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SEEMA SANGHOSH

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BHARAT KE
PRATHAM GAON



राजनाथ सिंह
RAJNATH SINGH



रक्षा मंत्री
भारत
DEFENCE MINISTER
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संदेश

मुझे बताया गया है कि सीमा जागरण मंच के मुखपत्र सीमा संघोष के वार्षिक विशेषांक 'भारत के प्रथम गाँव' का प्रकाशन हो रहा है। राष्ट्र की सुरक्षा में निश्चित ही 'प्रथम गाँवों' का योगदान अतुलनीय है। इनके विकास से राष्ट्रीय-सुरक्षा का विशेष संबंध है।

मुझे यह भी अवगत कराया गया है कि सीमा संघोष पत्रिका, देश की सीमा सुरक्षा से जुड़े सांगोपांग विषयों को लेकर जनजागरण का महत्वपूर्ण कार्य करती रही है। प्रथम गाँव, राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा की प्रथम पंक्ति में महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रखते हैं। इस दृष्टि से सीमा संघोष पत्रिका का यह वार्षिक विशेषांक एक अत्यंत सराहनीय प्रयास है।

सीमा संघोष के संपादक मंडल और इससे सम्बद्ध सभी कार्मिकों को अपनी शुभकामनाएं और बधाई देता हूँ और मैं उपरोक्त पत्रिका के सफल प्रकाशन की कामना करता हूँ।

“जय हिंद”


(राजनाथ सिंह)

नई दिल्ली
12 फरवरी, 2024

शुभकामना ग्रंथ

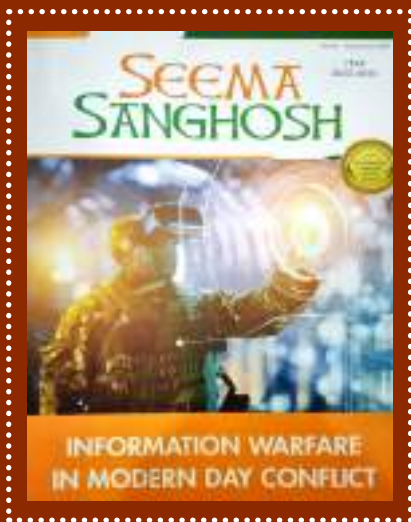


मुझे अवगत कराया गया है कि प्रत्येक वर्ष की भांति इस वर्ष भी सीमा जागरण मंच मुखपत्र सीमा संघोष के वार्षिक विशेषांक का प्रकाशन हो रहा है। इस बार का विषय “भारत के प्रथम गाँव” सीमा सुरक्षा की दृष्टि से बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण विषय है। सीमा क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले हमारे प्रथम गाँव के नागरिकों का सीमा सुरक्षा में बहुत ही अहम योगदान रहता है।

मैं सीमा संघोष की पूरी टीम को इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय को जन-जन तक पहुंचाने के लिए उनके प्रयास की सराहना करते हुए इस अंक के सफल प्रकाशन के लिए अपनी शुभकामना प्रेषित करता हूँ। मुझे विश्वास है की सीमा संघोष की टोली भविष्य में भी सीमा सुरक्षा को लेकर जनजागृति के लिए ऐसे सम्बंधित विषयों पर सजगता से सभी देशवासियों को जागृत करने का प्रयास करती रहेगी।

(आलोक)

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“Last” and “first”, if we do a literal analysis of these two words, we will find that the word “last” implies being the last in the row, in other words, the unimportant thing that gets the attention last. From the point of view of border security, till now all the border villages were referred as the last villages. These last villages were always neglected by the former governments as being of no use. There was a lack of infrastructure and the roads were not built with the idea

that the troops of the enemy country could not use these roads to enter our country. For these reasons, migration from border areas has always been a big issue that we have only heard about so far. But the policymakers of that time never considered the matter or took any initiative to provide a solution.

How fair would it be to blame the government? Are we not equally responsible as countrymen who live in the plains? We have never shown the same awareness about border security or border residents as we show on other issues. We hardly discuss these important

EDITORIAL

issues related to the security of the country. In our daily life, we are concerned about politics, movies, new iPhone models, holidays abroad, but we hardly talk about the challenges faced by our citizens living in the border areas. National security is not merely a matter for the forces but we should also understand the acuteness of this issue. The desolation of the border villages, the encroachment of the frontier, the cunning tricks of the enemy country and the least known part of the land are not as close to us as they should be.

Now the last village on the border will be referred as the first village. It began from Mana village on the Uttarakhand border. This decision is not just to change the name but to change our outlook, to change our attitude towards these areas. The word “first” indicates the priority, the determination of the Government to stop the migration from these villages. It indicates the strong intention of the government to deliver infrastructure here. Our border people are called the First Line of Civil Defence and they are the eyes and ears of our border guards. It is often said that as our language and culture expands, so do our boundaries, and that is why it is important for them to be there intact. This decision to refer these villages as First Villages will not only give an opportunity to the people living in these villages to be proud, but it will also motivate all countrymen to enhance mutual coordination and harmony with them by showing their importance.

As the types of wars are transforming, along with information warfare, there is a new strategy called psychological warfare, characterized by winning without fighting that is, defeating an enemy country psychologically without even fighting a war. China’s three warfare strategies include legal warfare, information warfare as well as psychological warfare. We often face these kinds of Chinese wars on the Indo-China border. It is a part of this strategy to stop our herdsmen from entering our own land by repeatedly saying that this is the territory of China. By planting Chinese flags in Indian territories, China tries to gain a psychological advantage. This decision of referring the last village as the first village will also serve the most urgent function of sending a strong message to the enemy countries. This psychological message of how important our border areas are for us will reach all the countries and the development works being done by the government in these areas will connect these remote areas to the entire country.

In this special edition of “Seema Sanghosh”, we will talk about some of the first villages that are India’s first villages on the international border. Not only Mana, but all the villages which are the first to enter India from the land or water frontier should be referred as First Villages. The list of such first villages is very long, but we have identified some villages and collected information about them by studying them at various points, which is our endeavour to

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convey to all the countrymen.

This edition is dedicated to all the residents of Pratham villages, their unwavering devotion to the country despite the adverse conditions, to our peripheral citizens who sacrifice their lives in defence of the country, their willpower not to migrate even in the absence of facilities and their determination to continuously contribute literal security of the country. I hope that this endeavour of Seema Sanghosh will be successful in changing the thinking of all the countrymen towards Border Security and will bring the border people together with all the mainstream. This edition may motivate all citizens to enhance contact and coordination with the residents of the "Pratham villages" and attract tourists to the border areas.

I hope that each of us will heighten our awareness regarding the crucial matter of border security and strive to raise collective consciousness. A vigilant society is essential for ensuring a secure border, and only through a secure border India can thrive.


With this belief, along with the entire team of Seema Sanghosh, I present this to all of you.

Jai Hind, Jai Seema Sanghosh

Deepanshu Garg



‘Vibrant Village Plan’ And The First Villages of Bharat



**Lt. Gen. (Retd.)
Gurmit**

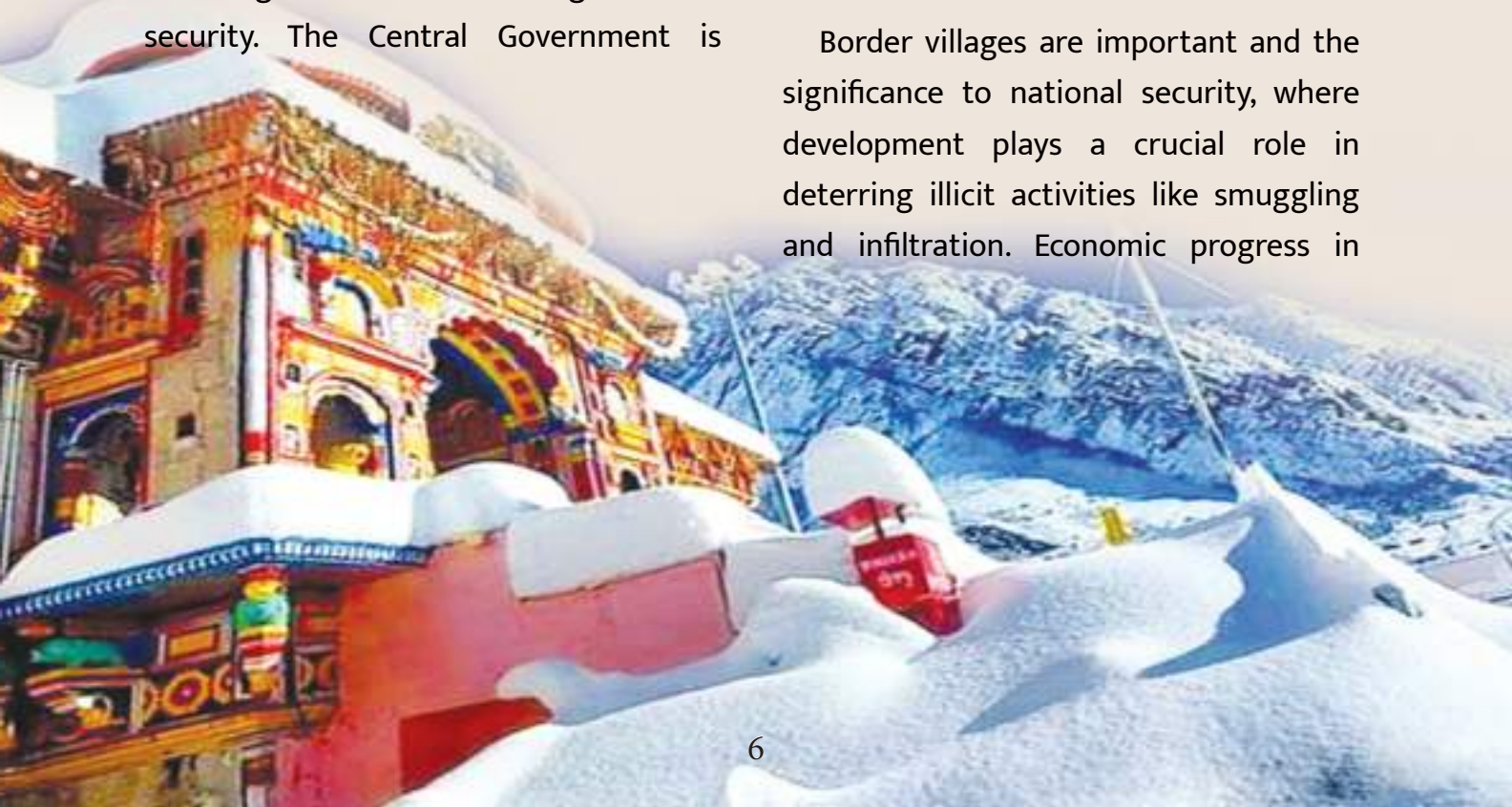
PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM

Former Lieutenant General Indian Army & Governor of Uttarakhand

P rime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has transformed the perception of the common man towards the border villages. Today, those residing in or visiting these border areas view them not as the last but as the first villages of India. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi prioritizes border regions, recognizing their significance in ensuring national security. The Central Government is

working continuously to enhance the infrastructure at the border, emphasizing the essential link between border security and the nation’s overall safety. New dimensions of development can be established by providing basic facilities in the first villages of the country. The ongoing efforts aim to elevate the first villages of the country by providing fundamental amenities, and the Vibrant Village scheme is poised to make these aspirations a reality.

Border villages are important and the significance to national security, where development plays a crucial role in deterring illicit activities like smuggling and infiltration. Economic progress in



these areas not only boosts local income and employment opportunities but also elevates the overall quality of life for residents. Situated in more remote regions, frontier villages are deprived of sociolect-economic development. Their development promotes social inclusion. Well-developed border villages can promote cordial relations across international borders, particularly through improved trade and cultural exchanges.

Additionally, the vulnerability of border areas to natural disasters like floods and earthquakes underlines the importance of development in enhancing disaster management and response capabilities. Access to modern facilities and technology can significantly improve the lives of the residents of border villages. The development of education and health services in these areas will uplift the living standards of the residents. These villages are symbols of national integration,

contributing to the strengthening of national identity and unity.

The Vibrant Village Programme of the Government of India is an important initiative aimed at promoting development in remote and frontier villages of the country. Under this programme, 2967 villages have been covered across 46 development blocks of 19 districts adjoining the northern border in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh and the Union Territory of Ladakh. The first phase of this initiative will encompass a population of approximately 1 lakh 42 thousand across 662 villages. A budget 4,800 crore is allocated for the implementation of this scheme from 2022 to 2026.

Another objective of the programme is to curb migration from border villages by providing better employment opportunities at the village level. A target of 5 years has been set to create



precedent in the villages affected by the displacement. The third objective of the programme is to develop basic sanitation facilities in border villages. Vibrant Village Scheme provides Government financial assistance, availability of resources and administrative support to strengthen development in rural areas. Its main objective is to promote prosperity, self-reliance and reduce the rural-urban differences in rural areas. The government is dedicated to linking villages with essential amenities to alleviate the strain on urban areas.

Uttarakhand, which is known for its diverse natural beauty and culture, is getting special benefits under this scheme. Uttarakhand, a captivating state of India, is renowned for its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. The grandeur and distinctiveness of its villages not only define the state but also represent a precious heritage for the entire nation. In this context, the Vibrant Village Scheme of the Government of India stands as an important stride in the rural development of Uttarakhand.

Numerous villages in Uttarakhand are located in border areas. This scheme aims to enhance infrastructure development in these villages, including the construction of roads, healthcare facilities, promotion of education, and the advancement of digital connectivity. The scheme holds

the potential to address the issues of mass migration from Uttarakhand. The creation of employment opportunities in rural areas, enable the youth to secure employment within their own villages.

The three border districts of Uttarakhand, Uttarkashi, Pithoragarh and Chamoli have been selected under this programme. A total of 51 villages across these three districts have been covered under the scheme. Every village in the border region will have essential facilities. These villages will be developed while preserving and promoting tourism, local culture and language. The success of the scheme heavily relies on community involvement. The active participation and input of the villagers are important at every stage of the scheme so that the benefits of the scheme can reach them directly and effectively.

The natural and cultural heritage of the villages of Uttarakhand is incomparable. Under this scheme, these villages can be made more attractive for tourism. Under this scheme, the villages will be provided with resources and assistance according to their local characteristics, enabling them to become more self-reliant. The scheme will boost socio-economic development in the villages of Uttarakhand, thereby improving the quality of life. The objective of this scheme is to equip our villages with modern facilities and resources so



that they can become self-reliant and move towards a prosperous and balanced development. The implementation of this scheme in Uttarakhand is particularly important as the villages are located in hilly and remote areas where the challenges of development are high.

Development of infrastructure in border villages, such as roads, electricity, water and health services, is a priority. It is also important to improve access to education and health services in these areas. Policies and incentives are being put in place to promote agriculture, tourism, and other local industries. Being a border area, security is also an important aspect. New dimensions can be established by promoting overall socio-economic development through community development programmes and social justice efforts.


The Vibrant Village Scheme presents a

significant opportunity for Uttarakhand, aiming not only to develop the state's border villages but also to enhance the overall socio-economic infrastructure of the entire state. Consequently, the implementation of this scheme holds the potential to provide a fresh direction and momentum to Uttarakhand. Community participation is crucial in the success of the scheme. The active participation and inputs of the villagers are important at every stage of the scheme so that the benefits of the scheme can reach them directly and effectively. Our aim is that through this scheme, the villages of Uttarakhand not only become more vibrant and lively, but also present a model that can be a source of inspiration for other states. Thus, the Vibrant Village Scheme is not only a new dimension of development of Uttarakhand, but also a meaningful effort to take the richness and diversity of Indian rural life to new heights.



For Enhanced National Security: Fortifying the Borders of Our Frontline Villages

In the extensive framework of national security, the first line of villages plays a significant role. These neglected villages and settlements (hamlets) play the primary defence against the external threats and significantly contribute to upholding the sovereignty of a nation. This article shows the multifaceted significance



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of ensuring the security of these often-neglected settlements and highlights its direct influence on the overall national security apparatus.

Strategic Importance

The geographical location of these first line villages provides them this strategic significance. As the villages are located at the forefront, these settlements act as the first point of contact in case of any external attack and as they are next to the border, high vigilance is needed here. First of all, these villages are aimed at by the infiltrators as well as by the enemy forces due to their proximity to the border, their

connectivity routes and their defence or battle formations help in stopping the enemy forces. Hence it becomes imperative to safeguard these villages from the enemy activities and unauthorized infiltrating entries otherwise the whole country may be put at risk.

Mobility of Human shield

The residence of these first line villages is known as the first line of civil defence of nation security. Staying on borders, they act as the initial buffer against any potential threats. During conflicts with the enemy, their resilience and cooperations with security forces help the forces in failing the nefarious intentions of the enemy. That's why the safety of the frontier villages is much more important than that of borders. It is a must to secure their lives as well as the welfare of these first line defenders.

Economic stability

The economic stability of a nation is intricately tied to the security of its borders, particularly in the villages situated along the frontline. These villages play a vital role in contributing to the country's economy through activities such as agriculture, trade, and various local occupations. Any breach in the security of these areas can result in disruptions to economic activities, impacting not only the livelihoods of local residents but also

the overall economic vitality of the nation. Thus, investing in the security of border villages equates to an investment in the broader economic stability of the entire country.

Cultural Conservation

In addition to strategic and economic ideas, the cultural heritage of any nation fosters and flourishes in the first line villages of the border. In these villages, the cultural diversities and the gist of historical significance can be threats to conserve the cultural generation. Security measures in these villages not only assure the physical well-being of the residents but also protect the intangible richness of their cultural heritage.

Prevention and Border Control

The protection of frontline villages serves as a deterrent against potential invaders. A strongly fortified border not only dissuades external forces from attempting to destabilise the nation but also inculcates a sense of confidence among both the military and local communities. This fosters a unified front, preparing the forces and villagers to collectively respond to any external threats.

Technology Integration

In the modern era, the security landscape has evolved. It has become the necessity of integration of advanced



technologies. The first line of villages is no exception. Surveillance systems, drone systems or technology and other sophisticated devices of surveillance increase the effectiveness of border security. These technologies not only provide information to the security forces but also allow productive response to the potential threats. Thus, the integration of technologies lessens the external threat risks to the country and the villages as well.

Community Empowerment

For a strong security structure, the local community of the first line villages must be strengthened & trained to make the localists aware & to report suspicious movements. Additionally, fostering a sense of responsibility and ownership in the villagers creates a cooperative atmosphere that the defence forces and the local community work together effectively. This collaboration helps in forming a resilient security system against the external threats.

Challenges and Mitigation

Despite the importance of securing the first line of villages on the borders, there are still various challenges present. Limited sources, risky areas and constant threats of intrusion from cross border are major hindrances. Hopefully, investment in infrastructure and better connectivity with international cooperation in sharing detective information etc. can reduce these challenges for making the security strong in these areas. There is a great need of holistic approach that may respond to both short term tensions and long-term stability.

Conclusion

The security of the first line on the border is not only the matter of regional integrity, but the matter of the existence of a nation also. These border settlements are the first targets which face the external attacks of enemy. While formulating the comprehensive security policies, the cultural importance of the first line villages must be kept in mind so that our country remains safe and prosperous permanently.

PRATHAM GAON & NATIONAL DUTY

Village,' marking a significant and symbolic shift. A shift in perspective catalyzes changes in priorities and thoughts, infusing new energy into the inhabitants of these remote areas and boosting their morale. Much work remains to transform our First Villages into vital attractions. Nomenclature may be a small step, yet it holds far-reaching sentimental value. A great deal of work needs to be done to



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Chaturvedi**

PVSM, AVSM, SM

National President-All India
Ex-Servicemen Services Council

The picturesque villages at our country's extreme boundaries, near India's international borders, were once termed the 'last village.' Recently, the Honourable Prime Minister has aptly renamed them 'Pratham Gaon' or 'First

develop these villages and bring forth the fruits of development that would provide the inhabitants with necessary facilities and comforts. If resources required to settle and live well in these areas are provided, these villages can become a

symbol of our national pride.

One of the primary objectives is to ensure that residents are not forced to migrate, a concern of paramount importance from a national security perspective. Fellow citizens living in these far-flung areas have always been a source of strength for us. It is these citizens of our country who first report anti-national activities and anti-national forces to the Army or administrative officials. Even during times of war, these citizens provide yeoman service at every step to our armed forces, readily boosting morale and invoking pride in our soldiers.

To transform 'Pratham Gaon' into a centre of attraction, concerted efforts are needed at all levels—National, State, and Local. Such unified efforts will pave the way to our collective success

National Level:

The most important criteria at the national level relates to development. Expanding communications to these first

villages as well as bringing rail and road connectivity where possible is the need of the hour. Air connectivity too should be provided where possible, such as at Tuting, Walong, Moreh etc

Internet and telecommunications, particularly for security purposes, along with entertainment options like television, must be made available in these areas.

At the National level, keeping in mind the economic necessities of these areas, sources of livelihood should be encouraged and established in these areas, including tapping the tourism potential of these areas

The local heritage and resources of these areas, including minerals, forests, forest-produce, flora etc would be an asset in national development and such utilization could be a major contribution at the national level

Another suggestion involves bolstering the population of these First Villages by thoughtfully encouraging ex-servicemen



to settle here, in close cooperation with local communities, ensuring harmony and mutual respect. This would be required to be done very thoughtfully and sensitively, keeping in mind the sentiments of the people involved. This will require coordination and cooperation with the national leadership and the state/local leadership. This should be done with full confidence from all sides involved. Some incentives shall have to be offered to ex-servicemen in order to attract them to settle in these areas.

Regional/State level:

State-level commitment is crucial for developing the infrastructure necessary for a decent standard of living in these remote areas.

Education and Health are two of the most important aspects therein. The state must ensure development of facilities related to education, including higher education, vocational education, skill development etc. If developing such in every village is not feasible, then these can be developed for a group of villages. Care should be taken to ensure that there is transportation facility available for inter-village transportation in case of such grouping of villages

Keeping in view any unique characteristics of a particular place or village, related businesses or tourism sites

should be developed and promoted. Along with this, important healthcare facilities such as primary health centres should be developed in all these villages. Apart from this, weekly visits by specialists such as gynaecologists, cardiologists, ophthalmologists, pediatricians and the like should be ensured. There should be facilities such as Ambulances etc available too.

Essential facilities such as water, electricity etc should be developed and made available on priority in these villages. Extension of essential services and their maintenance is a very urgent need, and this provision has to be ensured at the state and central levels both.

Local Level:

At the local level, significant efforts are needed from both the community and individuals. It is essential to take pride in and protect our languages, attire, cuisines, customs, festivals, and everything that forms our identity and traditions. In this, the role and contribution of gram panchayat, elders of the community as well as that of each individual is important

We all have to come together to extend our traditions to people, with the help of administrative officials as well as seniors of society. In these areas, each village has its own uniqueness which needs to be conserved, those traditions need to

be presented in their true sense. Any misconception needs to be allayed with the help of seniors of society. In these villages, the local inhabitants' art, skills, dance, costumes, festivals, cuisine all have their own specialty. Administrative officials and local military officers should actively participate in these festivals, exhibitions etc and should encourage the local population which in turn would make them proud of their traditions. It is our heartfelt desire to see our first villages emerge as symbols of our culture, value systems, development, progress and heritage.

Ensuring the development of the first villages and preventing migration demands unwavering dedication, commitment, and effort at every level—a priority that directly ties to our national security. This requires introspection at the individual level as well as dedicated contribution in whatever manner possible. The 'First Village' and the 'Vibrant Village' are complementary to each other. Vibrant villages have been identified so far in Arunachal, Sikkim, Ladakh, Himachal and Uttarakhand only. In a similar fashion, we have to identify and develop villages all along our land and sea borders. Youth need to be given opportunities and strength to showcase their abilities to the best of their potential. Women in remote areas need to be supported with education,

healthcare, employment opportunities as well as self-employment opportunities to enable them to become self-reliant and contribute to the progress of their families.

When our first villages, symbols of our national security start getting their due respect, they shall be a source of pride for us with their development, progress and heritage, and then in turn these heroes of Bharat would find the courage to safeguard their traditions and their birthplace, and would in all zeal contribute to the betterment of their families by progress of their villages. The all-important cooperation of local people in ensuring national security shall become possible. First villages, as the name suggests, will always remain foremost and shall always contribute importantly to national security.

Together, we must ensure the term 'First Village' is justified in its true sense and essence. I am confident that the First Villages will become emblems of our national pride.

To make the 'First Village' a centre of attraction, we shall all have to jointly make efforts.

I have no doubts that we shall succeed.

Jai Hind, Jai Bharat

Promoting “Orange Economy” for Sustainable Livelihoods and Cultural Preservation in Border Areas of Bharat



**Dr. Pandiri
Harsha Bhargavi**

Author & Columnist

Introduction

Living heritage, also known as intangible cultural heritage, serves as a cornerstone for sustainable development, nurturing cultural identity and diversity. Its preservation is vital for fostering a sense of belonging and identity within communities. However, changes in various socio-economic and environmental factors often threaten the transmission of this heritage. In Bharat, where cultural diversity thrives, the preservation of living heritage presents an opportunity not only for cultural

enrichment but also for economic growth. This article explores alternative livelihood solutions aimed at curbing migration in border areas by leveraging Bharat’s rich cultural legacy and promoting sustainable development.

The Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bharat, has urged the youth of the country to visit vibrant villages, highlighting the importance of cultural exchange and bringing remote border villages into the national mainstream. He emphasized the development of border villages as the “first villages” in Bharat, prioritizing

infrastructure, economic opportunities, and cultural preservation. He has also emphasized the active participation of villagers in the program's success and the national importance of border villages in contributing to a stronger, self-reliant Bharat.

While inaugurating the 'Nadabet Indo-Pak Border' tourism project in Banaskantha, Gujarat, Hon'ble Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated that the project will employ over 5 lakh youth within 10 years. The joint venture between the Gujarat government's Tourism Department and the Border Security Force (BSF) offers tourists the opportunity to learn about BSF personnel and participate in various sports and recreational activities.

Harnessing Bharat's Creative Economy

Bharat's creative economy stands as a formidable asset, contributing significantly to its cultural wealth and economic prosperity. Various cultural traditions, ranging from architecture to music, form the bedrock of the nation's creative landscape, enriching its GDP. UNCTAD study indicates that the creative economy contributes around 3% to the global GDP. The creative economy is now referred to as the "Orange Economy". It involves a blend of technology, intellectual property, and cultural inspiration.

The creative economy produces more than \$2 trillion in annual revenue and supports about 50 million employment globally. Creative professions attract 88% higher salary compared to non-creative professions.

Moreover, initiatives like public-private partnerships (PPP) can unleash the potential of the creative economy, particularly by empowering local artist communities and fostering innovation-driven creative industries. However, challenges such as lack of data and the predominance of the informal sector need to be addressed to fully realize the benefits of this sector.

Challenges faced with increasing migration

Bharat faces challenges in preserving its cultural heritage due to increasing migration, which can lead to the loss of traditional values, customs, and languages. This can negatively impact Bharat's rich cultural diversity and unique identity. To mitigate this challenge, measures such as promoting cultural education, preserving historical sites and artifacts, and implementing policies that support cultural preservation can be helpful. Bharat has undertaken initiatives like promoting classical music and dance forms, organizing cultural festivals, and establishing cultural institutions to ensure the preservation of Bharat's cultural heritage.

Assimilation and dilution of cultural practices are significant issues in today's globalized world. Bharat has made efforts to contribute to the universality of cultural rights by adopting mandates to safeguard cultural practices and ensure their preservation in the face of migration. These efforts include the establishment of cultural centers, promotion of cultural exchange programs, and recognition and protection of traditional cultural practices.

Language loss and its impact on cultural identity are also significant challenges. Bharat is taking steps to preserve its cultural identity amidst migration by establishing cultural centers, museums, festivals, and implementing cultural integration programs. Documenting and archiving cultural practices is crucial for preserving the rich diversity of human cultures.

Addressing Migration through Cultural Economy Promotion

The National Statistical Office reported a 28.9% migration rate in Bharat from July 2020 to 2021, with 51.8% in rural and the rest in urban areas. The majority of migration occurred within the same state, with 92.6% of females and 65.6% of males moving within the same state. The migration rate was 87.5% within the state, with 11.8% of migrants moving to another country. In Bharat, 55% of migration occurred from rural to rural, with female migrants being the primary drivers. The number of internal migrants increased by over 45% in the decade, with intra-state migrants accounting for 86.8% of total migrants in 2011 and 83.7% in 2001. The majority of internal migrants are short-distance intra-state migrants, with a low rate of long-distance inter-state migration compared to other developing countries.

Migration rates in Bharat, particularly in rural areas, highlight the pressing need for alternative livelihood solutions. By promoting the cultural economy,



communities can not only preserve their heritage but also generate sustainable economic opportunities locally. Capacity-building initiatives aimed at fostering technology-based start-ups in the arts and crafts sector can empower local artisans and mitigate migration pressures. Providing guidance, technical support, and networking opportunities are crucial steps in this endeavor.

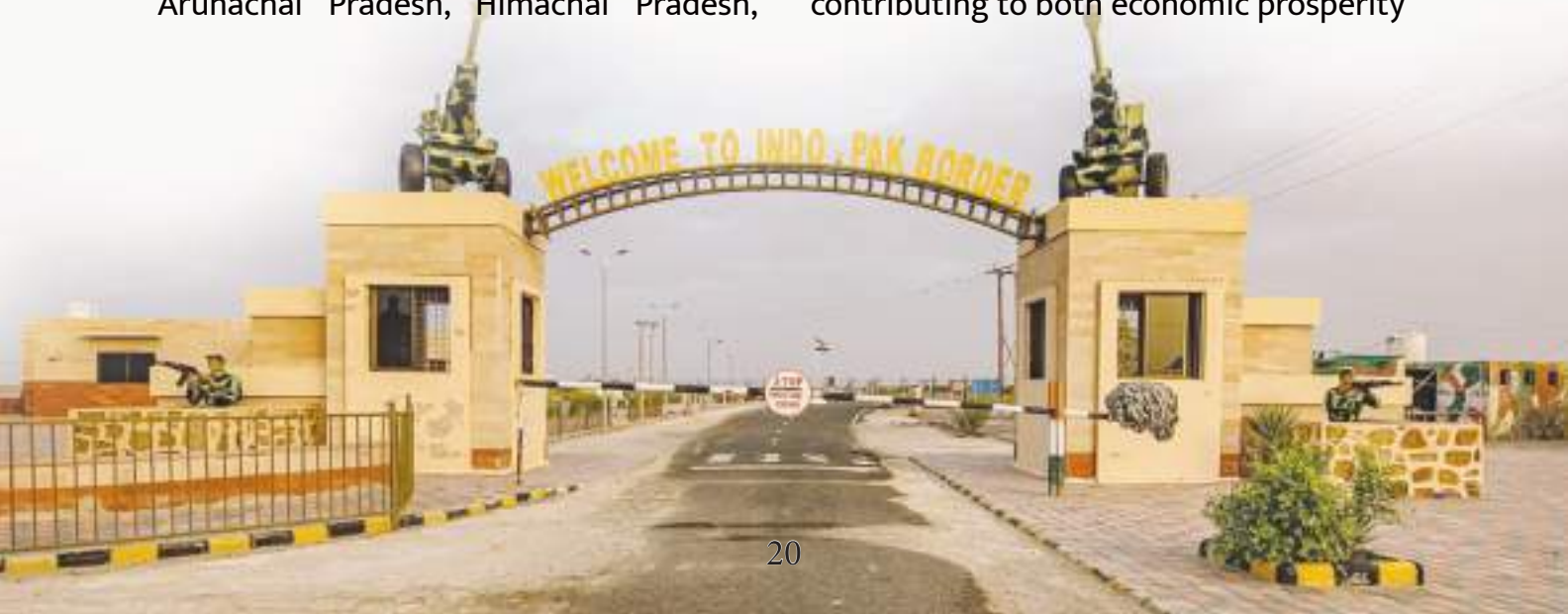
Government Initiatives & Programs

Government-led initiatives like the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) and the PRASAD scheme underscore the commitment to revitalize border areas through cultural and economic development. The Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) was approved by the Bharatn government on February 15, 2023, with a financial outlay of ₹4800 crore for the FY 2022-23 to 2025-26. The programme aims to improve the quality of life in select villages in 46 blocks in 19 districts near the northern border in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh,

Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and UT of Ladakh. It aims to create livelihood opportunities through agriculture, horticulture, tourism, cultural heritage, skill development, entrepreneurship, co-operative societies, road connectivity, housing, village infrastructure, energy, television and telecom connectivity, and financial inclusion. Additionally, efforts to promote cultural tourism, enhance infrastructure, and celebrate local traditions are integral parts of these programs.

Border Tourism: Balancing Development and Preservation

Border tourism holds immense potential for economic growth but requires a delicate balance between development and preservation. Initiatives like the Nadabet Indo-Pak Border tourism project in Gujarat exemplify efforts to capitalize on tourism opportunities while involving local communities. Furthermore, easing regulations and fostering trust between locals and defense personnel can unlock the full potential of border tourism, contributing to both economic prosperity



and national security.

Ethnic and Cultural Tourism: Leveraging Local Experiences

Ethnic and cultural tourism offer unique opportunities for travelers to engage with local communities and traditions. While ethnic tourism emphasizes direct interactions and authentic experiences, cultural tourism focuses on observing and appreciating cultural artifacts. Understanding the distinction between these forms of tourism is crucial for tailoring experiences that resonate with diverse tourist interests and preferences.

Promoting Sustainable Development through Intangible Cultural Heritage

Intangible cultural heritage plays a pivotal role in sustaining communities' well-being and fostering economic growth. By supporting initiatives that safeguard and promote intangible cultural practices, communities can not only preserve their heritage but also create economic opportunities. Initiatives like oral traditions, performing arts, and traditional craftsmanship offer avenues for income generation and cultural exchange, contributing to sustainable development and peace. A community-based approach is a comprehensive

approach that extends beyond the origin of an intangible cultural heritage element, allowing external facilitators to position themselves without disrupting existing processes while safeguarding the element. This approach is grounded in communities and the complex realities within which an intangible cultural heritage element exists. It is the most effective way to recognize and sustainably safeguard an intangible cultural heritage element. There is no single model, so it is essential to engage with various communities, groups, and individuals to find feasible modalities for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in a given context.

Conclusion

Preserving living heritage & promoting sustainable livelihoods in border areas is essential for fostering economic growth, cultural preservation, and social cohesion. By leveraging Bharat's rich cultural legacy, investing in local communities, and implementing supportive policies, it is possible to curtail migration and unlock the full potential of border regions. Through collaborative efforts between government, communities, and stakeholders, we can build a future where cultural diversity thrives, and sustainable development flourishes.



Suchetgarh : First Border Village of Jammu



**Rajeshwar Singh
'Raju'**

Reputed Writer, Hindi, English
& Dongri Language

Jammu and Kashmir is called the gem crown of India. In 1947(at the time of independence), the country was divided into two parts, following the principle of two nations. At that time, Jammu and Kashmir was an independent state. The government of Pakistan sent its army in the guise of tribal and attacked Jammu and Kashmir to capture it. Then, the Indian government sent its army and saved Jammu and Kashmir from them in difficult circumstances. On 26 October 1947, Hari Singh, Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir signed the historic Instrument

of Accession with India as respecting the sentiments of its residents and made it an integral part of India.

Most of the borders of this union Territory (UT) are with Pakistan. The main reason for this is that Jammu and Kashmir was a big princely state which got divided into two parts due to the Pakistani invasion in 1947. The large part of Jammu and Kashmir is under the control of Pakistan and which is called Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK). However, there is a continuous struggle by the

citizens of that part to get independence from Pakistan and merge into India. There is the International Border on one side and Line of Control (LOC) is situated on the other side due to the partition of India and Pakistan's occupation of some parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The people living at border places have to suffer a lot due to poor relations between the two countries. Continuous provocative activities are carried out by Pakistan which creates instability in India and allows terrorism to flourish.

To promote terrorism in India, Pakistan not only encourages the anti-social elements of India, but also plays the religious card. The Pakistani government allows terrorists to enter India through these borders under the protection of Pakistani Rangers. They are assisted by firing and providing cover fire in the border villages. Terrorists have been forced to cross the border by engaging the Indian Army in firing. But, it is impossible now the way this was done easily in the past. This happens due to the will power and determination of the present Indian government and providing all possible equipment to the soldiers deployed on the border. The changes taking place in the border villages can be understood with the example of one village.

On the international border, Suchetgarh is a small border village situated in Ranveer

Singh Pura (RS Pura) sector, at a distance of about 28 kilometers from Jammu city in the Jammu division of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The population of this village is around 500. Sialkot city of Pakistan is located at a distance of about 11 kilometers from here and Lahore is 141 kilometers away. The land of this village is quite fertile and mostly wheat and good quality Basmati are cultivated here. This Basmati is famous all over the world.

Being a border village, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the life of the people living here has been full of hardships. Pakistan does not desist from doing whatever it wants and often does something in the border area such that the people especially the farmers have to suffer who are living on this side. The political instability and the bad intentions of the Pakistan government do not allow good relations between the two countries. For some reason or the other, Pakistan Rangers prove to be helpful in infiltrating the terrorists into the Indian border by giving signals of malice and enmity. To prevent all this, Indian army has to take special care and more checking has to be done, which causes problems for common citizens too.

It is true that due to relatively good relations between India and Pakistan, many people of border villages on both sides were involved in illegal businesses

before the rise of terrorism, Smuggling business was in full swing. But since terrorism started raising its head and the neighboring country started giving shelter to terrorists, vigilance was increased on the international border and it became impossible to move across the border. Nevertheless, the neighboring country often help the terrorists cross the border through its Rangers.

Whenever the relations between India and Pakistan become more critical, the firing from across the border not only causes huge loss to the citizens but also causes gigantic damage to their crops and it hampers their livelihood and economic condition. People from the villages adjacent to the border have to move away and for the time being shift to some other places and wait for normal situation.

This region of Jammu and Kashmir is a very fertile; therefore the enemy country makes every possible effort to harm the farmers of Indian region. It is true that whenever there is firing from across the border, the residents here have to work very hard to save their lives. Meanwhile, permanent bunkers were built here to protect the residents from nefarious activities from across the border. In the

past, the people here had to suffer a lot due to lack of bunkers. The government has given a lot of relief to the residents here by building these permanent bunkers.

However, just like the 'Beating the Retreat' ceremony is organized at Wagah Border, Amritsar, 'Beating the Retreat' program is also organized in



Suchetgarh four days in a week. Initially, this program was organized in weekend and only Indian soldiers are participated. Indian soldiers offer Pakistani Rangers to participate but they refuse this. This is an effort to improve relations between the two countries and improve border tourism, but there is no intimacy in the relations from Pakistan's side. When relation between both the countries become critical, the program has to be postponed, which is rarely seen at Wagah Border, Amritsar.

Gharana Wetland

The world famous Wetland Gharana is situated near Suchetgarh village, where

birds from all over the world come to migrate. The wetland of Gharana village marks its presence on the world map due to these migratory birds. Recently, the Wildlife Department has acquired about 400 kanals of land for this wetland, which has significantly improved the water level and the number of migratory birds will increase in winter. This is a admirable initiative by the Wildlife Department to prevent any future attempt to encroach on this land by installing geo tag pillars on the acquired land.

It would not be wrong to say here that the Gharana Wetland was shrinking due to several reasons for the last several years. Nearby houses discharge dirty water into the wetland and the negligence of the concerned department were also responsible to a great extent. Better late than never, now the administration is doing something commendable in this direction.

It is noteworthy that migratory birds of various species come here from many countries of the world. The number of birds coming from Siberia is very high. When the season is at its peak, Gharana Wetland attracts thousands of migratory birds from Central Asia such as Mongolia, Russia, China etc. There is a huge crowd of tourists here to observe these birds, especially children are very happy to see them. During that time, there is a fair like

situation here.

To capitalize on this, the Tourism Department is making every effort to promote tourism in Suchetgarh and Gharana Wetland, which has been named as 'Border Tourism' or 'Seema Tourism'. This area is adjacent to the border and fascinates everyone due to its natural beauty, while the birds of different species coming from all over the world became the main attraction.

If we examine the lives of the residents of the villages adjacent to the border, it is true that it is not an easy thing to live in such conditions due to the terror spread by the neighboring country. The environment can worsen at any time and then what steps the enemy country takes, this in itself is a cause of trouble. That is why special campaigns are run by the Government of India to provide all kinds of facilities to the border villages.

Development has accelerated throughout the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, and this also affected the Suchetgarh, border village and the surrounding areas. Among these, there's a chance to construct the National Highway in the near future. The excellent state of the roads in a hamlet that has endured decades of traffic-related issues is evidence of the new dawn, and other necessary amenities are



readily available. It seems that the village has been rejuvenated, although there are possibilities of work being done on many schemes in future too.

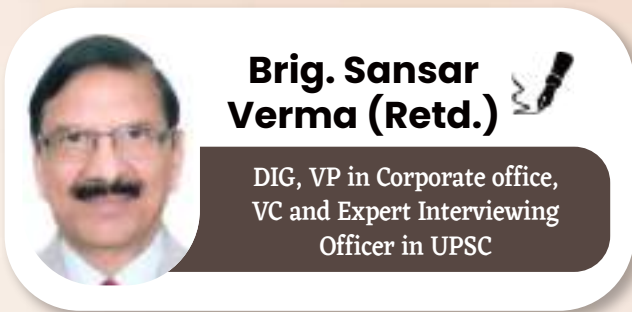
It is true that people living in border villages are also border guards. They also receive early notice of all activities occurring from the other side of the border. Their regular information sharing and interactions with the soldiers

stationed at the border also significantly enhance border security. If it is said that on one side the soldiers are deployed in uniform, then the people living on the border work as sentinels without uniform. The Government of India and the administration of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are well aware of this. Constant attempts are undertaken to improve the comfort of these border guards' lives, and the results are visible.





Hussainiwala: A first Village of Punjab with Historic Significance



Brig. Sansar Verma (Retd.) 

DIG, VP in Corporate office,
VC and Expert Interviewing
Officer in UPSC

After independence, we had set a vision that the development of India should start from the villages. But on the contrary, it is seen that whereas the bigger cities and towns developed at a faster pace, the villages, especially near the international borders, were neglected in every field. About 75 % of male population of villages has been occupied only in agriculture

and allied activities and the people have been deprived of basic amenities such as clean water, toilets and electricity. It is, therefore, very important to bring our villages to the mainstream of the Indian economy. It is, however, good to see that now the present government is giving the required priority for the development of villages in the fields of education, health care, agricultural income, road and rail communication, environment, culture and agro-based industry.

It is with this aim that the life and environment of one of the border villages of Punjab, The village has a great history

before and after the partition, which will inspire people, especially the students, to visit this border village and get connected to our martyrs who sacrificed their lives for our independence. Also, the study and insight of villages is very important for the students where they can have firsthand information of villages. The life here is simple, the environment is good, people are healthy and happy, families live jointly and there is more care for parents/elders.

Hussainiwala village is the 'First Village' of Punjab border with Pakistan. It is about 100 meters from the zero point, opposite the Pakistan village Ganda Singh Wala. It is named after a Muslim Peer, Baba Ghulam Hussainiwala, whose tomb is in the BSF Campus. The village also has a few clusters of villages nearby. It is situated about 11 km from the town of Ferozepur, on the banks of Sutlej River.

The village has a special historical importance since it has the statues of great martyrs, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. In addition, it also has the statue of another great patriot, Batukeshwar Dutt. It should be remembered that Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru had raised their voice against the British Government and threw a grenade in the British Central Assembly and were arrested by the British police. The three nationalists, however, were hanged one day before the fixed date anticipating its ramifications. Later,

they were cremated with great honor. It was because of the sacrifice of these three patriotic youth that India made their National Martyrs Memorials in 1931.

Historically, the railway line connecting Peshawar to Mumbai was built in 1885, passing through Hussainiwala. During the pre-partition days, Punjab Mail connecting the cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Ferozepur, Lahore and Peshawar used to pass through Hussainiwala village. During partition, the border was drawn along the Sutlej River and passed through Hussainiwala village. The village has witnessed two major bloody battles between India and Pakistan.

The total population of the village is approximately 15000 with about 7000 voters. Mostly the population belongs to the Rai Sikh community, who follow Sikh religion. Unfortunately, few of the villagers are converting from Sikhism to Christianity which is an unwelcome trend and must be checked. The area has one Senior Secondary School, one High School and eight Primary schools. There is no industry and the occupation of the villagers is only agriculture and doing labor work.

Achievements

- Mr Amandeep Singh has won a Gold Medal at national level in Rowing.
- Mr Sahib Singh has represented Athletics at national level.

- Four girls (Anju, Lakhvinder Kaur, Gagandeep and Pooja) of this village have won Gold Medals in Kabaddi.
- The village has a “Radha Swami Satsang Ghar” where the drug-addicts are being reformed and brought to the mainstream.

Indo-Pak War 1965 at Hussainiwala

During 1965, a Maratha Infantry Battalion defended Hussainiwala (an enclave with the Sutlej River behind it on the Indian side) against a sudden full infantry brigade attack, supported by tanks. After a loss of some area in the beginning, the Indian Army attacked the Pak forces and made them withdraw. The village supported the Army forces with fresh food and evacuation of wounded soldiers. The local people also provided important information about the enemy to our forces.

Indo- Pak War 1971 at Hussainiwala

Hussainiwala village is just on the border. The countryside is riverine and criss-crossed with protective bunds. The village is economically very important as it forms a part of the Hussainiwala Headwork feeding the Gang canal system. Politically, it is significant because of the Memorial. Militarily, it is important as the area affords depth to the Headwork and

the road bridge. The village was captured by Pakistan forces during the 1971 war. However, the area was vacated by Pakistan forces later. Indian forces here have a great disadvantage due to the location of Hussainiwala village with a river behind it, which limits the strength of troops and tanks which could be inducted within this enclave.

The National Martyrs Memorial

The Memorial has a great national and emotional significance for India, since its great patriots Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were cremated here on 23 March 1931.

It is also the cremation place of Batukeshwar Dutt, who was also involved in bombing the Central Legislative Assembly. The Memorial depicts a revolutionary spirit of these three national martyrs who lit eternal flame of liberty by smilingly embracing martyrdom for the motherland. When India got independence, Hussainiwala village went to Pakistan. However, India wanted Hussainiwala village back due to its importance, and to get it, India had to give 12 villages to Pakistan near Fazilka, in January 1961. An annual fair is held at the Memorial on 23 March every year to remember these great patriots.

Nearby Important Places to Visit

- **Flag Beating Retreat Ceremony by**

BSF

At Hussainiwala border crossing, a flag beating retreat ceremony is held every day at 6 pm by the BSF. It is open to the public as a tourist attraction. It is similar to the one being held at Attari border of Amritsar. Here the Indian and Pakistan attendees often smile and wave to one another, and even cheer for each other's guards as they perform the ceremony,

unlike the charged atmosphere at Attari border. This is a worth seeing ceremony.

- **Saragarhi Memorial**

This was built in the memory of 21 Sikh soldiers belonging to 31 Sikh Regiment, who fell in the heroic defense of Fort Saragarhi in Waziristan in 1887, while defending the fort against an attack of ten thousand pathans. The Memorial Gurudwara was built by the Army authorities in honor of these brave soldiers. Every year, on 12 September, a religious congregation is held in the Memorial to remember these brave soldiers.

- **Harike Wild-Life Sanctuary**

Harike is one of the most important Wild-Life Sanctuary of not only Punjab but also India. It is situated on the confluence of Beas and Sutlej rivers, near Ferozepur. It has been recognized by the International Body of Wetlands, under the UNDP in 1990. It is a refuge for a large number of migratory

- **birds**

Some 45 thousand ducks have been recorded here during the peak migratory season.

- **Anglo-Sikh War Memorial**

No nation can afford to forget the martyrs and freedom fighters who kissed the gallows for attainment of freedom for all of us. The Anglo-Sikh battle of Ferozeshah, Mudki, Aliwal and Sabraon has immense historical significance. These were short but very sharp battles in which the British experienced fiercer hand to hand fighting than on any other previous occasion in India. The fighting took place in 1845 between the Sikhs and the British troops. 745 British troops, including 54 officers were killed and 1625 wounded. The Memorial also has paintings and artifacts related to these historical wars.

- **Barki Memorial**

The Barki Memorial was constructed in 1969 to perpetuate the memory of the soldiers who made supreme sacrifice on the battlefield in 1965 and paved the way for the fall of Barki town, situated at a distance of about 22 km South East of Lahore. The Memorial which now forms a part of Saragarhi Complex has a pillar in the center, a Patton tank and a Barki mile stone. The moldings and relief carvings in the memorial are in the classical Indian architectural style.



- **Gurudwara Shri Jamni Sahib**

It is situated at Ferozepur, about 8 km away from the city. Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji came here after the battle of Muktsar Sahib. It is believed that a Jatt Farmer had borrowed some money from a Brahmin on the guarantee of Guru Sahib. But he had not returned the money and had passed away. In his second life, he became a Titar (pigeon) and Brahmin became Baaz (Hawk).

When Guru Sahib came here, he got the Titar killed from Baaz and got him free from the guarantee he had given in that case.

Conclusion

The identity of a nation, region, community or a group lies in its past; its historical and cultural heritage, which is

unique to that society and reflects the rich and diverse creations of humankind. History also elaborates the transformative process in society from past to the present of our village areas by generations. Our villages, especially near the borders, have distinct cultural characteristics and historical background, which makes their specific identity and uniqueness. These historical places and memorials are important to us, because it is fundamental to learn history and evidence of the past activity of the villages which is not widely known to people. Undoubtedly, the historical heritage, which includes war memorials and villages like Hussainiwala, have an intrinsic value and helps us to examine our history and traditions and enables us to develop awareness about ourselves.



First Village Nadabet: Wagha of Gujarat

The western part of Gujarat forms the international border with Pakistan. The villages of several districts of Gujarat came in the border areas. Those important districts are Banaskantha, Kutch, Rapar, Bhuj, Lakhpat and Bhachau.

The villages such as Chandangarh, Chhatarpur, Jalowa, Kundaliya, Meghpurpadan, Radhanesada, Radosan of Vav taluka of Banaskantha, the villages such as Balasar, Bela, Dhabda, Lodarani of Rapar taluka of Kachchh, the villages such as Bhirandiyara, Bhitaramota, Dhrobna, Dinara, Gorewali, Hodka, Khavda, Ludiya, Luna, Mithadi, Udhmo of Bhuj taluka,



**Dr. Neerja
Arun Gupta**



Vice Chancellor,
Gujarat University

the villages such as Ataro, Chhernani, Chhermoti, Guharmoti, Jara, Kaiyari, Kapurasi, Khatiun, Lakhpat, Mudhan, Narayan Sarovar, Pipar, Punrajpar, Rodasarlakki, Shinapar, Siot in Lakhpat Taluka, and the villages like Bambhanka, Dholavira, Gadhada, Ganeshpar, Janan, Kalyanpar, Kharoda and Ratan of in Bhachau taluka are the important border tourist destination.

Nadabet is the last village of Rann of Kutch after which the desert of Kutch and sea begins. It is similar to the Wagah border of Western India. The Rann of Kutch is famous for its white salty desert sand and is considered to be the largest salt desert in the world.

Rann of Kutch

The Rann of Kutch is a salt marsh in the Thar Desert in the Kutch district of western Gujarat. It is located between Gujarat (India) and Sindh(Pakistan). It covers about 30,000 square km of land which includes the Great Rann, of Kutch, the Little Rann of Kutch and the Banni grasslands.

The Rann of Kutch is famous for its white salty desert sand and is considered to be the largest salt desert in the world. In Hindi, 'Ran' means desert which is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Irina' which also means desert. The residents of Kutch are called Kachhi and they also have their own language with the same name. The majority of the population in the Rann of Kutch is Hindus, Muslims, Jains and Sikhs.

North of Khavda village, Kalodungar (Blackhill) is Kutch's highest point (462 metres), offering remarkable views of the Greater Nasalt Flat (or the inland sea if you're visiting during the monsoon). The hill is also famous for its 400-year-old temple dedicated to Lord Dattatreya. You walk along the side of the hill and gaze out across the vast hazy landscape that changes color as the day progresses and the sun sets behind the mountains.

Legends say that Lord Dattatreya stopped here to rest and found a group of hungry jackals. He gave them his body to eat and as they ate, his body continuously

regenerated itself. For the last four centuries, temple priests prepare cooked rice for the jackals who come for a late evening meal.

Ecological importance of Rann of Kutch

The Rann of Kutch region is also home to ecologically rich wildlife like swans and wild donkeys. They can often be seen around the desert. The Rann is also a part of some sanctuaries such as Indian Wild Donkey Sanctuary, Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary. It is a paradise for wildlife photographers and nature lovers.

The contrasting landscape of the White Desert is unique in India and it attracts a large number of tourists. Apart from being the filming location for many Bollywood movies, the white desert of Kutch is closely scrutinized as it is located on the northern India-Pakistan border. The White Desert is cited with several sanctuaries for wildlife, floral and wetland conservation.

The basin of the Indus River, the white desert of Kutch evaporates between November and February, giving way to its extensive salt-laden land. It is during this whitening period, the famous Rann Utsav is held on the White Desert of Kutch, one of the largest salt deserts in the world.

Nadabet is an island on the India-Pakistan international border in the Great Rann of Kutch. Vaniya Sar, a historic pond

with turquoise waters reflecting the sky, easily catches one's attention in the arid landscape of village Suigam located on the Indo-Pak border which is the headquarter of Suigam taluka of Banaskantha district and is on the way to Nadabet.

Nadabet Border is the breathtaking site of the 1971 India-Pakistan war and this place is also a major site of the Gujarat government's Seema Darshan project launched, which was launched in 2016 to promote border tourism as like as Wagah Border. This village is about 50 Km away from Pakistan. This is also called 'Wagah of Gujarat', is connected by a narrow bitumen road that cuts through mud flats that become submerged during high tide.

From the gate to the Indo-Pak border located 25 km inside, it is a thrilling experience and every visitor will become a patriot. As part of the Border Darshan project, Amit Shah, Union Home Minister inaugurated an India-Pakistan border viewing point at Nadabet in Gujarat (About 188 km from Ahmedabad) on 10th April, 2022.

Role of Indo-Pak border point in 1971 war

Jaloya and Suigam Nadabet are the nearest villages to the India-Pakistan

border. As a result of the 1965 war, when the Border Security Force was created to protect the border, the Indo-Pak border was under the surveillance of the BSF. The 1971 war marked the birth of Bangladesh as a nation and its liberation from the rule of Pakistan. On 16th December, 1971, the war ended with the fall of Dhaka and the surrender of Pakistani forces. This day is celebrated as 'Victory Day' in India. This Nadabet BOP is recognized for its contribution to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War (from March 1971) and the Third India-Pakistan War (from December 1971). Initially, BSF's front line defense was in action at Nadabet BOP to protect the border. Nadabet was used by BSF to stop the enemy trying to attack from the west and helped them capture 15 enemy points. The maps show the movements of BSF battalions capturing enemy positions during the war. BSF had captured 1,038 square km of Pakistan's land, which was later returned through the Shimla Agreement.

The Indian Border Security Force was established after the India-Pakistan War of 1965 to guard our borders from unfriendly neighbours. Till then it was the responsibility of the local police to protect those areas. The war exposed



the weaknesses of local police during international incidents and the need for an independent armed police force was felt to guard the thousands of kilometers of India-Pakistan borders, including the Nadabet border in Gujarat. It was good that BSF was born, as they played the most important role during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. This force was instrumental in giving birth to Bangladesh, which was known as East Pakistan till then.

In the Nadabet region, the BSF not only stopped all enemy advances but also succeeded in seizing almost a thousand square kilometers of Pakistani territory at Kam or Barhi. They held this territory until the Shimla Agreement, at which point the lands they had taken were returned. The Gujarati government and the BSF made the decision to establish a site to honor the lives and contributions of the BSF and its personnel in order to remember and tell the tales of their bravery and heroism.

The story of Nadabet border war in 1971

When East Bengal (also known as Bangladesh or East Pakistan) declared its independence in March 1971, it was obvious that Pakistan would strike both Bangladesh and India because India was backing Bangladesh's cause. Based on intelligence assessments, India was ready for war by October, and the army and BSF were deployed, particularly in Gujarat's

Bhuj-Kutch border area.

By the end of November 1971, a full-scale war was inevitable, but still, India decided not to fire first. As it happened on 3rd December 1971, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) flew into Indian airspace with the aim of destroying 12 forward air bases and radars with limited success. This was just the trigger India needed to put its plan into action. While the Indian Air Force and Indian Army were retaliating, three battalions of BSF in Palanpur, Gujarat moved towards the Bhuj-Kutch border. It is now called Nadabet India-Pakistan border.

The second battalion slowly but steadily advanced into the Rann of Kutch (salt desert) and within a few days captured major towns of Pakistan like Nagarparka, Dhangaon, Wirawah. Overall, the BSF Palanpur base occupied more than 1000 square kilometers of area in Pakistan.

Seema Darshan

BSF and Gujarat Tourism have created a complete experiential destination for us to live the story of valor and extraordinary courage and this place is called Guardians at the Edge. There are eight war exhibits including guns, missiles and tanks. Everyone, including children, has immense fun exploring these devices. The hard stop with T 55 tanks is a must stop as there is a tall observation tower from where one can have an unrestricted 360 degree view

of the Battle of Ndabet.

Zero Point

Nadabet Seema Nadeshwari Mata Temple is about 25 km away from another visitor experience complex near Suigaon, called Abati-Junction. Zeropoint is closest to the border due to layers of barbed wire fencing and a road that runs along the India-Pakistan border from Bhuj to Kashmir.

There is an old legend associated with this temple, which states that the BSF constructed it. The soldiers would often pray here before setting out on the treacherous and challenging desert journey with the assistance of the Rabari cattle herders in the area.

The one-lane road that was constructed across the desert is a marvel in and of itself. It is a brand-new route. BSF authorization is needed in order to drive on this road. Visitors will only be permitted to travel there in official, air-conditioned buses after the location is formally opened. The facility to view Pakistan's international border is provided to citizens through this border darshan. These posts are guarded by the Border Security Force (BSF) in Banaskantha district of Gujarat. It is a collaborative effort between BSF Gujarat

Frontier and Tourism Department of the State Government.

The goal is to grow border tourism in these places with overpopulation and shared borders with neighboring nations. The project intends to lessen migration from cross-border villages to India and increase tourism. Pakistan is located between 150 and 960 meters away from the Nadabet border post.

According to BSF Deputy Inspector General ML Garaf, the BSF will plan a procession akin to the one that takes place at the Attari-Wagah border in Amritsar; however, there won't be a procession from Pakistan. The parade will be held in the evening at an open auditorium 30 km from the border, which can seat 5,000 people.

Reaching Nadabet border

Nadabet can be reached only through a road guarded by BSF from Suigam. Most of the attractions developed as part of the Rs 125 crore Seema Darshan project are at the T-junction, but visitors can take special permission to visit the border about 25 km further north of the T-junction. At Zero point, a tall watchtower has been built which gives visitors a view of Pakistani territory. Bus facility has been provided for those tourists who cannot take

private vehicles. In addition, the location will provide activities like zip lining, rock climbing, and rifle shooting. It will feature a museum featuring displays such as MIG-27, aircraft, and other military weapons, as well as a viewing gallery.

Hard point on the way to zero point

Since there is just one lane for the entire 25 km, the road widens a little bit every few hundred meters to allow for the passing of cars, including buses.

Embracing Diversity: The Cultural Fabric of Nadabet

A growing tourist destination in Gujarat, Nadabet is a living example of India's rich cultural legacy which is located on the border between India and Pakistan. There are festivals and events that are influenced by the diverse culture of India throughout the year. These events not only provide a spectacular view for the visitors but also play an important role in the education and awareness of the residents. It makes Nadabet as one of the unique places to visit Gujarat. The way of life that the people of Nadabet lead has changed dramatically. It was once a peaceful location, but these days it's active with workshops, cultural performances, and fun events that highlight the best of India. These gatherings provide forums for community improvement in addition

to being sources of entertainment. They create a strong sense of community and pride by giving locals the chance to participate in, observe, and even learn from these celebrations.

Nadabet provides tourists with a unique experience of historical immersion and cultural inquiry. While it resonates with stories of bravery, it also reflects India's unity in diversity. It offers an enriching and unforgettable journey to every visitor and it strengthens its position as one of the tourist destinations in Gujarat. Although border areas are greatly influenced by local populations, it's crucial to acknowledge the larger government strategy that creates these boundaries.

Government's vision: Connecting citizens and defenders of the nation

Government projects have historically revolved around strategic border locations, such as the India-Pakistan border at Nadabet. There is a deeper sense that lies behind development initiatives and border policies to foster national pride and unity. Projects in these areas aim to connect the heart of India with its peripheries. An important objective behind such initiatives is to provide citizens with a closer insight into the lives of BSF jawans. By showcasing their challenging circumstances, tireless duties and unwavering patriotism, the government

strives to inculcate deep appreciation and respect for their sacrifices.

The goal of these projects is to establish a connection between the heart of India and with its peripheries. An important objective behind such initiatives is to provide citizens with a closer insight into the lives of BSF jawans. By showcasing their challenging circumstances, tireless duties and unwavering patriotism, the government strives to inculcate deep appreciation and respect for their sacrifices. These initiatives at this well-known Gujarati tourist site strengthen a sense of patriotism and encourage a sense of duty to the country and its defenders. With the government's vision, Nadabet emerges as a shining representation of India's unwavering spirit. The whole place reverberates with the national song being played poignantly and the tricolour rising proudly in the sky, which instilled a sense of patriotism in the air and it makes Nadabet as an exceptional place to visit in Gujarat.

These two significant anniversaries in Nadabet become lively events that draw people from all over to take part in a distinctly national experience. In addition to being a calendar-marked

event, they also act as a living tribute to India's unwavering spirit, its struggles in the past, its victories in the present, and its promising future. Observing these festivities at Nadabet allows one to fully comprehend the spirit of India's rich past and its steadfast commitment to the future.

The attractions of Nadabet, Gujarat's famous tourist destination offers a rich tapestry of history and culture, from the poignant retreat ceremonies to the evocative artefacts of the 'Naam Namak Nishan'. In addition to its historical value, Nadabet offers heart-pounding adventure activities that guarantee guests will feel both reverence and thrill in this exceptional range. In short, border areas like Nadabet are more than just gateways or borders. They are the heartbeat of a nation, encompassing its history, its diversity and its indomitable spirit. Nadabet is a must-visit location in Gujarat because of its multitude of experiences, which serve as a moving reminder of the people who have given their lives to protect our borders and the lively culture that thrives there.





First Villages of Bharat: Prime Stakeholders of Nation's Border Management

International border physically bifurcating two countries comprising boundary line, border areas, border population, and these three form an integral part of rural India. They also comprise an important part of the border management grid. Border management grid in literal sense means security governance of national borders to ensure sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The Ministry of Home



**Comdt (Retd.)
R C Sharma**

Retired Commandant of
Border Security Force

Affairs describes the border management objective as “Securing the country’s borders against interests hostile to the country and putting in place systems that are able to interdict such elements while facilitating legitimate trade and commerce are among the principal objectives of border management”. It lays emphasis on strategy to secure borders, to create infrastructure in the border areas and initiatives undertaken for construction of the fence, floodlighting, border outposts/ company operating bases and building roads along different borders.

India has land borders of 15,106.70 Kms spread over 17 states. One needs to understand that all Indian states

except Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Delhi and Haryana are frontline states. Nations also need to appreciate that development of border guarding infrastructure like fences, flood lights, and border roads does not mean development of border areas or economic improvement in the lot of the border population. The development of border areas means improvement in infrastructural facilities in the border areas like schools, hospitals, clean drinking water, transportation, uninterrupted electric supply and network of roads, connectivity initiatives and creation of employment opportunities for youth of border villages and an affirmative environment to enable border population to carry out its vocational activities without undue hindrance.

Border management has a vast horizon, is not restricted to border security, and encompasses various elements of governance, which play a role in border security, and development of border areas. It encompasses different stakeholders without whose cooperation, border-guarding forces may not be able to ensure effective border security and border defence. Thus, it can be said that border management without integrated stakeholders is a misnomer. It is just an extension of border guarding which only has one asset in its kitty i.e. border guarding force, which certainly can

ensure border security as a standalone stakeholder. However, a standalone approach will make the already onerous task of border guarding difficult, hostile and cumbersome for extremely stretched border guarding forces.

Question arises how to make border security impregnable and full proof? Can it be only made by developing border defence infrastructure and modernising border-guarding CAPFs? Answer is both yes and no. Border defence infrastructure and modernisation of border guarding CAPFs play a major role in ensuring strong border security; however, it may not achieve effectiveness desired without active cooperation of stakeholders who need to be taken on board as major components of border management. The first step in this direction should be to pick and recognise stakeholders of border management.

Who are major stakeholders in border management? Stakeholders are the border guarding force, border population and local administration. These three need to work in tandem with each other, and there is need for cooperation and coordination between them for effective border security, a prerequisite for national security. It is the responsibility of the border guarding force deployed upon a particular border to coordinate with all these stakeholders in the national interest



being responsible for border security.

Border population is a major asset which can play an important role in border security, however its pivotal role in border security needs to be recognised and given due weightage by government and executing agency the border guarding force. Border population is the only permanent element on borders. It possesses in-depth knowledge of not only its own side but also counterpart side and are well conversant with boundary lines as well as border area. So much so that it may not be incorrect to say that, it is border people who when asked to guide border men in various aspects of border guarding. Border guarding force and district

administration are fleeting elements that rotate regularly after fixed tenure and cannot be termed as permanent. So only permanent stakeholders and major assets without whose participation border management is incomplete is border population. Therefore, it is very important that the border population be recognised as one of the main pillars of border management.

It is a fact that relations between border population and border guarding forces have always been conflicting. It is true for all borders. The reason for conflicting relations is that the border population perceives border-guarding forces as hindrance in its routine

vocational activities of agriculture like sowing and harvesting more so on fenced borders whereas a border-guarding force has to ensure security of the border and enforce certain restrictions, which hinder free movement. The responsibility for rectifying and improving this adversarial relationship lies with the border guarding force, since it is perceived as a major source of adversarial relationship. Farmers have to go ahead of fencing to sow, irrigate and harvest their crops through designated border gates. There are well laid out SOPs for opening and closing of gates in terms of timings for both summers and winters. There are laid down protocols and procedures for checking of men, women and equipment entering inside gates and coming out of gates at laid down time. Farmers also appreciate and recognise security needs to check smuggling and do not resist physical frisking and checking,

rather cooperate in the drills. The problems arise during sowing and harvesting season. Generally border guarding forces is always face manpower shortage to man the gates and limited manpower is unable to handle rush of farmers, labour and tractor trolleys leading to delays at gates. It creates restiveness among farmers, a major cause of adversarial relationships as their limited time to work in the field is wasted at the gate. It is a perennial problem. Sometimes these problems lead to scuffles and local political interference causing undue stress to border men.

Another reason for conflicting relationships is tarring all with the same brush. It is true that borders are prone to smuggling and locals are involved in such activities but tarring all with same brush is unjustified. It creates a feeling of alienation among self-respecting citizens.



Border guarding forces need to sensitise their men on this aspect as it creates bad blood between both stakeholders. Not opening gates on time due to internal issues of manpower shortage or otherwise, also sometimes lead to tension, which is avoidable by strictly adhering to laid down timings. Behavioural aberrations by men on ground with locals also sometimes create unavoidable tensions, which need to be avoided, and men sensitised on the issue of correct behaviour that is strict without being rude.

There are laid down SOPs and procedures on continuous interaction with the border population especially at the level of company commanders, these need to be executed correctly and meticulously. Grievances of locals in terms of behaviour of troops, opening and closing of gates, making additional gates functional need to be considered sympathetically. There is a need to engage and interact with locals to make them understand the difficulties of borderman and certainly sincere interaction helps in

resolving issues and strengthening border security. Another aspect, which company commanders need to keep in mind, is that do not procrastinate in resolving local border management related issues affecting border population, do not make locals requesting for an audience to wait at border out post gate and then deny them audience and ask them to come next day and thus frustrate and humiliate them. It also applies at the level of battalion commanders and higher ups. It happens many times that farmers from border areas reach battalion and higher headquarters are made to wait inordinately at entrances and then turned back. One needs to appreciate their concerns and interact instead of avoiding them. It creates mutual distrust, which goes against border security interest.

How to integrate border population in border management? The government and border guarding forces first need to recognise that integration of border population in border management grid is essential for effective border security. It




need to be treated as an important spoke in border management wheel for stable borders. Border guarding forces need to carry out an in-depth analysis of factors, which lead to adversarial relationships between border population and border guarding force and address them. In the case of fenced borders it need to revisit gate management drills and procedures and enhance manpower at the gates especially during peak sowing and harvesting season. It need be reduce areas of responsibility by inducting additional battalions which will address all issues of adversarial relations and also strengthen border guarding by reducing gaps in border guarding.

An effective gate management protocol can even resolve the issue of fencing even on the Indo-Myanmar border where locals and some governments are against fencing due to cross border relations. If implemented sincerely, there may be no need to do away with the free movement regime (FMR) by regulating movement through gates thus addressing an important national security issue on that border by addressing local concerns. It will contribute in bringing peace and development to the region.

Border guarding forces also need to play an important role by influencing local government and local administration

to ensure speedy development of border areas in terms of infrastructural development to improve economic lot of border population to help wean away-misguided youth from smuggling and other anti-national activities, which adversely affect national security.

Border population needs to be recognised and respected as an important component of the border management grid by both government and border guarding forces. The contribution of stakeholder components need to be reflected in the annual reports of the ministry of home affairs, which at present seem to perceive border management only from the prism of border security restricted to border guarding forces. There is also a need to develop border-guarding doctrine encompassing all stakeholder from which flows border guarding strategy for effective border security. Let us hope that the border population is recognised and respected as an important component of border management in national security interest and positive steps taken to integrate it in the border management grid thus strengthening border and national security. What positive steps need to be taken to ensure integration needs in-depth analysis and integration is achievable.



Varkala: A Heritage Junction of Indian Coast

According to a myth, Narada Muni threw his tree bark garment (valkala) from the sky. It fell to a coastal region in the southern part of Bharat. The place where Narada's valkala touched the Earth got the name Varkala. It is now in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. On the 20th of August 2023, the Honourable former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, reached Varkala. He inaugurated the centenary celebrations of Narayana Gurukula, in the presence of Shri Arif Mohammed Khan,



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the Honourable Governor of Kerala. This Narayan Gurukula is not related to the mythological Narayana of Narada, but to a Narayana of modern times known as Swami Muni Narayana Prasad. Now, listed as serial number 98 among the Padma Shri awardees of 2024, Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, is also from Varkala. He is the current head and Guru of Narayana Gurukula.

From Brahma to Brahman

The story of Narada Muni and its connection with Varkala belongs to the spiritual/mythological domain of India. Brahma is one of the central figures of the ancient tradition of our nation. Over a

period of centuries, there evolved another tradition with Brahman or 'The Absolute' as one of the central concepts. This is the wisdom tradition of India and, one may say, this tradition attained maturity in Vedanta ie. the end or culmination of veda (knowledge). Over the centuries, brilliant saint-scholars like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and others have interpreted the Vedanta in different ways. The philosopher-poet Guru Narayana belongs to this class of noted exponents of the Vedanta. Through Guru Narayana, Vedanta, the "finest fruit on the tree of India's wisdom" attains certain hitherto not so known flavor by way of revaluation and restatement of ancient wisdom, the most notable being the application of Vedanta to solve social problems. Thus he proved that Vedanta is a living philosophy. No wonder, Romain Rolland, a French philosopher and Nobel Laureate, described him as "Jnanin of Action."

Narayana Gurukula

Guru Narayana had an army of dedicated disciples, both monastic and lay, who lived for his cause. Different streams originated from the 'Guru Mountain' and each disciple can be located dominantly in one of the streams. These streams are devotional, political, social, cultural and philosophical. Each stream has its representative disciple, and P. Natarajan belongs to the philosophical stream.

Narayana Guru paid special attention to teaching this disciple the subtle aspects of his darshana. He also sent him to the West for higher studies. Natarajan was awarded with a D.Litt. from University of Paris (Sorbonne) in 1932 and became Dr. Natarajan. Later, he obtained MRST (Member of the Royal Society of Teachers) from London. Narayana Gurukula was founded on 8th of June 1923 by this disciple of Guru Narayana. It is a guru-disciple foundation according to Indian (Hindu) tradition and derives its status in law from Article 19(1), 25 and 26 of the Indian Constitution. This is a non-profit, charitable and public foundation open to all without distinction of race, caste, nationality, sex or creed etc. who seek in living terms the Wisdom of the Absolute (Brahma - vidya) of which the Guru Narayana (1854-1928) is a model and exemplar. Its centenary was inaugurated in 2023 and the above mentioned Padma Shri awardee is the present head of this foundation.

Brahmavidyamandir at Varkala

Brahma vidya, as envisaged by Narayana Gurukulam, is a modern version of Advaita Vedanta where this ancient wisdom is seen as the Science of Consciousness, a Science of Sciences, The Science of The Absolute or Unitive Understanding. As an institutional means to impart this wisdom education worldwide, an Institute of Science of The Absolute (Brhmavidyamandir) also had

been initiated by the founder, who, by that time became Nataraja Guru. It is a wing of Narayana Gurukula and is in Varkala itself. As part of dissemination of wisdom, Narayana Gurukula has so far published more than 300 books in Malayalam, English and Hindi. Commentary on complete works of Guru Narayana, three commentaries on Bhagavad Gita and commentaries on all the ten principal Upanishads are some of the salient publications. Nataraja Guru, his successor Nitya Chaitanya Yati and the present head are the principal authors.

Advaita as Unitive Understanding

The value added to Vedanta by Guru Narayana is mentioned in section 1. Such a value addition made it possible for his disciple to present Vedanta in modern time as a Science of all Sciences. It is science of sciences because it is from the same consciousness all the sciences originate and Vedanta can be seen as the study of consciousness. Looking at Vedanta, especially Advaita, through this perspective and presenting it before a universal audience, need proper terminology in English. Usually Advaita is translated as non-dualism. But, according to Nataraja Guru, Advaita connotes more than mere unity and hence the usual translations are not equivalent expressions of the Indian concept of Advaita. So he coined the term 'Unitive Understanding' to convey the unique virtue inherent in it.

The idea of Unitive Understanding has been conceived not as a mere academic discipline nor its scope is limited to the domain of intellectual exercise. It has a wide range of applications and it is a way of looking at all disciplines of life through a different perspective – through the lens of what have been traditionally considered in India as Advaita. But it is not limited to individual life, it shows how social issues can be solved through a holistic perspective, integrating humans and Nature, ancient and modern and East and West. Nataraja Guru developed a 'structuralism', as a basis to make this integration possible. One can decipher the fusion of the ancient Indian notion of Chatuspada (referred in verse two of Mandukya Upanishad), a four fold scheme, and the modern 'Cartesian correlates' in this structuralism.

From Varkala to Ezhimala

Contributions of Narayana Gurukula in revaluing and adding new dimensions to traditional wisdom is not just limited to theoretical elaborations. A series of conferences were organised by Nataraja Guru to show the potential of Advaita, Unitive Understanding, to bring peace to the world. These had been in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The series was named as 'World Peace Through Unitive Understanding' and were held at Ezhimala, a coastal village in Kannur district of

Kerala.

As a symbol of world peace, the day selected for the 1970 conference was 11th of November 11.11 AM. This was to commemorate Armistice Day, the day on which peace negotiations to end World War I was held- 11th of November 1918, 11.11. The flag of this conference was hoisted by Freddy Van Der Borght, a disciple of Nataraja guru, who was in charge of the Narayana Gurukulam at Ezhimala. In 1971 the flag was hoisted by Field Marshal K.M.Cariappa who was the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. It was inaugurated by H.H.Natvarsinhji, Maharaja of Porbandhar. Duration of the conferences too was eleven days.

The topics discussed in these series were religion, world government, world law, yoga, ethics, aesthetics, education, economics and unified science. This list of varying topics reflect the applications of unitive understanding or the potential of Indian Philosophy to bring a new world order. Experts from India and abroad, especially from Belgium and France, presented the themes. Curran A. De Bruler, Mark Albert, Freddy Van Der Borght, Patrik Mission and Brigitte Lachaert were the foreign disciples of Nataraja Guru who spoke on the occasion.

Like Varkala, Ezhimala too has a local myth linking it with the epic Ramayana. A symbolic representation of this

mythological connection is the name Anjaneya Giri for a small hillock of the area and a 41ft tall statue of Lord Hanuman installed there.

Varkala (8° 43' 59.88" N; 76° 43' 0.12" E) is the coastal region of South Kerala where a revaluation of the ancient wisdom of India sprouted and Ezhimala (12° 01' 06" N; 75° 12' 57" E) is another coastal village in North Kerala from where the world heard a clarion call for 'World Peace Through Unitive Understanding'. Ezhimala was later taken over by Govt. of India and now this place is the location of Indian Naval Academy.

Sivagiri Mutt and Sharada Temple

As mentioned in section 2, Narayana Gurukula and its unique contributions to Indian thought represents the philosophical stream originated from Gurr Narayana. Sivagiri Mutt can be considered as the symbol of the devotional stream of Guru Narayana tradition. Samadhi mandir of Guru Narayana is in Sivagiri mutt. This mutt too is in Varkala. The Sharada temple of Sivagiri mutt needs a special mention because it is the manifestation of Guru Narayana's concept of a temple in modern time. This temple, devoted to Goddess Saraswathi, was consecrated by the Guru in 1912. Unlike the design of traditional temples, this temple has an octagonal shape with windows and ventilation. The idol of Saraswathy is seated on lotus.

Janardanaswamy Temple

Now going back to the opening story of Narada Muni. Why did he throw his Valkala from sky? According to one legend, Narada was visited by the nine prajapathis who told him that they had sinned. He threw his valkala to earth and told the prajapathis to go there and pray for their redemption. Since then the scenic village where the valkala fell was called by the name Varkala .Narada further requested Vishnu to create a deity and Vishnu did so using his Sudarsana Chakra. It is believed that devas constructed a temple of Vishnu there and worshipped him in the form of Janardana. Thus came in to existence the present Janardanaswamy temple of Varkala, another heritage in the great Indian tradition.

Varkala Cliff , Beach and Tourism

Geologically too,Varkala is blessed with a natural marvel .The cliff overlooking the Varkala beach is a unique sedimentary geo-morphological structure on the Kerala coast. There were reports stating that Varkala is the only place on the west coast of India where sediments in the Mio-Pliocene Age (13 lakh to 2.5 crore years ago)

have been founded. There is a proposal to declare this site as a National Geo-park. The beach ,together with the sea cliff have made Varkala a destination in the tourist map of the world. A Naturopathy hospital , rare in medical field , also is functioning at Varkala , in addition to the Ayurveda facilities.

Varkala beach, with its proximity to Janardana temple , has religious significance too. This sandy plain is considered as a sacred place for Hindu rituals like pitru tharpanam and amavasi tharpanam.

Varkala - A Multiple Junction

The ‘philosophical super highway’ , originated from time immemorial attains a new dimension at Varkala through the concept of ‘Unitive Understanding’ . A mythological stream also reached this place and concretized as Janardanaswamy temple. In terms of geography/geology too Varkala has a unique identity in terms of preserving pages of earth’s history .Thus ,considering 7500 odd km long coastal India as a geocultural region, Varkala can be visualized as a multiple heritage junction in it.





Waiting for Reconstruction: First Village Dhanushkodi

Dhanushkodi, the border village of Tamil Nadu, is very important from the point of view of 'first village'. Apart from being important from a cultural and geographical point of view, this village has immense potential to become economically strong. Our India is famous all over the world for its natural beauty. The country is full of mountainous plateaus, dense forests, rugged areas, plains, attractive beaches and cultural heritage that testifies to its prosperity



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and modernity over time. However, there are some places whose inaccessibility has caused them harm. 'Dhanushkodi' of Tamil Nadu is also one such place which became a victim of adverse circumstances even before it could reach the stage of its trade friendliness and geographical dominance. Surrounded by the 'Bay of Bengal' in the north and the 'Indian Ocean' in the south, this village has all the qualities to become a picturesque destination from a tourism point of view. This village is situated in a small area at the 'south-west' end of 'Pamban Island'. Its distance from 'Rameshwaram' is 18 kilometers.

To reach this village, people have to go via Ramanathapuram, which is not

possible at present as the construction of a new railway bridge is going on parallel to the old bridge which is expected to be completed in February.

If we look into the past of this area, the cyclone that came in 1964 had engulfed hundreds of people here overnight. On the tragic night of 22 December that year, 1500 to 2000 people died in Dhanushkodi. All 110 passengers and 5 railway employees aboard the train passing through the Pamban Bridge became victims of the cyclone. Local residents believe that there were 200 to 400 people in the train. Today this village is in ruins which was once home to 700-800 families.

Fish trade, local artefacts, conch shells and other maritime businesses were prevalent in Dhanushkodi. Today, more than 6 decades have passed and less than 300 families are left in Dhanushkodi. Due to lack of health services, many families moved to towns like Rameshwaram, Natarajapuram and Pamban. Even today, those who have not left Dhanushkodi send their children to get education in the primary school located in the nearby town.

After the disaster of 1964, the state government declared Dhanushkodi 'uninhabitable', effectively depriving the region of the facilities and fundamental rights of the country's mainland. Till now the attitude of the central governments

has also not been very positive towards Dhanushkodi. At that time, the reconstruction of Pamban Bridge was started with immediate effect. It was done but the railway line going to Dhanushkodi, the local post office and the government health center were left stalled forever.

Today, due to this, only dilapidated buildings, ruined temples and churches, old broken railway tracks and tin covered houses are visible in Dhanushkodi.

Despite being at a distance of only 18 kilometers from Rameshwaram, Dhanushkodi still lacks basic facilities like solid development, health facilities, communication system, travel operations. The present Central Government has taken some steps keeping in mind the development and prosperity of Rameshwaram, but its benefits do not seem to be reaching Dhanushkodi. While the work to ease rail and road traffic in Pamban Island is in progress, the government is facing delays and obstacles since the Corona period in the acquisition work for Dhanushkodi development. The present state government has backed out of the agreement to acquire land under the railway project, citing the coastal area of Dhanushkodi as 'naturally sensitive'.

The geographical location of Dhanushkodi is a boon for it. Economically speaking, Dhanushkodi has the potential to promote commercial tourism and

religious tourism without harming the environment. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated development projects worth more than Rs 19000 crore in 'Lakshadweep Mala'. And approved many other projects. When the people of the country are increasingly looking for the talented island groups of India: Lakshadweep, Andaman Nicobar and other tourist areas as an alternative to 'Maldives'. Then the Central Government of the country and the Tamil Nadu State Government should put their emphasis on investing in the reconstruction works of Dhanushkodi and rehabilitation of the local people. Due to proximity to Sri Lanka, migration of Tamil speaking people also remains a matter of concern, the government needs to pay attention to the personal security of the country along with strategic relations.

Culturally Dhanushkodi has been an integral part of the history of India. This place is very close to Ram Setu. In such a situation, it is better than wasting future possibilities by neglecting our national



heritage.

From a long term perspective, progress should be made on development and tourism in this area. Steps should be taken to figure out problems related to redevelopment, tourism – their solutions and immense potential for growth in business.

In April last year, the Tamil Nadu





state government had announced an investment of Rs 25 crore in 7 tourist destinations including Dhanushkodi. The Central Government will also have to take meaningful steps keeping in mind the economic needs of India. Acting from a commercial point of view, the Central Government has made the newly constructed Pamban Bridge 3 meters higher than the old bridge with '22 degree navigational clearance'.

To promote handicraft products among the local residents, there is a need to provide training and financial assistance to the talented people covered under 'Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana'. Efforts should also be made to promote local food and folklore and gain recognition

on the mainland and internationally.

The task of reconstruction will not be easy, but the Central and State Governments need to come together to formulate a concrete and far-reaching action plan to renovate Dhanushkodi to establish a strong economy. Local people believe that before the 1964 cyclone, there was no large population migration to Dhanushkodi, but there was a thriving economy. There was a prosperous population, a system of education and health care. There were no modern operational facilities but there was a pilgrimage of devotees. Today – Dhanushkodi has immense potential for redevelopment, growth in tourism and trade.

First Odisha Villages: Embracing Responsibilities and Challenges

Odisha Coast: An Overview

Odisha boasts a 487-kilometer-long coastline characterised by diverse geophysical and geo-economic features. The region encompasses seven coastal districts, housing a total of 3,878 fishing villages, comprising 813 marine and 3,065 inland villages. The primary sources of livelihood in these villages revolve around fishing and paddy farming. However, due to the susceptibility of the entire coastline to frequent cyclones from the



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Bay of Bengal and monsoonal floods, the economic condition of these villages is notably poorer when compared to other villages in the state. The absence of disaster-resilient infrastructure severely impacts the economic activities in these communities.

Coastal Security Management

Odisha currently has only 18 Marine police stations dedicated to ensuring the security of vital installations—such as

defence organisations and major/minor ports—located along its coastal areas, as well as the preservation of the coastal environment. The Odisha Police conducts regular and periodic assessments of the security scenario, focusing on detecting illegal immigration and preventing the entry of anti-social elements from the sea.

To enhance security, both at sea and on land, Fast Interceptor Boats and vehicles are deployed for regular patrolling by the Marine Police Stations (MPSs). Additionally, efforts are made to keep the local fishing community, residing in coastal areas, informed and vigilant. They are encouraged to collect intelligence and promptly report any concerns to the authorities. A Coastal Security Awareness Programme is conducted monthly to sensitise the fishing community.

Furthermore, a monthly security drill named “SAJAG” is conducted with the assistance of the Indian Coast Guard. This drill involves extensive checks on boats and verification of documents for all fishing vessels operating at sea, ensuring a comprehensive approach to coastal security measures.

Why these three villages?

In this study, three coastal villages—Kharasahapur, Dhinkia, and Arakhakuda—have been designated as ‘First Odisha Villages’ due to their immediate proximity

to the sea, strategic locations, and distinctive socio-economic structures.

Kharasahapur - Balasore District

Kharasahapur village is situated 45 km away from the sub-district headquarters, Soro (tehsildar office), and another 45 km from the district headquarters, Balasore. With a total population of 7,051 people, Kharasahapur comprises approximately 1,758 houses.

Strategically, this village is positioned just a few kilometers away from the Chandipur missile testing facility, Wheeler Island, and the renowned Khirachora Gopinatha Temple. Additionally, it boasts a scenic sea beach. The Dhamra sea port in the neighbouring Bhadrak District is also situated approximately 50 km from the village.

Dhinkia – Jagatsinghpur District

Dhinkia village is situated approximately two kilometres away from the Bay of Bengal coast. In close proximity, the captive port, Jatadhari, could serve as a facilitator for import and export activities. Additionally, Paradip Port, one of India’s top 12 major ports, is located around 15 km from the village.

The extensive tracts of land in Dhinkia are predominantly covered with betel or cashew plants, while some areas are dedicated to shrimp cultivation by the local villagers. The National Highway

connecting the capital city of Bhubaneswar to Paradip is also a mere 12 km away from the village.

Notably, JSW Steel has recently announced plans to construct a 900-megawatt power plant for captive use with an investment of Rs 53,700 crore on the same site where POSCO was initially expected to establish an industry.

Arakhakuda- Puri District

Arakhakuda is a fishing village located in the Brahmagiri block of the Puri district, and its residents have been engaged in fishing in Chilika Lake for generations. What sets Arakhakuda apart is its status as the first village on the Magarmukh channel, linking the lake to the Bay of Bengal. Consequently, the villagers have first-hand knowledge of the changes occurring in the lake system due to both human interference and natural processes. Residents voice concerns about decreasing salinity, shallowing of the lake, an increase in fishing activities, and a decline in fish catch.

With a total population of 478 individuals, comprising 252 males and 226 females, Arakhakuda has a literacy rate of 50.63 percent. Among the literate population, 55.56 percent are males, and 45.13 percent are females. The village consists of about 99 houses and is located a few miles from the renowned Kalijai

Temple and the INS Chilika.

Challenges

These villages face the following challenges:

- The impact of climate change, leading to rising sea levels, has resulted in the displacement of a significant population from 247 coastal villages, with 16 villages already submerged underwater. According to data from the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management, Chennai, 74 villages in the state are severely affected by shoreline erosion, marking the highest incidence in the country.

- The shoreline management plan, developed as part of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management project by the State government, indicates the potential for coastal erosion in Balasore, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, and Ganjam districts. According to a recent study, projections suggest that 55.85 percent of the 487-km long Odisha coastline is anticipated to experience accretion, while 44.15 percent is expected to undergo erosion or exhibit a constant trend by the year 2050.

- The initiative formulated by the Water Resources Department to safeguard the coastline has been stalled due to a lack of sanctioned funds. The sea appears to be particularly menacing during lunar and solar eclipses, exacerbating damage



to the coastal areas. Urgent corrective actions by the government are essential to prevent the complete submersion of acres of cultivable land and betel vines in the foreseeable future.

- Occupational challenges persist in these villages as fishing is no longer exclusive to the traditional fishing community. Simultaneously, fishermen face difficulties adapting to new economic competition from outsiders equipped with modern fishing trawlers and nets. Villagers encounter challenges securing loans from the formal sector due to the absence of collateral, often leading them into a debt trap when acquiring fishing instruments by obtaining land from local landlords.

- A similar predicament is faced by non-fishing communities, particularly farmers relying on betel leaves, cashews, honey, shrimp farming, and paddy cultivation for their livelihoods. These farmers struggle to secure financial assistance and alternative land support

from the state government in the event of crop loss and land damage caused by cyclones, floods, and soil erosion from sea waves. Consequently, a significant number of these villagers have resorted to leasing their land to Bangladeshi illegal immigrants for cultivation. Families that traditionally relied on fishing and farming for their livelihoods are now contemplating migration to other states in search of sustainable livelihoods.

- Last but not least, procuring firewood has become increasingly challenging, primarily due to the designation of Hental forests or Mangroves as sanctuaries, national parks, or reserve forests in these regions. In the case of Arakhakuda villagers, the forests are either disappearing, or even if they exist, access to them is restricted for the villagers. Large-scale individuals now use tractors to extract all the wood, leaving villagers with no choice but to purchase it from them, albeit at a considerable cost.

Satrasal: A First Village on Assam's Border

Geography: Satrasal, a village nestled in Agomani Tehsil of Dhubri District, Assam, stands as a testament to the diverse geographical features adorning this border region. Positioned 33 kilometers west of the district headquarters Dhubri, Satrasal strategically lies near the borders of West Bengal, boasting an elevation of 47 meters above sea level. The village is characterized by its proximity to the Gouranga and Jaldhaka rivers, adding to its geographical allure.

Local Geographical Challenges and Solutions:

The village encounters geographical challenges, including rugged terrains and climatic conditions. However, the resilient community of Satrasal has ingeniously crafted solutions to navigate these hurdles, showcasing adaptability and dedication to their homeland.

Known and Little-known Tourist Destinations



Partha P. Das



Dynamic professional with over 20 years of leadership in well known organizations

Beyond its strategic importance, Satrasal boasts a rich tapestry of tourist destinations. From majestic mountain views to serene riverbanks, the village invites travelers to explore its diverse landscapes. The article highlights both well-known and lesser-known tourist spots, encouraging a deeper appreciation for the region's natural beauty.

- Ramraikuti Satra

A Spiritual Haven at the Indo-Bangladesh and West Bengal Border Nestled at the Indo-Bangladesh and West

Bengal border in Satrasal, Dhubri District of Assam, Ramraikuti Satra stands as a sacred sanctuary with deep-rooted historical significance. This holy place, situated in close proximity to the borders, holds a unique position, not only for its spiritual essence but also for its role in preserving cultural traditions.

- **Historical Significance**

Ramraikuti Satra holds a significant place in history, dating back to the marriage ceremony of Chilarai and Bhubaneshwari, the daughter of Ramrai (cousin of Sri Sankardev). Sri Sankardeva, the revered saint and cultural icon, established this satra with the primary objective of promoting and propagating the Satriya Culture in the region. The satra has been a witness to the cultural amalgamation and historical events that shaped the cultural tapestry of Assam.

- **Cultural Promotion and Propagation**

Founded by Paramguru Sri Sankardeva, Ramraikuti Satra serves as a bastion for the promotion and propagation of Satriya Culture. Satriya Culture encompasses various art forms, dance, music, and rituals, and the satra plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting these traditions to future generations. The serene location at the border adds a unique dimension to the cultural vibrancy

of the satra.

- **Historical Ratha (Chariot)**

One of the remarkable features of Ramraikuti Satra is the preservation of a historical brass-made Ratha (Chariot). This Ratha holds cultural and historical significance, serving as a tangible link to the past. The intricately crafted chariot becomes a focal point during festivals and religious ceremonies, symbolizing the rich cultural heritage of the region.

Religious and Spiritual Practices

Ramraikuti Satra is a place where devotees gather to engage in religious and spiritual practices. The serene ambiance near the borders adds a sense of tranquility to the spiritual pursuits of those who visit the satra. Rituals, prayers, and cultural performances contribute to the vibrant spiritual atmosphere, fostering a sense of devotion and community among the followers.

Cultural Heritage Conservation

The satra plays a pivotal role in the conservation of cultural heritage. Through various initiatives, Ramraikuti Satra strives to preserve traditional art forms, manuscripts, and artifacts that reflect the cultural ethos of Assam. This commitment to conservation ensures that the rich heritage of the region remains alive and accessible to future generations.

- **Interfaith Harmony**

Situated at the border, Ramraikuti Satra serves as a bridge between different communities and faiths. The satra fosters an atmosphere of interfaith harmony, where people from diverse backgrounds come together to celebrate common cultural threads. This inclusive approach contributes to social cohesion and mutual respect among the followers of different belief systems.

Cultural Exchange with West Bengal and Bangladesh

Being located at the Indo-Bangladesh and West Bengal border, Ramraikuti Satra becomes a cultural crossroad. The satra actively engages in cultural exchanges with neighboring regions, fostering a rich tapestry of shared traditions. This exchange contributes to a broader understanding of cultural diversity and strengthens the bonds between communities.

Environmental Conservation Initiatives

Recognizing the importance of environmental stewardship, Ramraikuti Satra takes initiatives for environmental conservation. The serene natural surroundings near the borders are valued, and the satra actively promotes eco-friendly practices, encouraging both devotees and the local community to be responsible custodians of the

environment.

Tourism and Pilgrimage

Ramraikuti Satra, with its historical significance and cultural richness, attracts tourists and pilgrims alike. The satra becomes a pilgrimage site for those seeking spiritual solace, cultural enrichment, and a glimpse into the history of Assam. The steady influx of visitors contributes to the local economy and promotes cultural tourism in the region.

Continued Legacy and Future Aspirations

As Ramraikuti Satra continues its legacy of spiritual guidance and cultural preservation, there are ongoing efforts to adapt to the changing times. The satra looks towards the future with aspirations of modernizing facilities, expanding educational initiatives, and leveraging technology to reach a wider audience while staying true to its cultural roots.

In essence, Ramraikuti Satra stands not only as a physical structure but as a living testament to the intertwining of spirituality and culture. Its enduring presence at the border exemplifies the unifying power of cultural heritage, transcending boundaries and fostering a sense of shared identity among the people of Assam and beyond.



Bhairabkunda: The First Village from Indo- Bhutan Border



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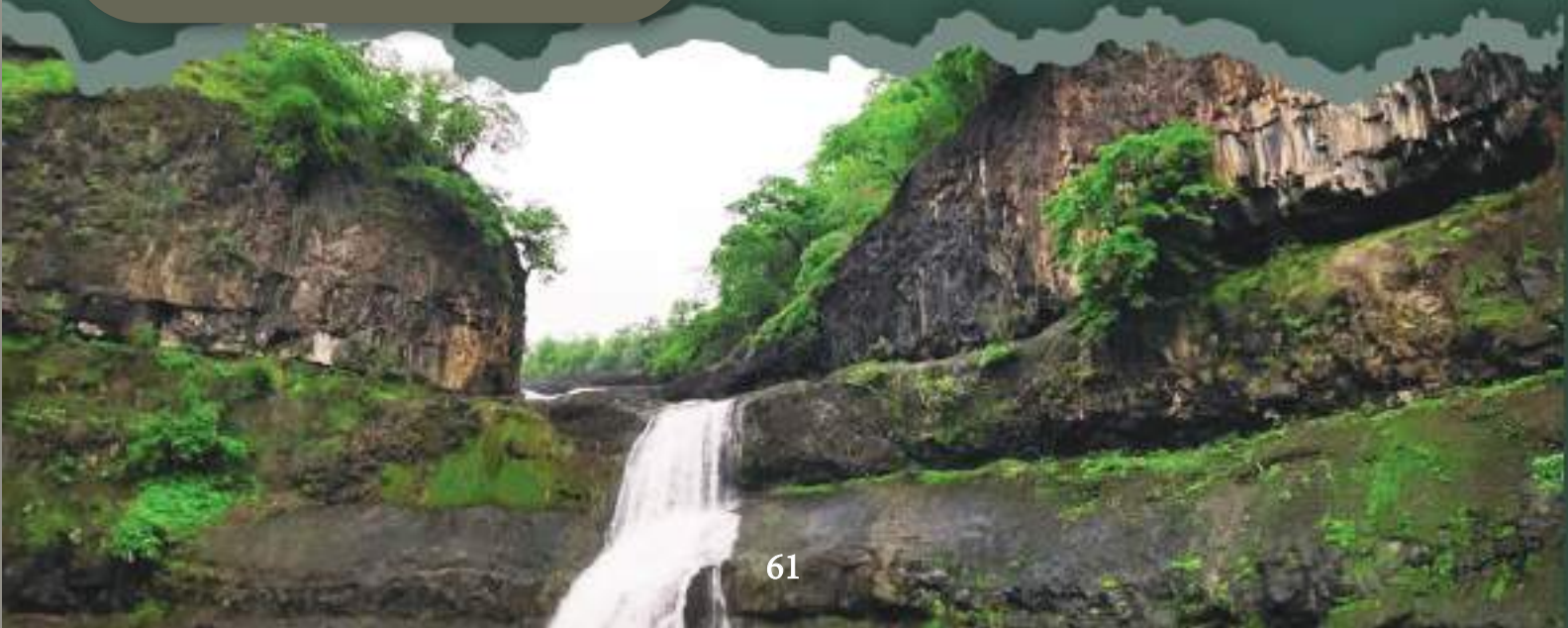


**Pallabi
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Nestled gracefully within the heart of Assam's Udalguri district, Bhairabkunda village emerges as one of the mesmerising first villages along the Indo-Bhutan border. Revered for its innate natural charm, this village assumes



pivotal role as a gateway to Bhutan's eastern province. Enchanting visitors with a confluence of rivers and the sacred Shaktipeeth, Bhairabkunda's cultural significance resonates deeply. Beyond its ecological wonders, Bhairabkunda stands as a cultural tourism hub, unveiling the rich tapestry of Bhutanese and Bodo traditions. The annual Bhairabkunda Tourism Festival, a celebration of local vibrancy, showcases captivating folk dances, delectable traditional cuisines, and vibrant festivities, enticing discerning visitors to partake in the immersive experience of this culturally rich and ecologically diverse region.

The international boundary between Bhutan and India, known as the Indo-Bhutan border, spans 699 kilometres. It delineates the Kingdom of Bhutan from the Republic of India, with an open border that extends across several Indian states. Specifically, it covers 267 kilometres in Assam, 217 kilometres in Arunachal Pradesh, 183 kilometres in West Bengal, and 32 kilometres in Sikkim. The boundary between Bhutan and Assam intersects various points across four districts of Assam: Saralpara in Kokrajhar district, Darranga in Baksa district, Bhairabkunda in Udalguri district, and Dadgiri in Chirang district.

Bhairabkunda village, the first village from Udalguri district in the Indo-Bhutan border, is renowned for its natural beauty

and tranquillity. As a transit point for Bhutan's eastern province, Bhairabkunda is positioned approximately 22 km north of Udalguri's district headquarters and close to the Bhutanese town of "Daifam." According to the 2011 census, the village spans 29.51 hectares and houses a population of 273 individuals, with 144 males and 129 females. The literacy rate is 69.23%, with 74.31% among males and 63.57% among females.

Bhairabkunda serves as a convergence point not just for geographical boundaries among Assam, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh but also for the rivers Jia Dhansiri, Bhairavi, and Daifam. The confluence of these rivers resembles a sacred 'Kunda,' reminiscent of a worship place dedicated to Lord Shiva. This unique characteristic likely contributes to the nomenclature of Bhairabkunda, underscoring its spiritual and geographical significance. The region's configuration echoes the spiritual significance linked to Shiva's abode. The Shiva (Bhairab Baba) temple in Daifam, Bhutan, near Bhairabkunda, is esteemed as one of the Shakti Peethas, emphasising its sacred importance. According to Hindu mythology, Shakti Peethas are sacred sites where Sati's charred body parts were dispersed by Lord Vishnu's Sudarshan Chakra, each housing a temple dedicated to Shiva's Bhairava manifestation. During "Makar Sankranti," devotees flock to this

site for ritual baths at the confluence of three rivers and offer prayers at the Shiva temple. According to folklore, a sacred kunda existed where devotees performed pujas, and fishes would take rice offerings, sprinkling holy water for peace but avoiding impure individuals. In another tale, devout Shiva worshippers, the Bodos, prayed through ancient Kherai dances. The God manifested among the devotees, gathering all musical instruments in a worshipper's house, which later burned down, causing their disappearance.

Bhairabkunda stands out as an appealing destination, especially for picnic enthusiasts. The crystal-clear waters of the Dhansiri River, the encompassing rocks, spacious open areas, and adjacent hills collectively present a comprehensive package of natural beauty. Widely regarded as one of the most favoured picnic spots, it also attracts people from various parts of the country seeking a tranquil setting for picnics and other recreational activities. Additionally, there's a suspension bridge constructed with steel cables linking Bhairabkunda to Daifam. Daifam, recognized as a tourist destination and a picturesque spot for photography, is easily accessible through this bridge. Another important tourist spot nearby, Dwijiri waterfall, is situated along the Bhairabkunda-Udalguri road. To attract a larger influx of tourists, the Bhairabkunda

Tourism Festival is orchestrated annually in January. This event unfolds along the banks of the Dhansiri River and at the Bhairabkunda Tourism Complex. Its primary aim is to boost tourism in the area and showcase the vibrant local culture. The festival serves as a platform to highlight the enduring bonds of fraternity, unity, and cultural integrity among diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, including those from neighbouring Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh.

Bhairabkunda appears as a remarkable testament to environmental stewardship with its expansive 450-hectare man-made forest, a collaborative initiative spearheaded by the Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) in Udalguri. The ambitious reforestation project initially faced a formidable challenge—nurturing the saplings without a reliable water source. To overcome this hurdle, the community constructed a 4-kilometre-long irrigation channel sourced from the Dhansiri River, originating in Arunachal Pradesh. Complementing this, two additional irrigation channels were meticulously excavated from the Dhansiri, safeguarding the newly planted saplings against potential water scarcity. This concerted effort spanned five development blocks within the Udalguri civil sub-division, eventually covering 41.683 hectares.

The culmination of these conservation efforts was not just robust plant growth but a gradual metamorphosis of the landscape into a distinctive manmade green cover now known as the Gethsemane Manmade Forest (GMMF). In the span of a mere five years, the awe-inspiring Gedsimani Forest (JFMC) emerged in Sapangaon, transforming 5,500 bighas of barren sandy land into a picturesque landscape. The extensive transformation involved planting over 1,400,000 saplings, encompassing valuable species such as khoir, gomari, simul, shisham, along the Dhansiri River in proximity to Bhutan. Over time, this regenerated forest has evolved into a sanctuary for diverse animal and bird species, offering solace to nature enthusiasts and a shining example of successful conservation endeavours. The lush expanse now serves as a haven for ecological diversity, embodying the harmonious coexistence of flora and fauna in this rejuvenated ecosystem.

Beyond its ecological significance,

Bhairabkunda is a vital cultural tourism destination for the eastern province of Bhutan. Travellers are invited to explore the town of “Daifam” in Bhutan’s eastern region, immersing themselves in the local culture, sampling indigenous cuisine, and observing distinctive aspects of religion, beliefs, lifestyle, economy, and traditional attire. Notably recognized for its local wine trading, Daifam adds a unique flavour to the cultural experience. Furthermore, visitors to Bhairabkunda can delve into the rich tapestry of Bodo culture, which is representative of the tribal communities in the Indian part. The picnic season brings forth a vibrant local market along the banks of the Dhansiri River, offering an opportunity to engage with and enjoy various indigenous products. The Bhairabkunda Tourism Festival, an annual celebration held in January, unfolds its vibrant festivities along the scenic banks of the Dhansiri River and at the Bhairabkunda Tourism Complex.

This meticulously orchestrated event





is designed to foster tourism in the area while showcasing the rich local culture. The festival's highlights include captivating folk dances, melodious musical performances, displays of traditional cuisines, and exhibitions featuring traditional attire from the Northeast region and Bhutan. Adding to the excitement, attendees can partake in activities such as elephant and

Jeepsafaris during the festivities, providing an immersive and enriching experience for all. Bhairabkunda, with its unique blend of environmental conservation, cultural richness, and vibrant festivities, stands as a multifaceted jewel in the northeastern region, beckoning travellers and enthusiasts alike to explore its diverse offerings.



Kibithoo: A Village of First Sunrise

Act East Policy (AEP), a masterstroke in border policy formulation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has transformed the border imagination from a restrictive space to a participatory one. The participatory space involves the renewal of attention that combines economic, demographic development, and geopolitical and geostrategic redefinition. This redefining process conceptualizes border space as not necessarily the end of the country's boundary but essentially its beginning. This perception reversal indicates the country's importance to its border space. In this connection, the Government of India's decision to declare Kibithoo as 'India's first village' expresses its importance to the border as a space of activity, unity, and interconnection. This is the vision of a new Bharat that pays equal

attention to every inch of this country and does not assess through the prism of margin and centre binary. The negligence the border along the eastern Himalayas suffered since Independence has found in the AEP a transformative shift and attitudinal and policy reinvigoration. This is sufficiently demonstrated in robust infrastructural development and institutional competence.

The case of Kibithoo is uniquely important. This is the first Himalayan village in India where the sun rises. With the rise of Kibithoo to activity, Bharat comes into being. Kibithoo is situated at a height of 1305 meters from the sea level. It is located in the Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh, and the Lohit River enters Bharat here. Its breathtaking





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beauty ensures its uniqueness. It is the first circle headquarters situated at the border of India and the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). The Chinese aggression in Tibet and the fallout of this led to the latter's annexation in the 1950s, which disturbed the geopolitics of the region. The situation was further exacerbated in 1962 after the India-China war. The vibrant trade, cultural, and social interaction, and exchange experienced an abrupt closure in the post-1962 war. Since then, China never developed a climate of cooperation and found the most sinister delight in salami slicing to occupy Indian territory gradually, and the border space acquired a marginal character and experienced no developmental attention; it was in 2014 that dedicated and definitive attention was given to the Northeast, and the result is visible on the ground. This disturbs China in a significant way. India checks China's obsession with territorial expansion. Its expansionism finds a fitting response. The required deterrence from the Indian side keeps China on an uncertain ground. Its border bickering at Doklam and Tawang indicates its restlessness for not making

any desired progress. This restlessness will acquire permanent character as India is steadfast enough not to allow any territorial interference from China. This resolve is seen on the ground and not just platitude. The logistics and retaliatory power that India has developed in the Northeast, especially in Arunachal Pradesh, to protect its integrity from the Chinese unfounded and illogical claims and its illegal cartographic exercise are substantive enough to control Chinese brinkmanship. Its spatial appetite for Arunachal Pradesh is to give India a checkmate and to restrict the latter's speed in securing development in the Northeast. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Chinese territorial ambition will not make any definitive progress. He has ensured connectivity, highways, airports, railways, and other logistics to protect India and its territorial integrity. The call for visiting the first village, Kibithoo, by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah explains the efforts of connectedness, not an attitude of indifference and negligence as historically existed. The road to Kibithoo is not met with difficulties of inadequate and unsafe

roads or fear of anonymity. This is where Bharat begins. The ease of transport and communication today to Kibithoo makes the imagination of the first village more compelling for a visit.

Historically, Kibithoo has seen trading activity between Tibet and India's North East Frontier Tract as it was known during the British colonisation of India. Under the barter practice, the border trade between the Mishmis of the Upper Lohit region and Tibetans from the Zayul district witnessed the exchange of merchandise from both sides for centuries. Economic determinacy was not the only driving force behind the trading instinct of the border communities. This exchange exercise also embedded culture, medicine, ideas, and social attitudes. This dialogic tradition and Buddhism made an interesting case for political and social bonhomie. The border, as a productive space for centuries, was abruptly interrupted by the Sino-Indian War in 1962. China's expansionist and interfering proclivity has suspended the productivity and interactive scope among the border communities. However, the hope of revival seems complicated because of the Chinese annexation of Tibet and the weight of complex geopolitics that the former has exercised in the region.

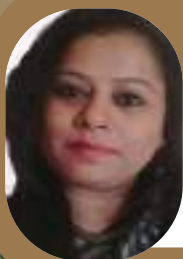
Given this geopolitical imperative, the urgency remains on the part of India to ensure robust infrastructural strength.

Since 2014, this urgency has been deeply felt, and rigorous infrastructural attention has been extended. The interstate connectivity between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has been worked out systematically to give the border villages a comprehensive focus. The water route linkages involving Sadiya, Pandu, and Dhuburi, and Dhola -Sadiya road bridge, and the Bogibeel railroad bridge, and in Arunachal Pradesh connectivity including Tezu, Hayuliang, Walong, and Kibithoo have been extensively mapped, and very substantive progress has been made in this direction to express the depth of India's connectivity paradigm. The work-in-progress frontier highway along the McMahon Line covers around 2000 km from Mago Thimbu in Tawang to Vijaynagar in Changlang, which constitutes the scope of this highway. It not only gives much-needed attention to the border space, knowing the geopolitical complexity China exercises, but it also gives the border communities a sense of connection and integration. Therefore, development begins from the first village rather than the last village, requiring an afterthought. This shift in perception constitutes the hallmark of Narendra Modi's policy paradigm, which believes in comprehensive development, integration, and shared success.



Dawki 'Connecting borders, Connecting hearts' between India- Bangladesh

The strong bond between India and Bangladesh is deeply rooted in historical and harmonious factors, shaped and nurtured by shared culture, diplomacy, and economic ties. The Indo-Bangladesh treaty and relationship are distinct from those of other South Asian nations, with both countries sharing tales of partition, sovereignty struggles, and a common thread of Tagore's Universal Humanity. Similarities in development needs, collaborative projects in microfinance, and mutual aspirations for growth further strengthen this unique connection. The natural friendship between the two nations is prominently evident in the town of Dawki in Meghalaya, particularly at the renowned Umngot



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river and the land port, which serves as the natural border between India and Bangladesh.

The residents of Dawki, including the Khasis, Jaintia, and Garo, are part of Hill tribes and distinguish themselves from other tribes in the North-Eastern region. Their origins and unique challenges set them apart from other communities in the area. In and around Dawki, these groups actively engage in local trading, fishing, and contribute to ecotourism.

The communities primarily experience peaceful coexistence, with occasional conflicts arising as a regular part of village life, including situational clashes with border security personnel. Meghalaya frequently faces challenges in its relationship with the neighboring state of Assam, resulting in frequent halts in road and trade activities. Over an extended period, both the village communities and border residents in Assam-Meghalaya have been striving for security, emphasizing the utmost importance of development

and stability. The transboundary river known as Piang-Umngot across India and Bangladesh, located in Jaflong, Sylhet has been famous both for its pristine clear water, natural surroundings encouraging tourism and trade opportunities. Riverine communities across Dawki seek to engage in sustainable livelihood. The ferry terminal in Dawki is situated at a distance of 0.32 km from the steel bridge in this river zone. It has evolved into a key river trade route, facilitating not only fishing but also small-scale trading activities along the open riverfront. This has resulted in a consistent and unrestricted exchange of interactions among people and traders. There is an open division along the river, lacking a distinct physical boundary between the two countries. The only form of separation is a rope held by security personnel, serving as a makeshift fence. While Dawki generally experiences a peaceful environment, occasional conflicts have arisen between the local residents and the Border Security Forces (BSF). The BSF on the Indian side is primarily



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focused on preventing illegal migration, but there has been a longstanding desire for development and socio-economic transformation in the region.

On May 4, 2023, the 10th land port connecting Bangladesh and India was inaugurated in Dwaki by Mr. Nityanand Rai, Minister of State for Home Affairs of the Indian Government. Located approximately 84 kilometers from Shillong, India, the newly established land port aims to enhance trade, simplify travel between the two nations, foster partnerships, and create new trade opportunities. The port is equipped with various facilities, including passenger and cargo terminal buildings, a warehouse, canteen, toilet blocks for export drivers, and a sewage treatment plant. Dawki has long been a prominent tourist destination, contributing to the influx of tourists in Meghalaya. Additionally, the Dawki-Tamabil border crossing has facilitated visits by many Bangladeshis to India.

Numerous households in the neighboring village are part of the war sub-tribe within the Khasi community, predominantly adhering to the Christian faith. However, several sub-groups within these households still follow the traditions of the hill tribes. Ancestors of many tribes from this region actively took part in the First World War as members of the British Army. The border between

India and Bangladesh remains permeable, necessitating increased efforts for development and a heightened sense of awareness.

The establishment of border haats between India and Bangladesh has played a crucial role in local development and trade. Five years ago, two such haats were initiated in Bholaganj and Ryngku, both located in the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya along the Bangladesh border.

In 2022, plans were announced to set up 16 new border haats between Ryngku in East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, and Bagan Bari in Duara Bazar, Sunamganj district, Bangladesh. Additionally, the haat between Nalikata in South West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, and Saydabad at Tahirpur in Sunamganj district, Bangladesh, was expected to open. By 2023, eight border haats between India and Bangladesh were confirmed to be operational. The concept of border haats is distinctive, providing markets for local goods and serving as a source of livelihood for traders. These haats around Dawki have been engaged in trading Indian tomatoes, kerosene, salt, Indian biris, ganja, as well as Indian soaps, shampoo, and certain medicines for over six years.

The construction of the Land Port Authority of India (LPAI) and the Integrated Check Post (ICP) in Dawki aims to enhance cross-border trade and streamline border

crossings. For the general public, Dawki serves as a significant export destination for commodities like coal, limestone, rawhide, boulder stone, food items, plastic furniture, geotextile sheets, tissue paper, laundry soap, PVC doors, and fire clay bricks to Bangladesh. Additionally, the Border Security Personnel (BSF) engage in civic action programs, providing computers, school supplies, ceiling fans, water dispensers, dustbins, and extending financial support to students in various schools and villages.

However, the challenge persists for passengers crossing through the Dawki border, whether for business, education, medical purposes, religious activities,

or tourism. The Indian Border Security Force rigorously checks documents such as driving licenses, Aadhaar cards, and valid IDs, and entry is either permitted or rejected even for Indian nationals at Dawki. Failure to present the required documents may result in prevention from re-entering checkpoints.

To conclude, a poet had written on border crossing 'Everybody has crossed a literal or figurative border at one time or another. These crossings take us from a place "where we feel at home to a new place'. Dawki remains at the heart of Meghalaya creating memories each day weaving stories around clear water in the land of root bridges.



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DIVYA AGARWAL
AIR III
99.4%



VANSHIKA BHAGAT
AIR III
99.4%



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SONSHU BHADUR (AIR 104), **AFUL PATEL** (AIR 100), **SHREYI** (AIR 124), **RAHUL CHAKRA** (AIR 167), **SALVI JAIN** (AIR 154), **KANISHK** (AIR 143), **NOVITA SHINGGA** (AIR 120)



SHREYA BANSAL (AIR 131), **RAVY AGARWAL** (AIR 119), **SHRUTI SINGH** (AIR 125), **ANSHU PATEL** (AIR 117), **SHRUTI SINGH** (AIR 110), **ANUSHU BHATT** (AIR 110), **ANUSHU BHATT** (AIR 121)

MPS Main Wing, 233, West End Road, Meerut Cantt. | MPS Per Gity Wing, 233, West End Road, Meerut Cantt. | MPS Shree Nagar, Sector 6, Dwarik Nagar, Meerut. | MPS "The First Step", Bhawalpur Phase-1, Kankhalera, Meerut. | SANSARA - The World Academy, 61, Ramia, Sector 10, Greater Noida. | MPS, Ved Vyas Puri, Cpt. Subharti University, Ved Vyas Puri, Meerut. | MPS Pallavpuram, Phase 1, Pallavpuram, Meerut. | MPS Defence Enclave, Dwarikapur Phase 2, Meerut.

A Day in Dawki

It was a pleasant autumn day in the year 2020, just before covid struck and paralyzed the entire world, that I visited Dawki. Dawki is a beautiful town in the west jaintia hills district, Meghalaya. It is some seventy kilometers by road from the capital city Shillong. Tucked on the border between India and Bangladesh, it is a first village and one of the few road border crossings between India and Bangladesh.

Borders are porous. I had read this somewhere in my childhood. Standing on the Dawki border check post, I was amazed to see people walking nonchalantly, hawkers passing over, some posing for pictures. Had it not been for a few army personnel with guns in their hands, who were occasionally stopping people from venturing too far into the Tamabil side, I would never have guessed that I was standing on an international border. Apart from a few stone pillars which suggest the demarcation line between the two countries, there was nothing much to the international border. I could see no fences, no heavily armored personnel or much stress in the manning. In fact, the BSF personnel often referred to it as a friendly border. The Umngot river, which is a major tourist attraction, is just a little away from the check post. My son asked, 'why do we need borders? Do birds and animals also have to pass through the checking gate?'. This got me thinking. Recognizing boundaries and borders, knowing what is ours and what is not is perhaps one of the



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primary attributes of being human.

Dawki is the first village on the India Bangladesh border in the west jaintia hills district. It is also known as the 'Gateway to Bangladesh'. A strategic business location, it has served as a trade center for the two countries for long. Dawki is mainly known for its coal and limestone exports to Bangladesh. It is a major center for export and import transactions between India and Bangladesh in the north eastern region. Apart from major business transactions, small-time traders and hawkers also cross over the border at Dawki to make business on this side. It is a hub of business exchange.

Dawki is famous for its natural beauty and ardor. The first village of Dawki, as mentioned earlier, is seen as a friendly border. This is the gateway to Bangladesh and it is through there that the bus route from India to Bangladesh passes. Although some locals are weary of the infiltrators, mostly, one can see a spirit of camaraderie and bonhomie amongst the people of both the countries living around the border area. There is easy cross over and ease of business. There is also much trust and familiarity. Perhaps there are families which are related through marriage. Although I did not find any evidence of the same but one cannot deny it given the soft nature of the border.



First INA administered village in Naga Hills

After Subhash Chandra Bose arrived in South East Asia in 1943, the Indian National Army (INA) was revitalised. Bose and his INA allied with the Japanese in its dream of liberating India from the British rule. On 7th March 1944, Tokyo radio informed that the attack of India had begun by the Japanese 15th Army under the code name U-Go operation commanded by Lieut. Gen. Renya Mutaguchi with three Divisions viz; 15th, 31st and 33rd, of 15,000 troops each.

Marching across the Naga Hills was the Japanese 31st Division under the command of Lieut. Gen. Kotuku Sato along with contingents of INA advancing with them on its historic march “On to Delhi.”



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The INA was given independent charge by the Japanese Generals to proceed on to Kohima with instruction that with the fall of Imphal “to advance rapidly and cross the Brahmaputra into the heart of Bengal.”

Azad Hind administration: the First Gaon

After overrunning all British outposts along the routes from Burma to Naga Hills, the INA arrived in Ruzazho village in the early part of April 1944. Bose himself was reported to have camped at Ruzazho village which is 75 km away from Kohima, where an eye witness Poswuyi Swuro (age 96 as in 2017) was said to have served as the interpreter/dobashi for Bose. When Bose reached the Village, he called a meeting with the people and this was where he organised the first Azad Hind administration when he appointed 10 Gaon



Buras or villager elders and appointed dobashis/interpreters for administrative purposes.

As described by the Villagers, Bose was a well formed handsome man with a striking personality, dressed in greenish uniform with long boots and a sword stashed in his sash. He was often surrounded or escorted by well-built Sikh soldiers. Bose spoke to the people that when India is liberated, he would bring drinking water facilities to village, built roads, schools, hospitals, etc. and hence ask the people to support the INA. Initially Bose resided at the Village priest house where a funny incident happen that one morning when they woke up, the INA horses tied nearby had eaten half the thatch of the house but the villagers instead of becoming angry burst out laughing as it had become quite a sight to behold. Later, they set up camp at the upper hill of the Village. Another incident also happen that one day when Bose was speaking in the meeting with the people, there was a giggling of women folk at the

back and when Bose enquired, they said it would be so unfair if a handsome man like Bose dies in the war and the menfolk were teasing them if they have fallen for Bose charm.

The local agent mobilised manpower for undertaking various task like collection of ration, guide and so on. According to Poswuyi Swuro, when they were guiding the INA-Japanese column to Satakha which was quite a distance from Ruzazho, they were ambushed by the British troops at Dzulhami village wherein a young local guide Kihoye Sema of Sheyepu village along with some INA/Japanese died. Bose stayed in this Village for 9 days where his memories with the people are immortalised in the folk cultures and narratives of the Village today. It was at Ruzazho where the first administrative machineries were installed.

On 25th April 2017, this village had been commemorated by the then Governor of Nagaland P.B Acharya and the Governor of Tripura Tathagata Roy as the first INA

administered village in the Naga Hills. Many villages en route to Kohima from Myanmar have similar stories about Bose like Chesezu, Thenyizu, Kikruma, etc. In Kigwema village which is 10 km away from Kohima, Bose was reported to have stayed in this village too during the Battle of Kohima wherein Viketu Kiso (age 94 as of 2017) said that he served as interpreter for Bose. On the route across where the INA-Japanese passed through, similar stories lies embedded in the oral history of the local people.

The climax of suffering for the INA was reached when they were at Kohima. Rations and medicine were completely exhausted and the INA suffered the same fate as the Japanese at Kohima and there were heavy casualties on the retreat where troops complained bitterly of being used as porters by the Japanese. Referring to this withdrawing, Shah Nawaz Khan wrote, "This retreat from Kohima was perhaps one of the most difficult retreats that any army in the world had to face. Torrential rains had washed away all tracks, men-made fresh tracks soon became almost knee deep, men eating horses death for four days, death bodies of Japanese and Indian soldiers lying on either side of the road due to exhaustion, starvation, disease, etc.

The exact organisation of the INA and its precise troops' strength is not

known since its records were destroyed by the withdrawing Azad Hind Govt. before Rangoon was recaptured by Commonwealth forces in 1945.

Far from the gaze of the world or the rest of the country, WW II in Naga Hills was an intense event in the form of the Battle of Kohima in 1944. This Battle has been voted as the 'Greatest Battles' the British Army has ever participated in all course of its history. Fought in one of the world most inhospitable terrain, it took a huge toll in term of men and resources wherein, more than 150,000 people died in the Indo-Burma frontier as a direct consequences of the War. This includes the dead of 80,000 refugees and 13,000 British army during the retreat to India in 1942 from Burma, 45,000 Japanese and 16,700 British and Indian troops during the Battle of Imphal and Kohima, and an unaccounted number of Indian National Army (INA) and the Nagas.

The communities of North East India especially in frontier areas were drawn into the War where it participated on both side of the camps as porters, interpreters, guide, soldiers, etc. and many died on the line of duty. While those who served with the British were recognised to some extent, those who served with the INA-Japanese were abandoned and forgotten given the fact that their lot lies with the defeated camp.

First Village Champai: Rice Bowl of Mizoram

Champai is the rice bowl of Mizoram, it is the first big habitation nearest to the Myanmar India border. The border between Myanmar and India (Mizoram) is a porous border and has remained so without a fence because Indian Mizos have deep rooted ties with the Mizos on Myanmar side. But this is likely to end as India has decided to fence the border, to contain illegal activities due to the porous



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border.

I have toured these parts and have also crossed the border and visited the Myanmar side to the renowned Rih Dil Lake in Myanmar. The word Mizoram means home of the Mizos. Mizos on both Indian and Myanmar side aspire to unifying their home on both sides of the border, which they refer to as Zoram which means larger home. This aspiration of a larger identity is at the core of their political struggle and gives rise to local political movements. And this is precisely why newly elected Chief Minister of the State Mr Lalduhawma made a representation to the Prime

Minister Narendra Modi not to fence the Indian side of the Mizoram border with Myanmar.

Champai has a history that intertwines with the broader historical narrative of Mizoram. Understanding the historical context provides insights into the town's evolution and its role in the cultural mosaic of the region. Mizoram has a history marked by migration and territorial changes. The Mizo people, originally inhabiting the Chin Hills in Myanmar, migrated to present-day Mizoram over the centuries. Champai, being in close proximity to Myanmar, has witnessed the ebb and flow of historical events that have shaped the destiny of the Mizo community.

The India-Myanmar border, which spans over 1,600 kilometers, presents various security concerns for both nations. The porous nature of the border, difficult terrain, and historical cross-border interactions contribute to a complex security environment.

Insurgent groups from Northeast India, seeking refuge and support, have historically operated along the border regions in Myanmar. The dense forests and hilly terrain provide favorable conditions for insurgent activities. Insurgent groups like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), and others have, at times, established camps and hideouts in

Myanmar, making it a security challenge for both nations.

The porous nature of the India-Myanmar border allows for easy movement of people, including militants, smugglers, and illegal migrants. This poses challenges for border control and security agencies on both sides. The movement of people for cultural, familial, and economic reasons is a part of the historical narrative but requires careful monitoring to prevent illegal activities.

The border region is a known route for the smuggling of narcotics and arms. The Golden Triangle, an area where the borders of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar meet, is a notorious source of illegal drug production, and the proximity of the Indian border raises concerns about drug trafficking. Arms smuggling is also a significant issue, with illicit weapons entering India through the porous border. This poses a threat to internal security.

Human trafficking, including the trafficking of women and children, is a concern along the border. Criminal networks take advantage of the porous border to engage in illegal activities, and human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights. The challenging terrain, dense forests, and lack of proper infrastructure make effective border surveillance difficult. Establishing and maintaining border infrastructure, such as



roads, border outposts, and surveillance systems, is crucial for controlling illegal activities. Both countries have been working on enhancing border infrastructure and coordination to address security concerns.

Unregulated movement and activities along the border can contribute to environmental degradation and impact the local ecosystem. Illegal activities such as logging and wildlife trafficking are concerns that need attention.

Efforts to address these security concerns involve bilateral cooperation, intelligence sharing, joint patrolling, and diplomatic dialogues between India and Myanmar. Both nations recognize the importance of securing the border to ensure regional stability and the well-being of their respective populations.

Champai is situated in the southern part of Mizoram. The town is nestled in the picturesque hills, surrounded by lush greenery and rolling landscapes.

The geographical location of Champai not only lends it a stunning natural beauty but also plays a role in its cultural and historical significance. The town's proximity to international borders has influenced its history and cultural exchanges. The landscape, characterized by hills and valleys, adds to the charm of Champai and provides a unique setting for the development of local traditions and practices.

Mizoram, as a whole, is celebrated for its rich cultural heritage, and Champai is no exception. The Mizo people, who predominantly inhabit this region, have a distinct identity marked by their traditional dances, music, and festivals. Champai serves as a microcosm of Mizo culture, reflecting the customs and traditions that have been passed down through generations. The community in Champai actively participates in various cultural activities, with festivals and events providing a platform for the expression of their artistic and cultural prowess.

One of the notable aspects of Mizo culture is Cheraw, a traditional bamboo dance. The rhythmic clacking of bamboo staves accompanied by vibrant Mizo tunes creates a mesmerizing spectacle. Champai often hosts Cheraw performances, bringing together locals and visitors in a celebration of Mizo heritage. The town is also known for its traditional handloom and handicrafts. Skilled artisans in Champai produce exquisite hand-woven textiles and intricate bamboo crafts. These products not only serve as a source of livelihood for the locals but also contribute to the preservation of Mizo craftsmanship.

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on tourism as an economic driver. The natural beauty of Champai, coupled with its cultural richness, attracts visitors seeking an authentic experience. The town has seen the development of tourism infrastructure, including hotels, restaurants, and guided tours, enhancing the overall visitor experience.

The promotion of eco-tourism is another aspect that aligns with the town's commitment to preserving its natural resources. Initiatives to showcase the biodiversity of the region and promote responsible tourism contribute to the sustainable development of Champai.

While Champai thrives in many aspects, it faces its share of challenges.

The geographical location, while offering scenic landscapes, also makes the region susceptible to certain vulnerabilities. Connectivity issues, especially during monsoons, can pose challenges to transportation and communication. Efforts are being made to address these challenges, with infrastructural developments aimed at improving connectivity. The government, in collaboration with local communities, is working towards sustainable solutions that balance economic development with environmental conservation.

The relationship between Mizoram and Myanmar is not confined to the terrestrial boundaries alone. The Kaladan River, flowing through Myanmar, provides a potential maritime route for Mizoram's access to the Bay of Bengal. This connectivity has the potential to transform the economic landscape of the region, opening up new trade routes and opportunities. Initiatives such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project aim to improve connectivity between Mizoram and the Sittwe Port in Myanmar, opening avenues for enhanced trade and economic growth. The towns along the border, such as Champhai in Mizoram and Falam in Myanmar, have been hubs for trade activities.

Migration In Uttarakhand from China border- Challenges and Solution



Migration from Border Districts of Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand shares a 350 km long international border with China in the North and Nepal

in the east. From 2008-2018, 3,946 village panchayats (VPs) in Uttarakhand became uninhabited due to the permanent migration of 1,18,981 people, according to the Migration Commission of Uttarakhand. In the three districts bordering China, namely Uttarkashi, Chamoli, and Pithoragarh, 868 VPs became depopulated, with 26,899 people permanently migrating. These three districts make up 22% of total uninhabited VPs and 22.6% of total permanent migration from the state.

Chamoli, is surrounded by six districts and shares a northern border with Tibet, China. It alone accounts for 9.45 per cent of total depopulated VPs and 12 per cent

of total permanent migration from the state during the 2008-2018 period.

Indigenous Reasons for Migration

The phenomenon of out-migration is not new in Uttarakhand. Before the 11th century, the mountainous areas were probably inhabited mainly by nomadic grazing communities. The massive in-migration occurred during the 11th and 12th centuries (Rural Development and Migration Prevention Commission, n.d.). In the present times, this migration trend has gained momentum, and the main reasons for migration are lack of employment, education facilities, and health infrastructure. Figure-2 below shows the leading causes of migration and their percentage in the Chamoli district.

Human-animal conflict and crop damage are additional factors prompting village migration. Monkeys and wild boars devastate crops, discouraging the 47.2 per cent of village panchayats who rely on agriculture. In the Chamoli district, the young labour force constitutes the majority of the out-migrants. Specifically, 26.71 per cent of out-migrants are under 25 years old, 43.49 per cent are aged 26-35, and the remaining 29.79 per cent are over 35 years old (Rural Development and Migration Prevention Commission, n.d.).

Strategic Importance of Village Population in the Border Districts

By employing a disciplined approach to determine overarching objectives, concepts, and resource allocation within an acceptable level of risk, a strategy aims to produce more favourable future outcomes compared to leaving the situation to chance or the control of others (Yarger, 2006, p. 5). A border does not necessarily need to have a nearby population, as geography, terrain, and climate also affect habitation. However, in some cases, like the India-China border, human settlements near a border are useful for enforcing and controlling the border, preventing illegal crossings, and enhancing safety and security. Locals can provide information and assistance to border guarding forces, deter smugglers, illegal immigrants, and encroachers, and act as the eyes and ears of the defence forces. In higher altitudes, locals are employed as porters by the forces due to their natural acclimatisation to the low-oxygen environment.

Local villagers played a key role in providing crucial information and logistical support to the army during the Battle of Rezang La (1962 India-China War) and the Kargil War of 1999 (Roshangar, 2019; Wangchuk, 2020; Yadav, 2021). The first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Vipin Rawat, mentioned in 2021 that migration from international borders was unsuitable for national security and development



activities needed to be increased in border areas for reverse migration (The Indian Express, 2021).

India's Policies for Border Districts

In February 2017, the Deputy Secretary to the Government of India wrote to the Chief Secretaries of 17 border states about developing model villages in border areas under the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) guidelines of 2015. The need for model villages arose due to the thinning border population, lack of connectivity, food security, electric power supply, telecommunication connectivity, civic infrastructure, sustainable livelihood, and employment generation. A model village would provide economic opportunities and employment options to all individuals residing within the village and neighbouring areas.

The Uttarakhand government plans to develop nearly 100 villages in 11 blocks

bordering China and Nepal as model villages, Joshimath block in Chamoli. The Inner Line Permit for visiting Niti Valley has been removed to promote tourism and development. To address out-migration and underdevelopment, India has accelerated its border infrastructure projects through the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), Border Area Development Programme (BADP), and Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP).

Border Area Development Programme (BADP)

The Department of Border Management, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, implements the Border Area Development Programme (BADP). Launched during the 1986-87 period by the Central Government, the program aims to promote development in border areas by bridging gaps in socio-economic infrastructure and enhancing security

through additional funding alongside State Plan Funds. The BADP is implemented through State Governments/Union Territories Administrations in habitations located within 0-10 km from the first habitation at the international border in 457 border blocks of 117 border districts in 16 States and 2 Union Territories adjacent to the international boundary (BADP-MHA, n.d.). It initially functioned as a standalone project financing vehicle, but post-2020 guidelines transformed it into a comprehensive development programme (GOI, 2020). It covers 9 Blocks of 5 districts in Uttarakhand, including the Joshimath block in Chamoli district bordering China (Singh et al., 2022).

Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP)

In her 2022-23 budget speech, the finance minister announced the new Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP), which will involve building infrastructure in villages, providing decentralised renewable energy, and supporting livelihood generation. (Finance, 2022, p. 10). The VVP was approved in February 2023 and covers 2967 villages in 46 border blocks of 19 districts in 4 States and 01 Union Territory, bordering Tibet, China. Among these villages, 662 have been designated as a priority for coverage, including 51 villages in Uttarakhand (Press Information Bureau, 2023).


Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

The BRO was formed in May 1960 as the Border Roads Development Board to develop road networks in the North and North-East region of India. Initially, the Prime Minister acted as its chairman and the defence minister as its Deputy Chairman. Later, it was turned into a department under the Ministry of Defence, with the Home Minister acting as the chairman of the BRO. The organisation has 18 projects of strategic importance covering India and has a presence in friendly countries like Bhutan and Tajikistan. In the last six decades, BRO has constructed 60,000 Km of roads, 693 bridges, and 19 airfields. Currently, it is involved in building 6,000 Km of roads, 257 bridges, two airfields, and four tunnels (BRO, 2021).

Recommendations

Promoting entrepreneurship, skill development, and financial incentives can generate local employment opportunities. Diversifying industries beyond agriculture and tourism to technology and service sectors can create broader opportunities. Investing in rural development schemes, such as education, connectivity, electricity, water supply, healthcare facilities, and telecommunication networks, can enhance the quality of life and reduce out-migration from rural and border areas. Promoting, preserving, and celebrating the unique cultural heritage of border districts can attract tourism and economic opportunities.



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India's Coastal Security, Challenges, Concerns & Way Ahead

According to researchers, the rise and fall of a nation depend on every citizen's involvement in nation building. With Pakistan's implementation of proxy war against India and Chinese anti Indian activities in the North East, the threat has become more widespread and is not limited to the frontiers alone. Country's armed forces

are already stretched thin dealing with land borders, it is impossible for them to be present everywhere and handle every potential threat.

To combat this proxy war effectively, the entire society must engage in the fight. Security should be the responsibility of each individual, and therefore, the existing connection between armed forces and society in the form of the Citizens' Force (TA) needs to be strengthened. The Territorial Army should be assigned certain coastal security duties, allowing them to assume more responsibility in intelligence collection, surveillance, and security operations.

For centuries, the fishermen of India have served as guardians of the coast, identifying and preventing intruders, including foreign vessels that trespass into

our waters. Following the incidents of 26/11, security agencies initiated interactions with the local fishing community at various landing stations, aiming to raise their awareness and strengthen coastal security.

Establishment of a Helpline to Enhance Coastal Security

In 2013, a dedicated helpline for the port zone was introduced with the number 1093. This toll-free helpline, linked to a police control room, serves as an emergency number. It was specifically launched for receiving complaints and tip-offs related to coastal security, catering to the fishing community and coastal villagers.

When local residents are unable to reach the primary emergency number 100, they can contact 1093 for assistance.

To prioritize coastal security, the police have provided mobile connections to many fishermen residing along the coast. These connections are registered with the police, naval, and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) control rooms, enabling fishermen to promptly report any suspicious activities on the high seas or along the coast.

Security Guidelines for Safety of Fishermen At Sea

The fishing community can play a significant role in ensuring the overall coastal security of the state and other

coastal regions of India. Fishermen act as the first line of defense for coastal security and serve as the eyes and ears of maritime security agencies.

Fishermen should carry their biometric cards when venturing into the sea. In cases where they don't possess identity cards, a letter issued by the local panchayat or other authorities should be carried instead. For safety purposes, fishermen should use floater buoys to secure their fishing nets and wear life jackets while onboard a vessel. It is crucial for fishing trawlers and larger vessels to carry Motorola free frequency communication devices to ensure effective communication with security agencies.

By keeping fishing trawlers afloat but static during the night, security agencies can prevent infiltration activities or suspicious movements from external territories.

Ensuring Seaworthiness for Safety at Sea

Fishermen should conduct systematic seaworthiness checks on their boats. They should stay updated with weather forecasts, carry distance alerting transmitters, maintain radio communication equipment, possess life-saving appliances, carry necessary boat documents, biometric identity cards, additional mobile phones/batteries,

temporary repair kits, first aid kits, extra fuel and rations, flashlights with extra batteries, and necessary medicines when venturing into the sea. Fishing boats should operate either in pairs or groups for added safety.

Fishing vessel masters must ensure the seaworthiness of their vessels and proper securing of cargo. They should conduct frequent checks on the ships, maintain and upkeep machinery and propulsion systems as scheduled, and keep a standby second anchor and chain cable for vessels at anchorage.

Supporting the Coastal Police

In the current situation, the police carry the responsibility of protecting society. To fulfil this duty, the police must be sufficiently strong to face the challenges. The community must cooperate with the police to overcome these challenges. However, some individuals within society attempt to challenge the police, pressuring them to take a lenient view towards law violations, organizing unnecessary protests and strikes. At times, they unjustifiably accuse the police of high-handedness while handling law and order situations. This creates obstacles in creating a safe and secure society.

Leveraging the Coastal Population for Coastal Security. It is crucial to educate the general public not only on being vigilant

but also on appropriate post-attack responses. A united population can assist the government in countering security threats effectively. Without the assistance of the general public's intuition, it becomes challenging to identify anonymous criminals, anti nationals, terrorists who blend into the surroundings. Implementing schemes like the "eyes and ears" initiative should be made mandatory for all areas. This encourages the active participation of the coastal public in reporting suspicious activities and supporting security efforts.

How can the fishing community and coastal population be encouraged to actively participate in coastal security efforts?

Encouraging active participation from the fishing community and coastal population in coastal security efforts requires focus on awareness, training, incentives, and collaboration. Here are some strategies to encourage their involvement:

Awareness campaigns: Conduct regular awareness campaigns to educate the fishing community and coastal population about the importance of coastal security, the role they can play, and the potential threats faced. These campaigns can include workshops, seminars, and community meetings that highlight their significance as the first line of defence and emphasize the shared responsibility of

safeguarding the coastline.

Training and capacity building: Organize training programs to equip fishermen with the necessary knowledge and skills related to coastal security. This can include training on identifying suspicious activities, reporting procedures, basic surveillance techniques, and emergency response protocols. Collaborate with security agencies, maritime experts, and local authorities to deliver comprehensive training sessions.

Establish communication channels: Ensure effective communication channels between the fishing community and security agencies. Encourage them to report any suspicious activities or incidents promptly and assure them of a swift and appropriate response.

Recognition and incentives: Recognize and appreciate the contributions of the fishing community and coastal population to coastal security. Establish reward systems, such as financial incentives, certificates, public acknowledgments, or community honors, for individuals or groups who demonstrate exceptional vigilance or provide crucial information leading to the prevention of security threats. These incentives can serve as motivators and reinforce a sense of pride and responsibility.

Collaborative initiatives: Foster

partnerships and collaborations between security agencies, local authorities, and the fishing community. Involve fishermen in joint patrolling and surveillance activities, where they can act as local guides and provide valuable insights. Engage them in regular interactions, workshops, and meetings to exchange information, address concerns, and jointly plan security measures. This collaborative approach strengthens the bond between different stakeholders. Stakeholders include variety of departments and organisations such as the Port Trusts, port officers of minor ports, the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships, Central Board of Excise and Customs, the Bureau of Immigration The maritime leisure/tourism community, comprising, a staggering variety of craft propelled by oars, sails, motors, engines. Tourist casualties are on the rise all along the coastline.

Technological support: Provide access to technology and tools that can aid the fishing community in their security efforts. Offer training on using these technologies effectively.

Socio-economic benefits: Highlight the direct and indirect socio-economic benefits of coastal security. Emphasize that a secure coastline attracts tourism, promotes sustainable fishing practices, and ensures the safety and well-being of coastal communities.

Forming Fishermen Surveillance Councils

It is essential to establish Fishermen Surveillance Councils. Prominent individuals can be appointed as “security ambassadors” to raise awareness about coastal security. People can contribute as informers, witnesses, and rescuers by remaining vigilant and reporting any suspicious activities to the police or security agencies. “Neighborhood watch committees” can be formed through community consensus to prevent terrorist attacks. The Indian fishing community can be engaged as “working partners” in maritime and coastal security efforts, with the local police, ICG, and Indian Navy (IN) developing social assets and respecting people’s rights. Strengthening witness protection laws and raising awareness among the public about threat along coast line. Teaching response protocols are crucial.

Utilization of Coastal Territorial Army (TA) for Coastal Security

To address the nation’s security needs, the Coastal TA can play a significant role as a second line of defence. A force dedicated to coastal security should be capable of operating in coastal waters and well-versed in legal issues. The TA should be placed under the command of the ICG, IN, or Indian Army. The Indian Army’s

operational experience with TA battalions for security and intelligence duties is valuable. The idea behind the TA is to have a force of part-time citizens who can be readily employed during high-threat situations, while remaining sustainable and cost-effective during low-threat or peacetime.

The current employment of the TA involves defensive tasks such as road opening, cordoning during search operations, and protecting army command headquarters. The TA’s professionalism, cost-effectiveness, and ability to maintain a connection with the civil population make it advantageous. Strengthening the part-time concept in coastal security is in the national interest, as the “Citizens’ Army” represents the entire society and can serve as a reserve force to address various threats.

In conclusion, fostering a strong partnership between the fishing community, coastal population, and security agencies is crucial for bolstering coastal security. The collective efforts of all stakeholders create a robust defense mechanism. It is important to recognize that the security of the coast is a shared responsibility that requires the active participation of every stakeholder including the population along the coastline.



A First Village on the bank of River Sindhu: CHULICHANG

In 1983-84, I was posted at Kargil. Being an Army Officer, one had to visit all posts. It was the month of June 1983, when I had a chance to visit a very small village in those days, named Chulichang. I was Lieutenant at that time and being in the Regiment of Artillery, at my rank at that time, one has to be with the guns deployed in the gun areas. Some of the facts about this wonderful Village located in the wilderness are as given below.

Chulichang is on the left bank of the Indus River in a narrow section of the Indus valley known as Brog Yul. It is the



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last village in Indian-administered Ladakh; the next village on the left bank, Natsara, is in Pakistan-administered Baltistan. Chulichang has an area of 125.90 hectares (1.2590 km²) and includes five hamlets: Groung Khiril, Groung Stod-I, Groung Stod-II, Sharchey and Grongjuk.

Chulichang is surrounded by Shargole Block towards South, Drass Block towards west, Shakar-Chiktan Block towards East , Taisuru Block towards South.

Location and Population

Latitude – 34.663323 degree North, Longitude – 76.315108 degree East

Population – Population in 1983 was approximately 200 which over a period of time has grown and according to the latest census of India (2011), the village has 912 inhabitants across 112 households Female Population is 48.8%. Village literacy rate is 58.4% and the Female Literacy rate is

22.8%. It is populated by Shia Brokpas and Baltis.

History

Historically, Chulichang and the adjacent regions were populated by Brokpa people — folklore maintains that they arrived at their current habitat from the Gilgit region. The Brokpa chieftains wielded autonomy in the region, pledging nominal allegiance to the Maqpon rulers of Skardu.

However, things changed in the seventeenth century when Jamyang Namgyal of Ladakh had a conflict with Ali Sher Khan Anchan of Skardu and had to accept Gurgurdho, a hamlet on the opposite bank of the Indus river, as a boundary between their territories. Consequently, Chulichang and villages to the north of it, such as Ganokh and Marol, became part of Baltistan and influenced by Shia Islam.[5] When Robert Barkley Shaw visited the village in 1876, he found Baltis and Brokpas living there, professing Shia Islam.

Nevertheless, the Brokpas of Chulichang historically entered into marriages with their ethnic kin in the Dah Hanu region of Ladakh; such connections would cease only with the latter's acceptance of Buddhism c. late nineteenth century. In the aftermath of the First Kashmir War (1947–1948), with Pakistan annexing territories north

of Chulichang, it became the only Brokpa village in India to be primarily composed of Muslims.

Transport and Accessibility

- **By Road**

Batalik is connected by road to other places in Kargil and Leh via the Kargil–Batalik–Khaltse Road[7] which forms a “detour” from the National Highway 1 between Kargil and Khalatse.

- **Rail**

The nearest major railway stations to Batalik are Sopore railway station and Srinagar railway station located 271 and 277 kilometres away respectively.

- **Air**

The nearest airport is at Kargil, 60 kilometres away, but it is currently non-operational. The next-nearest major airport is Leh Airport located at a distance of 205 kilometres.

Nearest Indian Village

The nearest Indian Village is Batalik, which is 4.3 kms towards the East of Chulichang. In fact, to reach Chulichang, one will have to go through Batalik Village. The Batalik Village is a pure Aryan Village

Brokpas People

The Brokpa people, also known as the Minaro tribe, have a rich and diverse history with multiple theories surrounding



their origins. Some sources suggest they are descendants of Alexander the Great's lost army, while others propose that they are the only surviving descendants of the indigenous Aryans in India. The region is inhabited by the Brokpas — an exonym, used by the Ladakhis (lit. Highlanders) —, who are a sub-group of the Shin people. From their oral history, it can be reasoned that Dah-Hanu region was first occupied in the 10th century by a group of migratory Shinas who practiced the largely-animist ancient Dardic religion, and staked claim to the Minaro ethnic identity. About six hundred years hence, another group of Shinas — influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism — migrated to Dah-Hanu,

fomenting a conflict but yet chose to live together. Until its absorption into the Maryul kingdom, their chiefs wielded nominal autonomy in the region.

Uninfluenced by Islam to any significant extent, the Brokpas of Dah-Hanu maintained a unique culture unlike most of neighboring Shinas

Batalik- Pure Aryan Village

Batalik is a village and military base in Ladakh, India,[2] located in a narrow section of the Indus river valley, close to the Line of Control with Pakistan-administered Baltistan. It was a focal point of the 1999 Kargil War because of its strategic location between Kargil, Leh and

Baltistan.

Batalik is 56 km from Kargil and is located in the Dah Hanu region, also known as the “Aryan Valley”, populated by Brokpa people.[5] Administratively, it is treated as a hamlet of the Silmo village.

The Aryan Valley.

Historically Aryan Valley is known as Dah Hanu valley or region, is an area comprising four villages — Dah and Hanu in Leh district, and Garkon and Darchik in Kargil district — and associated hamlets in Central Ladakh, India. Until its absorption into the Maryul kingdom, Brokpa chiefs wielded nominal autonomy in the region. The current name originated in the tourism industry c. 2010 to market the Brokpas, the Brokskat language speaking mostly-Vajrayana Buddhist local inhabitants, as being the primordial Aryans. The physical features of the Brokpa people, such as their tall stature, fair complexion, high cheekbones, and blue-green eyes, bear a resemblance to European characteristics

Aryan association and neologism

In 1880, G. W. Leitner, a British orientalist, called the Brokpas “remnants of an ancient and pure Aryan race” — this trope would be reinforced by other colonial administrators, effectively exoticising them. Mona Bhan, a Professor of South Asian Studies and Anthropology at Syracuse University, notes that such

a historical racialising of linguistic and cultural traits has persisted even in modern ethnography on the Brokpas.

In 1980, H. P. S. Ahluwalia reported having met three German Neo-Nazi female tourists who attended a Brokpa festival and hoped to be impregnated by the “pure Aryans”; such mythical tourists would be a staple of media coverage on the region. Over time, the Brokpas imbibed the Aryan characterization to the extent of tracing descent from Alexander’s army. During the 2003 elections to the Kargil Hill Council, they claimed representation to the minority seats based on their Aryan identity, among other factors. However, this self-fashioning differed from the usual connotations of “Aryan” in the West. For the Brokpas, their Aryan identity laid in a millennia-old-struggle to maintain a unique identity in the face of persecution by various rulers, as told through folklores, and was a tool to improve their abject socioeconomic marginalization.

Beginning in 2010, as the Government wished to attract tourism to the region, local travel agents began to market the “Aryan-ness” of the inhabitants; the state government reinforced the trend by projecting the Brokpa people as “pure specimens of the Aryan race”. Some Brokpas even changed their surnames to “Aryan”. The name “Aryan Valley” was created within this discourse. In 2019,

locals demanded that the “Aryan valley” be declared as a heritage village to boost tourism. The discourse on the Aryan traits of the Brokpas has been increasingly appropriated by right-wing Hindutva groups to leverage their supposed indigeneity against the Muslim other and to “validate their hold on India’s disputed territory”.

Flora and Fauna

The region exhibits varied vegetation, including herbs, shrubs, and trees like Shukpa, Stagpa, Umbu, Seva, Skyrepa, Spenme, Kangtakari, Askuta, Garma, Yuled,

and Kumout. The local population, known as Brokpa, observes rituals at a juniper shrine named Chilligi Deuha.

Despite the challenging climate, the area is home to diverse bird and mammal species. Observations include Pallas Dippers, Blue whistling thrush, Brown Dipper and Greenish Leaf Warblers, Common Swift, Eurasian Crag Martin, Large-billed Crow, Mountain Chiffchaff, Grey Wagtail, Hume’s leaf warbler, Red-mantled Rosefinch and Red-fronted Serin. The Himalayan Himalayan Ibex sporadically appears in the landscape.



First Villages of Nicobar

Villages such as Chaura, Teresa, and Kachal are among the initial settlements in the Nicobar region, falling within the Andaman-Nicobar Islands group. Positioned in the southeastern expanse of the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman-Nicobar Islands span from 6° to 14° north latitude and 92° to 94° east longitude, resembling a crescent moon with scattered pearls, extending about eight hundred kilometers from north to south. The archipelago, divided by the 10° channel, comprises the Andaman Islands to the north and the Nicobar Islands to the south. As a union territory of India, it is located in the Indian Ocean to the east and the Bay of Bengal to the west. The region consists of over 572 islands, with



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approximately 38 being inhabited while the rest are covered in forest. Encompassing an area of around 8249 square kilometers, although Andaman and Nicobar are distinct island groups, they share a unified administration. In December 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi renamed Ras Dweep in Andaman as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Dweep. Subsequently, Havelock Island was rechristened Swaraj Island, and Neil Island became Shaheed Island. Continuing this renaming initiative, on Valor Day, January 23, 2023, the Prime Minister honored the 21 largest unnamed islands in the Andaman-Nicobar region with the names of 21 Param Vir Chakra recipients.

Geographical point of view



Despite being an integral part of India, these islands have special importance in the context of international borders. Geographically, the Andaman-Nicobar Islands are a part of SouthEast Asia. Nicobar is adjacent to the borders of countries like Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia. With these countries it shares not only land borders but also maritime borders. Just 150 km north of Aceh, Indonesia. It is located at 1000 m, and the Andaman Sea separates it from Thailand and Myanmar. Geographically, Nicobar Island is divided into three parts. Like Northern, Central and Southern regions. Car Nicobar and Batticaloa islands come under the northern region. The central

region comprises the islands of Chaura, Teresa, Kachal, Nancouri, Kamorta, Teriket, Bambuka and Telangchang. The southern region includes islands like Great Nicobar, Little Nicobar, Pilomilo, Kondul, Cobra etc. The last end of Great Nicobar is 'Pygmalion Point' which is known as Indira Point or Indira Point and this is the last end of India. Earlier the border of India was called from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, but today India has expanded from Kashmir in the north to Indira Point in the far south which is located in Cambal Bay of Nicobar, this Indira Point is the last end of India.

Naming: Nicobar is derived from the word 'Nakkavaram' which means the country of people living naked. Marco Polo has named these islands as 'Nekoovaram'. Colonel Mule has given the Chinese name - 'Nalo-Kio-Chen' to Narikail Island. Apart from this, these islands are also called Nagdweep. Over time, scholars believe that Nagdweep-Niku Island acquired its existence as Niku and Nicobar. Sir S. Krishna Swami Iyengar has confirmed in an article that in the copper scripts of the time of Choladhipati Rajendra Chola, the name of Car Nicobar Island is mentioned as 'Kar Dweep' and the name of Great Nicobar Island is mentioned as 'Nap Dweep'. The whole of Nicobar was known as Nakkavaram. Regarding the islands, it is said that the kings of the Chola dynasty had conquered Andaman-Nicobar, Burma's

Arakan and Pigu region with the aim of expanding their kingdom, but there is no evidence available that the Cholas made their permanent residence here. But the name of one of these islands is Chaura Island which gives information about the arrival of Cholas in these islands. Along with this, some artifacts found in this island also confirm their arrival.

There are about 62 small and big islands in the Nicobar Islands, out of which 19 are major islands and 12 are inhabited by people. The original inhabitants of Nicobar are called Nicobarese. They appear to be of Mongolian breed. Apart from being fair, strong and attractive, they also have special interest in sports and entertainment. Their food is mainly based on coconut, fish, meat, and pandanus. Pandanus is one of the main fruits which is commonly found in these islands. The fruit is in the shape of a pineapple. Its stem is 30-35 feet high. Nowadays, Nicobarese have also started consuming rice, flour, pulses, sugar, spices, salt, tea etc. Prefer tea without milk.

A total of 6 types of primitive tribes live in

the Andaman Nicobar Islands. Nicobarese is one of them. Compared to other tribes, the Nicobarese were the first to come into external contact. Perhaps this is the reason why Nicobarese are able to achieve development in the field of knowledge, science and education today. But it is also noteworthy that they are also following their original culture and tradition. Even though the tribal people of Nicobar are Nicobarese, the people living in different villages are known by different names. For example, the residents of Car-Nicobar are called 'Tarik' while the 'Sampai' of Chaura, Kachal, Kamota and Trinket are 'Sam-ita'. Thus, there is considerable variation in the dialects of different islands. Despite this, there is unity among them and they participate together in social and cultural functions. For them the extended family or 'touhet' is an important social group. The main function of 'Touhet' is to control the social and economic activities of its members. They are interested in boating, gardening, hunting, fishing etc.

At present, most of the Nicobarese are following Christianity. Before adopting



Christianity they used to worship nature, believe in witchcraft too. Festivals are given more importance. Many programs like singing, playing, sports, boat racing, wrestling etc. are organized on the occasion of festivals. Every Nicobarese participates enthusiastically in these festivals and celebrates the festival with joy and happiness.

Festival

Otoyo: is a simple festival. On this occasion, people put new poles in front of the houses built on the seashore, which are beautifully decorated. Pigs are also sacrificed as per requirement.

Ha-Ngok-Mattai: This festival is celebrated when someone is ill. Food is also served on this occasion.

Apart from these, festivals are also celebrated when a new house is built or an old house is renovated. Celebrations are held on the birth of a child, on a naming ceremony, on the occasion of separation, and even on meeting a friend after a long time. Even today, he has unwavering faith in the traditional worship of the dead and the use of mantras to drive away ghosts. Christianity had no influence on their practice of sacrificing a pig and applying its blood to the body. In this

way, Nicobarese keep celebrating some or the other festival throughout the year. Their festivals are social and religious. Social festivals are celebrated with joy while religious festivals are related to celebrating ghosts etc. The festival of “Kanaha” is celebrated in different villages



one by one. A week before this festival, invitations are sent to other villages. The person accepting the invitation has to bring pork, sweet potato, banana, papaya, kuwen (bread-fruit pudding).

Pig Festival: Pig festival is celebrated once a year. This festival is celebrated when the number of pigs in the village is high. On this occasion, pigs are given as gifts to relatives. This festival is celebrated in the memory of ancestors. On the first day of the festival, pigs are kept captive near the place where the festival is celebrated. Two or three pigs are decorated with coconut leaves and clothes. Also small children are

decorated in traditional attire. Bracelets are worn on hands and attractive anklets on feet. Then the child is placed on the pig and taken out in a procession in the entire village. On this occasion people sing pig songs. This procession ends at around midnight. This is followed by a traditional dance which is usually a group dance. Both men and women participate enthusiastically in this dance. On the third day, special people are invited to perform special dances. The next day the bones of the ancestors are gathered at one place. Only certain relatives do this work. This festival is mainly based on socio-economic development.

Boat Festival: In this festival, Nicobarese pigs are fattened by feeding them plenty of food for a month inside a special enclosure. On festival days, they are taken out and made to fight among themselves. After that they are sacrificed. Collective dancing and singing continues till late night. After this the canoe or boat festival starts. A large scale feast is also arranged. Dongi songs are also sung on

this occasion.

Agricultural Songs: Agriculture in Nicobar is based on the season. Agriculture is mainly based on rainfall. Monsoon starts from May, hence before that the agricultural land is made suitable for cultivation. During the summer season, paddy is harvested and stored in a dry place. And while doing all this work they sing agricultural songs. Nicobarese song is the carrier of folk song tradition and folk culture. Nicobarese society is an independent society. Young men and women are given the freedom to choose their life partner as per their wish. It is not necessary that the girl should go to her in-laws' house after marriage, rather the boy can stay at home as her son-in-law.

Along with protecting their cultural tradition, Nicobarese tribals are moving step by step in the race of modernity. They are continuously ahead in the fields of education, sports, dance and music. In the administrative service, they are working in the medical department, as doctors, lawyers, engineers etc.





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India's southern most first village – Shastri Nagar

Subhashitani's compilation of Sanskrit verses on the country of India considers the great India as starting from the Himalayan Mountains and extending to the Indian Ocean. The land from the Hindu Kush Mountain range to the huge Indian Ocean was famous by the name of 'Jambu Dweep'. Over time, India became a major country in the Asian continent. Whose sentry are the Himalayas, the peninsular plateau, and the Indian Ocean, which provide it with fertile soil. Huge rivers irrigating water and people speaking diverse languages make the country divine and grand. Today the frontier villages represent the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, located in the Bay of Bengal, a famous bay of the Indian Ocean, the southern border of India. Although the latitudinal extension of the country India is 6 - 13° North and 92° - 93° East, then the extension of our large country is from 6° North latitude northwards from the equator (0°), and at this 6° North latitude lies the Great Nicobar Island. The name of

one of the border villages on this island is Shastri Nagar. Our country i.e. India has been a country of villages, but this era of globalization, commercialism, modernism, mechanization, industrialization, consumerism, and immense possibilities of development have made us comfort-seeking and development-oriented. Due to this fact 65% of the world's population lives in cities. There is no denying that the disasters caused by epidemics like Covid have forced city dwellers to migrate to villages. Today, workers from all over the world are returning to their villages on foot in unprecedented numbers. As a result, villages are now being repopulated.

In the changing global environment, urbanization of villages has been proven to be a panacea. Villages started becoming gems in making life green. Villages are getting connected with countless facilities like processed resources, smooth transportation, communication, health, etc. and villagers are getting connected with their precious soil. Being reflected from the original forms and qualities, they are becoming enlightened. It is because of the technological revolution that the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands and even the land of Great Nicobar located at the southernmost tip of India, are fortified with tribal people. Today it is moving on the path of progress and is implementing the Global Village's belief of one world, one family, and one future.

The southernmost tip of India was known as Pygmalion Point. Which was situated in Great Nicobar Island in the 80s, when the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited these islands and reached Pygmalion Point, the name of Pygmalion Point was changed to Indira Point in her name and today it is the southernmost point of Great Nicobar. The lamp post is located at the end and the park was named after Mrs. Gandhi, her life-size bronze statue stands there, it is no exaggeration if we say "From Kashmir to Indira Point we are one" because now gone are the days when we knew Kanyakumari,



the southern tip of the Indian peninsula, as the southernmost point, and our ignorance was such that we forgot Great Nicobar situated at 6°-13° north of the equator. Kalapani, the Andaman Islands have played an important role in India's freedom movement. The events of Cellular Jail, the arrival of the mighty Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in these islands, and the hoisting of the Tricolour provide new heights to Indianness. Even though this group of islands is one of the best tourist destinations in the world, it is also equally sensitive from the security point of view, these islands were famous since the Ramayana period. It is said that "Great Nicobar Islands are known for their Malayan nature of landscape and natural resources. Since it is situated 145 km from the Malay Peninsula, it is similar to the Malayan Peninsula in climatic scenarios.

Not a province located 1200 km away from the Indian peninsula. Even during

the maritime expansionist policies of the Chola Empire, the special contribution of these islands was in protecting their ships. Large fleets maintained trade relations with countries east of the Gulf of Malacca like Malaya, Java, Sumantra, Indonesia; and Great Nicobar Island, it is also believed that while taking Sanjeevani Booti and Dronagiri Mountain to Lanka, a piece of Dronagiri Mountain had fallen from the hands of the monkey king Hanuman. That is the Great Nicobar Island and to test the truth, this island is laden with an abundance of greenery. Due to abundant rainfall and being adjacent to the equator, bright open sunlight not only envelops the island in the aura of greenery but also big rivers like Galathea and Dagmar. Rivers like Alexandria maintain the reputation of Sanjeevani herb by providing water and coolness i.e. humidity and making the island full of oxygen. This feeling cannot be experienced in any of the islands of the Andaman and Nicobar Archipelago, which can be understood by looking at the climate of the Great Nicobar Archipelago, the soil, trees, plants, and the tribal and Nicobarese people living in the gentle prehistoric forests. Our southernmost tip of India is so beautiful that towards the north is mainland India, which includes the Garo, Khasi, and Jaintia hills and the delta of the Hooghly River, towards the east is the Arkan Yoma hills, towards the south is the Gulf of Malacca, the northern tip of

Indonesia and countries like Sumatra. You can reach the land of Indonesia which is located at a distance of just 145 km from the Indira Point of Great Nicobar through the inland waterways by boating for about 45 minutes. It passes through the island of Indira Point, which runs on solar energy and acts as a guide for all Indian and foreign cargo ships and ships. This route is very sensitive from the point of view of trade and security, due to which Great Nicobar has become a focal point of the trade route of western and eastern countries on the world trade map, which is recognized for its very important location in the Indian Ocean. Shastri Nagar, the last village located north of Indira Point on such an important island, and the entire Great Nicobar Island are very sensitive from a security point of view, about which the patriotic political prisoner, visionary Veer Vinayak Damodar ji, who came to Cellular Jail, when he first visited the islands, when he had set foot, had said that this island would be a major center of India's water power and military power in the future. His prediction came true in letter and spirit. All three wings of the Indian Army, Coast Guards, and Reconnaissance Squads, are deployed round the clock for the security of the country and islands. For this reason, our border village "Shastri Nagar" which is situated on Campbell Bay Island is gaining a lot of fame. This village has been named 'Shastri Nagar' after the great

Prime Minister of India Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri. It is 35 km by road from the jetty of Campbell Bay. This village is situated at a distance of 26 km from Indira Point, the last end of the country. Many geographical challenges still exist here. Despite this, the families of retired people from a military point of view were settled on this island, retired families from Punjab, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu were brought to Great Nicobar, along with some fishermen from Andhra Pradesh and people of Ranchi community from Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand were also brought and settled. From 1960-1980, people from families who retired from the army were brought here, as per the administrative arrangements of the Government of India and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Those who would have been 30-35 years old were settled in Great Nicobar with their families.

Shastri Nagar is connected by road to the populated places on the north and south coast. Which is spread north-south on the eastern coast of Great Nicobar 0 - 42 km. Starting from zero now 61 kms. But there is Indira Point and it is 35 km. Shastri Nagar is a village, keeping national security in mind, people from retired army families from Punjab, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu settled in Shastri Nagar, as it is said, "Dharma Rakshati Rakshitah", so they would be protected. If a country is capable of protecting its religion and itself, then

the state is automatically protected.

Thus, this part of India's land, Shastri Nagar village, is blessed with fertile land, a sub-tropical humid climate, and fertile soil filled with untouched humus. India, which is rich in environmental qualities and full of geographical diversity, despite being geographically isolated from the rest of the world, is blessed with the rich culture of Indians. Punjabi, Malayali, Tamil, Marathi, and Ranchi families live in the village and celebrate Holi, Christmas, Gurupurva, and local festivals happily. People from retired army families indulge in agriculture, coconut plantations, and rice farming here and because of their connection with military services, they have the capability of being army men, which means that they are said to be full of the skills to stand guard in the country's security.

So, the guards who are ready to protect the country are settled in Shastri Nagar. Vijayanagar village is adjacent to it and also helps Shastri Nagar and its life. The population is around 200 and there are 30-40 houses out of which two or three are private houses and the rest live in tsunami shelters. The residents are happy with the bus service and road connectivity. This village is prospering on cow milk, and fruits like coconut kernel, banana, papaya, sapota, etc. There are drinking water pipelines and ponds and there is also electricity. There is

also a Panchayat and Ward member which strengthens the administrative structure. Riders on bicycles and jeeps can also be seen. Due to being adjacent to the border, the villagers get employed in the activities of Border Road Organization and Border Road Engineering Service Development. They are engaged in agriculture, especially in making coconut powder, coconut shell, and oil, and also grow fruits, flowers, vegetables, etc., and are very self-reliant.

Retired soldiers are warriors who are associated with the Army but due to living in the highly sensitive Zone 5 of the seismic area, they also suffered the earthquake of 2004 and Tsunami. 80% of the Terrain including many houses in this village was destroyed due to the tsunami, except for one or two houses, all the people live in tsunami shelters. At present, due to the destruction of cultivable land, cow rearing and coconut shelling are the main sources of income. They engage in the export of coal and extraction of coconut kernel powder and coconut oil. There is also a mill in the village which is used for cleaning and crushing rice, wheat, etc., and a "Reflex Mill" (related to coconut) is located 35 km away, near Vijayanagar village and. 62 km from his village. They participate in Road and other development activities to be

built up to about 26 km, the Border Roads Organisation, Border Roads Engineering Service, Military Force 'Baaj' etc. They do not get tired of helping and are nurtured by the spirit of mutual brotherhood and philanthropy and desire for public welfare. They are connected among themselves through Hindi language (contact language) and with great pride speak the names of the villages at the extreme ends of India from Maa Bharati. It is connected to the fabric of famous villages. Government schemes and development efforts are priceless. The transshipment port is going to be built here, just 150 km from the borderline. There will be an amazing dock for ships on the international waterways located at a distance of 1500 meters. A civil airport is going to be under construction by connecting Gandhinagar, Shastri Nagar, and Vijaynagar villages. In the coming years, Shastri Nagar village and Andaman and Nicobar Islands will gain fame for tourism from the international perspective. Whoever came to these islands with Indian sentiments, Found these Chains of islands are linked to humanity. Ultimately, this village of India (Shastri Nagar) which is capable of strongly supporting the sentiments of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is moving on the path of world fame.



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