



Audiobook Month

Who doesn't love cosying down with a good book now and then? It's a great way to pass the time and can take you on wonderful adventures in other worlds, or recount amazing lives of people in this one. Even better, there's little that helps one drift off to sleep as easy as a good book. The problem is, you can't read while you're driving, or when it's completely dark, can you? What if you could? Audiobook Month celebrates the invention that made this all possible! The audiobook!

#HISTORY

The Ottoman Empire

Constantinople was renamed Istanbul and it became the seat of a new rising empire.



For centuries empires were the dominant form of political organisation. In the west there is some degree of familiarity with the British, French and German empires, and the empires of Spain and Portugal. Not to mention the Romans or the Greeks. But one empire that sometimes gets forgotten, outside Turkey, is the Ottoman.

On the 100th anniversary of its end, we look at five things you need to know about it.

Duration

The Ottoman Empire lasted almost 600 years, from the early 1300s until the aftermath of the First World War. The word Ottoman derives from the Arabic version of Osman - the name of its first ruler. The empire had a humble beginning as a provincial principality in Anatolia (now part of Turkey).

What transformed it into a rising and sizeable force in world politics was the gradual expansion into the lands of the declining Byzantine Empire. This process came to a conclusion in 1453 with the conquest of Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire.

Constantinople was renamed Istanbul and it became the seat of a new rising empire. In the 15th century the city became a vibrant centre of trade and architectural innovation. A period of steady expansion followed and the empire extended over parts of the Middle East along the Red Sea, northern Africa, the Balkans and Eastern Europe and up to the walls of the city of Vienna.

Power

The height of the empire's power came in the 16th century with the rule of Süleyman the Magnificent, one of the empire's longest-running sultans. A testament to the power of the empire is the fact that Süleyman acquired the nickname "magnificent" in the west. Within the Ottoman Empirehe was known as "the lawgiver".

During his reign, the empire acquired a new legal code and underwent a period of cultural renaissance powered by a blend of Christian, Islamist and Arabic elements. The empire also offered safe passage to Sephardic Jews fleeing persecution in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal).

By the early 16th century, the Ottoman Empire had one of the largest Jewish communities in the world. Constantinople, the city was n'tofficially renamed Istanbul until 1930, became a real blend of cultures. And throughout the renaissance,



the Ottomans became the biggest trade partner of Western Europe.

Relationship With Europe

The walls of the city of Vienna marked the apex of the Ottoman's empire power and the beginnings of its slow and gradual decline. The empire became a subject of admiration in the European courts. Its cultural life attracted the attention of western European thinkers and artists. Its military organisation and might captured the attention of theorists and politicians alike.

The Ottomans became one of the key subjects of the 18th and 19th century aesthetic and scientific movement known as Orientalism.

Crucially, the Ottoman Empire was in part a European empire. Its reach extended over lands such as the Balkans and southeastern Europe that now firmly belong in Europe.

Relationship With The Arab World

The Ottoman Empire extended its reach across parts of what is now known as the Arab world from Cairo to Algiers. For a long time, the Ottoman grip in the Middle East was minimal. The key preoccupations were with the protection of key trade outposts and the holy cities of Islam. Having mutual truce links and economies led different regions to exist happily as one unit, and retain loyalty to the Ottoman Empire.

With the outbreak of the First World War, however, this started to change. The rise of Arab nationalism and the dynamics of the war propaganda fomented movements across the Arab world that actively sought to break with the Ottoman state.

Influence On Modern Turkey

The defeat of the Greek army in Anatolia in 1922 by the forces of Turkish nationalism marked the de facto collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of a new successor state, modern Turkey. The Greek-Turkish war became a rallying cry for anti-colonial pan-Islamic movements across the Middle East and India.

But Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey's founder and first leader, wanted to make a radical break from the Ottoman heritage. He moved the capital of the new state from Constantinople to Ankara and initiated a series of rapid reforms such as the change of the alphabet and the abolition of the khalifate. Despite the radical break with the imperial past, a debate between tradition and modernisation continued to shape the evolution of Turkish political life.

In a world, where so many humans are forever ready to take the life of a tiger or any other animal, have you heard of a woman who immolated herself for a dead tiger? The legend of the shrine of Nahar Sati in Sariska is perhaps one of its only kind in the world



Sati On The Funeral Pyre Of A Tiger



#THE DIARY OF A FORESTER

In our childhood, we have all heard many tales of bravado of the great Rajput and Maratha warriors. We have even read about the famous story of Johar by queen Padmini with thousands of her fellow women. The braveheart Rani Hada had chopped off her own head in order to inspire her husband Rao Salumber to focus solely on fighting the enemy in the battlefield. These were highly inspirational legends.

Since school days, I have heard of stories of legendary people, like Raja Rammohan Roy and learned about Sati Pratha. This practice, I learnt, remained more prevalent among higher castes in different parts of India mostly during ancient and medieval times. Legendary Raja Ram Mohan Roy was instrumental in getting a regulation passed in 1829 to enforce ban on this loathsome custom.

Sati literally means 'a pure and

virtuous woman'. The practice of Sati or self-immolation by the widow was associated with a kind of virtue. The righteousness of this practice was defined by a religious logic that it was inauspicious for a widow to live after the death of her husband. A widow who agreed to self-immolate herself at the funeral pyre of her husband was considered to be highly virtuous for she has attained the status of Sati Mata or Sati Goddess. My grandmother one day revealed the mythological story behind the origin of Sati Pratha. She narrated that Sati was the wife of Lord Shiva and she immolated herself to protest against her father who had insulted her husband Shiva.

This knowledge got me bit confused because as per her story when Sati immolated herself, her husband lord Shiva was alive wherein as per the Sati Pratha, only widows used to immolate themselves on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands.

Many years later while serving in Rajasthan I had the opportunity of visiting few shrines made in respect of the Sati Matas at different places. I also saw how these shrines were

drawing more and more devotees with every growing year.

Suddenly in September 1987, one notable incidence came into light when in the village Deorala of Rajasthan, 17-year old Roop Kanwar, a bride of eight months immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

Luxuriant Forage Areas

This incidence stirred the entire country. Humans and women's rights activists came out on the streets throughout the country, seeking stringent law and exemplary action against those involved in this crime. The hue and cry not only activated state but also the central government as well as judicial courts. Consequently, overnight, several persons responsible for the act were arrested. At that time, the Indian Parliament acted speedily and unanimously passed the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 to abolish this custom forever from the Indian soil.

As a follow-up measure, as expected, state governments throughout the country got really geared up. The fares being organized on annual and periodic basis



Tiger at Sariska National Park.

Pandupole, cover a stretch of about ten kilometer before reaching Siliberi. On the way it passes through the savannah forests of Umri valley which supports a huge population of ungulates like chital, sambar, blue bull and primates like hanuman langur. As carnivores thrive upon these grazers and browsers therefore tigers, leopards, hyenas, and other small cats also inhabit this valley in sizeable number. The valley is blessed with a number of groves of ber (zizyphus) trees and shrubs attracting thousands of birds especially during winter when the trees get laden with juicy fruits. One if allowed would spend hours and hours watching the playful monkeys making hooping calls in pleasure while jumping and springing from one tree to another. Onlooker's eyes get riveted to the scene. The monkeys eat less but throw more on the floor to feed the herbivores which cannot climb these trees but wish to enjoy these tasty fruits full of nourishment. The hills surrounding this valley from all the four sides have excellent growth of dhonkoda or dhonk (Anogeissus pendula) trees up to the top. Being basically a browser, sambar loves the hilly terrain. Many a times they come to quench their thirst in this nullah which flows in sizeable width through the valley.

This valley is around 6 km in length and 1 to 2 km in width. It has several secluded jungle pockets, therefore protection of wildlife including the big cats has been a



Satimata's temple.

on various Sati Mata temples and shrines were forcefully stopped. Even now old locks may be found hanging on the dilapidated doors of these shrines.

Amidst this atmosphere won't you be surprised if I invoke you to visit a Sati shrine located in the heart of the tiger land Sariska? Yes, I really mean it but the purpose is neither to violate the law nor to irritate the said activists. It has a higher purpose of motivating people at large to respect nature and its wild creatures.

May be it is the only Sati shrine in the entire country where devotees are legally allowed to worship the Sati Mata which is the symbol of symbiosis between people and wild creatures. This shrine is popularly known as Nahar Sati temple which is located inside the rich Siliberi forest block on the eastern side of the reserve. The famous Pandupole temple is not too far from this temple.

The Pandupole nullah, a life line to several thousand wild creatures of the reserve, emerging from



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tigers or other wild animals for their petty self-pursuits?

Had I not been posted at Sariska Tiger Reserve, I wouldn't have had the luck to have visited this unique shrine, may be the only one in the entire country.

My first visit to the shrine was a mere chance.

During a rainy night in 1991 at Siliberi, one of the important protection posts located in the South-East of the Sariska Tiger Reserve, a forest guard told me a story which gave me goose bumps. He narrated the story of a pious lady who became Sati on the funeral pyre of a tiger. It was unbelievable. I knew our guards keep listening to many such stories of ghosts in the company of the forest dwellers and villagers located in the adjacent areas. But the guard swore his mother to justify his truthfulness and was ready to take me to the holy lady's shrine, located not far from this post.

The story had shaken me from head to toe. The anxiety to visit the shrine did not let me sleep that night. Next day, after inspecting the forest area of the Siliberi block, before noon, we reached the shrine, a small building having tiger idols on either side of its entrance gate.

There was an ordinary looking priest in the service of the shrine, who even offered drinking water and a cup of hot tea to us. But I was keen to testify the story narrated by the forest guard. The priest introduced me to a group of people, all of who seemed to belong to an educated city class. There were around seven men and women of all ages. They had come from Bombay to offer their puja (prayer) to the Sati Mata, which they worship as their pious Kuldevi (family deity).

The eldest man of the family narrated the legend behind this shrine. He told that about a thousand years ago, a forest dweller community used to live in this Siliberi valley in a hamlet having 30 odd number of cottages. A lady was living here with her little child and father-in-law as her husband had gone to a far away place for work. During one of these days a tiger took away the child. She was wearing a veil and

real challenge for the reserve management. It is worth mentioning that not far from this valley, a bit ahead of Siliberi are number of thickly populated villages like Baileta, Naya Gaon etc. The villagers are mainly cattle rearers. The luxuriant forage areas of this rich savannah jungle of Umri and Siliberial valleys lure them to graze their cattle here. Such cattle are likely to fall easy victim to the carnivores causing resentment among the villagers. During the reign of the royals before independence, the villagers living on the periphery or inside the reserve lived in perfect harmony with the wildlife, especially carnivores like tiger and leopard. The tiger then was not an enemy to them. The villagers worshipped the animal as a deity and did not harm it. But over a period of time the greed of the people has, however, changed this concept. That is why over time the management also started tightening its vigil. Firstly at Siliberi, a forest guard chowki was established in the old fort like red building built in pre-independence era.

After some time another chowki at Umri was also created. In 1980, a dedicated forest guard posted here fell victim to some unidentified criminals/poachers.

Story of a Pious Lady

In such a situation this Nahar Sati temple can prove to be a boon in safeguarding tigers and other wild creatures from agitated villagers and professional poachers. After all, how can people worshipping this Mata, a symbol of harmony between tiger and humans, can kill



Sariska National Park.

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman