

#MADAME ANNIE MASCARENE

A Woman Of Substance

A Trailblazer in India's Freedom Struggle!



India's long and arduous struggle for independence witnessed the contributions of countless men and women from diverse backgrounds. Among them, Madame Annie Mascarene stands out as a courageous and eloquent leader from Travancore (modern-day Kerala). A pioneering figure in both the freedom movement and post-independence politics, she played a vital role in mobilizing public opinion against British colonial rule and became one of the first women elected to the Indian Parliament.

Early Life and Education

Annie Mascarene was born in 1902 in Trivandrum (Thiruvananthapuram), Travancore. Coming from a Latin Catholic family, she was highly educated for a woman of her time. She obtained her Master's degree in History from Madras University and later studied law in Trivandrum. Her academic excellence and strong oratory skills soon brought her into the world of politics, where she would go on to become one of the earliest and most prominent women leaders from South India.

Entry into the Freedom Movement

Inspired by the nationalist wave sweeping the country, Mascarene joined the Indian National Congress and became actively involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement and other campaigns initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. She protested against British policies, led mass

movements, and was arrested several times for her participation in political agitations.

She also worked for women's rights and political education, believing that independence for India must go hand in hand with social reform and women's empowerment.

Role in Travancore and the Quit India Movement

Travancore, though a princely state under British suzerainty, became a significant center of political unrest in the 1930s and 1940s. Annie Mascarene played a key role in organizing protests against the autocratic rule of the Travancore monarchy, particularly during the rule of Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer.

During the Quit India Movement (1942), she continued her activism by organizing protests in Travancore, even though the movement was suppressed with great violence. She was imprisoned and brutally treated for her defiance.

Contribution in Post-Independence India

After India's independence in 1947, Madame Annie Mascarene's political journey didn't end. In 1949, she became one of the first women to be elected to the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament) from Trivandrum, Kerala, as an independent candidate backed by the Congress. In the Constituent Assembly of India, she played a significant role in shaping the Indian Constitution and advocated for civil liberties, gender equality, and representative democracy.

Legacy

Though not as widely remembered today as some of her contemporaries, Madame Annie Mascarene holds an important place in Indian history as:

- One of the first women freedom fighters from Kerala.
 - A fierce advocate for democracy in princely states like Travancore.
 - A pioneer among women parliamentarians in independent India.
 - A symbol of the intersection of feminism and nationalism.
- Several institutions and

public spaces in Kerala honour her legacy, and her life continues to inspire women entering public service and politics.

Madame Annie Mascarene was much more than a freedom fighter; she was a visionary leader, a legal scholar, and a champion of justice. Her role in India's independence movement and the early years of the Republic showcases the power of women's leadership in shaping a nation's destiny. Her contributions remain a beacon for those who believe in truth, equality, and fearless service to the nation.

India Won't Let The World Starve Of Chocolate



In the rolling hills of Karnataka, Ravi walks among trees that may hold the key to saving the world's chocolate supply. The third-generation cacao farmer surveys pods hanging like golden lanterns from branches that have weathered fifty years of monsoons and droughts.



Jal Khambata

Cocoa prices are skyrocketing. West Africa's plantations are collapsing under climate stress. And Big Chocolate is in crisis mode. Meanwhile, Indian farmers in Karnataka and Kerala are nonchalantly thriving.

ing and growing cacao, shaded by coconut trees, bred for 40°C heat, and processed from bean to chocolate bar. As the old supply chains crumble, India may just have a shot at reshaping the future of world chocolate. But will it rise to the moment? Or will the outdated policies and underinvestment melt the opportunity away?

As climate change devastates West Africa's cocoa industry, India is quietly growing stronger. But systemic neglect, underinvestment, and outdated policies risk squandering a once-in-a-century opportunity.

nity to reshape global chocolate industry. In the rolling hills of Karnataka, Ravi walks among trees that may hold the key to saving the world's chocolate supply. The third-generation cacao farmer surveys pods hanging like golden lanterns from branches that have weathered fifty years of monsoons and droughts. What he does not yet fully grasp is that his family's modest plantation represents something far more significant than a livelihood. It embodies India's unexpected emergence as chocolate's potential saviour.

Halfway across the world, the foundations of global chocolate production are crumbling. West Africa, the continent that has supplied 70% of the world's cocoa for decades, faces an unprecedented crisis that threatens to reshape not just the chocolate industry, but the very accessibility of one of humanity's most beloved treats. Yet, beneath this heartwarming tableau lies a graver, bloodier reality.

The Chocolate Emergency

The numbers tell a story of mounting catastrophe. Global cocoa production declined by 13% in the 2023-24 season to 4.368 million tons, while demand remained steady, creating a supply deficit of 494,000 tons, the largest shortfall in more than 60 years.

Global cocoa prices have erupted from \$2,500 per metric ton to peaks exceeding \$12,900 in December 2024, a staggering increase that has sent shockwaves through boardrooms from Hershey to Nestlé. At certain points, cocoa became more valuable per kilogram than precious metals, with price increases temporarily exceeding even NVIDIA's remarkable stock performance.

The production collapse was most severe in the world's two

largest producers. Ghana's cocoa production plummeted to only 531,000 tons in the 2023-24 season, down from its usual average of around 800,000 tons, marking the worst-performing session in 15 years. Ivory Coast's production fell by approximately 20% to about 1.8 million tons, significantly below its historical average of 2.25 million tons annually.

Combined, these two nations, which together produce 60% of global cocoa, lost more cocoa output than the entire global shortage. The crisis has been compounded by the cocoa-to-stocks ratio falling to dangerous levels, suggesting global reserves of less than two months of consumption when markets typically require a three-to-four-month buffer for price stability.



#WORLD SHIFTS

India's Unexpected Awakening

The transformation did not happen overnight. For decades, Indian farmers like Ravi have quietly cultivated cacao in the shadows of more prominent crops, their efforts barely registering on global commodity exchanges. But as West Africa's production falters, India's cacao cultivation area expands with the urgency of a nation that has spotted opportunity in crisis.

The economic signals have been impossible to ignore. In Indian markets, cocoa prices have surged from 25 per kilogram to 1,000, a staggering 4,000% increase that has converted skeptical farmers into enthusiastic adopters almost overnight.

While prices have since stabilised to around 550 per kilogram by September 2024, this still represents a threefold increase from previous years, ensuring continued farmer interest. What was once considered a niche crop suitable only for specialty farms has suddenly become one of agriculture's most lucrative pursuits.

The scale of India's transfor-

mation becomes clearer in recent production figures. India's cocoa bean production reached 27,600 tons in 2024, rising significantly from 19,000 tons in 2017, representing a compound annual growth rate of 4.8%.

Andhra Pradesh leads this quiet revolution with 10,983 metric tons of annual production, followed closely by Kerala with 9,647 metric tons. Over 110,000 hectares of land were dedicated to cocoa plantation by 2024, indicating the rapid expansion of cultivation areas.

These may seem modest figures compared to Ivory Coast's traditional dominance, but they represent something more significant: proof of concept for a different model of chocolate production entirely.

Where West Africa now suffers, India thrives. The subcontinent's temperatures, ranging from 24°C to 34°C, fall within the optimal range for cacao cultivation, a range that West Africa's changing climate increasingly struggles to maintain. While Ghanaian farmers watch their trees wilt under unprecedented heat, Indian farmers work in

conditions that their crops find comfortable.

But temperature alone does not explain India's advantage. The secret lies in an ancient agricultural wisdom that modern monoculture has forgotten: diversity creates resilience.

Professor Minimol J.S. explains the revolutionary approach: "Our multi-cropping system allows cacao to thrive in the shade of coconut and areca nut trees. This isn't just about space efficiency. It's about creating microclimates that protect cacao from temperature extremes while providing farmers with multiple income streams."

This agroforestry model produces results that would seem impossible to West African farmers accustomed to vast monoculture plantations. Indian cacao trees yield between 2.5 to 5 kilograms annually, which is ten to twenty times the global average of 0.25 kilograms per tree.

The implications of such productivity are staggering: India can produce more chocolate with fewer trees, less land, and greater environmental sustainability.

Scientific Innovation at Scale

In research laboratories across Kerala and Karnataka, scientists work with the intensity of those who understand they are racing against time. Kerala Agriculture University, in collaboration with the University of Reed in the UK, has collected over 600 germ-plasm from all over the world to develop heat-resistant cacao varieties, each designed to withstand the climate realities that have devastated traditional growing regions.

"For instance, our cacao hybrids can survive in areas like Andhra Pradesh where the temperature can become relatively high and also in areas of the Northeast such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram etc., where the temperature is low. This is thanks to the wide genetic base imparted in the hybrid," Professor Minimol states.

The research extends beyond mere survival. Indian scientists focus on creating varieties that can thrive for 100 years under the multi-crop system, compared to the 25-year lifespan typical of monoculture plantations. This longevity represents not just economic advantage but environmental stewardship on a scale that traditional chocolate production has never achieved.

"We have developed double-crossed hybrids. They are high-yielders with a single bean weighing more than one gram, at par with international standards. These are not merely incremental improvements. They are disease-resistant and drought-tolerant plants emerging from Indian research that can survive temperatures up to 40°C. Conditions that would kill conventional cacao trees. More remarkably, they maintain productivity levels that exceed global averages even under stress conditions," Professor Minimol reveals.



"The highest climatic potential is in Kerala, the quality of the beans is excellent here. However, the main problem is that the availability of land is limited here. Parts of Karnataka and the Godavari belt of Andhra Pradesh are great for cultivation. While land is plenty in Andhra, the issue is that in the summers, the temperature can reach up to 48-50 degrees. However, 99% of Andhra cultivation is from our own hybrid and they are able to withstand the high temperature. There is a slight decrease in the quality of the beans produced during summers due to less fat content," she admits.

#STATESMANSHIP

Tharoor on Trump

"Lacking Gravitas": Shashi Tharoor's Sharp Rebuke of Trump's Intellectual Credentials

At a high-level diplomatic gathering in New York, Indian parliamentarian and former UN diplomat Dr. Shashi Tharoor offered a cutting yet

composed critique of former U.S. President Donald Trump, calling into question his statesmanship, intellectual depth, and diplomatic stature.

Speaking at a panel on 'The Future of Global Leadership,' Tharoor did not mince words. In a moment that sparked headlines across Indian and Western media, he remarked: "There was a certain political heft, statesman-like gravitas, and intellectual quality that I find woefully lacking in this gentleman."

While he refrained from naming Trump directly at first, the context and subsequent references made it unmistakably clear who he was referring to.



A Diplomat's Eye for Leadership

Shashi Tharoor, known for his erudition and diplomatic experience as India's former representative to the United Nations, has had personal interactions with several U.S. Presidents over the years, from George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton to George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

"I've had the opportunity to meet and observe presidents across the political spectrum," he said. "Each brought

their own strengths - Bush Sr.'s pragmatism, Clinton's charisma, W's instinct, and Obama's eloquence and vision. Whether or not one agreed with them, they all carried a certain class and distinction."

By contrast, he implied, Trump lacked not just the intellectual rigor associated with high office but also the temperament and depth expected of a world leader.

A Subtle Yet Scathing Rebuke

While the comment was delivered with typical Tharoorian finesse, polished, indirect, and clothed in diplomatic vocabulary, it was no less scathing. For a public figure who has long advocated for 'cerebral diplomacy' and 'substantive engagement,' Tharoor's remarks reflect frustration with what he per-

Global Reaction and Domestic Reception



Why the Critique Matters

Tharoor's remarks gain particular significance given his background. A best-selling author and intellectual in his own right, Tharoor has frequently written about the need for 'moral authority and intellectual clarity' in global governance, qualities he believes are essential in navigating today's complex international

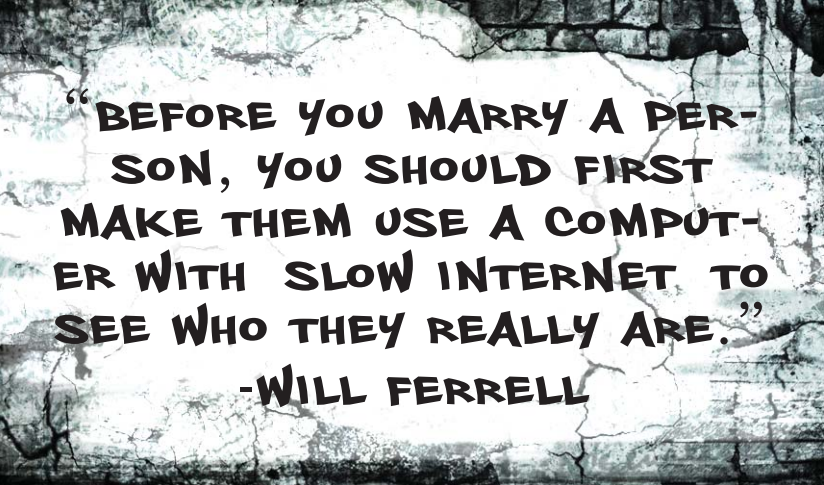
order. In 2019, he was among the Indian leaders who publicly criticized Trump's misleading claims about mediating the Kashmir conflict, calling them 'irresponsible and uninformed.' His latest comments appear to be an extension of that same concern: that impulsive leadership can cause lasting diplomatic harm.



While U.S. media largely overlooked the comment, Indian political and academic circles reacted swiftly. Some praised Tharoor for 'calling a spade a spade,' while others criticized him for undermining India's strategic relationship with the U.S. In a time when Trump is once again a central figure in American politics, Tharoor's remarks add a layer of intellectual dissent to the global conversation.

Shashi Tharoor's critique of Donald Trump is more than just a personal opinion, it is a statement about what leadership should aspire to be. In an age of performative politics and viral soundbites, Tharoor's emphasis on gravitas, intellect, and diplomacy offers a throwback to an older, and perhaps now endangered, ideal of statesmanship.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

