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EDITOR NOTE

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The Rationale for Soft Power

Dear Readers,

The term soft power was coined by Joseph Nye in his book '*Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*,' where he posited that cultural values, political philosophies and social mores could be used to gain influence in International Relations. While the coinage of the term 'Soft Power' is new, the use of such power, albeit without a conscious application has had tremendous impact across the world over millennia. An example is the spread of Indic thought in Southeast Asia as also the spread of Buddhism across Asia.

In more recent times, it was a concert held at the Madison Square on 1st August 1970, by India's sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar and the former Beatles lead guitarist George Harrison, which raised awareness of the world to the genocide taking place in East Pakistan. The name given to the benefit concert was "The Concert for Bangladesh," and included a host of super stars such as Ringo Starr, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Billy Preston, Leon Russell and the band Badfinger. For the first time, the concert raised awareness amongst the population of the genocide being committed against the Bengali people and shaped public opinion against the policies of their government, and demonstrated the strength of soft power.

Today, soft power as a concept is a constant fixture in any discussion on international relations. The spread of Yoga has given the world an awareness of India's spiritual and cultural past, as has the spread of Indian music, dance forms and cinematic traditions given an understanding of India's cultural diversity and rich heritage. Soft power is today an important component of foreign policy and constitutes within its ambit activities as diverse as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), United Nations peace keeping missions, and the like, in which India has played an important role over the past few decades. Whilst hard power will still be the most effective instrument of implementing state policy, the utilisation of soft power in conjunction with hard power can ensure the fructification of national objectives in a shorter time frame and with greater prospects of success.



Soft Power: An Important Aspect of Foreign Policy

M. Venkaiah Naidu*



Soft power has been defined as the ability of nations to shape the preferences and influence the behaviour of other nations through appeal and attraction as opposed to coercion. It consists of three major categories - a nation's culture, its political values and its foreign policy. These categories affect the image and perception of the country with respect to the wider international community.

Soft Power is a term that entered foreign policy lexicon in the 1990s when Joseph Nye, an American scholar, referred to it as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment”. It includes the ability to affect others through persuasion, agenda framing

and positive attraction using culture, values, inherent knowledge, spirituality, wisdom and foreign policy. In other words, soft power has the ability to affect the behaviour of others by influencing their preferences through persuasion.

It represents one of the newest frameworks through which India can understand and leverage its role in the international order. In this backdrop, it is timely and appropriate to focus on India's rise as a soft power nation and also engage in discussions on the need for an India-centric discourse on soft power; how to maximise and deploy soft power assets, particularly to furthering national, regional and global interests.

India has, from time immemorial, been one

**This article is a summary of the address delivered by Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice President of India on 17th December 2018 at the Conference on Soft Power at New Delhi organised by India Foundation.*

of the foremost cultural forces in the world. It was known as 'Vishwaguru' as India provided cultural, spiritual and intellectual leadership. Let me quote what some of the eminent personalities from the West had said about India. "India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only," said well-known American writer Mark Twain. Scientist Albert Einstein had said, "We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made." Similarly, Max Mueller, German scholar remarked, "If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions, I should point to India."

India has spread its knowledge and culture to all corners of the world. In fact, knowledge-seekers from other countries used to come to well-known Indian Universities like Takshashila and Nalanda. History tells us that India's educational strength was its soft power in those days. In 1893, Swami Vivekananda attended the Parliament of the World's Religions, where he was able to persuade and attract, numerous people from all over the world through his charisma and his spiritual and cultural teachings based on timeless and universal Indian values.

Today, one need only to look at the spread of Hinduism - a way of life which evolved over thousands of years of our civilization - and Buddhism across the world, or the popularity of Indian cuisine and cinema. It is therefore clear that India has had an undeniable impact in shaping the

minds of people across the world through appeal rather than force. And now, as India continues its rise in the international order, it is important that we recognize the cultural impact that the nation has had on the world, and leverage it in a way that is best for the nation.

From Yoga to spirituality to Bollywood; Bharatnatyam to Buddhism; cuisine to tourism, India has immense potential to use its Soft Power for expanding its global outreach. As has been stated earlier, Soft Power is non-coercive. It has the power to create an attraction and influence opinions in a rather unobtrusive manner. India's Soft Power should be used to combat the biggest menace humanity is facing in the present times - terrorism. While the governments normally have their own limitations, the biggest advantage of Soft Power is its ability to cut across all barriers and reach out to every segment.

Ours is one of the oldest civilizations with a rich culture and heritage. With the world becoming a global village and the social media further shrinking the barriers, the all-pervading presence of the internet should be used to project India's Soft Power. As a matter of fact, India must use its moral and cultural strength to influence public opinion to establish a truly peaceful, just and more equitable world order. Public opinion world over should be built to isolate nations which shelter terrorists as terrorism is the enemy of mankind.

One of the major reasons for India's respect all over the world is the non-violent manner in which we fought the colonial rule and attained independence. A country may obtain its desired outcomes in world politics in multiple ways, including through war or arm-twisting. But India never had ambitions of hegemony at any time and always believed in a peaceful co-existence with

other nations in an equitable world order. India always believed in using soft power for the welfare and betterment of the entire humanity. That's what is expounded in this Shanti mantra: "*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niramaya, Sarve Bhadrani Paschyantu, Maa-kaschith dukha baagh bhavet*", which means, let everybody be happy, let everybody be disease-free, let everyone see only the good things, may no one be subjected to miseries.

Although, it is important for countries to set agenda in world politics by attracting others through soft power, we should always remember what the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi had said, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

I am told that today, soft power forms an important aspect of foreign policy with many countries, including China, Japan and the US, including it as a part of their national policies. In India, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), an arm of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), delineates India's soft power resources and its articulations abroad.

Soft power is not restricted to culture alone. It can include any element of a country that is (or seems) attractive to other people, communities or countries. Below are some prominent examples of soft power:

1. **Cuisine** – the popularity of dosa and butter chicken masala is an example of India's soft power, while McDonald's is America's soft power.

2. **Democracy** - The parliamentary democratic

system of India definitely appeals to many people across the globe. The smooth manner in which power gets transferred from one party to another either at the national level or in various States is India's USP.

3. **Films** – I have already mentioned about Bollywood. Many of our actors like the legendary Amitabh Bachchan, Rajnikanth and Priyanka Chopra are popular in several countries. One of the best examples is the extreme popularity of 'Awara Hoon' song in Russia. The most recent example is that of 'Baahubali'.

4. **Sports** - India's Sachin Tendulkar, M S Dhoni, Virat Kohli and Viswanathan Anand and many other sports stars are well known in many countries.

5. **People** – Prominent Indian CEOs like Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai.

6. **Music and dance** - Different genres of Indian music and various dance forms, including Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, have legions of followers across the globe.

7. **Diaspora** - The presence of Indian diaspora can be effectively leveraged through soft power to project India's viewpoint and increase the outreach.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, General V K Singh, while outlining India's soft power strategy to a question in the Lok Sabha in 2017, included India's cultural traditions, activities such as Festivals of India conducted abroad, educational scholarships to foreigners, "technical assistance and capacity building inputs to partner countries" and extending of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to countries and communities in need.



Soft Power: Building Confluence of Civilisations

Vinay Sahasrabuddhe*



The concept of 'soft power' formally emerged and took concrete shape only after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In a way, it could largely be described as a post-Cold War phenomenon, which is now an established aspect of the contemporary discourse on international relations. The very timing of the formal emergence of the term 'soft power,' underscores the fact that it was the stark realisation of the limitations of hard power, that gave impetus to new ways of thinking on what could be done to shape perceptions in a non-coercive manner.

Soft power is essentially about mind space and

not geographical territory. Those who pursue hard power indulge in obvious protectionism, while advocates of soft power reject the notion of boundary walls, making the world of soft power a borderless glow. Protagonist of hard power always bank upon military might, which in turn leads to friction and fragmentation. On the contrary, soft power helps withering away of borders. Soft power is a uniting factor, whereas hard power has an element of disintegration inherent to it. However, now that the impact of soft power is becoming more and more telling, greater and in-depth analysis of the changing definition of soft

**This article is a summary of the address delivered by Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) on 17th December 2018 at the inaugural session of the Conference on Soft Power at New Delhi, organised by India Foundation.*

power and its expanses is also increasing, and the parameters within which soft power issues will have to be handled has become extremely important. Unless these issues are deliberated upon and some consensus is evolved, we may see a clash of civilisations rather than a confluence of civilisations.

Soft power, by definition, abhors any kind of coercion and therefore hegemony of a thought order. Monopolistic approach in any manner is unsustainable to any idea of a genuine soft power. To put it in terminologies that we understand, soft power is like *Karishma* - not that of a person, but of a country, community, or culture. And when it comes to *Karishma*, there is an essential element of magic and inexplicable pull of factors, a kind of attraction out of sheer curiosity which is inherent to it. It is understandable therefore, that cultures and civilisations known for colourfulness, liveliness, verve and warmth easily transform themselves into what, perhaps in the future, may be described as 'super soft powers' or 'soft super powers'. And when it comes to colours, principles of harmony need a special emphasis.

To ensure this essential harmony, what is required is to bring all soft power agencies and

apparatus on one platform and evolve some dos and don'ts in the concept of soft power enhancement by different countries. If we converge the soft power enhancement mechanisms into equipment of confluence of cultures and civilisations, every country would be able to create an understanding about its own culture world over, and such understanding would later pave the way for a strong mutuality, leading to a frictionless world of peace, harmony and co-existence.

Most of the problems that the global society is facing today have emerged from lack of proper understanding, leading to wanton misinterpretations of belief systems and cultures and these very factors have given a fillip to tendencies unfortunately of terrorism and violence. It is therefore, incumbent upon all of us to work for universal soft power regime, with equality of respect, equality of opportunities, and equality of security being provided to all. There is a need for spiritual and cultural democracy as the common minimum premise. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) is working in this direction so as to ensure that the generation next gets a brighter future with peace, freedom and prosperity, and of course, freedom from terror and violence.



India and Soft Power

Joseph S. Nye, Jr.*

The recent rapid growth of the economy has positioned India more seriously than ever as a major power in world politics, and it is often paired with China as part of the vibrant rise of Asia. But how should India understand and invest in its growing power?

Traditionally, power in world politics was seen in terms of military power. The side with the larger army was likely to win. But even in the past, such a view underestimated the non-tangible aspects of power. And that is more important than ever in the information age. While military power remains important, it does not produce power on the Internet or in dealing with climate change or financial instability. Judging power is more complex than it first appears.

Simply put, power is the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want, and there are basically three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payments (carrots) and attraction (soft power). If you are able to attract others, you can economize on the sticks and carrots. Of course, drinking coke or watching a Bollywood film does not automatically convey power for the United States or India. Whether the possession of soft power resources actually produces favorable outcomes depends upon the context. This is not unique to soft power. It is true of hard power as well. Having a larger tank army may produce military victory if a battle is fought in the desert, but not if it is fought in a swamp.

The soft power of a country rests primarily

on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority). Soft power depends upon attraction, and this can vary among countries, groups and generations. For example, America's culture produces soft power among some young people, but not others. Similarly, Indian films produce attraction among some viewers more than others.

Economic resources can produce both hard and soft power behavior. A vibrant economy like that of China or India produces a capacity for hard coercion or payments, but a successful economy is also an important source of soft attraction. Sometimes in today's world, it is difficult to distinguish what part of an economic relationship is comprised of hard and soft power. For example, China's "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) produces both, but the harsher the terms of loans, employment and control in a country, the less soft power the BRI produces in that country.

Because soft power has appeared as an alternative to raw power politics, it is often embraced by ethically-minded scholars and policymakers. But like any form of power, it can be wielded for good or bad purposes. Hitler, Stalin, Mao and bin Laden all possessed a great deal of soft power in the eyes of their acolytes, but that did not make it good. It is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms. We often judge

**Prof. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. is a professor emeritus at Harvard University, a former assistant secretary of defense, and author of 'Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics'.*

ethics on the three dimensions of motives, means and consequences. Fortunately, while soft power can be used with bad intentions and wreak horrible consequences, it does differ in terms of means because it depends upon the attraction of the subject. Contrast the consequences of Gandhi's choice of soft power with Yasser Arafat's choice of the gun. Gandhi was able to attract moderate majorities in Britain to favor India's independence, and the consequences were impressive both in effectiveness and in ethical terms. He left an important legacy for India's soft power. In contrast, Arafat's strategy of hard power, particularly in the second intifada, undercut Israeli moderates and drove politics into the arms of the hard right. The unfortunate consequences persist to this day.

Military force remains crucial in world politics for deterrence and defense. But military resources can also contribute to soft power. A well run military can be a source of attraction, and military to military cooperation and training programs, for example, can establish transnational networks that enhance a country's soft power. The skills and professionalism of its military is an important source of both hard and soft power for India. The impressive cooperation of the Indian and American militaries in providing humanitarian relief after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 enhanced the soft power of both countries. Such exercises continue.

On the other hand, misuse of military resources can undercut soft power. The Soviet Union's resistance to Hitler produced a great deal of soft power for it in the years after World War II, but the Soviets destroyed it by the brutal way it used its hard power against Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968. The US

similarly damaged its soft power by wars in Vietnam and Iraq. Brutality and indifference to just war principles of discrimination and proportionality can destroy legitimacy. The efficiency of the initial American military invasion of Iraq in 2003 created admiration in the eyes of some foreigners, but that soft power was undercut by the subsequent inefficiency of the occupation and the scenes of mistreatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. How India responds to jihadist terrorism will affect India's soft power.

There is very little likelihood that the United States, India or other democracies can attract jihadist terrorists. India suffered terribly in the Mumbai attacks. We need hard power to deal with such hard cases. But the current terrorist threat is not Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. It is a civil war within Islam between a mainstream majority and a small minority such as the Islamic State who want to coerce others into their simplified and ideologized version of Islam. Neither India nor the United States can win this struggle unless the mainstream Muslims win. That is impossible without soft power, and we cannot win hearts and minds without it. Soft power is more relevant than ever.

Looking ahead, China and India are the looming giants of Asia, with their huge populations and rapid economic growth rates. Not only are their hard power resources growing, but both countries have attractive traditional cultures. In 2007, President Hu Jintao told the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party that it needed to invest in soft power and President Xi Jinping has continued that line. China has invested in Confucius institutes to promote Chinese culture, and it is promoting its film industry, but Bollywood

produces more movies every year than China – or Hollywood for that matter. Indian writers reach large audiences overseas. Large expatriate communities in the United States have increased interest in their home countries in America as well as in Europe. Moreover, the transnational connections in the information industry are close, as high-tech companies increasingly employ affiliates in Bangalore and Silicon Valley.

The real soft power promise for China and India still lies in the future. A country's soft power rests upon the attractiveness of its culture, the attraction of its domestic political and social values, and the style and substance of its foreign policies. In recent years, both China and India have adopted foreign policies that have increased their attraction to others. But as the Soft Power 30 Index produced by the London consultancy Portland shows that neither country yet ranks as high on the various indices of potential soft power resources as the U.S., Europe and Japan. Polls show that this remains true despite the damage that President Trump's policies have done to American soft power. Fortunately, much of the soft power is produced by civil society, not government. That helps to explain how American soft power recovered after Vietnam, and will probably do so again after the Trump years. While culture provides some soft power, domestic policies and values set limits, particularly in China, where the Communist Party fears allowing too much intellectual freedom, censors the internet, and resists outside influences.

This is where India possesses an advantage.

China has grown more rapidly and done more to reduce poverty over the past two decades, and should be applauded for that, but China has not yet come to terms with the problem of increased political participation and recent events seem to be going in the wrong direction. India was fortunate to be born with a democratic constitution and political structure. This means that it has already passed a test that China still faces in the future, and that makes India a source of attraction to other countries. Of course, India still faces daunting challenges of poverty, unequal treatment of women, inequality tied to a caste system, and corruption and inefficiency in the provision of public services. But India is also changing and adapting within a broad democratic framework, and many foreigners find that attractive. Despite its many problems, it is a safe bet that India's hard and soft power are both likely to increase in the coming decades. If India can combine the two successfully, it will be a "smart power."

Fortunately, soft power does not have to be zero sum. If we wish to avoid conflict, we can all benefit if the attraction of another country rises in our own country. Similarly, given the rise of new transnational challenges like climate change, financial stability, pandemics, and terrorism which no one country can solve by itself, increases in soft power can pave the way for the cooperation the world will need to meet such problems. Fortunately, soft power can be part of a vision which understands the importance of power with others rather than merely over others. India can help lead the way.



The Sleeping Giant: India's Soft Power Potential

Jonathan McClory*

One of the most common criticisms of the annual *Soft Power 30* study is the conspicuous absence of India in the rankings. Admittedly, India's non-appearance in the top 30 countries does give one pause. So much so, it is worth exploring why this is the case, looking ahead to see when India might expect to break into the top 30, and understanding what changes the government might need to usher in to do so.

For those unfamiliar with *The Soft Power 30*, it is an annual study produced by Portland, a strategic communications consultancy, and the University of Southern California's Centre on Public Diplomacy. The annual report is built around a composite index that assesses the soft power resources of the world's leading countries through a combination of objective metrics and international polling data. The index – developed around Joseph Nye's argument that the sources of soft power are based primarily on political values, culture, and foreign policy – is designed to give a comparative snap-shot of countries based on their soft power assets. It is not a measure of absolute influence, but more the potential for influence. Objective metrics are structured into six sub-indices: Culture, Digital, Education, Enterprise, Government, and Global Engagement. International polling data is drawn from nationally representative surveys of 11,000 people in 25

countries, covering every region of the world. Survey respondents rate countries based on a set of factors that are most likely to drive perceptions of a foreign country. These factors include foreign policy, culture, liveability, and technology exports, among others. While the study only publishes a list of top 30 countries, there are a total of 60 countries included in the study, of which India is of course one. *The Soft Power 30* has been produced annually since 2015, but it draws on the earlier work of the Institute for Government Soft Power Index which was published in collaboration with *Monocle Magazine* from 2010 to 2014.¹

The 2016 edition of *The Soft Power 30* report identified India as 'a country to watch', arguing that an upward lift in its ranking (from 2015 to 2016) was likely the start of a trend that would see it break into the top 30 in the near future.² Surprisingly, this prediction has failed to materialise. Not only has India not built on its earlier momentum, its overall ranking has actually fallen since 2016. So, what happened and how can India reverse the trend?

There are several factors at play driving what feels like an underperformance in the *Soft Power 30* index for India. The first is that we need to recognise there is at least some element of Western bias to the concept of soft power, as developed by Joseph Nye.³ As conceived, and as borne out in some (but not all) of the *Soft Power 30* metrics,

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The Soft Power 30 and General Manager for Asia at Portland.

developed-economy countries do enjoy an advantage. This, in turn, puts India at a relative disadvantage. The other aspect of the index to bear in mind is that it is a composite measure, aggregating data across a diverse range of soft power metrics to produce a single score for each country. Thus, an especially poor performance in several of *The Soft Power 30* sub-indices drags down a country's total score. But this does not mean that such a country will not have clear strengths and useful tools in its array of soft power assets.

Bearing those caveats in mind, a breakdown of India's performance across *The Soft Power 30* can provide insights into both the factors dragging down India's overall ranking, as well as the

differently, it is systemic issues like corruption, poverty, inequality, gender inequality, and pollution that weigh on global perceptions of India, and thus its soft power. Often the most commonly covered topics on India in international media focus on these more negative stories. Subsequently, these issues have an outsized impact on international views of India, and not in a positive way. Table 1 below provides India's relative ranking and scores for each of the objective data sub-indices.

Looking at India's performance across the objective sub-indices, India's strongest soft power assets are found in Digital, Culture, and Government. In the digital sub-index, Prime Minister Narendra Modi powers India's

Table 1: India's scores and ranking for objective data

	Ranking	Score
Overall	41st	40.64
Digital	35 th	54.51
Government	37 th	51.76
Culture	38 th	30.01
Enterprise	47 th	37.50
Global Engagement	47 th	24.79
Education	51 st	37.84

country's soft power strengths that can serve India's foreign policy priorities if used effectively. India's biggest challenge, in terms of soft power assets – as assessed by *The Soft Power 30* index – stem from the 'harder' elements of soft power. Said

extraordinary digital diplomacy reach, which is among the best in the world. Prime Minister Modi is second to only to US President Donald Trump for Facebook followers in other countries. This means India's Government can reach a huge

international audience directly through social media platforms. In the Culture sub-index, India benefits from 36 UNESCO world heritage sites, ranking 6th in the world; it is 13th for average tourist spend; 22nd for international tourist arrivals; and 23rd for entries into major international film festivals. India's performance in the Government sub-index paints a mixed picture. India does well on some metrics that capture the vibrancy of being the world's largest democracy. But it performs less well on measures that capture citizen outcomes and government effectiveness, such as the UN's Human Development Index.

see India's cultural assets cutting through to international audiences. Chief among India's culturally-driven soft power assets are the richness of a millennia-spanning continuous civilization, the films of Bollywood, the global appeal of yoga, ubiquitous Indian cuisine, India's huge (and often successful) global diaspora, and India's cricketing prowess. Likewise, international public opinion gives India credit for its well-established digital and tech sector, with India's 'technology exports' being ranked 34th out of a total of 60 countries.

With a better understanding of India's performance across the different components of

Table 2: India's rankings and scores for international polling data

	Rank	Score
Aggregated	43rd	42.87
Culture	23 rd	7.03
Cuisine	35 th	6.87
Tech	34 th	6.43
Luxury goods	40 th	6.53
Welcoming to tourists	42 nd	6.93
Global affairs	42 nd	6.08
Visit for work or study	47 th	6.10

Turning to the international polling data we see a set of results that broadly reflect the objective data. India's best performance in the polling, as shown in Table 2 below, is in Culture, where it ranks inside the top 30 at 23. It is encouraging to

The Soft Power 30 index, we can turn our focus to what might be done to improve India's relative soft power assets and the capacity to better leverage them. On the systemic issues that weigh on India's soft power identified above, the

Government should be – and likely already is – aware that these domestic issues have implications for India’s influence abroad. They are complex challenges that will take time to address.

In the absence of immediate solutions, it would be wise to focus on what the Indian government can control in the more short term. One action that would immediately benefit India’s soft power is an expansion of its diplomatic network, as well as the number of international cultural missions of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. India would benefit significantly from more international platforms to engage global audiences and communicate not only what India has to offer the world in terms of its wider cultural offer, but also articulate its values, aspirations, and a clear vision for India’s positive role in the world.

Extrapolating from the international polling

data on perceptions of India’s foreign policy – where it ranks 42nd out of 60 countries – there seems to be a lack of understanding around what India wants from the world, and what it stands to contribute. Again, a larger diplomatic network with expanded platforms for articulating India’s aspirations and vision would be a boon for Indian soft power. With greater understanding and more familiarity, international publics are likely to increase their trust in India and see it as a potential partner. In combining India’s excellent digital reach with a greater international diplomatic presence, India will be better able to explain itself and its aims to the world, as well as leverage new platforms to engage international audiences with its formidable cultural assets. Results would not come overnight, but if resources could be mobilised, the returns on investment for India’s influence abroad would be significant.

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Communicating India's Soft Power

Daya Kishan Thussu*

The notion of soft power is associated with the work of Harvard political scientist, Joseph Nye and was defined by him simply as 'the ability to attract people to our side without coercion'. The phrase was first used by Nye in an article published in 1990 in the US journal, *Foreign Policy* and expanded in his 2004 book *Soft Power*. Despite Nye's focus being primarily on the United States, and the vagueness associated with the concept of soft power, the phrase has acquired global currency and is routinely used in policy and academic literature, as well as in elite journalism. The capacity of nations to make themselves attractive in a globalizing marketplace of ideas has become an important aspect of contemporary international relations, as has been the goal of communicating a favourable image of a country or countering negative portrayals in an era of digital global flows.

As the world's fastest growing large economy and with a pluralist polity, India is increasingly viewed as a global economic and political power. Since 2013, India has been the world's third largest economy behind China and the United States on the basis of purchasing-power parity, while, in overall GDP terms, its \$2.6 trillion economy has become the sixth largest, surpassing France in 2018. Nevertheless, the country is still home to the world's largest number of people living in extreme poverty.

Parallel to its rising economic power are the growing global awareness and appreciation of India's soft power – its extensive and globalized diaspora, mass media, celebratory religiosity (Yoga and Ayurveda) and popular culture. India's soft power has a civilizational dimension to it, the Indic civilization, dating back more than 5000 years, being one of the major cultural formations in the world, with wide-ranging influences from religion and philosophy, arts and architecture to language, literature, trade and travel. India is the point of origin of four of the world's religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism – and, as the place where every major faith, with the exception of Shintoism and Confucianism, has coexisted for millennia, India offers a unique and syncretized religious discourse.

The dissemination of Hindu and Buddhist ideas across Asia is well documented: it is no coincidence that the official airline of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, is named *Garuda*, the Sanskrit name for the Hindu God Vishnu's flying creature. The Indian contribution to Islamic thought (and via that to European) on mathematics, astronomy, and other physical and metaphysical sciences is widely recognized.

India's soft power in historical terms was directed not towards the West but to Asia. India's cultural influence across East and Southeast Asia during the early centuries of the Christian era was

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spread through the dispersion of Hinduism and Buddhism and thus the millennia-old relationship between India and the rest of Asia has a strong cultural and communication dimension. Buddhism was at the heart of this interaction, with the widest dissemination of ideas emanating from what constitutes India today, and remains a powerful link between the Indic and the Chinese civilizations. Narratives on Buddha's life and teachings are still a cultural referent in much of Asia, while traces of Indic languages, cuisine, dance, and other art forms survive in parts of Southeast Asia, notably in Indonesia.

Two of the world's other great religions – Christianity and Islam – also have long associations with India. Some of the earliest Christian communities were established in India: St. Thomas is supposed to be buried in Chennai and one of the world's oldest mosques is also located in India – in Kerala, where Jewish communities have lived for millennia. Adding to this legacy is India's long and continuing encounter with European modernity and its contribution to a distinctive worldview epitomized by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence and tolerance – whose thoughts influenced such leaders as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. This rare combination of a civilization which has strong Hindu-Buddhist foundations, centuries of Islamic influence, and integration with Western institutions and ideas, gives India cultural resources to deal with the diverse, globalized and complex realities of the twenty-first century.

In Prime Minister Modi's 'faith-based' diplomacy, promoting Buddhism is particularly

pronounced. Emphasizing the millennium-old cultural and communication links with other Asian nations, especially China, the Indian government has propounded the idea of '*sanskriti evam sabhyata*' (culture and civilization) as a core principle for promoting India's image globally. It is not without symbolic significance that the first foreign visit Modi made after being elected Prime Minister in 2014 was to Buddhist Bhutan. Since then, in his official visits to Asian nations such as Nepal, Japan, China, Mongolia and South Korea, he has repeatedly invoked Buddhism. With its focus on peace and non-violence, Buddhism is seen as a useful soft power tool for India, which has traditionally been a peace-loving nation. Another aspect of Modi's faith-based diplomacy is the promotion of yoga as part of soft-power projection, in which his government has been active, as evidenced by the adoption of International Yoga Day by the United Nations on June 21.

With its history as the only major democracy that did not blindly follow the West during the Cold War years, pursuing an autonomous foreign policy, India also has the potential now to take up a more significant leadership role. Despite growing economic and strategic relations with Washington, it maintains close ties with other major and emerging powers. India's presence at the Group of 77 developing nations and at the G-20 leading economies of the world has been effective in articulating a Southern perspective on global affairs. India is also a key member of the BRICS grouping of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well as the

Commonwealth. As the 2017 annual report of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) noted: 'India's diplomatic approach and engagement with the wider world is reflective of its confidence as a rising power capable of shaping the global discourses in the emerging multi-polar world', a sentiment also reflected in a 2017 documentary, *India Boundless - A Place in the Heart of the World*, produced for the Public Diplomacy Division of the MEA.

How effective are India's soft power initiatives? The intangible nature of soft power makes it hard, if not impossible, to measure. Has India's civilizational communication with Asia given New Delhi a greater voice in the continent's geopolitics? One major problem India faces is that it has not successfully communicated its soft power resources apart from its popular cinema. Indian news and current affairs continue to be largely domestically oriented and therefore absent in the global news arena.

As a result, the capacity to communicate India's cultural attributes - classical or contemporary - to a globalized audience is largely underdeveloped. Of the countries with ambitions for a global role, India is the only one whose national broadcaster (*Doordarshan*) is not available in the major capitals of the world.

Although international news channels are still dominated by Anglo-American broadcasters, most major non-English speaking countries have entered the arena to ensure their views on the world are heard via their English-language 24/7 news networks, such as China (CGTN), Russia (RT), Qatar (Al Jazeera English), Iran (Press TV) and Turkey (TRT-News). However, the Indian viewpoint is notably missing in the global news sphere, at a time when news media are a key instrument of public diplomacy.

While India's English-language private news networks, such as NDTV 24x7, CNN-News 18, India Today Television, Times Now and WION (World Is One News) are available globally, they have rarely ventured out of their diasporic constituencies. For a nation with a developed model of journalism and one of the world's largest English-language news markets, it is ironical that Indian journalism is losing interest in the wider world at a time when Indian industry is increasingly globalizing and international engagement with India is growing across the globe. Despite its penchant for managing media messages and Modi's personal reputation as a formidable communicator, his government has done little to address this shortcoming in India's external communication strategy.



Food is the Greatest ‘Soft Power’ for a Nation

Manjit Singh Gill*

Food is the visible manifestation of God. When we see food, we see the Divine in it. The physical, as well as metaphysical aspects of food cannot be ignored. Man is born of food, nourished by food and becomes food of other creations. Matter draws energy from food to become alive, gets nourished and then grows. Rasa - the juice of food, converts into rakta, the juice of life, to cajole the seed of tomorrow, to propagate life.

Food is an integral part of our cultural philosophy since it comprehensively reflects the essence and experience of life. Food in our culture is never merely a material substance of ingestion, not just a transactional commodity. Maybe that is why India has never been loud about its food and the knowledge behind this food evolved over centuries. Now, the time has come to aggressively promote knowledge — which I argue is the greatest soft power of any nation.

The Vedic science of gastronomy now referred to as the ‘anthropology of food and nutrition’ is still as relevant today as it was in the ancient and medieval times, and will continue to play a crucial role in the future as well. This knowledge which is universal will help gain a better understanding of gastronomy and recognizing a crucial place of the interdependence between food and wellness living. Given the importance of fire in the cooking

process, AGNI or fire finds its place of pride in the first sloka of the Rig Veda:

ॐ अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवम त्विजम्।
होतारं रत्नधातमम्॥१॥

“Aghnimile purohitam yajûasya devam rtvijam l hotaram ratnadhatamam ll” (Rig Veda 1.001.01)

The verse means: “Oh Agni, you who gleam in the darkness, to you we come day by day, with devotion and bearing homage. So be of easy access to us, as a father to his son, abide with us for our wellbeing.”

Just as the oldest text of the human race - the Vedas - acknowledge the value of Agni in the wellbeing of mankind, we must understand its role in the evolution of man in the context of food since the Stone Age, and how it is responsible for our existence. With fire began cooking. The deeper connect between food and fire was discovered - as man realised that fire was required to digest food in its digestive form - Agni. Fire helps to cook food, improves ingestion, making food easily digestible, enhances absorption and makes metabolism more efficient. Man soon learnt that nutrients absorbed from the food provided for the energy needs of the body, helping improve the immune system, which in turn helped the organs function the right way. The development of the brain occurred in a complementary fashion.

Slowly, with time, man also began to

**This article is a summary of the speech delivered by Mr. Manjit Singh Gill, Chef and President, Indian Federation of Culinary Association on 18th December 2018 at the Conference on Soft Power at New Delhi organised by India Foundation.*

understand that food not just nourishes the body, but also the mind, which in turn, leads to evolution - through developments of culture, language, knowledge. Wellness and sustainability - the twin objectives have always been driving the evolution of Indian cuisine. With these in mind, our food passed through various stages of evolution on the basis of continuous learning and observation from nature by saints, sages and wise men, who refined it through experimentation - over centuries! What they found was that eating is not to be considered in isolation as satiation of hunger. Rather, food is a source of nourishment for the body, mind and soul. They discovered the link between the five elements of nature, six seasons and the six tastes. Our ancestors have very well documented the essentials of cooking food:

1) One must have complete understanding of the characteristics of each food ingredient and the bearing on cooking and its impact on the body. The characteristics include seasonality, the taste of the naturally-occurring ingredient and its therapeutic effects on the body. All of these will assist you in making the correct choice and mixing of ingredients (which you may also call “pairing” or combinations).

2) One must be emotionally involved in the cooking process. You must touch and feel the ingredients. Just by touching the food ingredients, you can judge their quality from their texture, and observe their colour, and smell it. No wonder, the Indian philosophy relates to cooking as a spiritual process.

3) The process of cooking can be considered as a high level of meditation. It requires utmost

concentration of the mind, and deep involvement of the one who cooks. And it is not easy to control the mind! Bringing the focus of the mind on the act of cooking and holding your concentration there to create sumptuous, soulful and tasty food which creates happiness and wellness of the diners - makes the cooking process nothing short of a highly spiritual activity.

4) The mind must be filled with good thoughts, and must be devoid of all negativity.

This is the understanding of food we have inherited through our culture, and it forms the basis of the immense wealth of knowledge of our cooking.

The first vertical of Indian gastronomic science (Ayurveda) is wellness. Food is the only source of serving the nutritional needs of the body. For over 5000 years, our gastronomy which is a vertical of *Ayurveda* has been practised to promote wellness. It has influenced our philosophy of gastronomy. It was true in the olden times as much as it is relevant at present - beginning to find its place in the diet trends of the day. It is considered to be a sacred system that unites natural elements of the body and is tethered to the nourishment of the mind and the soul.

The second vertical of Indian gastronomic science is Sustainability. For a life with peace, harmony and happiness, we need to ensure that our surroundings are healthy, clean and balanced. Taking care of the environment around us is just as important, or even more, than taking care of our individual health or our body, mind and soul. Simply because, our individual ‘balance’ is contributed by the ‘balance’ of the environment

around us. It is as simple as this: Every time we contaminate our surroundings or the environment, we end up contaminating ourselves. It is usually taught in Ayurveda that whenever you throw something outside, assuming it to be a waste, rest assured it will always come back to you. If it is in the form of harmful fumes, we will breathe it back.

After travelling across the world's nations and experiencing their cuisines, I can summarise my exploration as a culinarian thus: What we found and laid stress on for centuries has become the motto driving all the food concerns today - which is wellness and sustainability! It is being accepted that eating food in courses has no scientific basis. This neither aids in digestion, nor does it lead to satisfaction and happiness. The world is waking up to the exploration of tastes, and the impact of seasonality on the body. But, we have known it for aeons!

The knowledge of our gastronomy - Why eat seasonal? Why eat tasty food? When to eat? What to eat? How much to eat? What is the effect of food on the mind and the soul? This knowledge is already with us. I appeal to all the knowledgeable stakeholders - in the government (AYUSH), various agencies, scientists, ayurveda practitioners, nutritionists, and the most important ones who put food in our stomachs - the chefs - to make people aware of this food in a presentable manner that encourages them to appreciate it by stimulating salivation. This can happen through food that is good to look at, but it must be complemented by the well-balance of tastes as per season, which triggers the neuro-systems for the digestion process.

Some time back, I had an interaction with Paul Newnham - who is the Coordinator of the UN's SDG2 Advisory Hub working towards Zero Hunger. We were at a place where poppy seeds were served in the form of a beverage. It led to a discussion on seasonal food where we spoke about the element of seasonality in food consumption which does not apply only to fresh produce. Even the seeds have a bearing on the body according to season. Now, poppy seeds are best-suited during the summer or *grishma ritu*. For winters or *hemanta ritu*, one could rather consume *alsi* (flax seeds), or *til* (sesame seeds). This is the knowledge which we already have, and if this can be stated in a simple, understandable and accessible document for the average person, it will help fix most of our common day cooking misadventures. It will lead to the spread of good practices and produce wellness longevity from our routine food.

It is difficult to cook something well without understanding the philosophy of any cuisine. Indian gastronomy goes beyond rules to discover the underlying 'Gastro-semantics,' which can be understood as a culture's distinct capacity to signify, experience, systematize, philosophize and communicate with food and food practices, rendering it as a central subject of attention. Our food is deeply grounded with five elements, five senses, three strands, three humors, six tastes and nine feelings. The five elements are earth, water, air, fire and ether. The five senses are hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste. The three strands are benevolence, passion and indolence. The three humors are Pitta or bile, *Vatta* or wind and *Kapha* or mucus. The six tastes are sweet, sour, salty,

pungent, bitter and astringent. The nine feelings are love, joy, wonder, calmness, anger, courage, sadness, fear and disgust.

As per our *Ayurvedic* gastronomic science, food cannot be nutritious, even while it has the essential nutrients in it, unless it is a well-balanced experience of six tastes. This literally means, that “If food is not tasty, it is not nutritious!” The six tastes are each composed of two elements: Sweet is water and earth, sour is earth and fire, salty is water and fire, pungent is air and fire, bitter is air and ether and astringent is air and earth. Further, even the body types Pitta, Vatta and Kapha are also determined by these elements. Pitta is fire and water, Vatta is air and ether, and Kapha is fire and water. The interaction of the five elements of nature through food, whether in the tastes or humors, determines what kind of body one has and the life one leads. Further, it is the basic gunas - sattva, rajas and tamas that have permeated all matter to form their basic nature. Human personality, too, is a blend of these three gunas and the dominance of any of the tattva (matter) determines behaviour patterns.

Sattva is a benevolent, unobstructive guna. Sattvic tattva enhances the longevity, mental power, health and the feeling of contentment. Rajas, reminiscent of royalty, is characterised by passion, valour, pride and possession. Known to be the manas or mind of the human cycle, the rajasic tattva in food triggers activity and the wish to conquer.

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः।

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं श णु ॥७॥

The above verse from the Bhagavad Gita is

simply interpreted as “You eat what you are and, you are what you eat.”

Food as a Soft Power

This wealth of knowledge of food must now be disseminated through the various agencies and practitioners to the culinary enthusiasts and the Chefs, so that food as wellness becomes the norm. Our science of gastronomy has a universal basis - the philosophy, principles, guidelines, fundamentals, applications - can be easily customised to prepare traditional wellness food anywhere across the world, using their unique geotropical ingredients and techniques.

My own experience by visiting and interacting with the professionals at various seminars, forums, workshops, demonstrations relating to food, I found in every country that people are very anxious to know the goodness behind the great food. Not just the recipe! But, what is the knowledge behind this food? What makes it so good? There is no doubt in my mind that Indian food science is the foremost culinary philosophy backed by our ancient gastronomic wisdom. It is scientifically validated through research by scientist Dr Ganesh Bagler of IIIT-Delhi who worked with data analysing 2,500 recipes of Indian food, and found that Indian cooking is all about using spices without overlapping their tastes.

It's not just how much spice and in what form, but how intelligently they are incorporated into the dish. Spices used in our dishes are much more carefully selected to produce the least amount of “flavour and taste overlap.” Every spice and ingredient has a purpose and they all work together

in harmony to produce the taste of the dish. People from the world over who are seeking hints to the wellness quotient of our food are coming here to learn cooking under the Ayurvedic gastronomic science. They want to visit our country and spend time to understand this practice as wellness is a global concern - and food lies at the heart of wellness.

An Ayurvedic doctor - Dr Ramniwas Presar - recently shared with me that there is a growing number of foreigners seeking him out to learn cooking as per Ayurveda. Nothing prevents us from exploring this growing interest in our cuisine on a large scale and it is imperative to take this great knowledge to global platforms and various forums to disseminate it. This will serve the twin purpose of promoting the right route to wellness, as well as establishing the knowledge of our food as supreme.

In the world of food and wine, French cuisine has reigned for the last couple of centuries, setting the standards for professional cooking. We are all aware of how France took its food to this position through structuring of the kitchen, standardisation of their recipes, and innumerable documentation and publication of literature. Many other countries followed suit, such as Italy, Germany and others in the Mediterranean region. In the recent times, countries such as UAE, Singapore, Australia, and even USA, have worked towards presenting their traditional food to the world. Most of them have marketed it innovatively with great success, becoming sought-after tourist and food destinations. Now, many of these countries have no substantial legacy of food worth talking about, but they have consolidated their food from other

influences in the region, branded it as their own cuisine, and “sold” it as their own food to the world.

What about us? We already have a repository of knowledge which we have inherited from our past, complemented by diversity of food. But we are yet to go to town with it. With careful planning, branding and selling of this cuisine, we can establish Indian food as the dominant cuisine of the world - with all the right assets - backed by science and knowledge. It is also something we owe to the world that is seeking the right answer after misguided and misrepresented takes on food.

And I strongly believe that if we recognise our food as a soft superpower, it will not only make our food popular, but also enhance our tourism experience with knowledge, contribute to revenue for the economy, and generate employment. As we somehow strayed from our understanding of seasonality of food following the international trends, this knowledge will put pressure on the Chefs to produce diverse seasonal foods that would in turn encourage farmers to adopt diverse agriculture as opposed to mono-cropping. This could critically help improve the agro-economy of the country.

Paraphrasing a quote from Turkey, “Once, we say that ‘we belong to the Indian nation’ we will begin to show in our language, aesthetic, morals and law and even in theology and philosophy, the originality and personality which befit Indian culture, taste and consciousness.”

Gastro-diplomacy as a Soft Power tool to enhance nation brand

The soft power of food would also help us in

diplomacy as Gastro-diplomacy or the practice of sharing a state's cultural heritage through cuisine. Thailand has established its own gastronomy product abroad. It is called Thai Kitchen with over twenty standard recipes as part of the brand that sells Thai food-based culture to foreigners, thus attracting prospective visitors to visit Thailand. Politicians like Hillary Clinton, former US Secretary of State, ushered in a whole new approach to the provision of food, as a part of what she terms "smart diplomacy". Indeed, as Natalie Jones, a deputy chief of protocol in the US Government puts it: "Food is crucial because tough negotiations take place at the dining table."

During my participation in San Sebastian Gastronomika, I met the Indian ambassador in Spain last year. In January this year, I called him ahead of my visit to Madrid. Food lives in the memories. The recall of food is very strong as opposed to many other cultural experiences as it involves ingestion of food in the body and a complete multi-sensory experience. A popular quotation:

“भूखे पेट भजन नहीं होय गोपाला
ले तेरी कंठी ले तेरी माला”

It is hard to sing praises of the Lord on an empty stomach.

What must we do to harness it? The Yoga

brand. Yoga has to be complemented with the correct food.

Conclusion

Even celebrated author Mulk Raj Anand has famously quoted from the old manuscript Khem Kuthal: "I will just record a few Indian considerations about food which might serve to show how, with their remarkable genius for systematising life and its functions, the Indians had raised cookery to a fine art." The fine art of cooking and dining must include: Food on the basis of its nutritive quality; in respect of its flavor and taste as judged by the palate; and in regard to the delight it gives to the artistic faculty of man's mind. This transforms the food into a fine dining experience.

What is Indian food? Food that draws upon the vast knowledge from our scriptures, is well-balanced of the six tastes, in sync with the season, includes the local flora and is based on the fundamentals of Indian gastronomy anchored on wellness and sustainability qualifies as Indian food. Indian food is not restricted to food cooked in India. Anywhere, any cuisine across the globe can qualify as Indian food if it fulfils the above criteria. In India, we can and must bank upon this well-established science of food.



Leveraging Spirituality as India's Soft Power

Sudarshan Ramabadran*

One of the most significant aspects of spirituality is that its profoundness can subtly permeate through our lives, creating a deep and integral link between spirituality and life. While placing spirituality into a global perspective is indeed a challenging task, spirituality by its very nature can fit in anywhere and everywhere! Let us link the two by first looking into what spirituality means and entails.

In his book, "A Brief History of Spirituality," Philip Sheldrake posits that, "...modern spirituality is centred on the deepest values and meanings by which people live... It embraces the idea of an ultimate or an alleged immaterial reality. It envisions an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of one's being. In modern times the emphasis is on subjective experience... incorporating personal growth or transformation, usually in a context separate from organised religious institutions."

Over time, the idea of spirituality seems to be becoming increasingly disassociated from the idea of religion, even though one has its roots in the other. There is a formlessness involved in spirituality which is absolutely personal and inner in nature. It is part of everyone, whether they know it or not. Herein lies its tremendous strength.

Now, let us look into the definition of soft power. The Soft Power 30 report that is brought out by USC Center on Public Diplomacy and the Portland Communications says, "In contrast to the

coercive nature of hard power, soft power describes the use of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives. Soft power shuns the traditional foreign policy tools of carrot and stick, seeking instead to achieve influence by building networks, communicating compelling narratives, establishing international rules, and drawing on the resources that make a country naturally attractive to the world."

How has India harnessed its spiritual power as part of its soft power projection and how it should continue to do so? One way of looking at it is that it is a simple case of demand and supply. India has come to be known as a spiritual soft power because across the world, the one thing which is most sought after is peace, and India has always had an abundance of promoters, proponents, patrons, pursuers and practitioners of peace. What is more, peace as a commodity is in ever-increasing demand. Margaret Elizabeth, an Irish lady, met Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895 and thereafter became his disciple and was known as Sister Nivedita. Mirra Alfassa, a French lady, who worked and collaborated with Sri Aurobindo, came to be known as "The Mother," a name given by Sri Aurobindo himself. In the recent past, the Academy award winning actress Julia Roberts embraced Hinduism. Many Indian spiritual saints and mystics have inspired seekers from the West who have found a deep connection with spirituality. The demand of seeking is relevant even today and it is a continuum.

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As materialism grows, so does the want for balance, in a seemingly no-win situation. It does not come by the snap of one's fingers. There are ideals and values that must be first lived, before peace can follow as a by-product. Such ideas are present in India's spiritual texts and are not locked away, in a secret hidden cave. They are available and accessible to one and all, regardless of caste, creed or colour.

It is not that India has intentionally monopolised the "spiritual market", so what makes spirituality and soft power so synonymous? Expounding on the subject at Roundtable on Spirituality hosted by The Centre for Soft Power Studies, Chennai, on October 21, 2018, Dr. David Frawley stated that India has always been a '*vishwaguru*' or in today's parlance a trendsetter, be it in the field of art, education, medicine or literature, to name but a few. He went on to state that, "India's ancient traditions, largely based on spiritual foundations, have empowered Indians to be pioneers in various ways. And while there has been flexibility as times have changed, there are also many values that have stood the test of time and are still being practiced today as they always have been. Indeed, one of India's greatest strengths is that not everything in India has changed with time". As the saying goes, "If it is not broken, do not fix it."

While Yoga and Ayurveda have permeated the global space in more tangible ways, India's spirituality has touched international lives in more subtle, albeit undeniable ways. As spiritual values can have no copyright or trademark, across the world we have people living the Indian ways without even knowing that they are Indian. Take

for example the practices of mindfulness and meditation. These are no new-age discoveries, but rather age-old means of connecting with oneself, as prescribed by the spiritual masters of India.

Swami Vivekananda, whose 156th birth anniversary India and the globe commemorated on January 12, 2019, emphasised how spirituality is at the core of India's soft power. "If India is to die," said Swami Vivekananda, "religion might be wiped off from the face of the earth and with it Truth." He went on to add, "We have yet something to teach to the world. The *raison d'être* that this nation has lived on, in spite of hundreds of years of persecution, in spite of nearly a thousand years of foreign rule and foreign oppression... This nation still lives; the *raison d'être* is, it still holds to God, to the treasure house of religion and spirituality" (Narayanaswamy, 2012).

His words remains true to date and permeate the minds of global citizens. In contemporary times, worldwide academia slowly but surely acknowledges India's contribution to the world through the prism of spirituality. An American Journal, *Scientific American*, has credited ancient Indians for the understanding of the life principle and their understanding of yogic science. The journal noted the contribution of Pranayama as well (André, 2019). "Recommendations for how to modulate breathing and influence health and mind appeared centuries ago as well. Pranayama (breath retention) yoga was the first doctrine to build a theory around respiratory control, holding that controlled breathing was a way to increase longevity."

Therefore, it makes a compelling case for India to strengthen its soft power diplomacy by

showcasing its spiritual roots. On a visit to Mongolia, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, used the term “spiritual diplomacy” for the first time. Addressing the Great Hural, the Mongolian Parliament, the Prime Minister affirmed (Press Information Bureau, 2015), “I bring the greetings of your 1.25 billion spiritual neighbours. There is no higher form of a relationship; no bonds more sacred than this.” It is precisely for this reason that India can take a giant leap vis-à-vis soft power diplomacy by positing its greatest contribution, spirituality, to the world.

The idea of a civilisational heritage and spirituality has entered the Indian foreign policy lexicon in several ways. Daya Thussu has also gone on to term this as the ‘Indic Civilisation’ (Kishwar, 2018). This has also manifested as *sanskriti evam sabhyata* (cultural and civilisational links), as one of the main pillars of the *Panchamrit* principles outlined by the Indian government in April 2015 (Kishwar, 2018).

The Indian leadership, under the present Government, has used spiritual linkages to enhance relations with other countries. For instance, in August 2014, during his visit to Nepal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to Nepal as the “land of Sita and Janak,” and as “the country of Buddha’s birth,” thereby bringing millennia old religious connections into the present day. As an addendum, India has also mooted, through its Ministry of Tourism, the Buddhist Circuit that will enable India’s civilisational connect with its neighbours. Buddhism’s presence in the foreign policy discourse has been promoted by a number of spiritual organisations, think tanks, individuals etc. The Buddhist strand of thought and religion

originated in India and so it makes absolute sense for India to promote Buddhist diplomacy. With the advent of the Buddhist Tourist Circuit, India is home to numerous sites of importance to the Buddhist faith, such as Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Nalanda. India is also the place where the world’s largest spiritual gathering Kumbh Mela takes place in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. In 2013, Harvard University researchers even came to Prayagraj to study the Kumbh Mela, from the prism of logistics, economics and design.

Diana L. Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at the Harvard University who was part of that research has beautifully enunciated Hinduism. She says, “Hinduism is an imaginative, an ‘image-making’ religious tradition in which the sacred is seen as present in the visible world - the world we see in multiple images and deities, in sacred places, and in people. The notion of *darsan* calls our attention, as students of Hinduism, to the fact that India is a visual and visionary culture, one in which the eyes have a prominent role in the apprehension of the sacred. For most ordinary Hindus, the notion of the divine as ‘invisible’ would be foreign indeed. God is eminently visible although human beings have not always had the refinement of sight to see. Furthermore, the divine is visible not only in temple and shrine, but also in the whole continuum of life-in nature, in people, in birth and growth and death.”

It is pertinent to note that spirituality has found its way across the globe, earning India its ‘soft power’ status much before the term itself was coined. While the US exported MTV, Coca Cola

and McDonalds, India exported spirituality and its values across the globe.

We, as a nation, are at a very critical juncture with respect to the use and play of soft power in global politics. China has left no stone unturned in ramping up its soft power assets and deploying them to serve its said objectives. It intends to have at least 1000 Confucius Institutes by 2020, across the world. In this context the time is ripe for India to know and leverage the spiritual impact that the nation has had on the world. This will no doubt enable India's standing in the global power structures and serve its interests.

Spirituality is not a business to be run on profit and loss basis. It is much beyond that and it has

permeated the globe for eons and it will continue to do so. In the world outside today, there have been several ambassadors like Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Kabir, Guru Ravidas, Ramana Maharishi etc. who have enabled innumerable people abroad to embrace spirituality and transform their lives. Christopher Quilkey from Australia, who is also a Member of the Editorial Board of the Mountain Path Magazine said at the recently held Conference on Soft Power in New Delhi, organised by India Foundation, in December 2018, "Be assured, the power of the principle that envelops India, that is spirituality, is slowly pervading the group consciousness of this world."

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Reviving the Influence of Indian Arts, Crafts and Design

Rami Desai*

Introduction

The history of India is marked by many centuries where Indian arts crafts and design were highly sought after globally. With over 3,000 unique arts and crafts, the importance of the arts in Indian society as well as its popularity in the ancient world is a testament to the fine workmanship and aesthetics of the Indian craftsman. India has an ancient and unique art history, with every region excelling in an art form. Usually the expertise is passed down from family members creating communities of artisans, these crafts are all of local provenance and are still found in their original forms.

Indian craftsmanship is also a prime example of the syncretic culture in India, with aesthetic influences from various religions like Hinduism, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, Islamic as well as unique tribal aesthetics. The world has influenced Indian crafts and India has in return influenced world aesthetics. This ancient bond has not sustained itself for thousands of years merely by chance but simply by the commitment of the Indian craftsmen to their expertise. For the Indian craftsman his work has always been more than just a form of employment, there has always been a deep sacredness and spirituality accorded by the craftsman towards his products.

Unfortunately, with the advent of industrialization from the mid 18th to early 19th century, cheaper forms of crafts based on industrial

labour replaced the craftsmanship of the *karigar*. This shift was a substantial setback to the Indian craftsmen and these special stories were forgotten. Today, many artisans struggle for survival and their unique crafts remain endangered. With the lack of product design, modern marketing techniques and political will various forms of Indian arts and crafts are becoming redundant, but the resilient Indian *karigar* continues to be the crucible of India's culture.

In the international markets, there remains a strong appreciation for Indian artisanal goods. Earth friendly in nature, Indian crafts are the need of the hour and Indian *karigars* are infusing these crafts with modern design influences to suit new markets and sensibilities. Each of these crafts are unique to the cultures that have influenced them as well as the region, just as are the individual producers or the communities they represent. However, *the karigars will* to adapt to modern markets, his resilience as well as the uniqueness of his craft has still not been enough to elevate the arts, crafts and design industry to its former glory. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the limitations faced by *karigars* trading internationally as well as in the local market. India from once being an influencer of arts and design on a global scale and having dominated the world market for centuries, today has to find solutions to optimise trade and influence of these crafts.

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History of international trade and the subsequent decline

A global international trade outlook for India is not a new perspective. The complex but well organised system of international trade between ancient India and the rest of the world is fairly well documented. There were structures for trade and linkages to institutions, artists and patrons. These interactions and linkages all played a role in the Indianization of world culture and positioning India as an influential Soft Power globally.

The Indus valley civilization (3000 BCE - 1700 BCE) had a rich craft tradition as well as a high degree of technical excellence in the art of pottery making, metal and terracotta, jewellery weaving etc. The craftsmen not only created all the local needed items but surplus items also.¹ Indus Valley sites like Lothal were busy ports and these products were highly coveted in countries like Egypt and Mesopotamia.

During the Vedic age too (1500 BCE) the rise of religious literature also created a market for the use of religious objects like pots made of wood, clay and metal. The Vedas themselves spoke of artists, craftsman and products that had gained popularity.

The Mauryan Empire (322 BCE- 185 BCE) also has some surviving remnants of its Buddhist influence in the form of stupas that were patronized by Ashoka. These were prime example of the mature design sensibilities of the ancient age. In the far north-west of India (modern Afghanistan and Pakistan) Greco-Buddhist fusion art developed (1 CE - 500 CE) and by the Gupta period (320 CE - 550 CE) Indian art represented

by all major religions of the time reached its peak. In the south of India as well the Chola, Chera, Pandya Tamil dynasties all patronized regional arts, crafts and design and were known for their sculptures and fresco paintings.

Trade of elegant and highly refined Indian textiles not just in India but internationally too can be gauged by the antiquity of Indian textile exports. The first century Greek source Periplus, mentions the Gujarati port of Barygaza, (Broach) as exporting a variety of textiles, dyes and ivory. Roman writer Pliny (CE 23-79) complained of the cost of luxury commodities imported to Europe from India. India known for its fine muslin and cotton (called “woven air” in roman literature) ivory, aromatics were in high demand world over amongst many other artisanal products”.² Pliny stated “Not a year passed in which India did not take fifty million sesterces away from Rome”.³ “One of the Roman Senators, while decrying the import of fine cotton muslin of India to satisfy the variety of Roman women, said that in doing so the Empire’s coffers had been emptied”.⁴

Textiles from India were also in demand in Egypt, East Africa, and the Mediterranean between the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, and these regions became overseas markets for Indian exports.⁵ “There was export of printed fabric to China by the 4th century, 13th Century Chinese traveller Chau Ju- Kua commented on the variety of Indian textiles in Gujarat and their export to the Arab Countries, Marco Polo also mentioned the export of Indian textiles to South East Asia, Chou Ta-kuan, the Chinese observer of life at the Khmer capital of Angkor at the end of the thirteenth century, wrote that preference was given

to the Indian weaving for its skill and delicacy. Prestige textiles like the *Patola* also had a great impact in some south Asian countries like Malaysia and Philippines where they were aspirational fashion limited only to the royal family members”.⁶

Goods exported from India was not only at the fore front of fashion but were prized for their unparalleled craftsmanship. These goods connected the world to Indian culture and influenced not just its aesthetics but also played a major role in the “indianization” of some civilizations. India had always been global soft power until the 18th Century.

The Colonial period in India also brought in its own western influence as well as European patrons. Indian calicoes and muslin became vital to the Portuguese, Dutch, British and Danish East India Companies. The Chintz became the axis of all textile trade. Later, even artists were influenced by the western style of painting like Raja Ravi Varma. Fusion of the European romanticized style with Indian influences evident in many art works of the era displaying The Tree of Life or Indian hunting scenes with elephants and tigers.

Unfortunately, this time of aesthetic collaboration and trade came to an abrupt halt. The Industrial Revolution in Europe made a significant difference to the development of India’s Arts and Crafts. With new industries in England that produced textiles and goods faster and cheaper, the Indian cottage industry was left severely impacted. The British levied heavy taxes and duties on Indian imports making them far more expensive than the European counterparts. In 1721 the East India company was banned from

importing Indian goods. In addition to this setback the disappearance of India’s royal houses that were some of the primary patrons of regional arts, crafts and design, left Indian *karigars* without patrons. This not only effected their creative focus but also left them without resources to experiment with new designs and techniques.

The artisanal value of these Indian goods also became less important to the buyer in contrast to industry manufactured goods. On the contrary the Indian markets were flooded with British made goods for the first time further damaging the Indian market.

The continued fall of sales of Indian goods as well as the lack of patrons, *karigars* that had historically passed their art down to the next generation started encouraging their families to take up alternate more profitable trades. Not only did the influence of India globally decline but also production of Indian arts and crafts in India slowed down.

Increasing relevance and the way forward

The story of Indian arts, crafts and design is as old as the land itself. The confluence of religion and culture in India’s sculptures, paintings, earthenware and textiles remain unparalleled. It is this very synchronicity that makes Indian crafts unique and invaluable. While India has at times shared its aesthetics with other parts of the world, she has at the same time incorporated foreign design and aesthetics from other countries into its crafts. For instance, Batik and Ikat textiles were created for Africa and South Asian countries. This was possible due to maritime trade of the time,

the route that the Indian Ocean provided for traders, the amicable relationship shared with other cultures, and the deep understanding of the craftsman towards the ever changing demands of the market.

Today, once again global leaders are largely moving towards greater cooperation and collaboration. The days of colonial domination is a thing of the past even while leaving some scars that still need healing. However, the resilience of the Indian craftsman and his commitment and sacredness towards his craft has carried Indian arts, crafts and design into the 21st century. It is this essential nature of the proud Indian craftsman and his sacred processes of creating India's arts crafts and design that touches the human heart and mind, and this is the essence of what should be translated into the soft power of a nation.

The crafts sector is the only industry that keeps the importance of human interaction alive in an increasingly machine oriented world. It relies on human contact at every step and that is what has maintained its relevance and uniqueness in the modern world.

Cottage Industry in India had grown organically since the birth of the Indian civilisation. The power it has yielded has impacted entire communities. It not only has absorbed workers from both genders, women and men both have equal standing within this industry but it also has also provided a skill that can generate income.

With the importance of climate change and the need of the hour being Earth friendly products, the time for Indian arts, crafts and design to take centre stage has arrived. Most products in the markets today are not earth friendly. Indian

artisanal products are completely biodegradable, recyclable and renewable. These products are also economically cost effective in the long run. The ethical approach to fulfilling consumer demands requires us to switch to artisanal products.

With the entry of global online stores there is immense possibility to aid the revival of Indian arts, crafts and design. It will not only encourage *karigars* to become more technologically savvy but also allow the very last *karigar* to access a global market. It will enable him to cater directly to the online customer eliminating the need of a middleman. However, there is also a necessity for the government to dispense information and not only online marketplace training directly to the *karigar* but also to ensure awareness to individual craftsman of standards, rules and regulations for export. Considering that employment generation by the handicrafts sector has been growing at about 6-7 per cent each year and has increased from less than 60 lakh in 2008-09 to over 70 lakh in 2011-12, it calls for developing a mechanism to enable rural and semi-urban entrepreneurs to take advantage of emerging market opportunities.⁷

It is equally important alongside the promotion of online trade to keep alive the 'bazaar'. The Indian bazaar has always been the social, economic and cultural heart of India. This is where human interaction, ideas and cultural religious exchanges take place. Most importantly the touch and feel quality of Indian crafts come to life. The bazaar is an integral part of the Indian culture and its preservation a necessity in a technology driven world. The impact of arts, crafts and design in India does not just limit itself to preserving the trade but it also mobilizes culture.

Access to urban and commercial spaces, exhibitions and fairs curated to global standards, generating interest worldwide through associations and fostering community enterprises will all aid the global positioning of Indian arts, crafts and design.

Few heritage villages are already successful models representing the community spirit of the craftsman, and more are being created to draw in visitors to witness not just the creation of products but also the cultural milieu. For instance, the heritage village of Raghurajpur in Odisha attracts tourism where people come to stay with the *karigars*, some to learn their crafts and some to imbibe the culture. The village fosters the spirit of the *karigar* and tradition of Indian arts, crafts and design. The promotion of heritage villages like Raghurajpur also creates access for patrons and consumers both nationally and internationally to recognise the value of the Indian *karigar*.

In a study titled “Infusing vibrancy into Indian handicraft sector” conducted by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry in India (ASSOCHAM), it is stated that the share of handicraft exports in India’s total exports has significantly declined over the years. From about four percent in 2001- 02 it has fallen to just under one percent in 2011-12.⁸ The possibility of decline in handicraft exports may also be due to the fact that over 60% of the exports are to the West whereas other potential buyer regions like South East Asia and Africa have been overlooked. Therefore, unfortunately India’s share in the international handicraft market is not nearly as formidable as it should be.

There is an immediate need to upgrade the

handicraft industry knowledge base. Most small craftsmen are not aware of standards, rules and regulations for export.

There is also a huge gap in understanding product design and modern needs. Age old techniques can be applied to creating modern products as per market requirement. There is also a necessity for the government to dispense information and online marketplace training directly to the artisan.

With the entry of global online stores there is immense possibility to revive dying arts and to encourage artisans to become more technologically savvy, enabling artisans to cater directly to the online customer. Besides, considering that employment generation by handicrafts sector has been growing at about 6-7 per cent each year, it calls for developing a mechanism to enable rural and semi-urban entrepreneurs to take advantage of emerging market opportunities.⁹

The economic focus of the artisan has to change from just subsistence to growth and success. The impact of art in India is not just limited to preserving the trade but also mobilizing culture. Through access to urban and commercial spaces, promotion of exhibitions and fairs curated to global standards, generating interest worldwide through associations and fostering community enterprises we may be able to promote and preserve the richness of Indian arts, crafts and design.

In the international market, there remains a deep appreciation for Indian artisanal goods and India has begun to realise the immense Soft Power potential of bringing back to the world its philosophical, spiritual, artistic, and aesthetic

capabilities and is ready to share it with the world. The success of Indian arts, crafts and design is not the sole responsibility of the *karigar* or of the

government. This is a collective responsibility and with the Indian artisan already reinventing himself his success does not seem distant.

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Breaking Box Offices: Indian Cinema as Soft Power

Shreya C*

A hundred and five years ago, India was dazzled by *Raja Harishchandra*, the first Indian feature film that told a story from the Mahabharata (Massey, 1974). Eighteen years later in 1931, Ardeshir Irani directed the first Indian sound film *Alam Ara* (*Beauty of the World*) that was a turning point for the Indian film industry. The “talkies” created stars out of actors for the young to idolize, spawned the creation of regional cinema – Bengali, Tamil and Telugu talkies were made within a few months of *Alam Ara*’s release – and created the glamour that we now associate the industry with.

Bollywood, a portmanteau of Bombay and Hollywood, entered common parlance in the 1990s and is often used as an umbrella term to refer to the Indian film industry. Yet, in the year 2015-16 regional language cinema accounted for 82.18% of films produced in India, with Tamil producing 15.30%, followed by Telugu 14.50%, Kannada 10.73%, Marathi 9.46% and Malayalam 8.83% (Central Board of Film Certification, 2016)¹. Hindi movies account for roughly 18% of all films produced in India. Each of these industries, boasts of a following abroad and contributes to Indian soft power, although undoubtedly, Hindi movie stars and films dominate the space.

Indian cinema has huge audiences from across the world including Africa, the Middle East, North and South America, Europe, Central Asia and Australia, and appeals to audiences beyond the Indian diaspora. For instance, Shahrukh Khan and

Katrina Kaif performed at the coronation of Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk, a known fan of Bollywood, in 2008 (Roy, 2012), and Chinese President Xi Jinping is said to have watched and “liked” *Dangal* (Press Trust of India, 2017). Michelle Obama while in office danced to the tunes of Bollywood songs (Sridharan, 2013) and Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi once commented that “we all love to watch Hindi movies” (Roy, 2012).

Indian films have transcended language and regional barriers, gained acceptance across populations and developed a cult audience as it travelled beyond its own borders. Indian movies are unique for their amalgamation of dance, drama, music and poetry, drawing from ancient Indian theatre traditions such as Kerala’s Kathakali, Tamil Nadu’s Terukuttu and Maharashtra’s Thamasha. While often ridiculed among scholars and critiques for being overdramatic and escapist – a more pertinent question is, what is intrinsically wrong with escapism? Some of Hollywood’s most successful movies are escapist – the Star Wars series, The Avengers, and Guardians of the Galaxy, the list could go on. Movies can act as a good source of entertainment and allow audiences to go on a short (and cheap) three-hour holiday. Nevertheless, the critique does not always hold true, for India has produced a good mix of *masala*² and “intellectual” or serious films.

Mother India, a hugely popular film, spoke of dignity of labour and that of the individual

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(Ahmed, 1992), a topic which resonated with audiences in the African continent, Southeast Asia and the Middle East (Mishra, 1989). Channel 4 aired it on British television “as part of its highly successful season of Indian cinema” (Mishra, 1989), it was nominated for an Oscar in 1958, and it is said that the movie continued to sell out even a decade after its first screening in Nigeria (Larkin, 1992). Satyajit Ray’s *Pather Panchali* traces the life of a poor, rural Bengali family while subtly exploring the tense relationship between rural-urban and the ongoing changes brought by technology – electricity and a railway line – a theme that resonated with audiences across the world. When Ray’s *Pather Panchali* premiered at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, little did he know that he would dispel “the long-held feeling that India was unlikely to produce a great film” (Massey, 1974). The movie was so popular that it went on to win the Best Human Documentary award at the 1956 Cannes Film Festival, is the only Indian movie to be featured in BBC’s Top 100 foreign movies ever made, and was described as having “introduced Indian cinema to the West as cataclysmically as Kurosawa’s *Rashomon* had done for Japanese films (Cherian, 2016).

What makes Indian cinema popular?

The growth of Indian cinema abroad between the 1950s and 1980s was exemplary. A large part of its success could be attributed to the Indian diaspora who were widely travelled and had settled in many parts of the world. Although the first Indian movie, *Sant Tukaram*, a Marathi film, had won its international award, prior to Indian

independence in 1937 at Venice, it was the Indian diaspora that introduced the movies to the general public. They brought with them cassettes, Bollywood posters and other movie paraphernalia, presenting India’s colourful movies for locals to consume. In these three decades India produced multiple hits, notable among them *Awara*, *Mera Naam Joker*, *Sholay*, *Pardesi* and *Disco Dancer*, many of which remain popular even today³. Mirroring this development, India too has produced movies – *America Alludu* (1985), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenga* (1995), *Hyderabad Blues* (1998), *Hum Tum* (2004), *Swades* (2004), *Namaste London* (2007), *Kabali* (2016) – that dealt with diaspora emotions, the longing to return to the homeland and similar themes that resonated with the diaspora, were instantly successful.

In Tanzania the first permanent theatres were Bharat and Krishna Cinemas that opened in the Indian quarters. It was quickly followed by the opening of the “major theatre”, Empire Cinemas, by Hassanali Adamali Jariwalla, a wealthy Indian entrepreneur, who “pioneered the first cinemas” in Tanzania and Zanzibar and screened Indian movies on the prime days of Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays (Brennan, 2005). In South Africa Bollywood movies are released every week in multiplexes across the country (Barlet, 2010). In the Netherlands, Indian movies are “very popular” among Surinamese Hindustanis (Oonk, 2007) who also helped in propagating the cinemas, most visible in The Hague (Verstappen & Rutten, 2007). Dutch theatres screen Indian movies regularly and since 2001, NPS, the official Dutch broadcasting network has been showing Indian films, mostly

on Sundays which has helped reach a wider audience (Verstappen & Rutten, 2007).

Conversely, Indian cinema is prevalent in countries like Senegal, Nigeria, Russia, Japan and Peru, who do not have a sizeable Indian diaspora. In Senegal for example, Indian movies were introduced in 1953 with the release of *Aan*, and has gained cult status ever since (Steene, 2012). No wonder it came as no surprise to many when Akon, a Senegalese, sang *Chamak Chalo* in Hindi for the movie *Ra. One*. Similar is the experience in Nigeria, one of India's most successful export markets, where Indian cinema has permeated most households through theatres, DVDs, dedicated Bollywood television and radio channels, and dance clubs. The influence of Bollywood is most visible in Nollywood spin-off movies, local dance and Bollywood inspired Nigerian literature, *soyyaya* (Luedi, 2018). The Nollywood film *ZeeWorld Madness* (2017), that pokes fun at Nigeria's obsession with 'ZeeWorld Bollywood', the channel that plays Indian cinema on television, is a testimony of Indian soft power. Telugu "power star", Pawan Kalyan is admired as much in South India as in Poland, Rajinikanth's *Muthu* (1998) ran for 23 weeks in Japan (Aiyar, 2017) and resulted in tremendous fascination for India visible today in the number of South Indian restaurants and "Rajini" fan clubs. The Telugu-Tamil-Malayalam movie, *Mahanati* was widely received in the North America despite little advertising. Moreover, online sources such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and HotStar have helped reach non-traditional audiences, most evident in the success of *Sacred Games*.

No paper on cinema as India's soft power is

complete without a mention of the roaring success of Aamir Khan's *Dangal*, especially in China, a country where Indian movies had not enjoyed a breakthrough, and S.S Rajamouli's *Baahubali*, across the world. Rob Cain, the film and television director, describes the two movies in *Forbes* as a "one-two punch" that "knocked out" everybody's expectations (Cain, 2017). *Baahubali* opened in over 10,000 screens worldwide, ran for over 100 days in Japan and "shattered all previously held box-office records" for an Indian film in North America (India Today, 2018). The protagonist, Prabhas, was described as "a presence grand enough to transcend language" (Tsering, 2015), evident in its worldwide success. *Dangal* on the other hand, which released as *Let's Wrestle, Dad!*, topped every movie in China except for *Transformers: The Last Knight* and earned \$152 million (Cain, 2017). The success of these movies in the Chinese market is significant as it not only remained a closed market for Indian cinema but also restricts the entry and screening of foreign films through stringent quotas. Yet, other Indian films too captured the Chinese market such as Aamir Khan's *Secret Superstar* and *P.K.*, and Salman Khan's *Bajrangi Bhaijan*. It is clear Aamir Khan remains a potent Indian soft power in the Chinese market with his massive following and potential to influence a young, growing audience.

What explains the popularity of Indian films abroad, despite some countries restricting the entry of these movies through quotas? Factors like the cast, certification, timing of release, number of screen playing the movie, symbolic meaning of the movie, format of release, and perception of India by the movie's foreign consumers, and the

movie's success in the home market determine the success of India cinema abroad (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, & Bode, 2004). The relation India shares with the foreign country also greatly determines the entry and consequently the success of the movie. Nevertheless, most of these factors are common to most movies that enter any foreign market. Therefore, it is perhaps India's cultural proximity that it shares with its neighbourhood and beyond that allows these films to engage with an audience in ways that Hollywood movies cannot. Moreover, the movies that have done well in foreign markets revolved around family, caste and religion barriers, conservative societies, morality, struggle, honour and family name, experiences which are also central to these countries. Indian movies are looked at as "decent" and allow the audience to be modern without being western, emphasize community oriented values rather than individualism than resonates with audiences in Asia, Africa and South America.

Cross-productions and influence on local cinema markets

Following the success of Indian movies in foreign markets, there has been an increased interest in cross border co-productions and India centric location shooting. One of the most popular of such films was a Soviet co-production *Alibaba aur 40 Chor* (1980) that starred Dharmendra, Hema Malini and Zeenat Aman from the Indian side (Salazkina, 2010)⁴. Equally popular was Raj Kapoor's *My Name is Joker* (1970) that starred Soviet actors. In 2009 a major Hollywood studio, Warner Bros., entered India with its co-production *Chandni Chowk to China* (2009). Although the

film failed to deliver in North America, interest from Hollywood continued and was soon followed by Sony's co-production of *Saawariya*, Fox Studio's *Slumdog Millionaire*, UTV Motion Pictures' *Chennai Express* and Walt Disney Pictures' *P.K.* Hollywood's *Nightfall* and *Crocodile 2* were shot and edited entirely in Ramoji Film City, the world's largest film studio complex, opening the doors for other foreign films. Mainstream successful movies like *The Jungle Book*, *Octopussy* from the James Bond series, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, *Eat Pray Love*, *The Darjeeling Limited* and *Dark Knight Rises* were either partially or fully shot in India.

It is of interest to note the influence Indian movies had on local directors. Melodrama as a narrative technique and other Indian cinematic attributes – centred on family, gender roles and emotional stories – were adapted by Malaysian directors to great degree, with many films having "more in common" with *Devdas* and *Shree* than Hollywood movies (Heide, 2002). Malaysian directors like P. Ramlee were greatly influenced by South Indian films and it is said that in the 1960s Malaysia, Malay moviegoers "started to prefer the Hindi-language" films which "were flooding the local cinemas" (Yusoff, 2013). King Ratnam, a Sri Lankan filmmaker debuted with *Komaali Kings*, a film that tells the story of the Tamilian population in his country. In Malaysia, Shanjhey Kumar Perumal's *Jagat*, a Malaysian movie made in Tamil, was an instant award-winning hit. The Hollywood movie *Divorce Invitation* (2012) was in fact inspired by a 1997 Telugu movie, *Aahwaanam*. Even in Brazil, the directors of the 2009 television show *India: A Love*

Story, that boasted of over 30 million viewers in the South American nation, drew their inspiration from India.

The influence of Indian cinema as a soft power is best appreciated when this admiration for Indian movie stars, films and shooting styles generates a ripple effect in other sectors. The movies create an interest in India among viewers who in turn desire to consume all things Indian. Gaining traction abroad for instance are Indian inspired weddings with song and dance or Indian “exotic” locations, Bollywood themed night clubs and restaurants, the creation of the Brazilian board game – The Bollywood Game, and an increase in Indian tourism. Furthering Indian soft power are also actors like Priyanka Chopra who have now become a household name abroad, especially in North America. When mainstream primetime television shows like *The Big Bang Theory* or *The Mindy Kaling Show* include an Indian character as a protagonist it goes a long way in furthering Indian soft power. The effect of this influence can be reversed too – take for example the wooing of Indian film stars and directors by foreign governments to shoot in their country to boost tourism from India.

It is clear that Indian cinema was global even before “globalisation”. It travelled across the British Empire and made its way into film festivals prior to Indian independence, and continues to be a force to reckon with. If Indian cinema in the 1950-1980s produced movies like *The Apu Trilogy*, *Awara*, *Mera Nam Joker*, Indian cinema has today, belted out mainstream hits and new age movies for the audience to consume. *The Lunchbox* (2013) for instance was screened in over

70 nations with little to no marketing. Indian movies have become so mainstream abroad that in 2015 a video surfaced on the Internet showing Miss Nigeria and Miss Indonesia bonding over their love for Bollywood films and simultaneously singing to *Dil To Pagal Hai*. Regional cinema has found its niche and own foreign markets, contributing effectively to Indian soft power, despite Bollywood’s overarching popularity.

BFI Southbank even celebrated Indian regional cinema in 2017 giving a platform to movies that are otherwise overshadowed by their Bollywood counterpart. Today, Indian films are celebrated world over – they are invited for screenings at virtually every film festival, have become some of the highest grossing films worldwide, movie stars are being invited to co-host or perform at major events, and the number of co-productions and star cross-overs is on the rise. Despite the hurdles that Indian cinema faced, it is undoubtedly one of India’s most powerful soft power tools.

Is it being leveraged?

But has cinema been leveraged as a soft power tool by India? If the WikiLeaks 2013 reports are to be believed, US officials had once wanted help from India to improve its image in Afghanistan and contemplated sending Bollywood stars there (Swaminathan, 2017). The plan never came to fruition but what is important is that such a plan even existed and shows the importance hard power nations give to soft power. On the other hand, despite Bollywood’s popularity in Pakistan, it has done little to foster better relations between the two countries. Cinema can be used as a tool to

inform foreign audiences about India, to influence their views about the country, and to encourage tourism and trade. It is unclear of the role that cinema can play as a soft power in international

relations thus far, nonetheless it will need to be included as a part of India's foreign policy to leverage Bollywood's popularity to India's advantage.

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- 1 Although Bollywood is used as an umbrella term, the Indian film industry consist of Kollywood (Tamil), the two Tollywoods (Telugu and Tamil), Mollywood (Malayalam) and Sandalwood (Kannada).
- 2 Masala films refer to popular Indian cinema.
- 3 In Russia, Raj Kapoor and Mithun Chakraborty enjoy a demi-god like status, especially among the older generation who reminiscence and sing to Awara and Disco Dancer.
- 4 Hema Malini was already a household name in the Soviet Union with two successful films – Sholay (1975) and Seeta aur Geeta (1972).



India's Vision for 'Collective Prosperity' in ASEAN

Devsena Mishra*

In January 2018, India hosted the leaders of all 10 ASEAN nations at the Republic Day Parade and set a historic milestone in the India-ASEAN partnership. India's ties with South East Asia stretch back to more than two thousand years. The symbols of our shared cultural heritage and the Indian civilization are spread across the entire ASEAN region. Today, India-ASEAN partnership has gone beyond economic and cultural links, the formalization process of which started in 1992 Singapore Summit. Growing from dialogue partners to strategic partners, India has a growing economic, diplomatic and security partnership. There are 30 dialogue mechanisms between India and ASEAN, including an annual summit and seven ministerial dialogues.

India, the world's fastest-growing major economy and a new frontier of global opportunities is an admirer of ASEAN's own progress too and has always believed that ASEAN has a unique potential to contribute for the larger interests of the world beyond it. The ASEAN nations have an opportunity to become an integral partner in the New India's transformation journey and to pursue higher aspirations together.

The developments of the last four years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Act East Policy' suggest that ASEAN countries are ready to participate in India's vision of 'Collective Prosperity.'

Myanmar

Myanmar shares a geostrategic land and a maritime border with India which includes a 1,640-km-long border with India's four northeastern states - Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. Prime Minister Modi calls Myanmar "a land bridge that connects India with Southeast Asia." In 2016, during the visit of then President of Myanmar Htin Kyaw to India both countries signed some key agreements for the construction of 69 bridges on the Tamu-Kalewa section of the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) highway and improvements on the Kalewa-Yargi section¹. The IMT highway has the potential to transform the economic landscape of the entire region as it will connect the Moreh in India's Manipur state to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar.

In India's physical connectivity vision for the ASEAN, the role of Myanmar is crucial. Some of the other key connectivity projects between India and Myanmar are: Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project, the Rhi-Tiddim Road Project, and Border Haats etc. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project was launched to create a Multimodal transit transport system which involves connecting the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, Myanmar by sea (shipping route of 539 km). In Myanmar, it will then link Sittwe seaport to

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Paletwa via the Kaladan riverboat route (inland water transport route of 158 km), and then from Paletwa by road to Mizoram state in Northeast India². Also, the extension projects of IMT trilateral highway to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam are being planned and consultations in this direction are going on.

India's participation in Myanmar's socio-economic development is significant and it is widely appreciated by the Myanmar government. Whether its infrastructure development, agriculture research or human resources capacity building assistance, India stands with Myanmar in their endeavors to stability and growth. In 2017, India committed to assisting in the Rakhine State Development programme and in December 2018, during the President Ram Nath Kovind's visit to Myanmar, we handed over the first 50 units of prefabricated houses built in Rakhine State. India's assistance portfolio to Myanmar is at present worth over \$1.73 billion.

The trade between both sides has doubled over the last decade. Some leading Indian oil and gas companies are in the process of opening their offices in Myanmar. In September 2017, Assam based Numaligarh Refinery signed an agreement³ with the Parami Energy Group of Myanmar for supplying petroleum products through Moreh-Tamu land border to Northern and Western Myanmar. In the month of December 2018, an Enterprise India show was held in Myanmar, in which a number of Indian SMEs also took part.

Vietnam

Defence and Security cooperation is a crucial pillar in the strategic partnership between India

and Vietnam. In May 2015, Defence Ministers of the two countries signed a "Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Relations -2015-2020". An agreement on cooperation between the Coast Guards of the two countries was also signed for mutual crime prevention efforts and the development of transnational cooperation. India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has affirmed that India would do all it can to assist Vietnam in defence and security domains, particularly in military technology, intelligence, personnel training and cyber security⁴. During PM Modi's visit to Vietnam in September 2016, India and Vietnam formally upgraded their relationship to 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.' The upgraded partnership is designed to provide a new direction to the bilateral cooperation. Both countries have signed another important agreement for Inter-Governmental Framework for the Exploration of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes. PM Modi announced a new line of credit US\$500 million to Vietnam for the procurement of defence equipment⁵.

Vietnam wants to build up a strong deterrence against China's rise and its aggressive moves in the South China Sea and India's defence capabilities can provide good support to Vietnam's defence needs. Indian Armed forces are cooperating with Vietnamese Armed Forces particularly the Navy, in the process of capacity building. India has already been providing assistance to Vietnam's navy through training to operate the new Russian-built submarines.

In the last four years, a number of significant bilateral visits took place between the two countries including the recent visit of President

of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind to Vietnam. Apart from defense, other emerging areas of cooperation between India and Vietnam are: energy, agriculture, agro-processing, textile, biotech, pharmaceuticals, minerals, marine and wood products etc. The bilateral trade between India and Vietnam has increased about ten folds in ten years and last year it touched US\$ 12.8 billion, which makes India one of the top trading partners of Vietnam.

Laos

In September 2016, PM Modi participated in the 11th East Asia and 14th India-ASEAN summit in Vientiane, Laos. On the sidelines of the summit, PM Modi held bilateral engagements too which included talks with Laotian Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith. Both sides have agreed that the bilateral trade between India and Laos is lower than its real potential and there is a great scope for the promotion of new trade opportunities among the business fraternity of both sides. In November 2018, the 9th Joint Commission Meeting⁶ on Bilateral Cooperation between the Laos and India was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, in which several avenues to enhance trade were discussed. India's engagement in Laos is centered on agriculture, irrigation, power, education and human resources capacity development through trainings.

India is facilitating the implementation of irrigation projects in Xayaboury, Vientiane and Savannakhet provinces, through a \$30.94 million Line of Credit and has approved \$72.44 million of fund for setting up a university of agriculture and training centres in Champasack province of

Laos. India has also extended Duty Free Tariff Preference Schemes⁷ to Lao PDR to encourage the exports of goods from Lao PDR to India.

Thailand

Thailand is one the key trading partners of India in ASEAN. The bilateral trade between India and Thailand is on an upward trajectory. In June 2016, during the visit of Prime Minister of Thailand to India⁸, the first India-Thailand Business Forum came up with recommendations to scale up business and investment opportunities between the two countries. Thai investment in manufacturing and infrastructure initiatives of India are quite significant. Apart from skill development, tourism, and film production there are some dedicated efforts going on to forge sister state/city relations between Assam and Chiang Mai as well as Surat and Surat Thani.

Cambodia

India and Cambodia share strong cultural and traditional links. Under 'Act East Policy' a satisfactory pace of development is going on to align this relation with the contemporary realities. India's role in human resource development and capacity building initiatives in Cambodia is significant and now the focus is on moving towards infrastructural development, conservation and the preservation of historical monuments. During Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Hun Sen's India visit in January 2018, the two countries signed four key agreements to enhance bilateral cooperation and to deal with mutual challenges of human trafficking⁹. India granted a \$36.92 million line of credit to facilitate the development

of Stung Sva Hab water resource development project. PM Modi has also announced the setting up of a centre of excellence related to Information Technology in Cambodia to train Cambodian youths. India is actively involved in the social development of Cambodia through Quick Impact Projects under the Mekong Ganga Cooperation initiative. PM Modi has decided to increase the number of annual Quick Impact Projects from five to ten and established a project development fund of Rs. 500 crore to expand industry and business links¹⁰.

Malaysia

Malaysia is the third largest trading partner of India in ASEAN and a key investment partner in the region. The two-way commercial engagements between both countries are traditionally strong which further strengthened with the signing of a bilateral comprehensive economic cooperation agreement in 2011, revised double taxation avoidance agreement in 2012, and the MoU on Customs Cooperation signed in 2013. Some Malaysian companies are actively participating in the infrastructure projects in different states of India. And other than the Indian businesses, there is a strong presence of Indian community in Malaysia too which plays the role of a significant bridge between both nations.

In the last few years, the bilateral trade between India and Malaysia has increased more than two folds and reached close to \$13 billion in 2017. There are growing synergies between the infrastructure companies of India and their Malaysian counterparts. In 2017 during the visit of former Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib

Razak, Indian and Malaysian infrastructure companies signed business deals of worth US\$36 billion, of which projects of \$32.13 billion will be implemented in Malaysia while \$3.86 billion worth of projects are planned to be executed in India. According to Malaysia's Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), as of 2017, Malaysian companies have completed 53 highway and road projects worth RM 9.3 billion (US\$ 2.84 billion) in India¹¹.

Transforming India offers tremendous opportunities for infra players of Malaysia, and for Indian construction companies, Malaysia is a crucial partner in the South East Asian market. According to some official stats, around 120 Indian companies, including 61 Indian joint ventures, 7 Indian Public Sector Undertakings, and 60 Indian IT companies are operating in or from Malaysia. The new areas of private sector cooperation between both sides are textiles, pharmaceuticals, glass containers, automobile associated industries, chemicals, biotechnology, healthcare, etc. In future through some active bilateral business forums such as Malaysia-India business council and India-Malaysia CEOs' Forum, these commercial exchanges are expected to further accelerate.

Indonesia

Indonesia is one of India's key neighbours in the region with which it shares a continuity of culture and civilization traditions. Today, both countries are focusing on enhancing bilateral trade exchanges too. The 2nd meeting of India-Indonesia CEO forum which was held in May 2018 yielded some concrete outcomes such as

setting up of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) office in Jakarta. In March 2018, the first ever India-Indonesia Infrastructure Forum meeting was organized by the Indian embassy in Jakarta in which a high-level delegation of nearly 30 plus Indian CEOs from infrastructure sector were present and some 80 Indonesian infrastructure companies took part. In the month of November 2018, an India-Indonesia Business forum (IIBF) was also held at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Following the state visit of Indonesian President Joko Widodo to India in December 2016 and the first-ever visit of PM Modi to Indonesia in May 2018, some successful bilateral ministerial-level defence and energy sector related exchanges also took place and the frequency of these exchanges suggest a mutual desire to enhance ties¹². For many years both countries are an active partner in naval exercises/patrolling and now there is a shared desire to deepen these maritime engagements in the light of changing dynamics of Indo-Pacific region.

Singapore

Singapore is India's leading economic partner and a key global strategic partner. Bilateral relations between India and Singapore have a strong cultural and commercial background and political relations are based on trust and appreciation for each other's potential. The economic cooperation between both countries is vibrant and spanned across all priority sectors of two sides. A good number of Indian companies are operating in and from Singapore which makes it India's crucial source as well as the destination

of investment. To further leverage these warm ties India and Singapore have signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

Singapore is known as the Fintech hub of the world. By keeping the growing global trends of Fintech innovations in mind, PM Modi has established a joint working group of Fintech in which the Monetary Authority of Singapore and Financial Services department of Ministry of Finance, India and other relevant stakeholders of both sides will work together to promote knowledge exchange and cooperation between the Fintech firms. In May 2018, at the 'Business Innovation and Community' event in Singapore, PM Modi has launched India's BHIM, RuPay and SBI app.

The Network for Electronic Transfers of Singapore (NETS) and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) also signed an agreement to extend Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) to recognize SGQR (Singapore Quick Response Code) for payments in Singapore. And India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) based cross-border remittance app (SBI app) will facilitate the remittances by Indian workers¹³. The partnership between NETS and NPCI and the launch of Indian digital payment apps in Singapore are some remarkable moves toward internationalization and branding of Indian digital payment frameworks.

Singapore is a global centre of tech and innovation and it is the only country in ASEAN with which India's exchanges are designed around the changing needs of our time. After Fintech, Smart Cities is another futuristic area where this

partnership is going well. Singapore government's Centre for Liveable Cities in partnership with the Town and Country Planning Organization of India has launched a programme to train 100 Indian officials in Singapore for effective planning and execution of India's Smart Cities Mission. During PM Modi's recent Singapore visit at the "India and Singapore: Stepping into Future" business event, some 13 agreements related to investment promotion, start-ups, FinTech, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and water management etc. were signed. The Indian government's India-Singapore Entrepreneurship Bridge (InSprenneur) initiative held two editions in 2018 and now Start-up Singapore has announced the Singapore-India Incubation Programme which aims to provide exposure and support for emerging start-ups keen to explore both markets.

Philippines

On 27th Jan 2019, a Philippine church got bombed by terrorists, in which more than 20 civilians were killed and many got brutally injured. Dealing with the ever-growing threats of radical Islamic terrorism is one of the mutual challenges for India and all ASEAN nations. On several occasions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has invited South East Asian nations to join hands in the fight against terrorism. The Defence and Security cooperation are the focal points of discussion in India-Philippines dialogues. The frequency of bilateral exchanges between both nations, which started with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Philippines to attend ASEAN and EAS Summits in the month of November 2017, has substantially increased. In

terms of trade, India is exploring opportunities for investments in Philippine markets in the sector of pharmaceutical, information technology, energy, and transportation, which in turn will lead to generation of thousands of local jobs. The India-Philippines bilateral trade stands at nearly \$2 billion in 2016-17, while India's exports amounted to \$1.487 billion and imports to \$494 million.

For more than five decades Indian companies and Filipino joint ventures are thriving in the Philippines such as India's Aditya Birla Group through its Indo Phil Textile Mills and the Ispat Group which owns and operate Philippines's largest plant with an investment of \$254 million. Recently GMR group Ltd joined hands with a local company Megawide for airport maintenance and upgrading related projects. Other Indian automobile giants such as Tata Motors and Mahindra, and IT/ITES companies like Wipro, TCS, L&T Infotech, Infosys, Tech Mahindra etc. are active in the Philippines markets. The Indian Pharma majors like Dabur Pharma, Lupin Ltd., Torrent Pharma, Zydus Cadila, and Claris Lifesciences have also set up a liaison office to promote their products in the Philippines market. And Kalpataru and Kamani Engineering Corporation are engaged in the transmission line projects in the Mindanao regions of the Philippines. A couple of Joint Working Groups have also been set up to explore two-way trade and investment opportunities¹⁴.

Brunei

The bilateral trade between India and Brunei has more than doubled over the last decade and stood at \$504 billion in 2016-17. In the last four

years, some efforts have been made to explore mutually beneficial trade opportunities through regular exchanges. In September 2016, Indian Chamber of commerce, Kolkata organized a 'Buyer Seller Meet and Exhibition' in Brunei, in which Indian companies from diverse sectors including heavy engineering, electronics, education, textiles, and handicrafts participated¹⁵. Apart from defence and security, energy is one of the most dominant themes of our bilateral exchanges with Brunei. In the month of November 2016, the Indian government has organized a high-level delegation meeting comprising of the foreign, trade, energy, and finance ministers of Brunei with the business leaders and their Indian ministerial counterparts in India, which yielded some positive outcomes.

In his op-ed piece "ASEAN-India: Shared Values, Common Destiny" which was published simultaneously on 26th January 2018 in all the leading dailies of the ASEAN member nations, Prime Minister Modi has said: "Indians have always looked East to see the nurturing sunrise and the light of opportunities. Now, as before, the East, or the Indo-Pacific Region, will be indispensable to India's future and our common destiny."

In the past, in an environment of turbulence and hostility, some responsible regional players of South East Asia laid the foundation of ASEAN, and united 10 countries for a common vision of economic growth and security. Today ASEAN can again play a defining role for a stable, prosperous and peaceful future of the region and the world.

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<https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29932/IndiaIndonesia+Joint+Statement+during+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Indonesia+May+30+2018>
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<https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29942/IndiaSingapore+Joint+Statement+during+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Singapore+June+01+2018>
 - 14 *India-Philippines Bilateral Brief, Embassy of India, Manila, Philippines*
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 - 15 *INDIA-BRUNEI BILATERAL BRIEF, High Commission of India, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam*
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Conference on Soft Power 2018

Aman Nair



Soft power is the ability of nations to shape the preferences and influence the behaviour of other nations through appeal and attraction as opposed to coercion. It represents one of the frameworks through which India can understand and influence its role in the international order. In this backdrop, India Foundation's Center for Soft Power hosted the first international Conference on Soft Power that aimed to engage in discussions on the need for an India-centric discourse on soft power, how to maximise and deploy soft power assets, particularly in the view of furthering national, regional and global goals, and India's rise as a soft power nation. The Conference was organised over three days on 17-19 December, 2018 in New

Delhi and saw the participation of 63 speakers from 16 countries and over 250 delegates, deliberate on various themes including public diplomacy, yoga, cinema, digital storytelling, Ayurveda, cuisine, performing arts, art craft and design, education, tourism, spirituality, language and literature, and museums and soft power. The conference was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri Venkaiah Naidu. The conference was hosted in collaboration with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), with the Center for Public Diplomacy of the University of Southern California and Nalanda University as the lead academic partners.

DAY I – 17th DECEMBER, 2018

Pre-Conference Workshop

Prior to the inaugural session, a workshop was held for pre-registered participants, that looked at digital storytelling as a means of soft power. The interactive workshop was conducted by Ms. Stacy Ingber, Assistant Director for Programming and Events, USC Centre on Public Diplomacy and Ms. Amara Aguilar, Associate Professor, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

The workshop began with Ms. Aguilar giving an account of how devices such as mobile phones have become the primary source of data storage, media consumption and communication across the world. She pointed out that as technology improves, people are attempting to find new and alternative ways of interacting with their audiences in a more engaging manner. She outlined the specifics of different target audiences and how the

data they receive differs based on factors such as age, likes and dislikes, and how this in turn is used by different social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, with each one attempting to cater to a specific type of content and a specific audience.

She stressed on the need to think of content circulation and virality in a visual manner. The chance of data being spread across a large number of people is increased significantly when accompanied with visuals. Therefore, it is important that all entities, whether countries or individuals, understand the power of visuals when it comes to sharing a message or data online. In terms of soft power, this is important because it can affect the way a country tells its story to a larger audience. Furthermore, she pointed out the importance of understanding the platform on which the data is being shared, and how that affects the reach of that data – going on to discuss the demographics, purposes and downsides of



platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, etc. Finally, the participants were shown some of the tools available for them to ensure that their content reaches as wide a viewership as possible and were able to create a “story” in a hands-on manner.

Inaugural Session

The Chief Guest of the inaugural session was the Hon’ble Vice President of India, Shri Venkaiah Naidu. The session began with an address by Shri Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, President of ICCR, who said that “soft power is essentially about mind space and that is where it differs from hard power. Soft power is not about military might, and the pursuance of soft power helps in withering away of borders.” He also stressed on the fact that most issues arise from a lack of understanding between people and praised the ability of soft power to create harmony instead of division.

In his inaugural address, the Hon’ble Vice President spoke about how India can create its own discourse using soft power as since ancient times, India has been a centre of culture and spirituality. He stressed that India never aspired to be a hegemonic power and always believed in peaceful co-existence. For this, India has always used its soft power as a tool for the welfare and betterment of the society as a whole. He said that from yoga to spirituality, India can use its soft power to reach out to all segments of the global society. He also stated that India, being an ancient civilization, has much to offer culturally to the world serving as a link between these nations.

The Hon’ble Vice President’s inaugural address was followed by a riveting conversation between Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, a yogi, mystic



and founder of Isha Foundation, and Mr. Subhash Kak, a scientist, author and Regents professor at Oklahoma State University, USA. The stimulating conversation revolved around science and spirituality and how we can shape a society with seeking as the highest goal. On India’s soft power, Sadhguru said, “If we bring this one thing, that the highest aspect in the world is seeking the truth and liberation, you will naturally have the fragrance of this culture everywhere. It is a natural consequence of seeking”. Sadhguru also addressed the gathering on artificial intelligence and the future of the society, the role of education, and the possibility of bringing back Sanskrit as a mainstream language in India.

DAY II – 18th DECEMBER, 2018

Session 1: Panel Discussion – Cuisine

The first session of the day was a panel discussion on “Indian cuisine as soft power”. The discussion was chaired by Advaita Kala. Chef Vikas Khanna, a restaurateur and judge of MasterChef India began the “delicious” discussion by stating that Indian cuisine has now begun to establish itself in the world food market. He



narrated his experiences from New York and how people were oblivious to the depth and complexities of Indian food, which made it difficult for Indian Chefs to break into the market. However, now as the average American consumer is becoming more aware about Indian food, there is a growing audience and market for it. He also pointed out that due to the lack of India's presence in food events, it is difficult to promote the cuisine to an international market, but this trend has been changing positively.

The next speaker was Mr Rohit Khattar, Chairman of Old World Hospitality, the group that runs the restaurants at Habitat Centre, New Delhi and the world famous Indian Accent restaurants. He spoke about how he took Indian food to London in 1997 where he observed that most chefs at Indian restaurants were Bangladeshis serving 'typical gravies'. However, over the years, modern Indian restaurants have come up, that provide a different experience of Indian food than the stereotypical dishes such as Indian Accent that have found a niche audience in cities like New York.

Mr Manjit Singh Gill, President of Indian Federation of Culinary Association, pointed out the inherent difference between the way India and the West view food. He said the West views food as a commodity while in India we view it as a manifestation of God. He pointed out that most consumers of Indian food are unaware of the diversity of the cuisine and restaurants abroad are not innovative in their menus, only offering the typical butter chicken masala and dals. He stressed on the inherent Ayurvedic and wellness properties of Indian food, and how that can serve as a point of entry for many people to Indian cuisine.

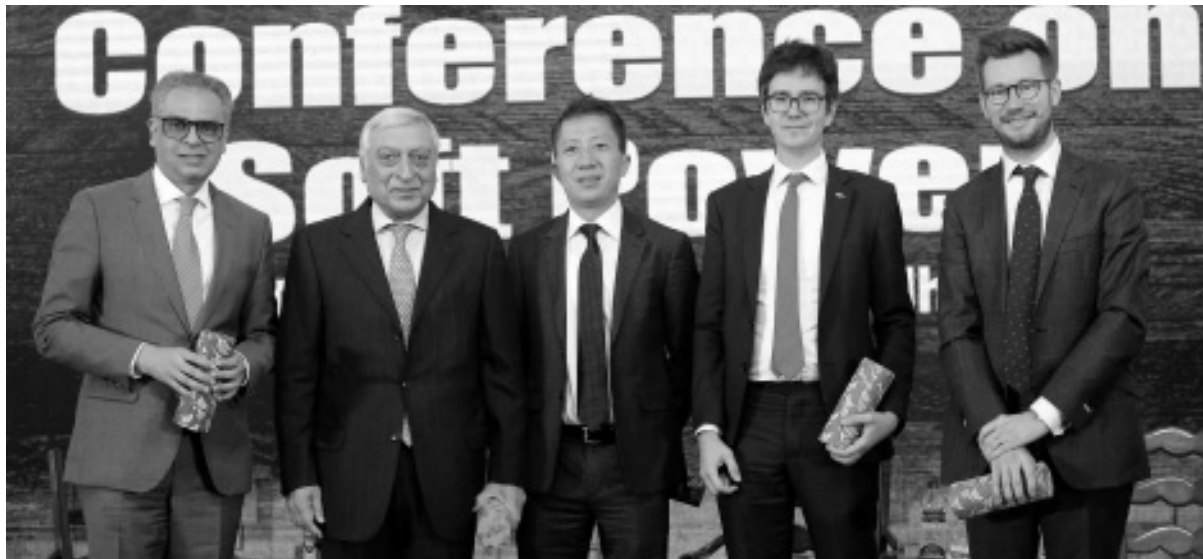
Session 2: Keynote Address and Panel Discussion – Public Diplomacy

The session on "Public Diplomacy" began with a Keynote Address by Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations at New York. Ambassador Akbaruddin gave the audience an overview of the present state of Indian soft power and noted that large scale multinational institutions such as the

United Nations serve as assets of soft power, as they allow India to interact with multiple nations at once, and dictate the manner in which it is perceived at the international level. He continued by highlighting some of India's significant contributions to the international order, and how these contributions must be better communicated so as to maximise Indian soft power. He cited the example of Hansa Mehta who was instrumental in shaping the wording of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from "all men are born free and equal" to the more gender sensitive, "all human beings are born free and equal". He also spoke of the little-spoken about role that Indian peacekeeping forces are playing and said that these are instances where "we got the implementation right but did not take credit". He pointed to the success of yoga at the international level, and projects such as the International Day of Yoga, as striking the balance between implementation and communication.

The Keynote Address was followed by a panel discussion on "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power"

that was moderated by Amb. Kanwal Sibal, former Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. The first panelist, Dr. Jay Wang, Director of the USC Center of Public Diplomacy, spoke of the need to shift to a more strategic form of public diplomacy in the age of soft power and technology. He said that the aim of public diplomacy should not be to simply convey a country's message but also its culture and its values, thereby creating an effective soft power tool. Mr Kieran Drake, Minister Counsellor: Head of Politics and Press, at the British High Commission in India, spoke next and outlined the challenges and successes that the United Kingdom government faced through its GREAT campaign. The campaign was a coordinated attempt to use media as a means of communicating British culture and soft power throughout the world. The final panelist, Mr. Jonathan McClory, author of SoftPower 30, spoke of his experience in creating the SoftPower 30 report, and on India's ranking in the list. He pointed out that India was not excluded from the list, but fared poorly on many criteria despite



having a rich culture, and thereby was not part of the top 30. He shed light on the methodology of the paper, and said that while India has enormous cultural capital, it falls short in other key areas that bring down its ranking despite having the potential to be an influential country in terms of soft power.

Session 3: Panel Discussion – Museums

The next Panel Discussion was themed around “Museums as Soft Power” and was chaired by Ms Masooma Rizvi, an art consultant. The first presenter was Ms Ngaire Blankenberg, Cultural Consultant and Co-Editor ‘Cities, Museums and Soft power’ who describes herself as a “museum doctor”. She outlined that need to revisit and think of soft power differently, away from Joseph Nye’s conception of soft power, which is outdated in some aspects, especially in the way it views museums as a soft power tool. She said that museums are representative symbols and help shape narratives while also acting as a public space. However, the current perception of museums is that of being for an elite crowd, and so to truly harness the soft power potential of museums, it is essential that visitor services must be upgraded and special attention must be given to empowerment of the staff. She noted that museums must be experiences to engage the audience and to effectively tell its story, citing examples of museums from India to Spain.

The next presenter was Ms. Deepika Ahlawat, Museum Curator and Art Consultant who is based in London. She spoke about how museums help preserve colonialism by telling the story from a Euro-centric angle and highlighted how Western museums rarely repatriate objects they stole from

the colonized country. In a way, museums are a continuation of colonialism and shape narratives from their viewpoint. Notable exceptions are some new museums that are sprouting up in former colonized countries that are willing to tell stories from their perspectives and thereby can act as an effective tool of soft power.

The last presenter, Ms. Nalina Gopal, Curator at India Heritage Centre at Singapore, outlined how India’s cultural influence in South East Asia, and the high levels of Indian immigration, has positively affected India’s perception in Singapore. She said it was this perception that facilitated the creation of the Indian Heritage Centre, which aims to provide visitors with an understanding of India and its roots.

Session 4: Panel Discussion – Performing Arts

The post lunch panel discussed the role of performing arts in soft power and was chaired by Ms. Rukmini Vijayakumar, a Bharatanatyam dancer. The first panellist, Ms. Mira Kaushik, Director, Akademi London, stressed on the need for collaborative productions that blend classical Indian styles with western stories, and vice versa, as these would provide a relatable entry point for audiences around the world to Indian performing arts. The next panellist, Mr. Jonathan Hollander, Director of Battery Dance, New York noted the power of India and how its artists acted as cultural ambassadors. He remarked that the depth and variety that exists in Indian performing arts is what makes it unique, and separates it from all other countries. He also stressed the need for investment at the state, national and international level to truly harness the power of Indian performing arts. The

final panellist, Ms. Sharon Wezer, Director of the Indian Dance Europe at the Netherlands, spoke about her work in creating the 'Indian Dance Festival' in the Netherlands, as a way of introducing Indian dance forms to a Dutch audience. She spoke about how her dance group, looked to combine elements of familiar western classical arts with unfamiliar Indian dance forms so as to reach a wider audience.

Session 5: Panel Discussion – Art, Craft & Design

The next session on Art, Craft and Design was chaired by Ms. Jaya Jaitly, Founder, Dastkari Haat Samiti and the panelists included Mr. Rahul Goswami, UNESCO expert on intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region; Ms. Shelly Jyoti, Visual Artist and Independent Curator; Ms. Valerie Wilson, Author and Founder Moti Clothing Company; Mr. Robert Borden,; and Ms. Gaia Franchetti, owner, IndoRoman.

The first presenter, Ms. Gaia Franchetti,

owner of IndoRoman in Italy, noted that Indian textiles, and Khadi in particular, have the ability to form strong cultural and soft power relations with other nations. She said that given the role that Khadi has played in Indian history, it can carry a clear Indian identity to numerous countries across the world. Ms. Shelly Jyoti, a visual artist from Delhi, spoke about how art can act as a means of introducing people to India's values and its culture. She spoke of how we must be using resources such as Khadi and Ajrakh to promote Gandhian philosophy around the world. The growing desire for handmade commodities and organic goods provides Indian textiles with the perfect opportunity to reach a larger audience than ever before. Ms. Valerie Wilson, the founder of Moti Clothing Company in Australia, was the next presenter. She shed light on the "charming irregularities", primacy of relationships, hard work and continuous learning that Indian clothing conveys to foreign audiences. She also spoke about her efforts in marketing Indian clothing abroad,



and attempting to overcome the negative perceptions that it carried. Her presentation was followed by a presentation by Mr. Robert Borden, Vice President of Enrolment, California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), who pointed out how institutions like CalArts act as the incubators for creative talent. These institutions he said offer artists a platform to express their art on the global stage and to a wider audience and thus further soft power. Mr. Rahul Goswami, UNESCO expert on Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific region, spoke about how crafts are a manifestation of systematic knowledge, and the efforts of UNESCO to put in place structural and institutional support for crafts. He said that India must learn from other countries and take greater steps to protect and advertise its diverse crafts.

Session 6: Panel Discussion – Yoga

The session on Yoga as Indian soft power was chaired by Dr. H. R. Nagendra, President, Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (S-VYASA) and began with a presentation by Mr Gopi Kallayil, the Chief Evangelist of Brand Marketing at Google. He narrated his experience in bringing yoga, *bhajans* and *kirtans* to Google. He described how yoga has started to be used as a means of team building, and how it has found its way into numerous Google offices around the world, with many of them even sending employees to India for yoga retreats. Next, Ms Nouf Marwaai, a Padma Shri awardee, recounted her experiences as a child, where yoga helped her overcome numerous health issues. She was inspired by this power of yoga, and began to teach yoga in Saudi Arabia. In doing so she says that “Yoga has helped Indian and Saudis rediscover the bond that the two

countries have shared since time immemorial”. The final presenter, Ms Suhag Shukla, Executive Director of the Hindu American Foundation, outlined the need for sharing yoga with others in a way that is relatable but at the same time does not delink yoga from Hindu thought and Indianness. She said this can be done through teaching people that yoga is more than just a set of *asanas* and that although it is a part of Hindu thought, you need not be Hindu to practice it.

Session 7: Presentation – Cinema

Mr. Bharat Bala, a film director, producer and screenwriter, presented on Indian cinema as a potent soft power tool. He gave the audience a first look into India Film Collective, a project that he is working on to disseminate the “untold story” of India through 100 short films. The audience viewed three such short films. Mr Bala said that film is a more powerful medium in telling narratives of India, than typical or traditional ways.

DAY III – 19th DECEMBER, 2018

Session 1: Panel Discussion - Ayurveda

The Panel Discussion on Ayurveda was chaired by Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. The panel began with Dr Vasant Lad, Director of the Ayurvedic Institute in the USA, giving an account of his experiences in taking Ayurveda to the United States, and opening the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque. Next, Dr Abhishek Joshi, an Ayurveda doctor at Universitas Hindu, Indonesia spoke about the long-standing link between India and Indonesia and how Ayurveda has had a large influence on the culture of Indonesia, and Bali in



specific. He spoke about *Usada Bali*, an indigenous form of medicine practiced in Bali – and that the word “Usada” is in fact derived from Sanskrit word *aushada* meaning medicine. Next, Mr Rajiv Vasudevan, the Founder-CEO of AyurVAID, outlined how the personalised nature of Ayurveda can fill the void left by modern medicine, which is currently very impersonal. He said Western medicine treats symptoms and not patients, unlike Ayurveda which focus on the specificities of each patient. Finally, Dr. Ramkumar Kutty, Co-founder of Punarnava Ayurveda in Coimbatore, emphasised the need to embrace Ayurveda within India before it can be properly harnessed and exported as an asset of Indian soft power.

Session 2: Panel Discussion - Education

The panel discussion on education was chaired by Prof. Sunaina Singh, Vice-chancellor, Nalanda University and Vice President, ICCR. The

first panelists, Ms. Tatiana Shaumyan, Head, Centre for Indian Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow expressed her gratitude to be discussing Indian soft power, as traditionally the only area of focus when studying Indian power has been hard power. Mr. Shaunaka Rishi Das, Director, Oxford Center for Hindu Studies, spoke about the universal nature of education as soft power, and how India can contribute by helping define new perspectives on not only what to think but also how to think. He also added that the success of Indian education globally is based on India’s own hard work, and that the onus lies on India to define how it is to be studied. Prof. Subhash Kak, Regents Professor, Oklahoma State University, spoke about the fundamental difference in current dominant global thought perspective and the Indian perspective, and how it is the Indian perspective that can take the world forward given the technological advancements that are underway. Prof. Ramdas Lamb, Professor,

Department of Religion, University of Hawaii, outlined the need to ensure that courses on India should be restructured so as to allow for Indian culture to play a more dominant role in the classroom, including even teaching in Indian languages and not only English. Finally, Mr. Come Carpentier De Gourdon, Convener, Editorial Board, World Affairs Journal noted that the current policy is to resist the Indic or Bharatiya perspective. He stressed the need for an international alliance on education to clear misconceptions on India and Hinduism.

Session 3: Panel Discussion – Tourism

The session on “Tourism as Soft Power” was chaired by Ms. Anuradha Goyal, an author and founder of the blog, IndiTales. She began the session by pointing out tourism’s power in influencing the minds of people around the world, by providing them with shared experiences. Next,

Mr Manish Sinha, Founder of Unhotel spoke on the power of tourism to take not only the essentials, but also the essence of a place, and translate it through a real story. He gave the example of a grandmother in New Delhi who has hosted people from over 60 countries, telling an authentic story of India, and also added that it is the duty of every Indian to do their bit as a storyteller when promoting Indian soft power. Finally, Mr Nick Booker, Co-founder of IndoGenius, spoke about how bringing foreigners to India can challenge the outdated stereotypes of India that exist. He stressed the need to introduce people to the new India that is emerging in the era of technology and startups – one where India has become an intellectual superpower.

Session 4: Panel Discussion - Spirituality

This panel discussion was chaired by Dr. David Frawley, Founder, American Institute





of Vedic Studies, who spoke on how India is not a nation of just any spirituality, but rather is one defined by Dharmic traditions. He notes that this Dharmic tradition has now begun to spread globally in many forms, and that this spread of Indic traditions has been India's biggest source of soft power. Next, Ms. Dena Merriam, Author and Founder of the Global Peace Initiative of Women, Merriam recounted her story of when she first came to India, and how she came to be a Hindu. She spoke about the ongoing commercialisation of Dharma and how it needs to be stopped so as to not lose the essence of what Dharma is, and eventually spirituality as Indian soft power. Next, Mr. Christopher Quilkey, Member of Editorial Board, Mountain Path, stated that moving forward in the realm of spirituality Hinduism must ask itself the question of, what does it do best? He spoke on the influence that Hinduism has had in every field of Indian life and even on other religions, and pointed out the need to ensure that this knowledge is transmitted to upcoming

generations of people. Ven. Banagala Thero, President of the Mahabodhi Society, Sri Lanka, spoke on the historical influence India has had in the world, saying that Indian soft power stretches back to the days of Ashoka and Kanishka – when Indian word dharma was the single principle that defined the foundation of all Asian societies. Finally, Ms Maria Wirth, an author, spoke on the need for India to embrace the spiritual concepts that it has provided to the world, such as concepts of rebirth and Karma, that provide alternatives to western religious ideals and spoke of her own experiences of a German discovering Hinduism.

Session 5: Panel Discussion - Language & Literature

The final session of the Conference on Soft Power was "Language and Literature" that was chaired by Prof Makarand Paranjape, Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. He began the session by highlighting the immense impact that India has had on literature across



history. He points out that India's contributions have not only been in Indian languages, but that India has contributed vastly in areas of foreign literature such as English literature and Persian Literature. Prof. Paul Palmarozza, Director Sanskrit at St James spoke about the power of Sanskrit as one of the key elements of Indian soft power. He spoke about his experiences in bringing Sanskrit to the West through Sanskrit at St James where thousands of students have benefited from the knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian literature in the West. Prof. Chirapat Prapandvidya, Professor and Head of Department of Sanskrit Studies, Silpakorn University at Thailand, spoke on the historical literary ties between India and Thailand. He spoke on the influence of Sanskrit on the local language of Pali, and of how Indian literature and stories influenced many of the works of local Thai writers and storytellers. Mr. Robert Arnett, an author, recounted his efforts in bringing his works which outlined stories about India to classrooms in the United States, so that students studying

about India would get a more realistic perspective of what India is. He said India has to preserve its traditions and knowledge and not seek to emulate the West but rather serve as a model for them. Next, Paramacharya Sadasivanathaswami, Editor in Chief, Hinduism Today, Hawaii, spoke on his experience in bringing India and Indic thoughts into the literary mainstream through his work at Hinduism Today, and the struggles that they have faced in doing so. His presentation gave the audience a visual insight into Hinduism in the West and how India can use its spirituality as a soft power tool. Finally, Mr. Oscar Pujol, an Indologist from Spain, noted the fact that throughout history Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature had played an important role in defining the knowledge held by the world.

He pointed to a second renaissance for Sanskrit that took place in Europe, which influenced much of modern linguistics. He went on to say that there is a need for a third Sanskrit renaissance in the 21st century.



Roundtable Discussions on Aspects of Soft Power

Aman Nair

The build up to India Foundation's inaugural conference on soft power was marked by a series of roundtable discussions, on each of the individual themes that were to be discussed at the conference – Arts, Crafts and Design; Ayurveda, Cinema, Cuisine, Language and Literature, Museums, Performing Arts, Spirituality, Tourism, Education and Yoga. The roundtables covered how a specific theme has to be presented and discussed at the conference with respect to its role in promoting Indian soft power.

The first roundtable to be held was the roundtable on Yoga, held on 23rd September, 2018, at Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Chennai. The roundtable focused on how Yoga has become one of the most dominant Indian cultural exports in the modern world. The roundtable looked at how despite its apparent success, the popularity of yoga has some underlying issues – such as the commercialisation of Yoga. The participants focused on how India can properly leverage the global popularity of yoga for its own political and monetary gain. They also tried to address the problem of how India can accurately communicate the true essence of what yoga is to the world, to counteract the current, commercialised versions of yoga that exist abroad.

The roundtable on Performing Arts was held on 2nd October, 2018, at Lshva studio, Bangalore. The roundtable was attended by practitioners of numerous art forms, with the aim of determining means by which Indian performing arts can be

successfully taken abroad. The participants stressed the importance of collaborative efforts between Indian and foreign artists as a way to make classical Indian art forms more initially relatable to foreign audiences. They also focused on how both government and private entities must take greater initiative in supporting Indian artists, both home and abroad, by facilitating them to perform at larger international venues and festivals.

The Roundtable on Ayurveda was held on 11th October, 2018, at India Foundation's office in New Delhi. The roundtable examined some of the current obstacles that Ayurveda faces as it attempts to become recognised in foreign societies. The participants identified the need to create a singular narrative for Ayurveda that is echoed by all parties – government and private institutions – consistently. They also discussed the potential role that Ayurveda can play in such things as Japanese elder care, where it can serve as an alternative to existing western medicines.

The next roundtable was on the topic of Arts, Crafts and Design. The roundtable was held on 13th October, 2018, in New Delhi. The roundtable looked at how Indian arts, crafts and design can properly tap into an ever growing global market. It focused on the growing trend towards organic and handmade materials and goods, and how Indian handicrafts are in the perfect space to take advantage of this trend.

The roundtable on Language and Literature was held on 16th October, 2018, at South Avenue,

New Delhi. The roundtable looked at Indian soft power through the lens of India's myriad of literature as well as through the lens of India's multiple languages. The roundtable focused India's contributions to literature in both indigenous and foreign languages. It also looked at how the teaching of Indian languages like Sanskrit can serve as a facet of Indian soft power, and how subsequently Sanskrit literature can serve as a doorway to wider Indian culture.

The Roundtable on Spirituality was organised on 21st October, 2018, at the Chinmaya Heritage Centre, Chennai. The roundtable looked to tackle the issue of how to communicate the core values of Indian spirituality effectively and accurately to a foreign audience. The participants spoke of the need to ensure that Indian spirituality and its teachings are not warped or appropriated when sent abroad. They spoke on how Spirituality can serve as the perfect gateway to truly understand India and its culture, since spirituality lies at the heart of much of India's culture.

The Roundtable on Tourism was held on 23rd October, 2018, at South Avenue, New Delhi. The roundtable noted India's growing tourism sector

as having the potential to become one of its most important soft power tools. The roundtable identified a number of solutions to address how to grow India's tourism sector. The participants suggested measures such as streamlining the visa procedure and making the information more easily available, and creating promotional campaigns based on the testimonials of real tourists who have visited India.

The Roundtable on Cuisine was conducted on 23rd November, 2018, at South Avenue, New Delhi. The roundtable focused on issues facing Indian cuisine abroad. They highlighted problems, such as failures in marketing Indian food to foreign audiences, the outdated nature of Indian food abroad, and the failure of culinary schools in India to educate students on traditional Indian cooking techniques.

The participants looked to provide solutions to these problems, such as encouraging fusion between Indian and foreign cuisines, so as to act as a gateway to foreign audiences. They also suggested promoting not just food but also specific ingredients such as ghee and turmeric for their medicinal properties.



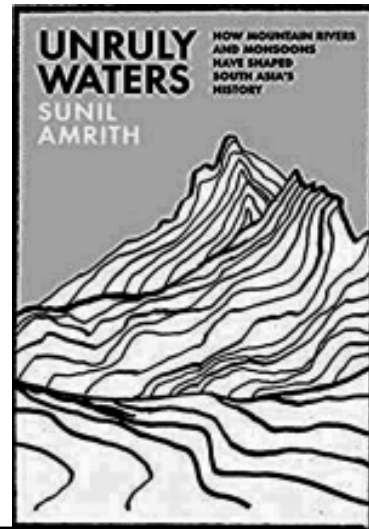
Unruly Waters: How Mountain Rivers and Monsoons Have Shaped South Asia's History

Author: Sunil Amrith

Publisher: Allen Lane, 2018, PP 416

Price: Rs.799/-

*Book Review by: K. Raka Sudhakar Rao**



The centrality of water to South Asian civilizational dynamics is indisputable. This is more so for India, where rivers starting from the evanescent Saraswati to eternally inspiring Ganga to the Godavari and Kaveri down south, not to speak of the mighty and ‘maha-baahu’ (deep-chested and huge-armed) Brahmaputra, inspired the course of history. Indians are essentially river people. People identify themselves as “Chora Ganga Kinare Wallah” or “Saryu Paree” or “Saraswats” or even ‘Sindhis’. The rains, rivers, coasts and the seas have shaped the history of not just India, but the whole of South Asia.

In South Asia, water has spurred dreams of political freedom and economic development. This quest has egged them to re-engineer the flow of water through a slew of dams, barrages, reservoirs and aqueducts regardless of the environmental consequences. It has also catalysed inter-state and inter-country rivalry for control over water resources. Thus, water in India has both been a great cultural unifier as well as a nasty political divider. Water is also politis.

Through his book *Unruly Waters: How Mountain Rivers and Monsoons Have Shaped South Asia's History*, Mehra Family professor of South Asian Studies at the Harvard and MacArthur fellow, Sunil Amrith presents a compelling history of India over the last two centuries from the perspective of the deep interplay of its people and their tryst with water and of course, the weather. Amrith, whose earlier book *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and Fortunes of Migrants* too talks about India and its tryst with water, continues his study of governing influence of monsoon in the current book too. He makes the profoundly significant statement that the Indian Ocean was a weather factory: the source of India's climate. The Indian subcontinent “is the crucible of the monsoon and more than 70% of India's total annual rainfall occurs during those three months. Despite a vast expansion of irrigation since independence in 1947, 60% of India's agriculture is rain-fed” the author points out.

India presents a great paradox as waters that have profoundly affected the contours of its history

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so much, deliver only 4 per cent of world's fresh waters and provide fresh water to just 14 per cent of its population. But it is this water that funded the British affluence and supported its military might. He recounts how British masters' avaricious quest for revenues even in times of acute famines midwifed by truant monsoons wrought catastrophe on the country. The other side of this story is the efforts of visionary European mandarins who tried to master India's water map of the country. This is another typical Indian paradox. Even while fighting the hegemonistic British rule, Indias venerated modern day Bhageeraths like Sir Arthur Cotton, who helped materialise marvels like irrigation projects, dams and an enviable reticulum of canals to turn a poor region into "an expanse of irrigated fertility," to paraphrase the author. Similarly, the Himalayan mountain range disgorges 10 rivers that serve a fifth of humanity, running through 16 countries and fed by innumerable tributaries. The Ganga basin has thus become the hub that fuelled economics not just in South Asia but also in the Mekang region.

The book, a result of eight long years of scouring through the dusty archives stacked away in the labyrinthine storehouses of Imperialist British era, also chronicles the financial felicity of Indian economy catalysed by its maritime activity during the 16th Century. He writes: "Indian economy absorbed 20 per cent of the world's silver between 1600 and 1800. Throughout South East Asia's era of commercial expansion in the 16th Century, Indian traders from the coasts of Gujarat, Madras and Bengal shipped cloth to Pegu and Tennasserim in Burma, to the

thriving port of Melaka on the Malay peninsula and to the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java, the author says.

He also tells us how the Moghuls and Sher Shah Suri improvised the already existing irrigation systems and how the Britishers stabilised the same systems using the modern technology during the 18th Century. Even after Independence, this quest to 'free India from the seasons' continued and Nehru termed these big irrigation projects "the new temples of India." "Dams were the single largest form of public investment in modern India. Swallowing considerably more government expenditure than health care or education More than any other technology, they promised a mastery of nature," writes Amrith. But he is also not oblivious to the perils of big projects. He also laments that among the powers was a lamentable and "a willful blindness to the consequences of repeated attempts to conquer nature," says Amrith. Sunil Amrith warns about the ecological impact of the 'disease of gigantism' sweeping through the South Asia. He argues that big dams may not always be the panacea for India's water woes.

Amrith also talks about the positive and constructive role being played by NGOs and civil society organisations in efficient water management. In the last chapter titled 'Stormy Horizons,' he talks about initiatives such as the 'Third Pole's Mapping Platforms, which imparts an ability to envision the risks involved in water management. The taut narration has a lyrical lilt to it and makes this book a fascinating read. This original work of history will go a long way in improving our understanding of India's water systems.



Just Released



India's Foreign Policy

Toward Resurgence

Dhruv Katoch

The primary role of a nation's foreign policy is the maintenance and preservation of National Interest. How a nation conceives its national interest and seeks to protect and promote it through its foreign policy must hence be a matter of public importance and discourse. This book expounds upon the various facets of India's foreign policy, tracing its roots from the times of Chanakya, millennia ago, and then expanding upon the post independence phase of India's foreign policy.

Chanakya is credited with crafting perhaps the very first treatise on statecraft, sometime in the fourth century BCE. India thus has a rich legacy in dealing with foreign powers towards the furtherance of national interest. Post independence, India's foreign policy was crafted by its first prime minister and since then has evolved over the last seven decades, maintaining at one level a distinct continuum even as it transferred from one Government to the other.

This book brings out the dynamics in play in India's foreign policy and offers a holistic understanding of the factors which have shaped its growth. Covering a vast swathe, it delves on India's strategic culture and security concerns, economic growth, soft power, and relations with the neighbourhood and the world.

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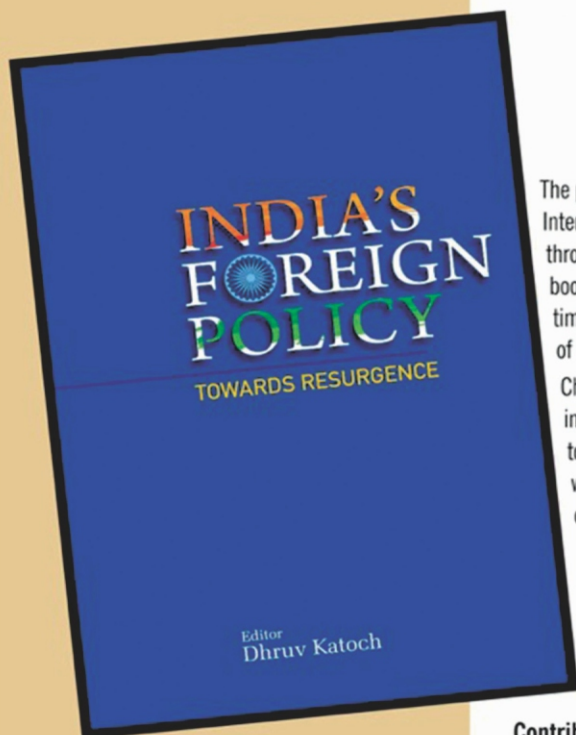
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