sense of connection with the food, the people who prepared it, and the people who share it, and foster a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the food that nourishes.



#### Cultural Heritage

Eating with the hand is a common traditional practice across many cultures beyond India and the Indian Sub-Continent, like parts of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Central America. Different cultures have their etiquette when eating with the hand. In India, especially towards South India, the right hand alone is used. The thumb and index fingers are used for tearing off a piece of bread or roti while all the fingers are used to mix rice with curry. In North India, the left hand is used to hold the bread or roti while the right tears it off to dunk in the curry.

According to Chef and Restaurateur, Kunal Kapur, "Food is the only art that requires all the senses. From the sound of cooking to its aroma, touch and feel, visual appeal and taste, food requires all the senses, and touch is important as it allows you to feel what you are about to put in your mouth". So, let us embrace the hand-to-mouth relationship with our food that engages our senses, connects us to our heritage and nourishes our body and our soul.

## Exclusive

### Racing Tracks to Boardrooms: Divya's Unstoppable Inspiring Drive



In an exclusive conversation with Priyadarshni Rahul, Editor of PreSense, Divya Miglani, a car racer, rally driver, and advocate for women's rights, shares her journey into race car driving, citing her love for speed and the encouragement of her father. She emphasizes the increasing presence of women in the sport, highlighting belief system challenges. Miglani discusses the growth of women drivers in regular cars, advocating for a supportive ecosystem. In the media industry for two decades, she envisions continuing as a Media and Revenue Strategist. She is instrumental in inspiring billions of human minds through the media content in Newspapers, Television and now OTT platforms. As a champion of women's rights, Miglani addresses the progress and challenges in increasing women's representation on corporate boards, urging a shift toward recognizing women leaders beyond legal obligations. Divya Miglani is a TEDX speaker and has won several national awards as a Car Racer. Excerpts:

**Q: *What made you become a race car driver? Is there any specific incident that motivated you? Who is your source of inspiration in this adventurous sport?***

A: Speed excites me. I love zipping cars. I also grew up watching my two elder brothers drive. I so enjoyed sitting with them when they drove fast but nobody ever thought I would take my love for speed to this extent of becoming a race car driver. When I started driving myself I felt very good. The whole manoeuvring of the car, speeding up on the flat road, the judgment of the car in the traffic or on the turns, reversing it, parking it, all this was like a real-time videogame for me - it was never just a transport. I found out about motorsports in India. That was it. I trained myself, participated in championships, and started getting



corporate sponsorships, getting recognition. I thoroughly enjoy it. So I would say my everyday experience with the car itself inspires me in this adventurous sport.

**Q: How many women are in this race car driving in India and the world over? What are the challenges that a woman faces in this area?**

A: First of all this is a gender neutral sport. Men and Women drive on the same grid. Women are doing good and are increasing in numbers. It's the belief system that challenges women the most. First believing in themselves; second others believing them. It's changing now as women have started getting more and more involved and have prioritised their interests over just the families' needs. So they take out more practice time on the race track, budget their funds, plan their holidays, get support from their partner and family. When everyone around them sees them as consistent, dedicated, and performing then others start believing in them too. All other challenges become part of the game then.



**Q: Why women are not showing interest in driving normal cars, not to speak of race car driving?**

A: I used to drive an SUV in 2006, a Honda CRV. Back then not many women drove SUVs. But now am so thrilled to see so many women confidently driving more and more SUVs and other cars. But still, this number can be improved if we have a better ecosystem in the country like women mechanics, better road safety, etc. This will encourage women to take their car to the workshop themselves and get more aware of their subject - that is their car. We can make the environment more comfortable and safer. And honestly, the number I want to see increased is of women taxi drivers. How about that? Would you like to take a cab ride with a women driver?



**Q: You have also served the media industry. What prompted you to join the media industry? Where do you see yourself in the media domain?**

A: I have always liked the idea of connecting with people. Media gave me that opportunity. I worked with TOI in the internet space when people were just getting to understand the internet in 2005. We launched KBC with Shah Rukh Khan in Star TV, created branded content for the Neo sports channel in the days when LIVE sports could only get viewership, Raised corporate funds from Swacch Bharat Abhiyan, and created Cultivating Hope campaign on farmers' suicides on NDTV, growing emerging sports on Discovery Sports. I have been working in the media industry for two decades now. I realised how media is so powerful in influencing people's lives. I am currently a Media and Revenue Strategist. I see myself continuing in this industry and facilitating more positive, inspiring, entertaining and intriguing content for the viewers on OTT and Television Broadcasting and other media platforms

**Q: You are a champion of women's rights. You have been talking about the representation of women in corporate boards. What is the present status in India? Why Corporates do not encourage professional women in Boards? I am not speaking of women, the relatives of the owners, in the Board.**



A: Corporates actually do encourage women on boards as they are obliged to do so by government dictates after the Companies Act 2013. The numbers have increased. This mandate for Indian Companies to have at least one woman director on board has pushed the numbers. So how has it changed over these 11 years? Have we identified the resource pool from where to get these suitable women directors? Have we started getting more confidence in women directors? Are we promoting women to board-level positions on merit or purely because of a gender equality agenda? Or is it a mix of both? All am saying is maybe we all are missing something here. Somehow in India, it's still male-driven board rooms. Can we have a space where women leaders are approached, welcomed and respected in corporate India? Let's all pay more attention here and look at women not just as a legal obligation but rather look at women as corporate leaders who can enhance and empower the board. And to all my women tribe let's just ask for bigger roles. Now is the time.

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## Freedom Fighters of India

### U Kiang Nangbah



By C. Badri, Consulting Editor

***(U Kiang Nangbah's 1862 revolt against British oppression, prophesying India's freedom, symbolizes unsung heroes' crucial role in independence. )***

***"Brothers and Sisters, please look carefully on my face when I die on the gallows. If my face turns towards the east, my country will be free from foreign yoke in the next 100 years and if it turns west, it will be a bondage for good."***

These are the last words of U Kiang Nangbah while he was escorted to the gallows for staging a revolt against the British on the evening of December 30, 1862.

U Kiang Nangbah was born in 1835 to Ka Rimai Nangbah in Tpeppale, Jowai - his father's name and date of birth are not known as it was not properly documented. Jowai was the headquarters of the West Jaintia Hills district in the State of Meghalaya. It is home to the Pnar, a sub-tribe of the Khasi people. U Kiang Nangbah emerged as a pivotal figure in the resistance against the British annexation of the Jaintia Kingdom in 1835. He did not get any formal education. He was brought up by his mother as a single child. Being a single child, he was influenced by his mother's patriotism and love for the country. She often explained the dangers of the British occupation and that they would make them slaves. This had a long-lasting effect on U Kiang Nangbah. Despite lacking royal lineage, U Kiang Nangbah, a common farmer from the Sookpoh clan, was deeply disturbed by British highhandedness. He was greatly inspired by the patriotism and the daring life story of his maternal uncle U Ksan Sajar Nangbah who revolted against the British at Chanmyrsiang.



Ram Singh was ruling the Khasi and Jaintia tribes and kingdoms. Raja Rajendra Singh, who succeeded his uncle Ram Singh, faced a significant challenge when the British demanded he sign a treaty agreeing to pay a tribute of Rs.10,000/-. Refusing to comply with what he considered an unreasonable demand, Rajendra Singh found himself in a precarious situation. In March 1835, Captain Lister issued a sudden proclamation, resulting in the annexation of the Jaintia Hills territory by the British. This annexation meant that all cultivatable land came under British control, leaving only the less profitable hilly region for Rajendra Singh. Realizing the financial impracticality of this arrangement, the king voluntarily surrendered the hills to the British. In the aftermath, Rajendra Singh chose to relocate to Sylhet (presently in Bangladesh), where he received a monthly pension of Rs.500/- from the British authorities.

The British during 1860 levied house tax on the people living in Jaintia. This was a new rule imposed by the British and the people were not accustomed to paying tax on their houses

which they owned. They were offering only a goat and a small quantity of rice annually to their king and nothing more. The imposition of house tax came as a rude shock to them. Initially, the British adopted a non-interference policy, but tensions rose when they imposed taxes and interfered with customs and religious practices. U Kiang Nangbah vehemently opposed these actions, notably the House Tax in 1860 in Jaintia Hills. A police station was established in Jwai in 1855 to check on the Jaintia people. It was established near the cremation ground of the Dhakar clan which was resented as they felt offended by the action of the British. Further, the establishment of a missionary school aggravated the feelings of the Jaintia Hill people. Thus, the anti-British movement started when the British tried to impose additional taxes and intruded into religious activities and their customs. However, the British undeterred imposed additional taxes and asserted their authority, exacerbating the discontent among the Jaintia people.

The catalyst for resistance was the confiscation and burning of weapons during the traditional dance at Yalong, further demonstrating British religious intolerance and indulgence. This incident fueled a mass movement, culminating in a Dorbar of the twelve Dalois, where U Kiang Nangbah emerged as a unanimous leader. Under U Kiang Nangbah's leadership, barricades were erected, weapons were manufactured, and attacks were launched on British establishments. The rebellion spread across Jaintia Hills, prompting the British to deploy more regiments for a full-scale military operation. Despite falling ill, U Kiang Nangbah continued to resist until his capture on December 27, 1862, due to a betrayal by U Long Sutnga. He faced a mock trial and was swiftly sentenced to death, highlighting the British resolve to crush resistance.

As U Kiang Nangbah faced the gallows on December 30, 1862, he uttered a prophetic statement. He declared that if his face turned east upon his death, the country would be free from foreign yoke in the next 100 years; if west, it would remain in bondage. U Kiang Nangbah's execution did not deter the eventual independence of India within a century. His struggle mirrored that of indigenous peoples worldwide against the imposition of foreign values.

The anti-British revolutionary spirit that permeated through many of our freedom fighters played a pivotal role in the eventual attainment of our country's independence. Their bold and open resistance against British rule left an indelible mark on the history of our nation. Despite their significant contributions, the stories of these unsung heroes often remain in the shadows, and we must acknowledge and celebrate their heroic deeds. Regrettably, the narratives of these brave individuals have not received the attention they deserve, and there exists a gap in our collective understanding of the sacrifices and struggles endured by these freedom fighters. To truly honour our history and the quest for independence, it is incumbent upon us to actively seek out and disseminate these lesser-known stories.

By bringing these tales to light, we not only pay homage to the courage and determination of those who fought for our freedom but also ensure that future generations are aware of the diverse and inspiring narratives that constitute our national history. Failing to recognize and appreciate the contributions of these unsung heroes would be a disservice to their memory and a missed opportunity to instil a profound sense of pride and gratitude in the hearts of all citizens.

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