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Mishra's Mishmash

As a regular contributor to the Times of India, the country's largest newspaper, Mishra is often sought-after by Danish media and academia to provide expertise on Asian-related matters, human rights issues and democratisation. He has spent half his life in India and the other half in Denmark and Sweden.



AIR INDIA

New Delhi was sari to see them go, but they'll be back

IN MID-SEPTEMBER, Air India launched its first direct flight between New Delhi and Copenhagen. The tickets are extremely cheap and the idea is to connect two strong centres of culture. Connecting the easy Nordic way of life with spicy and colourful India is an interesting experiment.

Wonderful for women

I ATTENDED the reception and inaugural function of the very first flight and was astonished to see that the pilot, co-pilot and whole crew were women. Now, this does not in any way represent a typical workforce environment in India, but Copenhagen is a capital known for being the world's safest place for working women.

My hunch is that in the future we will see – as the enthusiastic crew comprising just women showed – a rise in the number of female-tourists from India. There is a growing number of rich working women, and they would find a capital like Copenhagen attractive – a place where they do not have to have a male family member walking beside them to act as a kind of guardian angel.

More connected

THREE times a week, and the first couple of flights have already been filled to capacity. Also from Scandinavia, Stockholm already has three direct Air India flights to New Delhi. And in the near future, Air India is launching direct flights to Los Angeles, Tel Aviv, Dallas and other prime destinations in Asia and Africa. This further underlines the economic potential of the new Indian middle class.

The amount of luggage allowed is almost twice that of other flights, making it easier for film producers to come to Copenhagen and make catchy films like 'Love in Copenhagen'. Last year, the Swedish national broadcaster, SVT, ran a TV drama series entitled 'Delhis Vackraste Händer', which means 'the most beautiful hands in Delhi'. The series was based on a novel written by a Swedish writer.

Water and weather

BUT OPENING a direct flight is not enough. Other incentives are needed to create a market for flight passengers, and they might not be so obvious to westerners.

For example, while Indians

may or may not find the Little Mermaid interesting, they will definitely be drawn by the quality of the waters the statue resides in. Additionally, being able to drink water straight from the tap is a novelty as India lacks proper drinking water. And, of course, Indians will love Danish ice-cream!

But above everything, for a New Delhi-Copenhagen route to become a success, Indians need to understand the appeal of the Danish climate.

Both countries have their summers at the same time, and with temperatures similar to the Indian winter, going to Denmark in June, July and August will appeal to Indians wanting to escape the extremely hot weather. Likewise Danes in wintertime can discover temperatures similar to their summer in India.

Of course, this applies to the whole of Scandinavia, and the new flight will probably lead to Copenhagen Airport getting more Norwegian transit passengers, as there are no direct flights from Norway to India. So connecting Copenhagen to New Delhi might as well bring Oslo and Copenhagen closer.