

STARTUPSATURDAY

Weaving the art of crafting smart travel

ROOT MAPPING Inspired by the eco-friendly lifestyle and successful business of the Amish community in the US, city-based techie Radhika Naware quit job to launch her travel company that aims at uplifting cottage industries in the country

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PUNE: When Radhika Naware, the founder of Treasured Holidays, was vacationing in the US, she visited the Amish community where she saw their lifestyle was the exact opposite of an average American's. They follow a very eco friendly lifestyle and made a living by selling their produce. This visit led to an idea that later became Treasured Holidays, a niche travel company that offers designer craft and textile trails across India.

PREPARING THE DATABASE IS EVERYTHING
Naware was working with an IT company when she decided to quit her job. After extensive research and gathering information about the art and craft sectors of various states in India, she began travelling in order to study the places and visit the craftsmen and their homes. "Initially these craftsmen were wary of me. After all they did not know whether I would help them or would steal their designs, art. Building relationships took time and several visits." Preparing a database was one thing. The next was devising the itinerary, planning a trip.

MULTIPLE BRAINS STORMING
Says Naware, "I told people I wanted to start a niche travel company and I received terrific advice and help. Doreen D'sa a previous colleague who started EcoTours company guided me on how to set up an itinerary, the pricing. Nandita Khare a marketing expert helped me with social media marketing." Help also came from DeAsra who showed her how to write a business plan. On Sept 27, 2016, Naware launched her company, Treasured Holidays. "I do not take more than 10 people on a trip. The artisans live in small homes. How would 30 people be able to see and learn from say a bagru printer or a khunn weaver? It would not be feasible."

But does this mean that travellers only see the arts and crafts, people and villages and miss out on the regular tourist spots? "No,



Radhika Naware (third from left), founder of Treasured Holidays, a niche travel company that offers designer craft and textile trails across India, with her clients on a coracle (a boat made of wickerwork, propelled with a paddle) ride, in Hampi during one of the trails.

OUR TRIPS HELPED GENERATE BUSINESS FOR A PART-TIME WOMAN WEAVER OF ILKAL SARIS TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT SHE NOW HAS ROPED IN HER TWO BROTHERS TO SERVE THE DEMAND

we also show them around the place. So in Hampi you will not only see the khunn weavers, their work and homes but also the Unesco sites. In Himachal Pradesh you will drive through apple orchards and witness silver river streams. The trip though focused on the arts, also takes the tourists around typical spots.

FUNDING
Naware does not wish to reveal the quantum of her funds. But

she bootstrapped all the way. "I want to grow organically. When I started my first tour to Kutch Gujarat, even though I had just five people, I still went ahead. It took me a year to hit break even. So far I have taken 19 trips in the past two years since I launched my travel company." More funds? "Well yes but I don't want to get a venture capital or angel investor. Currently I am working on my website. I think maybe after two to five years I may think of getting an investor. As of now it's okay."

In the last one year Radhika has had a turnover of ₹20 lakh. Up until this financial year she was in the red. "My artisans and the boutique owners who come on my trips make more money than I. But that's ok, I'm happy the artisans are doing good business." Her trails cost from ₹8,800 to ₹32,000.

RIPPLE EFFECT
In Karnataka, Naware's trails

helped a woman weaver of Ilkal saris get back into weaving full time. "She used to work as a weaver part time as she was not getting enough orders. But our trips helped generate business for her to such an extent that she now has roped in her two brothers to serve the demand. This is deeply gratifying for me."

FB AND WORD-OF-MOUTH (SAME DIFFERENCE)
As of now sales come from word-of-mouth and her Facebook page. She aims to develop her online presence through her website. "But I don't want to increase the number of people I take on a trail. The artisans will not be able to manage it. I may do more trails to the same place, but keep the number at 10."

Naware's business model takes into consideration, the artisans work and families. It takes into account people's carbon footprint. And carefully

understands that the business comes with limitations. "We encourage our travellers to carry bottles that can be filled with water whilst on a trip. Buying mineral water is then redundant."

"What gives me the greatest pleasure is to see our artisans' business grow. To see a dying craft revived. To know that my trips to their homes help not just them but make more and more people understand the role arts and crafts play in our lives. That is my greatest joy."

That it earns money is an added joy. Treasure Trails was awarded the champion entrepreneur award by DeAsra and has been long listed for Indian responsible tourism award 2019. So though Naware is the only person in charge of the operation, she has helped generate income for the 50 artisan families that now do good business on account of her Treasured Holidays.

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RADHIKA NAWARE, founder of Treasured Holidays

TEXTILE TRAILS

Treasured Holidays offers designer craft and textile trails across India. The trails are currently organised in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Rajasthan. They organise a total of eight trails in a year with a group of eight to 10 members each. They cover about 52 artisans across these eight states

HAPPENING TODAY

WHEN: Saturday, November 3
WHERE: MCCIA trade tower, fifth floor
WHAT: Railways & Metro: Transforming India's transport sector
For anyone looking to know of the tremendous business prospects in the railways and Metro sector in India. Organised by MCCIA, Pune
TIME: 10 am to 6 pm
* Prior registration required

STARTUP UPPER

Kesar-flavoured protein shake for the win

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PUNE: Samit Mehta of Six Pack nutrition, a protein drink manufacturer, had a serious problem when he set up his company a decade ago. He had no USP. Protein supplements are easily available in India. Mehta refers to US-manufactured protein powders such as the whey isolate - where you get over 90% protein; or the whey protein concentrates - where protein ranges from 80 to 35%.

"These powders are manufactured in the US," he says. Six Pack's market disrupter was going about taste. Yes, protein powders with kesar kulfi and masala doodh flavours is what gave Mehta's business just enough bulk to so some heavy lifting in the sales department.

Mehta says he knew early on that he would provide the best isolate protein powder to his clients. "Indians prefer a certain kind of taste.

Imported powders come in basic flavours like vanilla and chocolate, but I developed kesar kulfi and masala doodh flavours which I then added to the protein to suit Indian tastes.

I also put up a response programme where people could post their queries on our website which was answered by a nutritionist. This helped clear myths surrounding whey

powder," says Mehta. Mehta's big other claim is: "Ours is a natural product derived by separating whey from milk after curdling and spray drying it.

Since it is natural it does not harm your body." The question of cost remained.

Mehta managed to get fixed-rate purchase contracts with his suppliers in the West.

"Part of the major cost is the fluctuations in price. I managed to convince my suppliers to give me a fixed rate, for a fixed term.

That gives me control over fluctuations."

Surely these are short-term measures? "Yes. While we do aim to extend our supply contracts it is important that our customers accept our quality and brand.

The industry is price elastic, people still buy imported whey that can be 30% to 45% higher priced.

However, despite price fluctuations I have not changed the price of my product. I have absorbed the rate hikes."

While these short-term measures work, Mehta is aiming for greater acceptability of his brand.

The future plan - a deep dive with a ₹70 crore investment in machinery that will allow him to produce the whey protein isolate in India.

New app will track movements of forest officials in real time

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MUMBAI: To counter issues related to the protection of forests, a mobile application to track real-time movement of their officers across various forests in the state.

While the app - AsTra (Asset Tracker) - was launched by the state forest minister last month, the details were released on Thursday at the forest department's head office in Nagpur.

The technology will not only enable monitoring of foot patrolling, but also help capture details of problems including illicit felling of trees, grazing, poaching, man-animal conflict, forest fires, and encroachments. The app also collates resources such as forest rest houses, office buildings, forest nurseries and forest tanks that are available using satellite imagery.

"This is the first such application in a Commonwealth nation to monitor reserved and protected forests through real-time forest governance," said P Srivastava, additional principal chief

THE APP WILL HELP MONITOR ISSUES SUCH AS FELLING OF TREES, GRAZING AND POACHING

conservator of forest, state forest department. "Officials can mark problems on the map or photographs can be uploaded, and corrective action can be taken in a speedy manner," said Srivastava.

The app will also allow the department to track and safeguard forest areas that are inaccessible by foot. "The information is stored even when the cell phone is not in connectivity. Once user enters a zone of connectivity, saved information gets uploaded on the server and it can be viewed by authorised users," said Srivastava.

Environmentalists welcomed the move. "The staff can no longer make claims about a particular area without visiting it. However, this is a new technology and challenges will unfold as the trials go on," said Stalin D, director, Vana-shakti, an environment group.

Rights panel will be fully functional in next 6 months, state govt tells HC

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MUMBAI: The state government on Thursday assured the Bombay high court (HC) that Maharashtra state human rights commission (MSHRC) would start working in full strength within six months. The division bench of justices BR Gavai and MS Karnik was hearing a writ petition filed by Surendra Kaware.

According to the petition, vacancy of the posts of chairman, secretary, special inspector general of police, inspector general of police and four other members had led to a backlog of cases. As of 2017, there were 4,500 pending cases. The petition pointed out the need to increase the sanctioned posts, in light of the guidelines laid down by the United Nations human rights panel. Responding to the plea, advocate general Ashutosh Kumbhakoni said the vacant posts would be filled within six months and additional posts would be created in eight weeks.

KALYAN WELL DROWNINGS

'Firemen were not wearing masks'

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KALYAN: The two firemen who drowned in a well near Chakki Naka in Kalyan (East) on Thursday while trying to save three others trapped inside, were not wearing masks as they did not know the water was toxic. Moreover, usually, in the case of well-rescue operations, firemen are not required to wear masks, said Sudhakar Kulkarni, fire officer, Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC).

The incident took place on Thursday when sanitation worker Kamlesh Yadav, 35, went to clean the well belonging to Rahul Goswami, 32, at Chakki Naka. When Yadav did not return, Rahul jumped in to rescue him. Seeing him, his father, Gunwant Goswami, 56, also jumped. Later, the two firemen, Anant Shelar, 48, and Pramod Waghchoure, 44, also jumped in to rescue the three. They got trapped and died. Although it is suspected that the five men died owing to toxic gas, the firemen were not wearing masks as the locals had told the fire brigade that the men were trapped inside owing to elec-



A policeman with liquid samples from the drainage line and the well in Kalyan. (Right) Four of the five people who drowned in the well on Thursday.



(Right) Four of the five people who drowned in the well on Thursday.

tric current. The power supply was cut off, when the firemen entered the well. "The firemen are well-versed with rescue operation in water but we were not aware the water is toxic. They did not wear mask as usually during rescue operations inside wells, masks are not required," said Kulkarni. "Shelar and Waghchoure were always ready to rush to the spot. They loved their jobs. The department and their families are in shock," he said.

Kin blame Kalyan civic body

KALYAN: On Thursday, the Goswami family and their relatives was inconsolable after two members drowned in a well near Chakki Naka. They stood at the entrance of the temple near the well and watched on as firemen pulled Rahul Goswami, 32 and his father, Gunwant Goswami, 56, out.

According to the family, the

failure of the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) to plug a leak in the drainage system led to the contamination of the well water, the toxic fumes from which was suspected to have killed five people.

A close friend to the father and son, Ashok Saroj, 35, said "The Goswamis has lived in the same house for more than 50 years.

They had complained about the deteriorating quality of the water since the past three years."

A senior officer from KDMC said, "If the locals have complained we will investigate why it wasn't looked into. We will also repair the drainage lines at the earliest and if the contractor is found guilty of shoddy work, action will be taken."

PANSARE KILLING

Examine arms link to Nalasopara, SIT

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MUMBAI: The special investigating team (SIT) probing rationalist Govind Pansare's murder recently approached the special court under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, to examine the weapons seized by the anti-terrorism squad (ATS) in the Nalasopara arms haul case.

The SIT moved an application earlier this week, claiming they needed to check the weapons and if it has any connection to the murder. The court is scheduled to hear the plea in the coming days, once they receive a reply from the ATS.

Pansare was shot dead on February 16, 2015, at 9.25am when he and his wife, Umadevi, were taking a walk in Kolhapur.

movie review

Lavishly mounted but disappointingly dull

ABROAD SPECTRUM



RASHID IRANI

THE NUTCRACKER AND THE FOUR REALMS
Direction: Lasse Hallstrom and Joe Johnston
Actors: Mackenzie Foy, Keira Knightley
Rating: ★★

The Nutcracker... is a lavishly mounted but disappointingly dull affair. It's a live-action 3D version of a short story by the German fabulist

ETA Hoffman, also the source of the eternally well-loved two-act ballet scored by Tchaikovsky.

Here, two veteran directors Lasse Hallstrom and visual-effects wizard Joe Johnston raise expectations, but are perhaps let down by the sluggish, pedestrian script by first-timer Ashleigh Powell.

After a somewhat long-winded opening sequence set in London on Christmas Eve, the viewer is transported along with the teenage protagonist (fresh-faced Mackenzie Foy) to magical parallel worlds sprawling with tin soldiers, rodents and all manner of mechanical contraptions.

Joining forces with the titular soldier (Jayden Fowora-Knight), the sprightly heroine

strives to bring peace to four warring factions.

The costumes and production design are gorgeous. The pomp and pageantry of the fantastical alternate realms are eye-catching. Also notable are two interludes in which the ballerina Misty Copeland swirls to Tchaikovsky's music.

In the acting department, Keira Knightley exudes charisma as the deceitfully sweet Sugar Plum Fairy. Helen Mirren (the dictatorial Mother Ginger) and Morgan Freeman (the avuncular godfather) are underutilised. The overall effect is far from wondrous. Kids are more than likely to relate to this fanciful fantasy. Others are advised to read the original short story instead.



A live-action 3D version of a short story by the German fabulist ETA Hoffman.