



School for scandal

With special focus on pro-Palestine protests, several global universities have turned into activism hubs

As more students join anti-Israel protests in countries like the US, England, France and elsewhere, it has spawned a debate regarding the role of educational institutes in shaping political ideologies and influencing global opinion, as well as the question of whether students should get involved in politics.



As a Sanskrit saying goes: "Ya vidya sa vimuktaye"

(Education liberates). Since it is a universal truth, this liberation must manifest itself in the conduct of students. No denying the logical boundaries of any dissent and that violence has no role in such demonstrations.

PICTALK



Farmers harvest wheat at a village near the Indo-Pak border, on the outskirts of Jammu

Nothing 'gentlemanly' in Chinese diplomacy



BHOPINDER SINGH

China's recent outcry over the alleged breach of 'Gentleman's Agreement' with the Philippines reveals a profound irony, given the history of its coercion and deceit

There is a huge amount of insincerity and gall involved in the Chinese complaint that the Philippines had torn up the bilateral 'Gentleman's Agreement', between Beijing and Manila. While the term 'Gentleman's Agreement' has an implicit assumption of 'trust' as a fundamental tenet besting a relationship, which may otherwise not be legally binding...



"unsinkable aircraft carriers". All this has been done with sheer impunity and disregard towards any neighbouring countries' territorial claims, sense of security, or socioeconomic concerns. Dupliciousness and attempting to checkmate (by force or lure) any emerging force that could challenge the Chinese juggernaut...

Vietnamese forces that led to a rupture between China and Vietnam, that still lingers subliminally. Even earlier in the 50s, the Chinese laid the trap for Nehru's complacency when Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai refused to contest Nehru's rightful insistence on Aksai Chin by accepting that China had no claim on it.

expansionism and unbridled ambition to assert its hegemony. Propaganda in the highly controlled media of China has been elevated to a fine art. Filipino Defence Secretary was quick to rebut the same by clarifying that he was, "not aware of, nor is it a party to, any internal agreement with China"...



EVEN EARLIER IN THE 1950s, THE CHINESE LAID THE TRAP FOR NEHRU'S COMPLACENCY WHEN CHINESE PREMIER ZHOU ENLAI REFUSED TO CONTEST NEHRU'S RIGHTFUL INSISTENCE ON AKSAI CHIN BY ACCEPTING THAT CHINA HAD NO CLAIM ON IT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KASHMIR'S PATH TO NORMALCY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "AFSPA repeal: A step towards Naya Kashmir," published on May 3, this is my response. The Union Home Minister's contemplation on AFSPA removal in J&K reflects a pivotal shift in the Government's approach towards the region.

PRESS FREEDOM IS VITAL

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Upholding the Fourth Estate in Digital Age," published on May 3, this is my response. Press freedom stands as an indispensable pillar of democracy, safeguarding our right to knowledge and accountability.

Deceptive digital dangers



Apropos the news article, "Time to curb fake videos in elections," published on May 3, this is my response. The emergence of 'deepfake' technology in political campaigns signals a disturbing trend toward digital deceit.

which these fake videos can be created using advanced technology raises concerns about the erosion of trust in media and public discourse. Moreover, the implications for national security, as highlighted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, cannot be overlooked.

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SANTOSH ANAND

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FIRST COLUMN

PROTECTING OUR DIGITAL WORLD

Cybersecurity is all about safeguarding trust, privacy and business interests



SHAINY SHARMA

With the proliferation of connected devices, cloud computing and various other digital platforms, the attack surface of the threats ranging from individual hackers to organised cybercriminal groups has expanded significantly. In the age, where technology pervades every facet of our lives, the importance of cybersecurity cannot be over stated and with the advent of technology, it has been deemed to have the emergence of new threats.

Cybersecurity measures, such as encryption, access controls and data loss prevention, help prevent unauthorised access, theft and misuse of confidential information. In an era of widespread digital connectivity, maintaining privacy, safeguarding personal information and communications from unauthorised surveillance, identifying theft and invasive data collection practices are crucial not only for individuals but for organisations too. The motto 'Protecting our digital world' is a responsibility we all share. Cybersecurity researchers cover a wide range of topics be it understanding the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) of cyber adversaries or focusing on developing methodologies, tools and best practices to integrate security into the software development lifecycle; are aimed at addressing current and emerging challenges in protecting digital assets and infrastructure. Cybersecurity researchers investigate software and hardware vulnerabilities to understand their root causes.

Safeguarding cybersecurity is imperative across all sectors of work be it business or education. Cybersecurity is integral to national security and defence strategies, as cyber threats pose risks to sovereignty, economic stability and public safety in shaping India's economic growth and global competitiveness, particularly in the realm of cybersecurity, the Indian Government has implemented various initiatives and policies such as Cyber Surakshit Bharat, Cyber Swachhta Kendra and many more to combat the cybersecurity challenges in India. These initiatives are aimed at generating awareness about the latest cybercrimes, detection and removal of malicious programs from devices and ultimately combat cyber threats by creating a secure cyber ecosystem.



The digital landscape is constantly evolving, with cyber threats becoming more sophisticated and pervasive. Cybersecurity measures, including threat detection, incident response and vulnerability management help identify, mitigate and contain cyber threats such as malware, phishing, ransomware and denial-of-service attacks.

Effective cybersecurity will build trust and confidence among stakeholders, including customers, partners, investors and the public at large. By demonstrating a commitment to cybersecurity best practices and compliance with regulations, organisations enhance their reputation and credibility in the digital marketplace.

The need for cybersecurity has increased due to the evolving threat landscape, technological advancements, digital transformation initiatives, regulatory requirements, geopolitical tensions and societal reliance on digital technologies. Cybersecurity is not just about safeguarding the data rather it's about safeguarding trust, privacy and freedom in the digital age. It requires a comprehensive and proactive approach involving technology, policies, education, collaboration and investment to address the evolving challenges posed by cyber threats. One needs to stay vigilant, informed and proactive in keeping online space secure. Strong passwords, regular updates and staying cautious of phishing attempts are just a few steps toward cyber resilient community. Despite advancements, cybersecurity does face a lot of challenges, including the constant evolution of cyber threats, the shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals and the global nature of cybercrime.

(The write is an educator; views are personal)

Global tapestry and impact of terrorism

In an era marked by geopolitical upheavals and regional conflicts, the spectre of terror looms large, transcending borders and threatening stability on a global scale



SUDHIR HINDWAN

At a time when the world political landscape is dealing with a number of regional conflicts such as Israel-Palestine, Russia-Ukraine, skirmishes in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, trans-national terrorism has hogged the limelight world over during the last few years. Similarly at the domestic level terror organisations from across the border have unleashed a wave of terror in Kashmir to attract attention from the media to upturn the diminishing morale of the mercenaries. Seen in this recent perspective are the latest sinister designs of the terror forces in different parts of the world whether in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Red Sea, Israel, Palestine, Scandinavian Countries, Central Asia or Russia. In the past few days, the insurgency has resulted in numerous killings of innocents and the martyrdom of several Army soldiers in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir on the domestic front in India.

International terrorism, though comparatively less in volume than the domestic variety, has crossed all limitations despite increased Government efforts to combat it. Much blood, if not ink, has flowed since terrorists struck the World Trade Centre and Pentagon in the US. This was followed by an upsurge in terrorist activities across the globe. Repeated terror attacks over the years sometimes after a brief lull have not only exposed the security and intelligence network but also robbed confidence of modern nations in controlling the menace.

Whether terrorism is unleashed at the local, regional, national or international level, it cannot survive for long without international support and collaboration. In a globalised world, the matrices of power turn on the highly visible, inequalitarian structure of the international economy and as such inter-relationships between socio-economic conditions in different parts of the world are becoming more and more obvious. At another level, the post-Cold War international political-economic order is still a victim of the power game that was thrust on the world by the then-big powers. Many seasoned international experts on violence and terror are of the opinion that the power network woven by the hegemonic mighty in the entire West Asian region has provoked the ire of the opposition forces in almost every State where they had an interest-based relationship. Thus, as societies globalise and curtains of opacity are raised through increased inter-societal interaction at the international level, people in under-developed countries are holding the big powers responsible for their inferior socio-economic positions. The Cold War Era leading to interference in crucial areas such as Afghanistan, South-East Asia, Gulf and Latin American countries has resulted in the development of peculiar trends that provided breeding grounds for terrorist activities. Talibanisation of Afghanistan would never have taken place had the powerful nations handled the situation well in the beginning. The consequences of the failure to diagnose this social disease (terrorism) at the early stage can be pernicious for the various countries. The strategies of imposing arms and economic sanctions on the so-called rogue nations during the last few years have been counter-productive



THE STRATEGIES OF IMPOSING ARMS AND ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON THE SO-CALLED ROGUE NATIONS DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE BEEN INEFFICIENT AND RATHER HELPED THESE NATIONS TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL SYMPATHY

and rather helped these nations to gain international sympathy. Although the hope of a permanent solution to the problem of terrorism is still far away, one hopes that the powerful nations will develop a more mature understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism that has assumed alarming proportions. The rapid international transportation and use of sophisticated weapons like AK 47 assault rifles and plastic explosives (RDX) have helped to facilitate the expansion of terrorist networks around the world. Besides, the new suicide squads of terrorists have left the entire security apparatus of the affected States in a State of shock. The recent incidents cannot be viewed in isolation.

A leading anti-terrorism expert, Mr Brian Jenkins, believes that though more articulate and multiplied effort by the police and intelligence can tell us about a possible terrorist attack, there is still confusion over whether such a mechanism is successful in dealing with terrorists driven by fundamentalism. Gradually, religion is becoming the main motivating force for terrorism across the globe. There is a growing nexus between terrorists and internationally organised crime networks. Mr. Alison Jamieson, a British analyst on organised crime and political violence, commented that the distinction between terrorism and organised crime has become very blurred recently. An Italian organised crime expert, Professor Ernesto, says: "The terrorist's goal is an ideological one,

while organised crime's goal is financial, but the instrument is the same.

They both need money and arms". In Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers engage in drug trafficking to finance their struggle, in north-eastern India guerrillas kidnap tea planters and hold them to ransom to help fund their fight for independence. In Chechnya, the secessionists were heavily involved in drug distribution.

These days terrorists are more confident than ever before of their access to the vulnerable points before carrying out any of their attacks and they plan their attacks in a heroic manner for the justification and fulfilment of a cause that they think is just. Thus, they attempt, by their acts, to inspire and manipulate fear to achieve a variety of purposes. For effective administrative measures, various sources of terrorism must be found first. There is a need for a truly effective preparedness programme at the Government level.

First, we must know about the people involved in terrorist activities and their motivations.

Dealing with a terrorist incident and mitigating its consequences need to be carefully thought out. Sufficient data about the terrorist-hit area could be of immense use. Intelligence should be able to provide information about terrorist targets, timing and site in advance. But the Government alone cannot do much to stop it. Individuals and groups can make a significant contribution towards improving the general security

environment. On the other hand, there is a need for sophisticated security procedures that can go all the way from airport screening to the border area.

Some kind of positive programmes which can alleviate the frustration of terrorists can prove effective. There is also a need to promote open institutions, including political institutions to absorb the ethnic, religious and political pressure and allow terrorists to vent their feelings in a proper way. This will change their mind and thus encourage them to settle their differences in a peaceful way. Since present-day terrorists are very well organised and more professional than their counterparts a decade ago, new concepts of safety and security should arise. A vigilant and assertive police and paramilitary network should replace the old one. There is an apprehension that with the availability of biological and chemical weapons, terrorists could start their campaign with a renewed vigour.

No civilised political system can progress until terrorism is wiped out, but terrorism cannot be eliminated unless there is a political solution. The need of the hour is the political will to solve problems that generate terrorism. The States affected by terrorism should open up avenues for a negotiated settlement of disputes and exhibit genuine willingness to resolve long-festering problems.

(The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award, is a professor and expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

Saffron cultivation: Replicate Poonch's success story

The Government must extend comprehensive support to farmers, fostering significant opportunities for saffron production in similar regions

In the heart of the border district Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, amidst the rugged terrain and lush valleys, a quiet revolution is underway - the cultivation of saffron. "For the past 5 years, we have been conducting trials of saffron and a year ago, we took the plunge into full-scale cultivation. The results? Astonishing! Our efforts were supported by School of Biotechnology at the University of Jammu, who provided us a generous grant of INR 10 lakhs. With unwavering support from Professor Jyoti and the expertise of the university's scholars, including PhD student Tahlil Bhatti and SDO,



BHARTI DEVI

Horticulture, Mohammad Fareed from Poonch, we started to explore saffron cultivation in Poonch, uncovering the untapped potential of saffron production in the region," shared 35-year-old farmer Ajaz Ahmad from Bayla village, in Mandi tehsil, bordering Poonch. He has made a name for himself as a saffron farmer in the region, moving away from traditional farming over the past few years. In this research, Ajaz found that saffron production can be done in abundance in areas

like Surankote, Arai, Fatehpur, Bayla, Mandi and Mendhar of Poonch. The environment and soil here are almost similar to those in the regions of Jammu and Kashmir where saffron production takes place. Saffron holds the esteemed title of being one of the world's most prized spices. Known as "Kong" in Kashmiri, "Jafran" in Urdu and "Kesar" in Hindi, it is derived from the delicate threads of fragrant flowers. Historically, its cultivation has been confined to specific regions within the Union Territory. While some cultivation occurs in Kishtwar, the Pampore region of Kashmir reigns as its primary producer, renowned for its superior quality. Commanding a premium price, Pampore saffron fetches around 3 lakh rupees

per kilogram. It takes an astonishing quantity of flowers - approximately 160 to 180 - to yield just one gram of saffron. Moreover, a kilogram of this precious spice requires the harvest of about half a million flowers.

Ajaz Ahmad highlights the shifting agricultural landscape in Poonch, noting a traditional focus on seasonal crops like maize. However, he observes a gradual change in mindset among local farmers, with growing enthusiasm for saffron production. "We have procured saffron seeds from Pampore and Kishtwar districts of Kashmir. Now, my desire is that after Pampore and Kishtwar, Poonch becomes the third largest center for saffron production in Jammu and

Kashmir," he said. He advocates for Governmental support in the form of security measures rather than subsidies, citing the comparatively high cost of saffron seeds. Ajaz emphasises the need for crop protection from wildlife, particularly bears that frequently ravage fields, suggesting that fencing could mitigate such risks and safeguard farmers' livelihoods.

It can be easily understood that extensive efforts are required for saffron production. In India, saffron cultivation begins in June and July, while in some regions, it starts in August and September. Flowering usually begins in October. Apart from India, saffron cultivation is mainly done in Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Iran and China. 80 per cent of

the world's total saffron production is concentrated in Spain and Iran alone. For the farmers involved in its production, it is nothing less than a boon because its price in the market ranges from 3 to 3.5 lakh rupees per kilogram.

The allure of saffron extends to both men and women who actively engage in its cultivation. Shamim Akhtar, a 35-year-old farmer from Bayla, shared, "I've been cultivating saffron for several years now and the results have been rewarding. However, the construction of a road through our land resulted in crop damage. Nonetheless, my passion for saffron cultivation remains strong. Despite facing financial constraints to procure seeds, I aspire to continue with this endeavor."

Farmer Abdul Samad from the same village, however, has another concern on his mind. He is worried about agriculture being affected by changing environmental conditions. He explains that due to changing weather patterns, there has been a decrease in saffron production in Kashmir in recent years. It requires rainfall between 1000 to 1500 millimetres, which has decreased and untimely snowfall has had a negative impact on the soil, resulting in reduced saffron production.

Kashmir, which previously yielded up to 15 tons of saffron annually, has seen this output dwindle to 8 to 9 tons, a worrying trend. Despite this setback, Kashmiri saffron remains highly valued for its medicinal properties, known

to alleviate blood pressure and migraines and find use in beauty products. The central Government's attention to Kashmiri saffron is evident through initiatives like the National Saffron Mission (NSM). Aimed at bolstering saffron production and enhancing the socio-economic status of Kashmiri residents, the NSM has notably benefited saffron farmers. Additionally, various other Government schemes also promote saffron cultivation. However, for farmers to swiftly reap the benefits of these programs, they must be executed on a larger scale, given the increasing enthusiasm for saffron cultivation.

(The writer is a grassroots writer from Poonch, J&K. Charkha Features)



A well-timed book, *Modi's North East Story*, enumerating the development story of the North East, is an inspiration for those genuinely wishing to connect with this hitherto remote region of India, says **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**

NARENDRA MODI INTRODUCES INDIA TO ITS ASHTALAKSHMIS



It is election time and television news channels across the country are on a roll as spokespersons of various Opposition parties try their best to churn out the "failures" of the NDA Government that has been in power for the past 10 years even as representatives of the ruling coalition vociferously list out the achievements of the BJP-led Government at the Centre. This is an age-old practice since the first General Elections held in India from October 1951 to February 1952. Although the ruling Congress party back then had nothing major to list out as achievements, the party continued to roll out new promises. From the basic provision of drinking water to all villages, establishment of schools in all districts of the country, to subsidised ration to the poorer sections of society, all topped the list of electoral promises. These so-called promises continued till the 1990s. In fact, in the 1960s, people were asked to forego a day's meal owing to the severe famine the nation faced back then. A lot has been written about the Green Revolution but the sad truth is that despite the much publicised initiative, hunger and malnutrition continued to haunt India. There was no serious attempt from the Governments of the day to increase productivity of our farm lands. India's

"pluralism" and "vivid nature" were on full display during the summer as well as rainy seasons. While the scorching heat of the summer played havoc in South India with most of the rivers going dry, the North experienced floods and deluge. Every year hundreds were drowned in the recurring floods as the snow in the Himalayas melted causing severe deluges in the mighty Brahmaputra which resulted in village after village in States like Bengal, Assam and Bihar getting completely devoured by flood waters. While the northern part of the country was battered by floods, the southern States were crying for drinking water. Rivers like the Kavery and the Krishna routinely run dry whenever the South West Monsoon fails to hit the Indian coast. The drought in the Kaveri River has severe implications for Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry as farming operations come to a complete standstill due to non-availability of water for irrigation. Although a lot of experts ranging from Sir Arthur Cotton and Captain Dastur to CP Ramaswamy Iyer and VK Rao had suggested the interlinking of Indian rivers no Government took note of the proposal. Every year the west flowing rivers in Karnataka and Maharashtra discharge thousands of cubic feet water into the Arabian Sea while the Godavari discharges an equal

or more quantity of flood water into the Bay of Bengal. Had a responsible Government taken adequate measures to divert these river waters into the Mettur Dam or other parts of water-starved regions, Tamil Nadu would have come out of its perpetual struggle with water scarcity. The Supreme Court in 2002 ruled that the Government of India should take the initiative and interlink the rivers in the country so that the perpetual flood, drought and water scarcity problems would be resolved once and for all. Although we did get governments that worked while other governments worked faster, nothing permanent was done to sort out the issue for good. In fact, we even witnessed a Chennai-based Gandhian write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi immediately after the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, asking him not to take up the post of Prime Minister as the latter had no mandate to rule the country. Indeed, the priority of our politicians was at variance with that of the requirements of the common man. Till 1998, the country had not heard about a four-lane highway linking Kanyakumari and Kashmir and Surat to Silchar. Nobody took the initiative to bring down the travelling time between New Delhi and Thiruvananthapuram when train travelers had to toil for almost 52 hours to cover the 2900 km. There was no highway

MODI'S NORTH EAST STORY
 Author : Tuhin Sinha and Aditya Pittie
 Publisher: Rupa
 www.rupapublications.co.in
 Price: ₹595.00

between Chennai and Kochi and a bus journey took literally two days to reach the destination. If this was the situation in mainland India, the condition in the North East India was far worse. Insurgency grew by leaps and bounds. The Nagas, the people of Manipur, and other North Eastern states of India considered themselves as citizens of a separate country altogether. So much so, that a so-called government in exile is functioning from some European countries claiming to be the lone representative of the Nagas. Most of the youth of the North Eastern States are even misled to believe that they do not belong to India. Making matters worse, those in power in these regions never wanted to disprove this notion. Immediately after Independence from our British colonial masters, what the new rulers did instead was to create yet another problem, this time in Kashmir. A separate entity by the name North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) was formed with the objective of uplifting the seven sisters of Brahmaputra (as Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram were known initially). Unfortunately, the Congress Government that ruled post-Independence till 1977, 1980-1989, 1991-1996 and 2004-2014 did nothing for the economic and social development of these States. In 1998, when Atal Bihari

Vajpayee was sworn in as Prime Minister, he renamed the Seven Sisters of Brahmaputra as Ashtalakshmi by including Sikkim in the group and some long-needed efforts were made to bring these eight States into the national mainstream. Till then, news emanating from these States dwelt mainly on secessionism-related issues. Bodoland, AASU, the Maoists of Manipur and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim and the turf war between various terrorist organisations formed the crux of news broadcasts from the North East. However, when the BJP Government came to power in 2014, it launched a plethora of missions to harness the real potential of the North East. In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the one to comprehend the vast opportunities and immense potential offered by this hitherto unexplored region of India. It is in this context that *Modi's North East Story* authored by two young professionals, Tuhin A. Sinha and Aditya Pittie, deserves appreciation and immediate attention. The 196-page book offers a panoramic view of the eight North Eastern States and the path-breaking developments that have taken place in this long neglected region in the past decade. It has witnessed an unprecedented development in infrastructure, the number of

airports have increased manifold and the entire region today has rail and communication connectivity to boast of. Clearly, neither Prime Minister Modi nor his team are the kind to rest on their achievements. Instead they are continuing furiously on the path of development and work is going on at a frenetic pace to develop these States with world class infrastructure facilities even as they ensure that the essence and unique culture and heritage of these regions remain untouched. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Kiren Rijiju, the energetic and youthful Union Minister from Arunachal Pradesh and Pema Khandu, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, and a host of such dynamic leaders and policy makers have made their mark in the holistic development of the North East. The authors of *Modi's North East Story* deserve kudos as make the readers travel straight to these scenic States with the story of the coming of age of the eight States, the *Ashtalakshmis*. Even an old and ailing person like this writer felt inspired to fly to these abodes of the God and Goddesses. The words penned down by Tuhin Sinha and Pittie come straight from the heart and indeed inspire their readers to visit the North East, behold its serene landscape and meet the people long alienated from the country's mainstream.

A Breathtaking Journey into the Heart of Nature

Ompal Sansanwal's passion for trees and nature shines through every page of his book. His art whispers tales of resilience and interconnectedness - a heartfelt tribute to nature's enduring grace, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Meditations on Trees by Ompal Sansanwal, co-published by Aleph Book Company and Black Cube Gallery, is a breathtaking journey into the heart of nature's timeless beauty and spiritual significance. Through a masterful fusion of art and philosophy, Sansanwal invites readers to contemplate the majesty of trees and their profound connection to human experience. At the core of Sansanwal's work are his stunning paintings of banyan trees which serve as powerful symbols of life, growth, and unity. With each brushstroke, the artist captures the essence of these ancient trees, infusing them with a sense of liveliness and wisdom that transcends time. His cityscapes, devoid of human figures yet brimming with life, offer a poignant reflection on the harmony between urban development and the natural world. *Meditations on Trees* offers a profound exploration of an artist's deeper connection with nature, particularly with trees, as a source of inspiration and reflection. Through a rich collection of artworks and insightful commentary, the book takes readers on a visual and spiritual journey, inviting them to contemplate the beauty and significance of trees in our lives. One of the key themes that resonate through the book is Sansanwal's view of trees as metaphors for life.

MEDITATIONS ON TREES
 Author : Ompal Sansanwal
 Publisher: ALEPH Book Company
 www.alephbookcompany.com
 AVAILABLE ON DEMAND

He sees them as symbols of strength, resilience, and interconnectedness, much like the complexities of human existence. This perspective is beautifully captured in his depiction of ancient banyan trees, with their aerial prop roots and sprawling trunks, mirroring the intricate web of relationships and experiences that shape our lives. The book also delves into Sansanwal's exploration of urban landscapes, particularly cityscapes. These paintings, characterised by softened hues and the gentle play of light, offer a serene glimpse into the rhythm of urban life, highlighting the harmony that exists between man-made structures and the natural world. Central to Sansanwal's artistic vision is his deep spiritual connection with nature. His paintings of the Nataraja using the banyan tree's branches and his portrayal of Krishna lifting Govardhan Hill are symbolic of his reverence for the divine in nature. His art not only celebrates the aesthetics of the natural world but also invites viewers to contemplate the deeper spiritual meanings embedded in them. In addition to his spiritual reflections, Sansanwal's artistic process is also explored in the book. His meticulous studies of trees and foliage in monochromatic pen and ink drawings reveal his keen observation of nature's intricate

details. These studies, combined with his use of light and shadow, showcase his mastery of technique and his ability to evoke a sense of wonder and awe in the viewer. The book also pays tribute to the influences the artist draws his inspirations from, which include French artist Georges Seurat and German writer Hermann Hesse. His study of Seurat's work inspired his techniques and processes, while Hesse's writings on nature resonated deeply with his own

around us. His artwork is not just images on canvases, they are windows to a world where the boundaries between man and nature, art and spirituality reveal the timeless truths that lie at the core of our existence. Arguably, *Meditations on Trees* is a beautifully crafted book that celebrates the profound wisdom of nature. The heart of this book is Ompal Sansanwal's deep spiritual connection with nature, reflected in his exquisite artworks and insightful commentary. This timeless treasure resonates with readers of all ages, be it a nature lover, an art enthusiast, or one simply seeking a moment of reflection, making it a must-have for your library.

