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14 Clubs and
their Fabrics



NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING 2020

Skål's masterplan for the
industry in India gets underway



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Kolkata Club aims to host Skål
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

My dear Skålleagues,

On behalf of the National Board, I take this opportunity to wish you, the family and work teams a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year 2021.

As we move into the first quarter of the calendar, it pleases me to state that your Board has been extremely active in implementing a slew of measures that ensure achievement of the overall vision of directly addressing the traveling consumer. In doing so, we will showcase that Skål and Skål India stands for trust, fair business, safety (health and fiscal), and integrity.

To spearhead the new direction and joint vision, the Board and National Committee approved a new brand identity that brings our 14 clubs onto a single visual focus whilst celebrating the traditional fabrics of each city and state. Do read more in this issue of your KOTIN.

Also accomplished was the successful launch and distribution of KOTIN – our monthly electronic and print publication which is now read by Skålleagues and several thousand corporate CEOs, CMOs, CFOs, MDs,

and other senior leaders spread across northern & southern India. As I pen my thoughts for the President's Message for our first issue of 2021, I am humbled by the pro-bono services that Page One Media provides to Skål India. In tandem with Skål India's National Director (PR & Communication) Sk. Vivek Braganza, Page One Media has worked tirelessly to ensure that the vision of a 'monthly magazine' is leagues ahead of an association newsletter. We are slowly and steadily taking our much overdue place on the centre stage of travel associations operating in India. For far too long has Skål India been a quiet spectator to the travel and tourism environment or eco-system within India. It is time our collective voice is heard by Government, stakeholders, members, and yes, even consumers.

The 1st National Committee Meeting (NCM) held during the first week of December at Kolkata set the pace for many decisions to streamline our systems ahead of our ambitious activations. Without a strong administrative and financial control dashboard, it would be challenging for the team to set in place a strong legacy that would carry on into the next generation. I would like to extend my appreciation to our National Treasurer Sk. Ranjit Vig, National Secretary Sk. Krishna Gopalan, and Senior Internal Auditor Sk. Burjis Mehta, who collectively worked tirelessly to set in place strong administration and fiscal control protocols.

During the National Meeting Committee in Kolkata; Sk. Sanjeev Mehra our 1st National Vice President & President of Skål Kolkata supported by the Kolkata Board, officially launched the logo and plan for the 2023 bid for Skål World Congress, details of which you will find in this issue. I am honoured to have been invited to take on the role of 'Congress Chairperson' and look forward to working with the Kolkata

& National Team to deliver this bid successfully to not only the members and people of Kolkata; but to each of you. A successful bid hinges on strong support systems which I hope each of you will provide to the team and myself.

We closed the year with our EOGM held in Delhi which was a hybrid event – in person and online. On behalf of the board, I would like to extend our appreciation to Sk. Greesh Bindra, President of Skål Delhi & Sk. Sanjay Datta, President of Skål Asia for their gracious assistance and hospitality, and for inviting our outstation Skålleagues to attend the Christmas Lunch held at the magnificent Imperial Hotel.

As we enter 2021, we need to demonstrate resilience and navigate our business and personal lives whilst dealing with the ongoing pandemic. On the cards for the months of January and February will be the signing of several MoUs to help us enhance our mass communications reach and begin a closer cooperation with leading non-travel related business associations as part of our direct-to-consumer initiative.

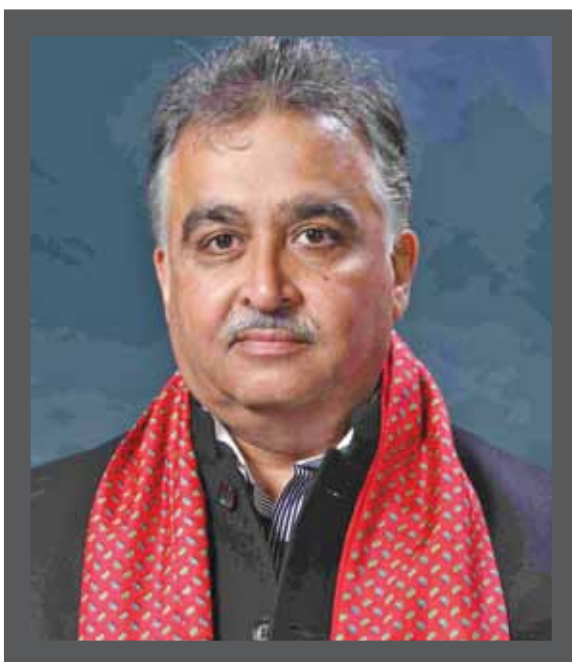
In the first week of February, this Board will complete 100 days in office. We intend to deliver a 100-day performance report by the 10th of February. So do look out for this first of many good business practices for Skål India via our online and social media platforms.

Permit me to reiterate that this Board will not just set a benchmark; but will set historic records and precedence which will determine a legacy for many teams to be seated.

With fond wishes,

Carl Vaz
President
Skål International India





Sk. Sanjay Datta
President
Skål International Asia

A True Global Ambassador

In June 2019, Skål India's candidate Sanjay Datta was elected as President of Skål International Asia Area (SIAA), winning with an overwhelming majority. Ensuring that the voice Of Asia is heard, creating platforms for SIAA members to conduct business amongst friends, ensuring transparency, inter-Club twinning, making the Skål Asia Congress bigger and better with more participation and networking, and creating a task force of stalwarts to create a long-term roadmap, are among the key points of his agenda during his Presidential tenure, which lasts until mid-2021.

Through his involvement at various Indian and global platforms, he has been able to harness networking opportunities, not only for his Club and its members, but also for his own development. From actively participating in global events such as World Travel Market (WTM),

International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM), International Travel Trade Show (Berlin), and Pow-Wow (USA) to localised Skål events such as the International Congresses in Spain, Mombasa (Kenya), Bahrain, Cebu (Philippines), New Delhi, and Singapore, he has come to learn that the industry thrives on a personalised approach – which he plans to bring to Skål Asia.

His experience enables him to cross-pollinate ideas and cultural synergies within Skål Asia, and in doing so will develop and nurture a team that reaches out to multiple stakeholders such as Tourism Boards, hotel chains, airlines and associations. This will help in showcasing ideas on how Skål Asia can integrate with their business plans.

The Skål India Connection

At the national level, Sanjay has previously been an Executive

Committee Member of Skål India (2015-2017). At the Club level, he has served as Past President of Skål Delhi, India's oldest Club, for two terms (2015-2017 and 2017-2019). Earlier he held positions of Vice President (2013-2015) and Secretary (2011-2013). He was a Board Member of the Delhi Club from 2007 to 2011.

Since his induction as a Skålleague in 1998, he has been a vibrant personality, attending various Skål Asia and World Congresses. He was the Chairman of Skål Asia Congress in 2011, which witnessed a record turnout.

During his term as President Skål Delhi, he played an integral part by conducting an auction to help the Florimont Volkert Fund collect a large sum of money at Skål's World Congress in Hyderabad (2017). He also had the honour of hosting many Skål International Presidents in the country.

Airborne Travels Pvt Ltd.

On the professional front, Sanjay has invested 35 years in the travel business. He began his career with Gulliver Travels in 1983. Thereafter he joined Jet Air in the Sales Division (GSA-Gulf Air). Over the years, he has been involved in various facets of the travel-tourism, hospitality, and airline industries, which enabled him to grasp the technical know-how of the service industry.

In 1992, Sanjay launched his own company, Airborne Travels Pvt Ltd., with travel as its primary focus. He later added two more verticals, holidays and events.

Airborne is a B2C enterprise with its main intent on the deliverance of good service. With over 25 years of expertise, the organisation has adapted its business and corporate travel services to the needs of each of its clients.

Accommodating client preferences in travel itineraries effectively is the primary focus.

Airborne's attention to detail in coordinating with international and domestic organisations, working with various associations and agencies, and conducting symposiums and sessions has been the main reason for customer retention.

TAAI & TAFFI Background

Sanjay has a world of experience with Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), two of the largest associations and most meaningful travel associations in India, where he has been part of the Managing Committee as well.

He has been Co-Chairman at two TAAI conventions – Dubai (2009) and Phuket (2010), Chairman of the Airline Council (2009-2011), and Chairman of TAAI's Newline Magazine (2009-2011). He has also served as a Core Committee member in TAAI's and TAFI's Northern Region.

The Last Word

Sanjay has officiated as the Secretary of the Residents Welfare Association of his colony in Delhi for many years and was responsible for liaison with various Government departments to ensure good management of the association and appropriate use of its funds.

PR, by his own admission, is his forte. He is a strong believer in intra-personal relationships, something that has stood him in excellent stead over the years. One look at his well-connected network all across the world and you'll understand why he has cult status in the industry.

A DECEMBER TO REMEMBER

The first National Committee Meeting of Skål India's new Board of 2020-22 in Kolkata was all about putting into action the organisation's masterplan for the travel-tourism-hospitality sector in India to break free from the shackles of the pandemic and to draw a map for the road ahead. **Vivek Braganza**, National Director, PR & Communication, reports...



Skål India President Carl Vaz addresses the delegation

Never mind that the travel-tourism-hospitality sector in India, just like the rest of the world, spent the best part of 2020 in quiescence, given that various parts of the country were under different stages of lockdowns, and curfews even, owing to the widescale destruction wrought by Covid -19. The heartening factor was the gutsy resolve that was on display towards the end of the year. December was all about the industry's remarkable fightback.

Between December 4th and 6th, the Presidents of 14 Skål clubs across 13 cities in India, along with the Skål India National Board members congregated in Kolkata to examine the road ahead for the sector and to launch a masterplan to regroup, recover, regrow, and rejoice to revitalise tourism in India. This 'hybrid' event was held both physically and virtually – on Zoom and Facebook.

Skål International India comprises members across up to 42 verticals of the travel & tourism industry – including hospitality (hotels & resorts), aviation, travel agents, tour operators, OTAs, ground transport, tourism boards, marketing consultants specialising in tourism, and several stakeholders from international and local Government representatives. The first National Committee Meeting (NCM) of the new Board of 2020-22 took place in Kolkata. This meeting consisted of invitees, including the 14 Club Presidents (or their appointees), 8 members of the National Board, and the 2 Internal Auditors.

With a packed itinerary of 3 days in West Bengal, and centred in Kolkata, the invitees enjoyed some legendary Bengali hospitality. Congregating on the outskirts of the city, the delegates experienced inspired heritage, hosted by Skålleague Ajay Rawla at his incredible Rajbari Bawali property.



Skål India President Carl Vaz launches KOTIN, Skål India's monthly magazine-cum-newsletter

An extraordinary architectural masterpiece, this property built 250 years ago, saw 170 years of grand living during the Zamindari era. Painstakingly restored, the former residence of nobility is now accessible to its privileged guests. The Rajbari Bawali was home to Skål India National Committee members for 2 days, soaking in the life and times of a bygone era. Strolling around the 4 acres of this modern yet deeply historical resort gave one the feeling of being ported back through time, walking through corridors that tell many tales and glancing through windows looking out from the past into an action-packed present. The group enjoyed a boat ride to capture the sunset on the Ganges before returning to a gala evening under the stars.

The delegation then regrouped in Kolkata, at the Novotel Kolkata for an evening hosted by Skål Club Kolkata. The occasion was the launch of the Club's bid to host the Skål World Congress in 2023. The glittering ceremony was held in the company of Chief Guest Nandini Chakravorty, IAS, Principal Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of West Bengal; and Sagnik Chowdhury, Deputy Director General & Regional Director (East), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The event was celebrated by friends and well-wishers from across the sphere of corporate companies, consulates & embassies, and the tourism industry.

The attendees then moved into the National Committee meeting on 5th December. There was much ground to cover, keeping in mind the valuable time of this eminent audience of Skålleage leadership from all across India. On the agenda were big-ticket items, including the review and launch of Skål India's new brand identity, the unveiling of 'KOTIN' – the new official monthly magazine-cum-newsletter of Skål International India, and making great leaps forward to set up the administrative and financial machinery in keeping with the masterplan and vision for revival of the industry. Club Presidents and representatives shared their updates from the Clubs, including best practices and innovation through the tough year of 2020.

Skål International India President Carl Vaz opened with his masterplan and vision to bring Skål forward as a B2C brand. Sk. Venkat Reddy, 2nd Vice



Sk. Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål Club Kolkata and 1st Vice President, Skål International India

President, Skål India, announced the 6 new Committee Heads supporting the National Board (who were also introduced in KOTIN). Treasurer Sk. Ranjit Vig presented the financials for 2020-21, and the first cut of the interim budget 2021-22, along with the Internal Audit report presented by Sk. Burjis Mehta. These reports culminated in the decision to hold an EOGM in Delhi to have the same approved, in continuation of the AGM 2020 held in Chennai. Board members Sk. Krishna Gopalan, Sk. Shalini Khanna Charles and Sk. Saravanan Palanivelu presented their outlook respectively, covering Secretariat, Young Skål, and International Skål Councillor securing Skål globally.

The delegates then switched to their traditional attire, bringing to life 'our

social fabric'. Over a lovely outdoor setting at the Novotel poolside, Skålleagues enjoyed the camaraderie that Skål is known for. The evening was a celebration of a successful National Committee Meeting, and in anticipation of the next one – with the hope to have all 14 Clubs represented under one banner. In typical Kolkata style, the delegates had another surprise in store!

During the next morning's programme, organised by West Bengal Tourism, Skålleagues experienced a unique ride around town – in the new open deck buses for tourists to Kolkata. Our members got the opportunity to enjoy the sights and sounds of the metropolis, soaking in the history and tradition of Kolkata, while being regaled with exciting tales that bring a city to life. Delegates were treated to a unique perspective to Kolkata, with deeply knowledgeable local guides for the occasion – Skålleagues Manav Soni (IPP, Skål Club Kolkata), and Amin Asghar (Vice President, Skål Club Kolkata).

Speaking on the sidelines of the NCM 2020, Sk. Carl Vaz, President, Skål India said: "The National Committee is an important body for Skål India. With the presence of the Presidents of our Clubs, National Board, and Internal Auditors, this is the primary executive audience of the Skål movement in India. With our country being the second-largest collective of Skålleagues in the world, we have the responsibility and purpose of not only supporting our members' interests, but also to lead from the front to revitalise our tourism industry in India. At the 2020 National Committee Meet, we have together taken several steps in that direction, including launching a new customer-facing brand identity and magazine, resolving for an improved financial and administrative standing, and most importantly uniting ourselves to a common purpose."



Sk. Ajay Rawla, the gracious host at Rajbari Bawali Kolkata, with his welcoming smile

Sk. Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål Club Kolkata (and also 1st Vice President, Skål International India), added: "We in Kolkata are proud to showcase our hospitality and culture of West Bengal. In fact, as the gateway to the East, our region has much to offer Skålleagues. We hope the National Congress has sparked new energy, interest, and potential business for this part of India. We are thankful to our delegates for making the trip, and hope to have created lasting memories of a lifetime for our Skålleagues across India."



▲ Skål India President Carl Vaz, Skål Asia President Sanjay Datta, and Sk. Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål Club Kolkata, raise a toast



▲ Workshop in progress



▲ Folk Dance



▲ Dr Suborno Bose IIHM, International Institute of Hotel Management and Skål India President Carl Vaz sign an MoU to promote tourism in India



▲ The Rajbari Bawali Boutique Heritage Hotel, Kolkata, looks dazzling in the firelight



▲ Skål Asia President Sanjay Datta and Skål India President Carl Vaz at the conference



▲ Brainstorming session



▲ Skål India President Carl Vaz and First Lady Sk. Sonalee Vaz chat up with delegates



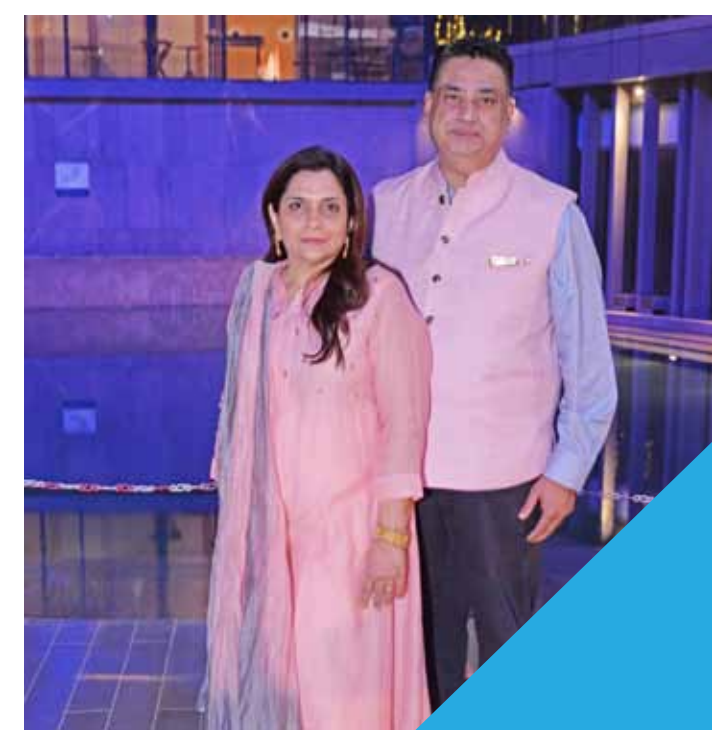
▲ Security and other staffers pose aside the West Bengal Tourism sightseeing bus



▲ Skål India President Carl Vaz gets ready to hop on a West Bengal Tourism sightseeing bus



▲ (L-R) Sk. Vivek Braganza (National Director, PR), Sk. Venkat Reddy (2nd Vice President) and Sk. Krishna Gopalan (Secretary), Skål India



▲ Skål India President Carl Vaz and First Lady Sk. Sonalee Vaz pose for a keepsake



Glimpses of the 80th Skål World Congress (2019), which was hosted in USA, aboard the world's largest cruise ship - Royal Caribbean's Symphony Of The Seas



BRINGING THE WORLD CONGRESS BACK TO INDIA

Skål Club Kolkata has thrown its hat in the ring in a bid to host the prestigious annual Skål International World Congress in 2023. With the second-largest member base in the world, it comes as no surprise.



Launch of the Skål World Congress logo in Kolkata

Skål International holds an annual World Congress each year in a different country. Without a doubt, it's a great opportunity for its members to discover incredible destinations and different realities of the travel and tourism trade worldwide.

The General Assembly of Skål International takes place during the annual Skål International World Congress, where the new Executive Committee is elected. Previous destinations and



Chief Guest Nandini Chakraborty is flanked by Carl Vaz, President, Skål India, and Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål Club Kolkata



Chief Guest Nandini Chakraborty, IAS (Principal Secretary, Tourism Department of West Bengal) addresses the audience

venues for the mega event include Symphony of the Seas, USA (2019); Mombasa, Kenya (2018); Hyderabad, India (2017); Monaco (2016); and Malaga, Spain (2015).

Last year's Skål International World Congress, which was scheduled to be hosted in the Kvarner Region of Croatia, had to be cancelled, unfortunately, owing to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The last time India hosted the World

Congress was in 2017, in Hyderabad. It was a well-attended event, ripple effects of which can still be felt three years later – with Skålleagues around the world actively interacting and doing business with the 14 clubs around India.

Now, Skål Club Kolkata has thrown its hat in the ring and made a bid for the mega event in 2023, with a vision to bring the World Congress back to Skål International's second-largest member base, worldwide. The bid was launched



Sk. Carl Vaz, Skål India President (C), addresses the audience, while Sk. Sanjeev Mehra, Skål Club Kolkata President (L) and Sk. Sanjay Datta, Skål Asia President (R) look on



Skål India President Sk. Carl Vaz and First Lady Sk. Sonalee Vaz tune into the programme

last month at a glittering ceremony at the Novotel Kolkata, in the presence of the leadership from West Bengal Tourism and Incredible India.

With sterling support from the State Government and an array of branded hotel infrastructure, Kolkata is ideally suited to host a Congress of this stature. It is a modern metropolis that over 14.1 million people call home, and it serves as the financial and trading hub of Eastern and North Eastern India. The city is known as the 'cultural capital of India' due to its immense historical and architectural significance. At one time the capital

of the British Raj (until 1911); the city has roots going back over two millennia. Showcasing the plurality and vibrancy of the nation, Kolkata is indeed an intrinsic part of the social fabric of modern India.

Sk. Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål Club Kolkata (and also 1st Vice President, Skål International India), said: "We are proud to host Skål India's National Committee meeting in the sweetest part of India. This is also the perfect forum for us to announce Kolkata's bid to host the Skål International World Congress in 2023. It's a great opportunity to bring recovery and international business to Kolkata and West Bengal, while putting India back on the world map since the last World Congress was held in Hyderabad in 2017".

Echoing the sentiment, Sk. Carl Vaz, President, Skål International India, added: "With over 1,150 members across 14 Clubs, India has one of the largest National Committees in Skål International. Kolkata would be a fine venue to bring Skålleagues from across the globe together, with a focus on growing the industry in a post-Covid world."

PROCESS IS KING

Skål India's mission of process improvement sets the tone for the New Year, says **Vivek Braganza**, National Director, PR & Communication

Alan Lakein, the famous American author on personal time management, whose works include 'How To Get Control Of Your Time And Your Life', writes: "Planning is bringing the future into the present, so you can do something about it now."

Aiming to put the notion in motion, all the leaders of Skål India – Club Presidents, National Board members, and Skålleagues from across the country – came together last month to review and approve financial matters pertaining to the organisation.

In a hybrid event hosted by Skål International Delhi at the Suryaa Hotel, New Delhi, the objectives were clear and the vision of process improvement even more so. The crisply-organised session discussed and reviewed the Internal Auditors' report and passed the Accounts for 2019-20. Further, the Treasurer's Finance Report and Budget 2020-21 were put forward to members for review and duly passed.

While the details of the meeting are available transparently to Skål members via their Clubs; the event was a landmark in the journey towards great transparency and smoother execution. The focus was to recognise that

'Process is King' and to clearly identify the roles and collective or individual responsibilities of the leadership of the Skål movement in India.

By virtue of this event, a few roles became prominent by their presence and involvement. The Senior Auditor expressed his responsibility to over 1,150 Skålleagues, overseeing financials and administrative observance of Skål India in terms of statutes and by-laws. The Treasurer took over to describe his mission of delivering compliance both in terms of observance thereof, as well as the necessary structure, with the objective of providing a robust financial system for successive Boards to take over. The Secretary, who organised this well-structured meeting in a hybrid environment, with stakeholders based across the country and physically in the Suryaa Hotel as well.

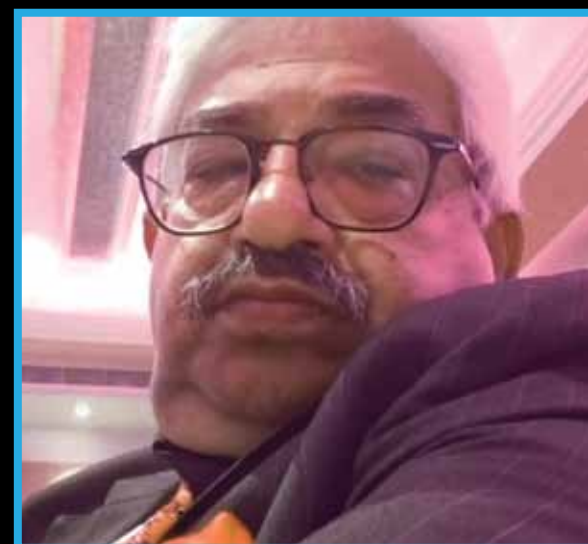
Speaking during the event, Carl Vaz, President Skål India, said: "The vision of this Board is to regroup, recover, regrow, and rejoice to revitalise tourism in India. This would not be possible without a robust financial and administrative system in place, to support our plans. Our members' involvement and participation in this EOGM is an important step towards bringing our vision to life."



Skål Asia President Sk. Sanjay Datta



Skål India President Carl Vaz shares his views



Greesh Bindra, President Skål International Delhi, and host to the EOGM



Skål India National Secretary Krishna Gopalan managing the hybrid event



Skål India Sr. Auditor Burjis Mehta presents his Audit Report and Findings



Skål India Treasurer, Ranjit Vig presents his report

FABRICATED

Now that each of Skål India's 14 Clubs has announced its Flags/Fabrics, it's time to get acquainted with our centuries-old handloom heritage. Ivor Vaz takes you on a dazzling 'Fabric Tour' of India...

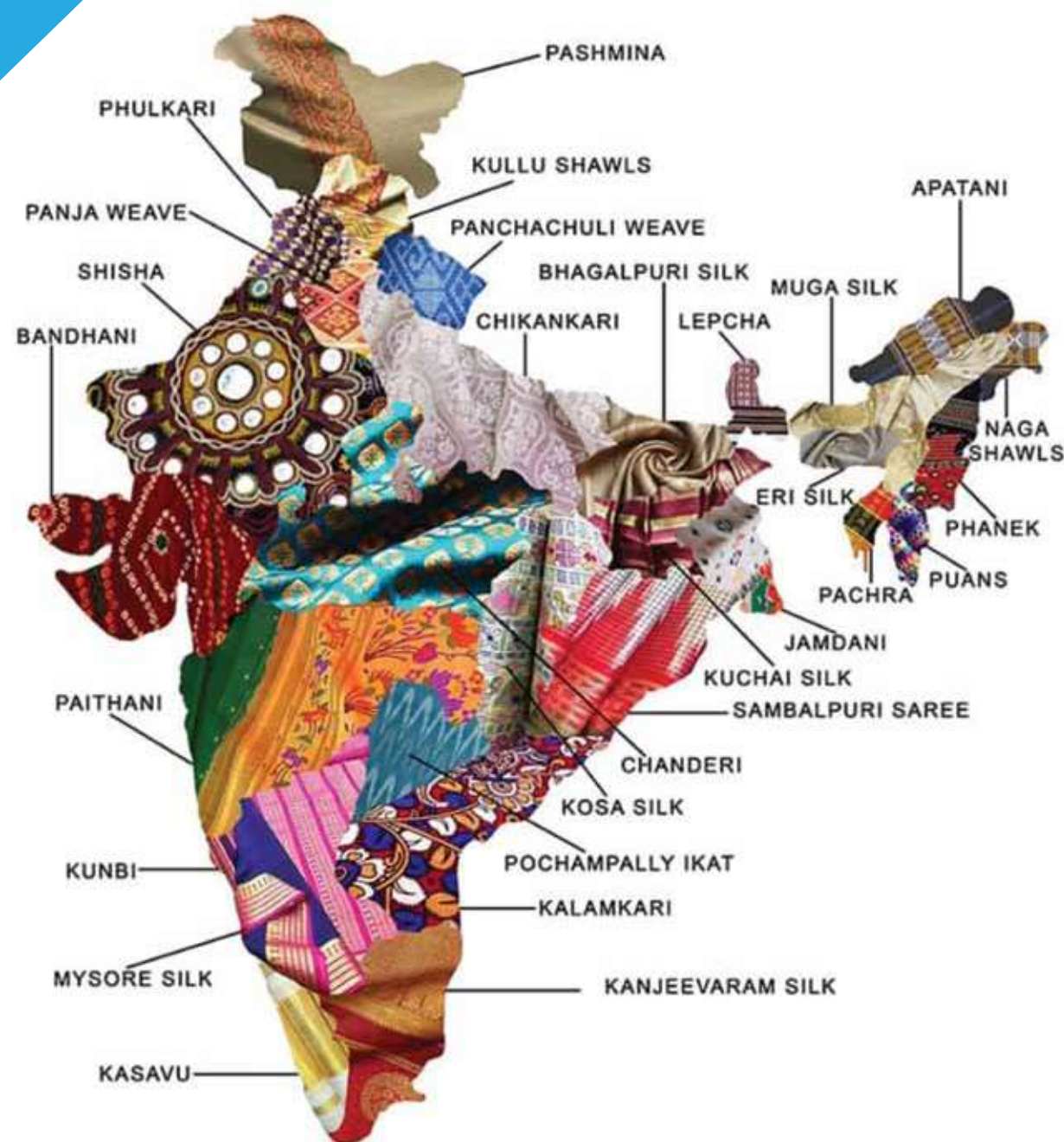
A visitor to India is enthralled by the range of Indian fabrics on display



Sk. Sudipta Deb, Committee Head – Sponsorship, Skål India, resplendent in his classical Bengali attire

India is all about the myriad experiences it presents to every traveller. As one of the most diverse nations on the planet, it has so much to offer, it just might knock you off your feet. It's a land of a hundred languages, faiths, and cultures. From its eclectic spread of cuisines to its quaint customs, traditions, and festivals, each region in India has its own distinct cultural identity. Probably the most emphatic aspect of that diversity is the attire of its people. Did you know that not just the outfits, but even the fabric used to make them are exclusive to each Indian state? From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and from Bhubaneshwar to Bhuj, every region has its own handloom techniques that are used to weave its unique fabrics.

Fabric Map of India



Be it Maharashtra's Paithani, Kashmir's Pashmina, Gujarat's Bandhani or Goa's Kunbi, India is replete with different traditional handlooms. Some are colourful. Some have a deep historical significance. Even so, while relating to the country's culture, they are all eye-catching. Understanding the story behind these fabrics offers an insight into the various regions of India. This is probably why the newly elected Board of Skål International India decided to have fabric flags, wherein each Skål club chose a fabric indigenous to its region.

Says Carl Vaz, Skål India's President: "Our new brand identity recognises the beauty, history, and diversity of India's fabrics and prints. An amalgamation of the distinctive styles of each region we are located in, each club's print is an integral part of the social fabric of Skål India. The imagery can also be extended as we bring in new clubs across India, by recognising their local traditions and artisans. This, of course, also presents a CSR opportunity, which is certainly part of our remit as Skålleagues. Clubs are most welcome – encouraged in fact – to incorporate



The diversity of India's fabrics and prints is astounding

these design elements into their club identity."

From this standpoint alone, it made perfect sense for each Skål club to embark on the 'fabric' journey. With just under 1,200 members across 15 Clubs in 14 cities across the country (the newest being Bhubaneswar, which is in the process of getting its finishing touches), herein was a splendid opportunity to develop not just unity under this umbrella organisation for the travel-tourism-hospitality sector in India, (which is probably still counting the enormity of the losses engendered by the pandemic), but also the diversity that makes each region special.

Carl adds: "The vision is to create a recognisable brand for Skål India – one that is visible when the customer walks

in to buy a flight ticket, checks into a hotel, visits a travel agent, drops by a tourism board booth, or sifts through an industry publication. The best brands are those which are simple to understand, and tell a great story. What better way to grow our movement in India, than with a heartfelt connection to our roots, the social fabric of our clubs – united in spirit, and devoted to spreading the vision of doing business among friends?"

As you scan the following pages, you'll not only learn about the different handloom techniques used around the country, but also the history behind the unique local fabric that each Skål India club has used for its own flag. Rest assured, you'll discover a part of India you've probably never known.

IT'S ALL ABOUT BRAND IDENTITY

Behind the fabric of each Indian State is an interesting history lesson. Listen up...

COVER STORY



State: Maharashtra
Clubs: Bombay, Mumbai South, Pune
Fabric: Paithani

The Paithan town of Aurangabad, Maharashtra, is famous for its Paithani silk saree. A hand-woven saree having vibrant colours and intricate designs, it is considered a valuable possession in every Maharashtrian family. This fabric was used extensively by the royals. Because of its intensive weaving technique, the fabric looks exquisite from both sides. It is still a big part of Maharashtrian culture with its weaving centre in Yeola.

State: Goa
Club: Goa
Fabric: Kunbi



The Kunbi saree is worn by the Kunbi and Gawda tribes, who are the original inhabitants of Goa. The apparel is centuries old and existed even before the arrival of the Portuguese. Although this saree has got its traditional roots and is considered very ethnic, the weave on it is a simple checkered one, differentiating it in the class of geometric designs from the textile designer's point of view. This fabric which is being revived of late has put Goa on the textiles' map.

State: Karnataka
Clubs: Mysuru, Bangalore
Fabric: Mysore Silk



When Tipu Sultan ruled over Mysore, the silk industry witnessed a huge growth. To date, the state is the largest producer of silk. Mysore silk is one of the most popular, finest, and purest forms of silk. Known for its extraordinary sheen and lustre of the fabric, purity of the *zari*, the distinctive drape, a wonderful non-crush quality, and a butter-soft feel, it gives an elegant look to the wearer. The sarees are made out of crepe-de-chine or georgette, with or without gold lace borders.



State: West Bengal
Club: Kolkata
Fabric: Baluchari Fabric

The Baluchari saree originated in West Bengal, and is mainly worn by the women of India and Bangladesh. It is a hand-woven saree using richly dyed silk, with intricate motifs depicting Indian mythology woven onto its large *pallu*. Baluchari takes a week to be woven, and the craftsmen are largely centred in Murshidabad. The designs are mainly from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and are worn as a sign of aristocracy and status. They are indeed connoisseurs' items.

State: Jammu & Kashmir
Club: Srinagar
Fabric: Pashmina



Shawl weaving was one of the most important economic activities of Kashmir till the late 19th century. The Pashmina shawl is a timeless luxury that has always been a symbol of sophistication and class. The word Pashmina has been derived from the word 'Pashm', which literally means soft gold. Introduced in the 14th century in the Valley, Kashmiri Pashmina (or Cashmere Wool) is believed to be the finest of all Pashminas in the world. Original Pashmina, according to grassroot artisans, can be used for over 100 years!

National Capital Region
Club: Delhi
Fabric: Paisley



Paisley is an ornamental design that consists of curved teardrop shapes. It is also known as *buta* or *boteh*, and is believed to have originated in Persia. At first, it was hand-printed or embroidered on fabrics, and you can still find lots of Paisley woven with silver and gold threads on wedding attire in Iran. Traditional and modern at the same time, Paisley fabric has found its way into fashion, architecture, jewellery, interior design, and art. In terms of clothing, this timeless pattern has been seen on men's ties, shirts, dresses, pants, skirts, bandanas and more.

State: Kerala
Clubs: Trivandrum, Kochi
Fabric: Kasavu



In a country full of myriad patterns and bold colours, Kerala's traditional Kasavu saree stands out for its elegance and visual restraint. The white and gold Kasavu saree is famously used by the people of Kerala especially during the celebration of Onam. Kasavu is referred to the gold zari border depicted on the mundu-saree that is made out of 100% unbleached cotton. This saree features kara designs on the bottom and peacock designs on the *pallu*.

State: Telangana
Club: Hyderabad
Fabric: Pochampally Ikat

Pochampally Ikat, is a type of silk that finds its origin in Bhoodan Pochampally, a small town in Telangana. Dubbed as the 'Silk City of India', the town is known for giving the world a fabric that can rival any other production in the country. The silk saree boasts of blending comfort with the usual grandeur meant for silk sarees, to perfection. There are about 5,000 looms in the villages of Pochampally and it has found a place on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites, with its iconic saree weaving clusters of India.



State: Tamil Nadu
Clubs: Chennai, Coimbatore
Fabric: Kanjeevaram Silk



There are many handwoven silks available in India, but the most expensive ones are Kanjeevaram. This popular silk fabric is from Tamil Nadu and is famous for its exquisite fabric and *zari* work. Created by the master-weavers of the Kancheepuram District of Tamil Nadu, each Kanjeevaram silk saree incorporates traditional artisanal techniques. At present, the saree remains one of the popular in India with its rich depictions of gold.



A TALE OF RESILIENCE

The Indian travel-trade community, which is known for its strength and determination, stood up to the unexpected challenges of the virus that played havoc with humanity and human life, says **Hector Dsouza**



Veterans, as well as newcomers, are quick to point out that the last three quarters of 2020 were a total washout for the travel-tourism-hospitality industry – not just in India, but worldwide. Tourism numbers in most parts shrunk by a whopping 80-90% owing to a ban on international travel, closure of hotels & resorts, shutdown on cruising, and anything and everything remotely connected to the word 'travel'.

Covid-19 literally brought the world to a complete halt and had the global population down on its knees; praying for prevention of the rapidly contagious virus as well as seeking a remedy and cure in the form of a vaccine. Sadly, it all took time; and it is here that human ingenuity came into play. When faced with a 'back-to-the-wall' situation, travel & tourism professionals have always stood firm; coming up with face-saving solutions. It was no

different this time, except for the fact that most were staring at uncertainty, not knowing the exact time the revival was likely to begin.

Travel WhatsApp groups that earlier focussed on travel-related information opened their 'chat-box' to include offers from the fraternity that included home-cooked food to wedding gowns to innovative appliances for daily use. A wide range of sanitizers, hand masks, gloves, and PPE kits for sale could be seen on these chats and purchased online. Needless to say, travel entrepreneurs found a new way to market and sell their products. Those tired of cooking, for instance, had new options and choices to choose from. Tickling the palate with delicacies and tempting offers through a tried-and-trusted marketing channel worked wonders. Some also discovered new-found talents and hobbies that were monetarily beneficial.

On a different vertical, passenger airline carriers shifted the focus to the transportation of cargo as demand increased for the movement of goods and products, including perishables. Many airline companies today focus on this business model for sustenance. Secondly, the need for quick delivery has seen a healthy demand and a rise in freight rates. Some forayed into courier services, using the vast network they had already developed over the years.

Many in the trade chose to hone their knowledge skills by participating in several live travel webinars, ranging from destination promotion, the way forward, developing new learning skills to knowledge sessions on a variety of travel-related products and services. Some attended online education courses lasting upwards of a week on diverse subjects like archaeology, map reading, architectural styles, and the

architecture of ancient India. Needless to mention this newly acquired information will hold destination specialists, tour operators, and travel agents in good stead, in time to come. What probably helped the most was learning without the hassles of work pressure and deadlines.

In keeping with the desire to explore and learn, a few among the travel community took advantage of their free time to explore surrounding nature parks and retreats, while organising study tours for a select few interested participants. These common interest groups spread over the country gained tremendously from such experiences. The hardier trekked to nearby forts situated on hilltops while experiencing nature at its (un)viral best!

There is a silver lining in all situations. Covid-19 is no different. Many who chose to realign thought, walk off the beaten track, or simply had to gumption to do something new benefitted the most. Those who succeeded dared to think differently, got used to the idea of living virtually, and used this same implicit model of communication for selling, earning, and learning. True to its nature, the Indian travel-trade community, which is known for its unwavering strength and determination, stood up to the unexpected challenges of an unseen virus that played havoc with humanity and human life.

**The author is a member of Skål International Mumbai South – 732. He is the founder of L'Orient Travels, and India Representative for the State Tourist Board of Southwest Germany. He is also a prolific travel writer whose articles have appeared in various newspapers and magazines.*



Sk. Greesh Bindra
President

Skål International Delhi (125)

A committed entrepreneur with 37 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Greesh Bindra has been associated with independent hotels as well as renowned chain hotels. Not only is his name popular across the industry, but he is also highly regarded among foreign guests who keep returning to the hotel he leads, regardless of their preference for brands. Even so, his collaborative and people-oriented approach, as well as his passion to develop young industry professionals into leaders has earned him the tag of 'People's Person'.

Besides being President of India's oldest Skål Club – Delhi, Greesh is also Committee Head – Hospitality & Govt. Relations at the national level.

Greesh is currently Vice President–Operations with The Suryaa, New Delhi, where he has been since June 2019. His key achievements in this role include overseeing the Hilton-Dushanbe in Tajikistan; and spearheading a new

project of an upcoming luxury resort in Jaipur.

Earlier this year, he took up a contractual assignment with Signum Hotels & Resorts on its Board of Advisors as Chief Development Officer, wherein he is responsible for the development of the brand in India and international markets. He is also a member of The Board Of Advisors at Centriq Inc., a multi-cloud native intelligent process automation, customer experience, and insights platform. Prior to this, he was Regional General Manager (North, West India & Bangladesh) for the InterContinental Hotels Group. For 16 years he worked for IHG with 14 hotels until April 2019.

Greesh recently received the 'Hotelier of the Year' Award at the 15th Annual International Hospitality & Travel Awards (2019) and 'Lifetime Achievement in Hospitality' by The Golden Star Icon Awards (2019).



Sk. Sanjeev Mehra
President

Skål International Kolkata (127)

A highly motivated and ambitious individual, Sanjeev Mehra is the Founder & Director of Aaryan Leisure & Holidays Pvt. Ltd, an IATA accredited company. He has 25 years of success in the tourism industry and has worked as a tour operator and Luxury & MICE travel consultant. He is also a Travel Agent for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship of Canada, and Destination Canada.

Before becoming President of Kolkata, India's second oldest Skål Club, in 2019, he has been a member since 2009, and served as Secretary from 2014 to 2018. He has attended several Skål Congresses, including Skål World Congress in Hyderabad; Skål Asia Congress in Macau, and Bangalore; and Skål World Congress in Kochi, Goa, and Kolkata. At the national level, Sanjeev is currently 1st Vice President of Skål India. Earlier, he was 2nd Vice President (2018-2020). His grand vision, by his own admission, is bringing the World Congress 2023 to India, in Kolkata.

On the professional front, Sanjeev worked with CA TCG Software (P) Ltd from 1999 to 2002 as Head of Travel & Administration. He also worked with Sita World Travel India as Branch Manager from 1990 to 1998. Over his career, he has received several personal awards and citations, besides leading his company and team to 15 award wins during the last 10 years. He has been voted among the top best Travel Agents in India, and Top 50 in Kolkata. Other notable recognitions include Best MICE Consolidator 2014 (East India Travel Award), and Best Company in TTF Award for contribution to tourism.

Sanjeev completed his B.Com from Calcutta University, and has a Post-Graduation Diploma in Business Management from Calcutta University. He is fluent in English, Hindi, Bengali, and Punjabi, and counts reading, travelling and sports among his biggest hobbies.



Sk. Sushil Bhatt
President
Skål International Bombay (144)

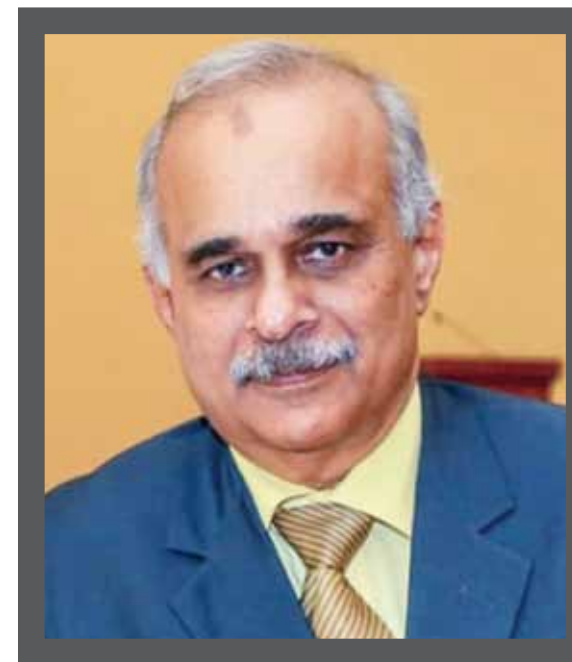
Having first ventured into the travel-tourism business way back in 1969, Sushil Bhatt, the President of Skål International Bombay Club has seen and done it all. With over 50 years of solid experience, he is virtually an institution by himself, and serves as an inspiration to hundreds and thousands of young aspirants in the industry.

His first foray in the business was with Trade Wings Ltd. (1969-1985), where he served a long stint as a Manager. He later moved on to Thomas Cook India as General Manager (1984-2001). In 2004, he joined Forvol International Services, a Destination Management company catering to tourist traffic from Europe, UK, and the US for inbound tourism. In 2005, the company was acquired by Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. and is a 100% subsidiary of the Group today. Sushil is currently the CEO of Forvol.

As an industry veteran, Sushil has played a major role at several prestigious events. These include the World Interpol Conference, the World Poultry Congress, the World Food Programme Conference, the World Immunology Congress, the President of Iceland's visit to India, and most recently the Landwehr Swiss Orchestra's chain of concerts in India.

Sushil functions as Director of Swiss NeWater India (SNWI), a joint venture between the SymbioSwiss of Switzerland and Forbes Marshall Group of India. He also serves as Co-Chairman of the Hospitality and Tourism Committee at the IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He did his schooling at Modern High School, Mumbai, and later completed his graduation at Jai Hind College.



Sk. Seetharam Subramaniam
President
Skål International Chennai (205)

Seetharam Subramaniam, or Subi as he is fondly referred to by friends, is ardently passionate about most things he puts his mind to. Tourism is one of those things. Cricket is the other, which he used to play during his college days, and speaking of which he can't help but gush over India's recent triumph at the 'Gabbatoir', where its so-called 'C' Team thrashed the mighty Aussies, breaching their impregnable fortress in Brisbane (something no team had managed to do in the last three and a half decades), to retain the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

The travel-tourism business, however, is what helped him eke out a career for himself, and a fairly successful one at that. It wasn't something pre-planned though. Subi completed his schooling at Doveton Corrie High School, and later graduated with Economics from Madras Christian College. When he applied for a job (several, really), it was the first one he landed.

With over four decades in the travel industry today, all with one employer – Travel Corporation (India) Ltd., he's seen it all and done it all. His work was mainly involved handling inbound as well as outbound travel from TCI's Chennai Office. He has travelled widely across Europe, UK, and the US.

Subi joined Skål's Chennai Club in 1995 and has held the positions of Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice President, before becoming President in 2019. He played an active role, helping organise the Skål World Congress when it was hosted in Chennai (2003).

This mild-mannered, affable septuagenarian lives in Chennai today with his wife Lena. He has two sons – Sulen, who is a software engineer and lives in Texas; and Suben, who lives in Chennai. Subi is also a proud grandfather. He lists movies, music, and reading among his favourite pastimes.



Sk. James Kodianthara
President
Skål International Kochi (368)

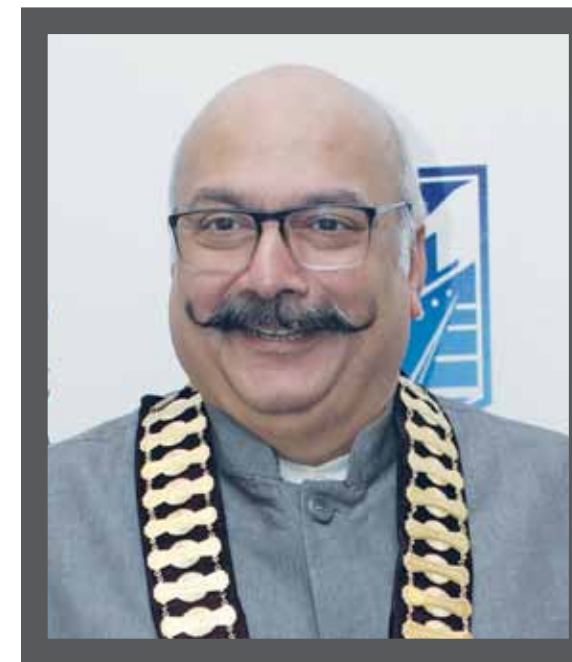
James Kodianthara is the Managing Director of Concord Exotic Voyages (India) Pvt. Ltd., an inbound tour company. He is also the Managing Partner of Concord Tours & Travels, an outbound tour company, and the Managing Director of Lemon Grass Eco-Lodges, Camps & Resorts, an enterprise that promotes eco-tourism.

Established four decades ago, the Concord Group is presently one of the most reputable destination management companies in India for inbound and outbound tourism. Concord Exotic Voyages has in its kitty a National Tourism Award for 'Best Inbound Tour Operator of India'. With offices in Delhi, Goa and Kerala, it has a strong pan-India presence. Each year the company handles around 55,000 tourists in India from all parts of the world.

James graduated from St. Joseph's College, Bangalore. He began his career with Tata Tea Ltd. where he worked as an Assistant Manager until 1993, after which he made his foray into the travel and tourism business.

He hails from Kumarakom, a beautiful backwater paradise in Kerala, and at present is settled in Kochi, where he lives with his wife Sapna James, and three children Sarad Joseph, Kavya Anna, and Mehek Elizabeth.

A veteran Skålleague, James is the current President of the Kochi Club. He was previously Chairman of the Kerala chapter of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI). He is also the Founder, Convener and Secretary of the Kerala Travel Mart Society (KTM). James is a former President of the Kochin Yacht Club.



Sk. Anurag Gupta
President
Skål International Bangalore (407)

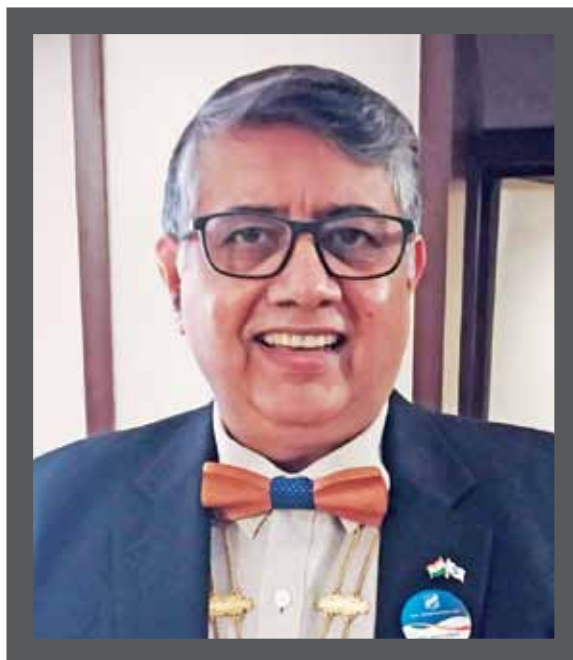
A member of Skål International's Bangalore Chapter since 2003, Anurag Gupta made his mark straightaway, organising an exhibition during the Skål World Congress in Chennai the same year. He became a Committee Member (2012-2014), and later Secretary (2014-2020). During his tenure as Secretary, he was instrumental in bringing the 48th Skål Asia Congress to Bangalore in 2019. Currently, President of Skål International Bangalore (2020-2022), Anurag is also Committee Head – Membership, Skål International India.

Clearly, exhibitions and event organisation is his forte. No surprise then that Anurag is the brainbox behind the India International Travel Exhibition, India's premier B2C & B2B travel & tourism event, which he has been putting together in the country's Tier II and Tier III cities since 2007. IITE provides a great platform for interaction

between HNIs from these B and C towns, and travel service providers, travel boards, and travel agents. The event is organised keeping in mind the consumer's travel and leisure needs. The event also facilitates a launchpad for new entrepreneurs in the field. Participants can reinforce their business links, for they converge with business professionals and entrepreneurs in a hassle-free environment.

Anurag also publishes a monthly travel magazine, Corporate Outbound, since 2011, which is widely circulated in hotels, airlines, tourism boards, and the travel industry.

A postgraduate in Business Management, and a Diploma holder in Systems Management, Anurag loves driving across the length and breadth of India to understand the social fabric of the nation.



Sk. Avijit Chaturvedi
President
Skål International Pune (452)

A veteran of 38 years in the hospitality sector, Avijit Chaturvedi spent a majority of those – 22 to be precise – with the Taj Group (1983-2005), where he first started off as a management trainee. During this period, he served in various positions at Taj Bengal, Sohar Beach Hotel (Oman), Hotel De L'Annapurna (Nepal), and Taj Banjara. His last assignment with the Group was as General Manager at Taj Garden Retreat, Kumarakom, where he was responsible for the upgrade and expansion of the property by adding pool villas and dining options among other things.

Since last year, Avijit is the Founder & Mentor of AARC Consultancy. He is also Co-Founder & Chief Experience Curator of Khanabadosh Journeys.

He spent four years with the Pune Club become President of Skål Pune last

year. Prior to that, he served as Vice President of the Club.

Avijit completed B.Com with Honours from Delhi University. He also has certificate courses from the Hotel Catering International Management Association (HCIMA), London, and CF&BE Michigan.

His wife Rina was also a hospitality professional and a senior hotelier with the Oberoi and Taj Groups. She is now a hospitality educator at IIM Jaipur. His daughter Asmita is a second-generation hotelier and is presently doing her final year step with The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur. Avijit lists theatre among his main interests – he has over ten years of experience back in the 1970s and 1980s. Poetry and photography are his other hobbies. He is also an avid sportsman, with cricket, football, hockey, and chess being his favourite pastimes.



Sk. N.S.N. Mohan
President
Skål International Hyderabad (606)

By his own admission, the legacy of the Kennedys has always intrigued N.S.N. Mohan profoundly. So it's a no-brainer really that when he launched a travel company, he called it Kennedy Holidays. His father and grandfather were both ardent admirers of JFK and the Kennedy clan – and as a boy, he caught the bug when he was only three. The story goes that on his first trip to America when asked what purpose brought him there, Mohan replied that he wanted to place a wreath at the John F. Kennedy Eternal Flame, the Presidential Memorial at the gravesite of John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia!

Cut to September 2012, in Hyderabad. That's when Mohan started Kennedy Holidays, a full-service travel agency catering to the luxury market and offering everything from adventures, exotic cruises, honeymoon packages, group travel, and historical tours. He

has been the company's CEO since its inception. Prior to this, Mohan headed several national and multinational companies in the positions of Head of South/Vice President/Regional Head for over 12 years.

Even before becoming the President of Skål's Hyderabad Club, his vibrancy was never in question. He has attended quite a few Skål World Congresses, including USA (2013), Monaco (2016), and Mombasa, Kenya (2018), besides many Skål Asia Congresses. He has also played a key role in bringing the Skål World Congress to Hyderabad.

Mohan did his schooling at Don Bosco High School, Egmore, Chennai, and graduated in Political Science from Osmania University. He also holds an Advanced Diploma in Business Administration from the Indian Institute of Labour Management, Chennai.



Sk. Ernesto Francisco Dias
President
Skål International Goa (691)

Hailing from the 'Land of Sun, Sea, and Surf', Ernesto Dias could very well have been contented to sit back and enjoy his home state's natural bounties. But from the start, it was his dream to put Goa on the world tourism map. Three and a half decades after he ventured into the travel-tourism industry, Ernest can easily claim to have played a major part in the development of tourism in Goa.

Ernest started his career in Saudi Arabia with ARAMCO, an American company, looking after their travel requirements from 1983 to 1987. Upon his return to Goa, he worked with Menezes Air Travel, looking after their Inbound business (1988-1991). He then joined Sita Travels in 1991 as Senior Executive, and has been with the organisation till date, through its takeovers – first by Kuoni India (2000), and later by Thomas Cook India (2015). He is presently Chief

Operating Officer, Travel Corporation India (TCI), a subsidiary of Thomas Cook India. During his long stint, Ernest has played a major role in handling International Charter flights to Goa and Kerala from the UK, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Russia, Iran, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

Ernest currently serves as Vice President of Travel & Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG), where he has been a Managing Committee member for over 15 years. He is also a Managing Committee member with the Museum of Christian Arts, and has served on the Tourism Committee of Goa Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCI) for the last 10 years.

As President of Skål Goa from 2018, Ernest has helped his Club win the 'Skål Club of the Year Award', a prestigious first in the history of Skål India.



Sk. Raja Gopaal Iyer
President
Skål International Trivandrum (726)

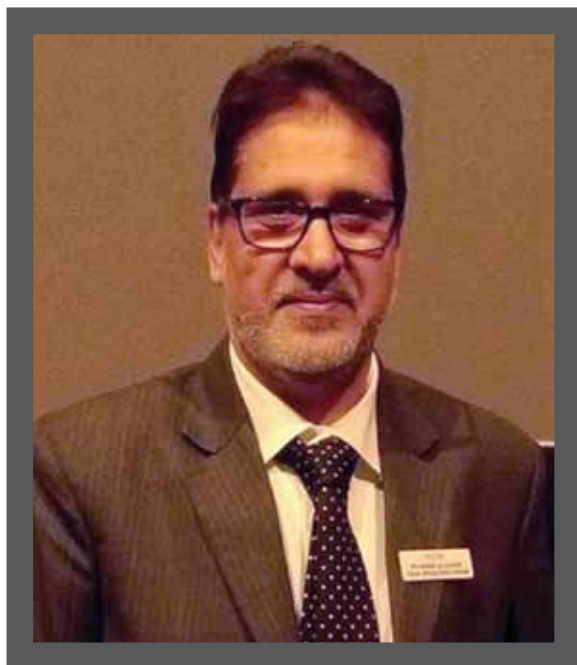
A thorough marketing professional, outstanding media speaker, versatile hospitality consultant, vivid writer, born activist, transforming trainer, and hospitality expert witness...That's how Raja Gopaal Iyer, President of Skål's Trivandrum Club chooses to describe himself.

A well-recognised personality in the hospitality circuit, Raja Gopaal began his career with the Oberoi Group of Hotels. After three years, he moved on to the Taj Group, where he worked for six years. Thereafter, he has had brief stints as General Manager at Green Park (Kottayam), Hotel Sangam (Trichy), and Oriental Towers (Thanjavur). From 1996-1998, he served as Vice President at The Kodai International. During his career, he has designed and developed restaurants, lobbies, and kitchens for many hotels.

Raja Gopaal is currently the CEO of UDS Hotels and Resorts, a multiple-business group with a prominent

national presence, which is focused on building world-class resorts in Kerala and elsewhere in India. Having been with UDS almost since its inception in the 1990s, he is acutely tuned to the opportunities and evolving market dynamics in the hospitality industry. With in-depth research and analysis, he formulates effective strategies that make UDS properties a prime choice for discerning guests.

Among the properties under his charge are Uday Samudra Leisure Beach Hotel (a 5-star wellness resort in Kovalam), Uday Suites Garden Hotel (only 4-star airport hotel in Trivandrum), Uday Sky Kitchen (a Flight Catering unit near Trivandrum International Airport), Uday Backwater Resort (a 5-star property in Alleppey). He is also playing an instrumental role, developing the Hotel Convention Centre, an upcoming Ayurveda hill resort in Vagamon near Thekkady.



Sk. Mohamed Ibrahim Siah
President
Skål International Srinagar (729)

A former President of the Travel Agents Society of Kashmir (TASK), which is the apex tourism body in Jammu & Kashmir, Ibrahim Siah is the Founder President of Skål International India's Srinagar Chapter, which was launched exactly two years ago. The club, which is Skål India's 12th, was formed with just 21 members, consisting of hoteliers, travel & tourism operators, and adventure specialists. At the national level, he is Committee Head – Frontier Markets.

And while Skål may be new to the region, J&K tourism certainly is not. Ibrahim happens to be a third-generation travel operator, whose family was among the first that ventured into the business even before India won its Independence.

From a young age, Ibrahim was passionate about the industry and was keen to continue the great legacy of the travel & tourism business that his

forefathers had started. And so, after completing his education from Church of England School, he jumped into the fray and joined the professional trade of houseboats-running, and began to organise an array of tours to the most remote corners of the Valley.

Being closely connected with the travel trade, which was rapidly growing in J&K, Ibrahim recognised the need to march along with the times. He soon succeeded in creating a fleet of deluxe houseboats, including a six-bedroom beauty, attracting wide recognition for Shahnama Group of Houseboats & Tours.

And while the tourism and hospitality sector faces many challenges today, Ibrahim remains optimistic that if all concerned parties work with a common vision, mission, and framework for its consolidation, tourism in J&K might witness a rerun of its glory days.



Sk. Charles Fabian
President
Skål International Coimbatore (730)

Charles Fabian may well have been a successful cricketer, a model, or an actor, had he chosen to be one. He had to have some serious talent, having played league cricket from his school days right until 1991. And yes, he acted in a handful of commercials too. Yet, hospitality was his clarion calling; and that was the career track he rode.

He began his career as an apprentice in the F&B department and gradually rose to Director, Operations, over a span of 38 years. During this period, he garnered heaps of experience in all F&B divisions, including specialty restaurants; all-day dining outlets; permit rooms; and events & conferences. His first job was at the Taj Coromandel, where he worked for 15 years. He later worked at Savera Hotel (Chennai), The Residency Towers (Chennai), and The Residency Towers (Coimbatore).

Charles' overseas experience includes three years in Muscat, Oman, on deputation while still at Taj Coromandel, where he rendered services for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also worked for four years as F&B Manager at the Palace Inn Hotel, Bahrain.

Prior to becoming President of Skål Coimbatore, he was an active member of Skål International Chennai since 2012, and helped institute the Skål Club of Coimbatore in 2019. At the national level, he is Committee Head – Hospitality & Skill Development.

Charles holds a Diploma in Hotel Management & Catering Technology from Annamalai University, Chennai. Today, he is content to sit back and listen to some relaxing music while reminiscing how nearly four decades in the hospitality industry have quickly flown by.



Sk. Kuldeep Bhartee
President

Skål International Mumbai South (732)

Kuldeep Bhartee is the Vice President – Operations for ITC Hotels since January 2020 and is based out of ITC Green Centre in Gurgaon. Prior to his appointment at the ITC Hotels Headquarters, he was associated with the chain as the Area Manager (South) for ITC Hotels & the General Manager at ITC Grand Chola, Chennai.

He has an exceptional service record as a hotelier in both domestic and international markets with an experience spanning over three decades in the hospitality industry.

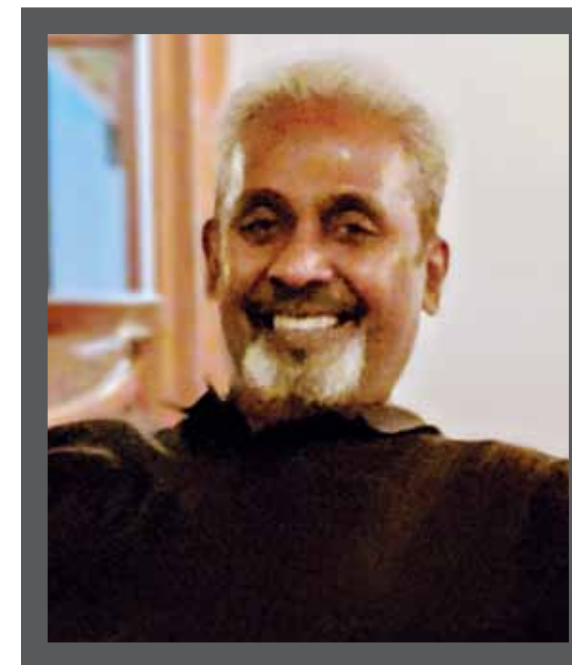
An alumnus of IHM Mumbai, Kuldeep is also a certified Hotel Administrator from American Hotel & Lodging Association – USA and a member of The Institute of Hospitality, UK.

Kuldeep started off his career with

Indian Hotels Company Ltd. with Taj Mahal Palace & Towers and the Taj Intercontinental, Mumbai. He later moved to Muscat, Oman to work with them internationally. After a brief tenure in Egypt and Germany, he returned to India and joined ITC Hotels. He joined ITC Maurya, New Delhi in the year 2000, and his journey with the ITC Hotels started off from here.

Apart from having strong leadership and decision making skills, Kuldeep also excels in various functions such as spearheading large scale operations, coordination of crisis management and leading the marketing and positioning of the brand.

During his leisure time, he likes to travel and explore new places in India and around the world.



Sk. Suresh Charles
President

Skål International Mysuru (736)

Suresh Charles was born into a military family – his grandfather, father, and uncles were all in the army. His father, an officer in the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, was posted to a new city every two years. This meant a change of school, a new third language, and new friends with metronomic regularity.

He completed his schooling at Clarence High School, Bangalore, and went on to do his B.Com from St Joseph's College of Commerce, also in Bangalore.

His first job was with Caesars Restaurant in Bangalore in 1982. In 1983, he joined the Taj Group of Hotels, working in Chennai, Madras, Bengaluru, Bangalore, and finally in Kolkata. In 1993, he established and ran Hotel Naveen in Hubli for the late Dr. R.N. Shetty, who owned the Taj Residency in Bangalore. In 1996, he returned to Kolkata to join a cellphone company (now acquired by Vodafone).

In 2000, Suresh went into business for himself, opening a call centre, Telecare Solutions, which he sold off in 2005. The same year, he relocated to Bangalore, joining the India Builders Corporation, and has been with the Group ever since, and is currently based in Coorg. At present, he is the Managing Director of The Birchwood Retreat, a sanctuary set amidst 400 acres of rain forest in Madikeri.

Suresh has been a Skål member since 2006. He is currently the President of Skål Mysuru.

He is married to fellow Skålleague Shalini Khanna Charles, who is presently the Director of Young Skål India. They have one daughter – Inika. An animal rights activist, he has three dogs – Chelsea, Zoe, and Curious. Suresh lists reading, photography, travel, and cooking among his hobbies.

GOODBYE 2020 HELLO 2021

Since his installation as President of Skål International India, **Sk. Carl Vaz** has continuously been a man on the go. Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Karjat, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune...the list is unending. Through the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, it's been a whirlwind of activities, events, conferences, new launches, and a whole lot more!



▲ Raising the Skål Toast along with Sk. Greesh Bindra, President of Skål Delhi and Sk. Sanjay Datta, President of Skål Asia, at their Christmas Brunch



◀ Signing ceremony of the MoU with IIHM at the National Congress Meeting in Kolkata

▶ Sk. Carl recognizes Sk. Sabrina Nayadu as Honorary President, Skål India



◀ Sk. Carl shares a moment with Sk. Avijit (President, Skål Pune) and Sk. Krishna (IPP Skål Pune & Secretary, Skål India); along with Sk. Suresh, representing Skål Mumbai South



◀ Sk. Carl along with Sk. Anurag, President of Skål Bangalore, along with fellow Skålleagues at their Christmas lunch

▶ Sk. Carl joins Skålleagues at the EOGM held alongside Skål Delhi's annual Christmas event



◀ Sk. Carl and Sk. Anurag, Committee Head - Membership, join Sk. Debasish Mahapatra and future Skålleagues as they prepare to launch Skål Bhubaneswar

▶ Sk. Carl celebrates Christmas along with Skålleagues from Skål Mumbai South



◀ Sk. Carl along with Sk. Subi, President of Skål Chennai at their Christmas Ball



◀ Sk. Carl welcomed by hosts Sk. Sanjeev and Sk. Ajay at the 300 year old Rajbari Bawali Resort



◀ Sk. Venkat Reddy and Sk. Carl Vaz pose for a keepsake with Sk. Sabrina Nayadu (Honorary President, Skål India), Skål Chennai President Sk. Seetharam Subramaniam, and the Skål Chennai Board



◀ The Big Three... Skål India President Carl Vaz, Skål Delhi President Greesh Bindra, and Skål Asia President Sanjay Datta raise a glass to a better 2021

▶ Sk. Carl flanked by (L-R) Sk. Amin Asghar (1st VP, Kolkata), Sk. Anurag (Skål Bangalore President), Skål India Treasurer Ranjit Vig, and First Lady Sonalee Vaz at the National Meet in Kolkata



▶ Sk. Vinayak Laud and Sk. Deepak Ramnani (L) pose for the picture, even as Sk. Carl Vaz, and Sk. Jyot Jhaveri (R) seem to say cheers at the Skål Bombay Christmas party



◀ All is merry and bright in Delhi with Bloody Marys to go!



◀ Skål India President Carl Vaz and Homa Mistry from Skål Delhi pose for a keepsake



◀ Sk. Sabrina Nayadu (Honorary President, Skål India) is flanked by Sk. Carl Vaz and Sk. Venkat Reddy in Chennai



▶ Skål India President Carl Vaz and Skål Bombay's 1st Vice President Sunil Va pose for a keepsake



◀ Skål India President Carl Vaz and Sk. Tekla Maira pose for a picture at the Delhi Christmas Lunch event

▶ Sk. Carl joins the festivities at Skål International Mumbai South



◀ Sk. Carl bringing in his birthday in the presence of his dear Skålleagues in Kolkata and from across India

HOPE FLOATS

EDITOR'S NOTE



Allow me to begin my address by wishing all my Skålleagues across the country a Happy New Year. Even as we ring in 2021, let's pause and look back at a rollercoaster of a year. 2020, as you may recall, began with plenty of promise and hope. The economy was booming, and funding for entrepreneurs was at an all-time high. Then came the pandemic which brought along massive turmoil, wherein our careers, families, friendships, emotions, networks, and, in fact, our entire lives were upended in ways no one could have envisaged nor predicted.

Admittedly, 2020 has been quite a difficult year for most people, especially those in our industry. With country borders sealed, cities at a standstill, and flights grounded, the travel & tourism business was brought down on its knees worldwide. Covid-19 did not only wreck our health and sanity but also left quite a lasting impact on most of our lives – one that will continue to affect our lives even when this nightmare is finally over. Yet, our indomitable human spirit tells us to hold on to hope and persevere for a brighter and better tomorrow. 2021

has a lot of people's hope riding on it, and the start of a new decade has never seemed more promising.

While Europe and the US continue to grapple with the pandemic in the New Year, India looks relatively better placed with the number of cases and fatalities on the decline and recoveries on the rise. At the time of writing, India's active caseload has fallen below the 2-lakh mark after nearly 7 months and comprises just 1.86% of the total infections – a significant achievement in India's Covid-19 trajectory.

Most world leaders have openly exuded confidence that 2021 will be the year of turnaround. From our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to Russian President Vladimir Putin, to UK PM Boris Johnson, to the newly sworn-in US President Joe Biden, everyone is optimistic about global recovery now that the Covid-19 vaccine has finally arrived.

The anticipation for better times is contagious. 2021 will give us the opportunity to reboot and start afresh and work towards rebuilding our industry in a post-pandemic world, while constantly seeking to better ourselves in order to avoid such horrific affliction again.

Let me finish by quoting the words of a famous poet: "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past." I'm no philosopher, but my message to you is simple. The New Year lies ahead of you. Wipe last year's slate clean and gear up to write a new chapter in your life.

Ivor Vaz

Author, Historian, Journalist

Editor – KOTIN

Skål International India

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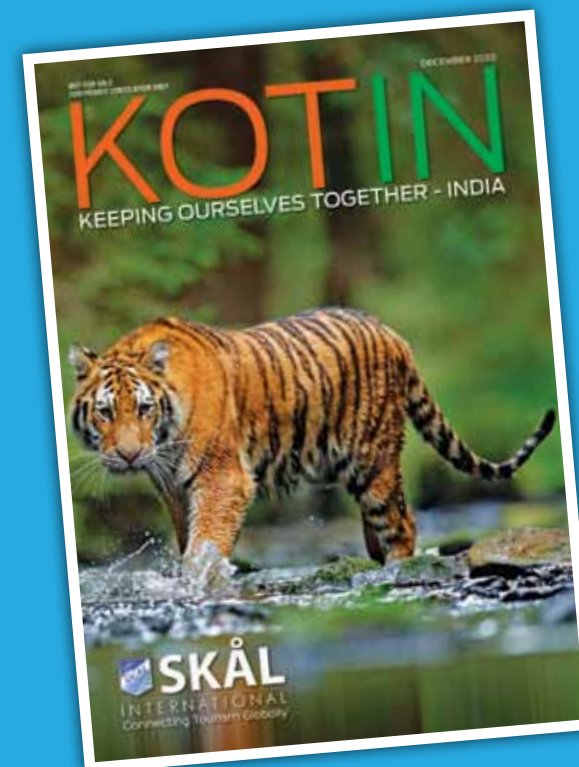
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