

# Woman's era

Dr. Satinder Kaur

Dr. Gagan Saini

Dr. Nivedita  
Dhingra

Dr. Manish Singhal

**Dr. Upasana Arora**  
Leading Indian Healthcare  
Industry From Front





Informing all

# COMPANIES, TRUSTS & ENTITIES



Keep Important Documents  
Securely In A Private Safe Deposit Vault

**Easy KYC  
Operations by Board Representative**

To meet customers' needs, City Vaults offers a range of different sized lockers. Large size special lockers are also available.

Type of Locker	Size In Inches	Size In cm	Good For	Locker rental Per Year (Rs)
Size D	7.44 x 10.35	18.9 x 26.3	Convenient Size	6,000
Size E	6.26 x 16.65	15.9 x 42.3	Document Size	7,000
Size H1	12.64 x 8.27	32.1 x 21.0	Decent Size	7,000
Size F	10.94 x 13.86	27.8 x 35.2	Medium Size	11,000
Size G	7.44 x 20.83	18.9 x 52.9	Shares and Deeds	12,000
Size H	12.64 x 16.65	32.1 x 42.3	Good Size	14,500
Size L	15.91 x 20.83	40.4 x 52.9	Big Cabin Baggage Size	24,000
Size L2	15.16 x 20.83	38.5 x 52.9	Extra Big Size	24,000
Size XL	26 x 21 x 28	65.5 x 62.1 x 71.12	Decent Size	30,000

## CITY VAULTS

E-3 Jhandewala Estate, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110055 | Call: **+91-7428412999**

Asian Cookery Special

February 2026 ₹ 100

# Woman's era

30+

*Bold Flavours  
Across Asian  
Borders*

LOVE ISN'T  
JUST CHEMISTRY

WELLNESS  
AND HASHTAGS

CHAOS  
AND CITY PRIDE

LOVE AND  
BURNOUT

LIFE  
LESSONS  
FROM YOUNGEST

LOVE MEETS  
LEGACY

WEDDING RITUALS  
TO REELS

PEAKS AND  
PERSPECTIVES





**CARE BEYOND ROMANCE**  
BY DEEPSHIKHA PANDEY



**POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN DISEASE**  
BY DR SANJAY TEOTIA



**CURVEBALL CRUSHING**  
BY SAMRITI DHATWALIA



**HEALTH IS NOT A HASHTAG**  
BY RAMA KAHSYAP

**19 ICONIC LOCAL**  
BY VIDYA ARUN MAJUMDAR

**28 TRYING TO KEEP UP**  
BY NEHA SHUKLA

**34 LOVE THY MOUNTAINS**  
BY DR SUDHI AGARWAL

**51 WEDDING NOW AND THEN**  
BY RENUKA KRISHNARAJA

**62 WHEN NOSTALGIA BECOMES PALPABLE**  
BY S RADHA PRATHI

**66 YES OR NO**  
BY PUSHPA BHATIA

**68 A RAINY DAY REMINDER**  
BY SRIPRIYA SATISH

**80 SWEETS OR MEMORIES**  
BY SUCHI SARGAM

**84 THE COST OF CARE**  
BY TARU BAHL

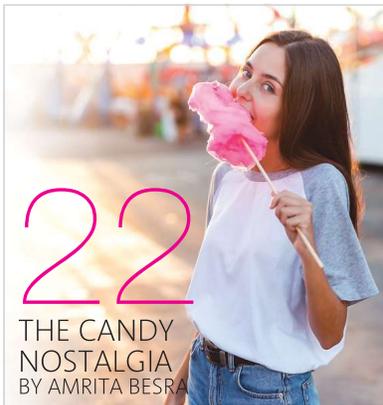
**88 TREK TO THE HIMALAYAS**  
BY AMRUTHA S RAO

**90 VEMBANAD SANCTUARY**  
BY BINDU SAXENA

**94 LOVE, LEGACY AND LUNCH**  
BY MIRA PAWAR

**96 THE TIGER'S NEST**  
BY VIJAYALAKSHMI SARMAH

**106 THE AMAZING RACE**  
BY DR ELSA LYCIAS JOEL



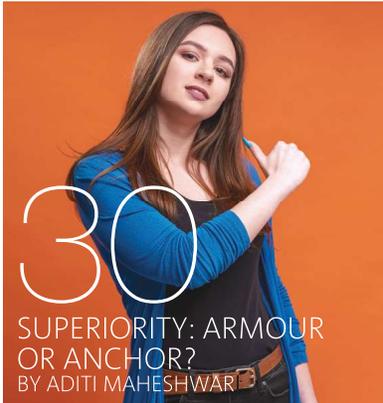
**THE CANDY NOSTALGIA**  
BY AMRITA BESRA



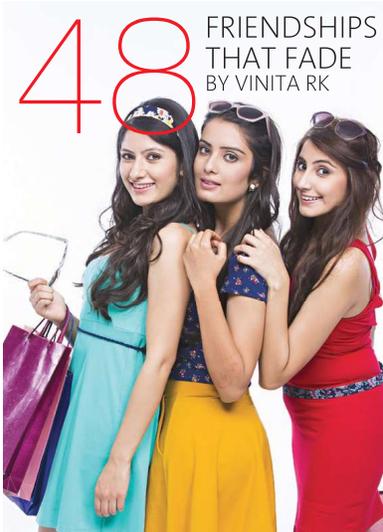
**YASHODA MEDICITY: BUILDING ONCOLOGY ECOSYSTEMS**



**ARTIST PRIYANKA SHARMA: SOUL RENDERED IN COLOUR**



**SUPERIORITY: ARMOUR OR ANCHOR?**  
BY ADITI MAHESHWAR

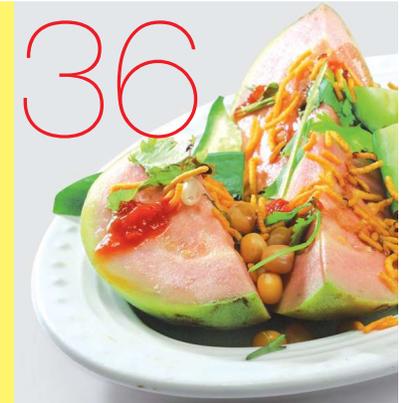


**FRIENDSHIPS THAT FADE**  
BY VINITA RK

## Cookery

**36 Spice Route Rewritten**

- Luchi Burger
- Sambhar Shots With CurryLeaf Dust
- Indian Ratatouille Rice Bowl
- Lemongrass Flavoured Indian Kulfi
- Honeyglazed Water Chestnuts



**70 Rooted In Asia Open To World**

- Naan Frittata
- Caramel Pudding With Ladoo Crumb
- Indian Style Chicken Khao Suey
- Steamed Chinese Bao With Indian Chicken

And Many More...





CINEPLEX



Fashion

46

LOVE LOOKS BETTER



55

STYLED WITH GRACE

- 50 BEAUTY QUERIES
- 52 LOVE MEETS LIFESTYLE
- 61 FAMILY FRIENDS AND ME
- 64 PERSONAL PROBLEMS
- 69 KITCHEN QUERIES
- 82 UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE AS A BRIDE
- 83 TEENACHE
- 107 CHILD CHALLENGES
- 108 NEWS IN PICTURES
- 111 DATING HANGOVER
- 112 AS YOU SAY

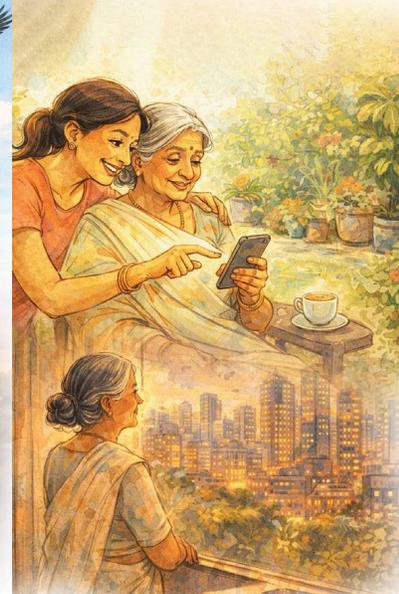
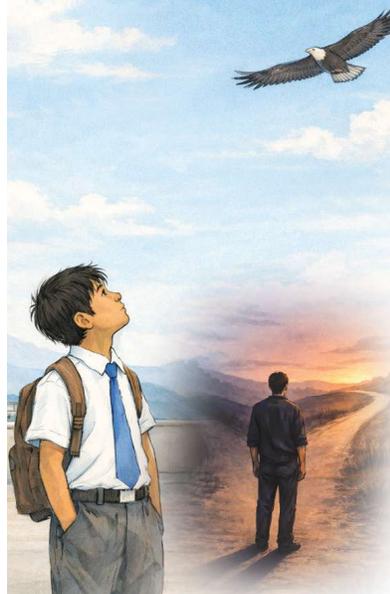
## Features



AFRICA FASHION WEEK

108

NEWS IN PICTURE



## Fiction

58 AN APPARTITION PERSON  
BY MADHUR GOYAL

104 RETURN OF MATRIARCH  
BY SUPREENA NARAYANAN

Editor, Printer & Publisher  
**DIVESH NATH**

Published on behalf of Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.  
Editor@WomansEra.com

Printed at:  
B-23, Site-3, Industrial Area,  
Meerut Road, Ghaziabad,  
Uttar Pradesh - 201003

Founder: Vishwa Nath (1917-2002)

1. Contribution articles and stories  
write@womansera.com
2. For advertising and product promotion queries:  
advertising@womansera.com
3. To participate in features:  
features@womansera.com
4. Opinion on articles:  
letters@womansera.com
5. Subscriptions and others:  
admin@womansera.com

### OFFICES

Mumbai: 1704, Lodha Supremus,  
Dr E Moses Marg, Worli Naka,  
Worli, Geeta Talkies Building,  
Mumbai-400018  
Phone: 09810160122

### EDITORIAL, ADVERTISEMENT & PUBLICATION OFFICE

Delhi Press Building,  
E-3, Rani Jhansi Marg,  
Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055.  
Phone: 011-47377777.

Title WOMAN'S ERA registered with Government of India as trade mark.

Copy sale, subscription, all advertisers and writers can send mail to:

Woman's Era  
Delhi Press  
E-3, Rani Jhansi Marg,  
Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110055.  
INDIA

[www.womansera.com](http://www.womansera.com)

### Woman's Era Print Subscription Plans

Current Issue ₹ 100 with effect from August 2020. Shipping by Indian Postal Services.	2 year - 24 Issues ₹ 2400 Shipping by Indian Postal Services. Services by courier Assured delivery plus Add ₹ 720 for delivery by courier.
1 year - 12 Issues ₹ 1200 Shipping by Indian Postal Services. Services by courier Assured delivery plus Add ₹ 360 for delivery by courier.	3 year - 36 Issues ₹ 3600 Shipping by Indian Postal Services. Services by courier Assured delivery plus Add ₹ 1080 for delivery by courier.

Cheques in the name of Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.  
Posted to Delhi Press Building, E-3, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055.

The names of characters used in all fiction and semi-fiction articles are fictitious.

ISSN 0971-1503  
No article, story, photo or any other matter can be reproduced from this magazine without written permission. This copy is sold on the condition that jurisdiction for all disputes concerning sale, subscription and published matter will be forums/tribunals at Delhi.

Copyright Notice  
© Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.  
New Delhi-110 055. India.

Self-addressed stamped envelopes must be enclosed with all manuscripts, otherwise the rejected material will not be returned. No responsibility is assumed for material submitted for publication.

# CINEPLEX



Recently, Alia Bhatt shared cheerful photographs with Ranbir Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor, Soni Razdan, and Riddhima Kapoor Sahni from her Christmas celebrations. Christmas 2025 became a warm, intimate family gathering, as Alia and husband Ranbir marked the day with loved ones. The celebration was hosted by her mother Soni Razdan, who organised a cosy dinner at home for close family members.



Alia Bhatt Shares Intimate Christmas 2025 Moments With Ranbir Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor And Riddhima Sahni



Golden Globes 2026: Priyanka Chopra Jonas Stuns As She Walks Hand In Hand With Blackpink's La Lisa



Priyanka Chopra Jonas and BLACKPINK's Lisa shared the spotlight at the 83rd Golden Globe Awards, creating a rare Bollywood-K-pop crossover. Appearing together in Beverly Hills, they took the stage as presenters for Best Actor in a TV Series – Drama. Cheers erupted before the announcement, making their interaction one of the evening's most discussed moments during the globally watched ceremony.

# FROM BOLLYWOOD...

Kriti Sanon Drops A Heartfelt Note On Nupur Sanon and Stebin Ben Wedding, Says, " My Little One Is Married"

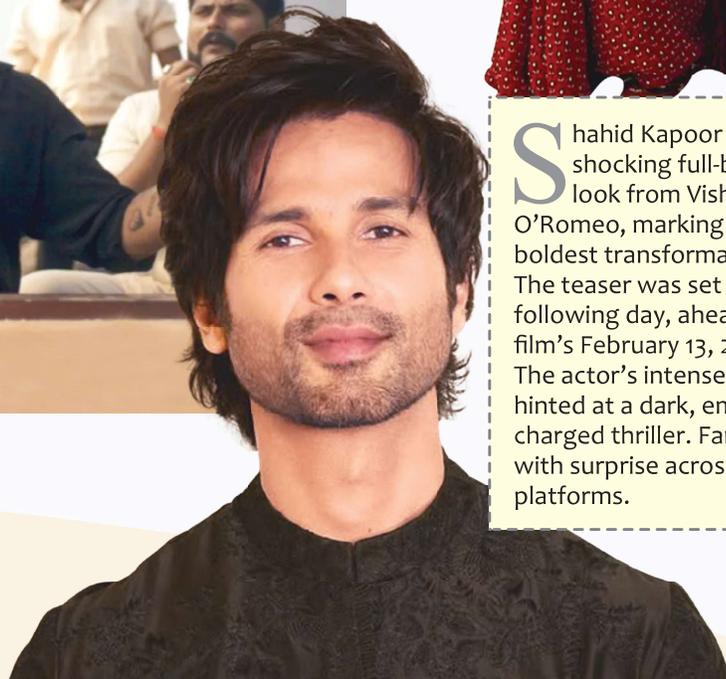
**B**ollywood actress Kriti Sanon shared a heartfelt Instagram note for her sister Nupur Sanon on her wedding to Stebin Ben. Expressing deep emotions, Kriti said words could not describe her feelings and the moment had not sunk in, lovingly calling Nupur her little one. The post touched fans online worldwide.



Shahid Kapoor Flaunts Full-Body Tattoo In First Look Of O' Romeo, Stuns Fans



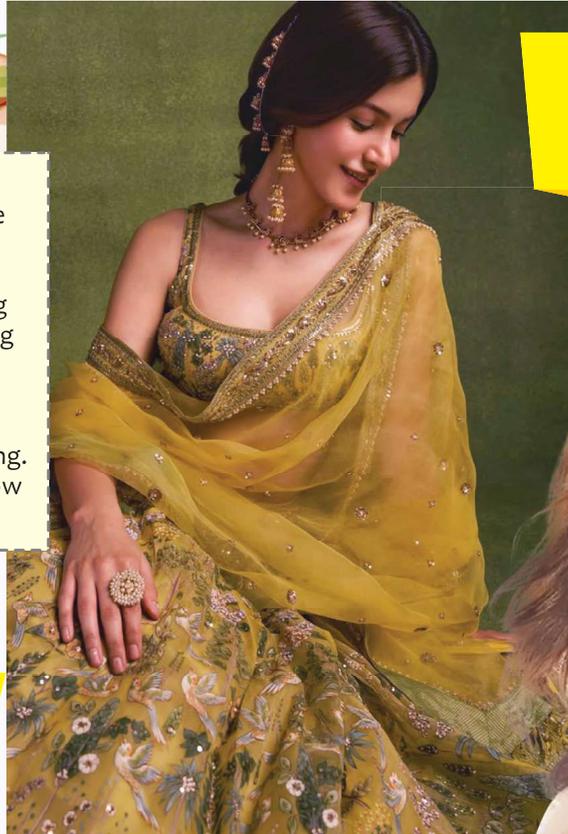
**S**hahid Kapoor unveiled a shocking full-body tattooed look from Vishal Bhardwaj's O'Romeo, marking one of his boldest transformations to date. The teaser was set to drop the following day, ahead of the film's February 13, 2026 release. The actor's intense new avatar hinted at a dark, emotionally charged thriller. Fans reacted with surprise across social media platforms.





**H**and painted flora and fauna moved across the surface, layered with antique detailing that gave the piece tactile richness. Featuring a strappy blouse and a billowing skirt, the ensemble's silk base lent diaphanous lightness, mirroring Kapoor's pared-back approach to ceremonial dressing. Set against a distinctive meadow greenish-yellow.

Shanaya Kapoor Stuns In A Lehenga Brought To Life With Hand-Painted Pichhwai



Nupur Sanon-Stebin Ben Share Pics From Hindu Wedding Ceremony; Celebrate 'Sukoon, Shukr'



**N**upur Sanon and Stebin Ben shared adorable pictures from their Hindu wedding ceremony, celebrating love, joy, and togetherness. The couple tagged the moment as 'Sukoon, Shukr,' reflecting peace and gratitude. Fans flooded social media with wishes as the newlyweds looked radiant, marking a memorable start to their married life.

**S**hikhar Dhawan announced his engagement to his Irish girlfriend, Sophie Shine, through a heartfelt Instagram post on Monday, January 12. Sophie shared a photo of the couple that quickly attracted attention and went viral online. She captioned it “My love” with a heart emoji, marking the couple’s first public acknowledgment of their relationship at the time of announcement.



Shikhar Dhawan Announced Engagement To Irish Girlfriend Sophie Shine, Shared Heartfelt Instagram Post

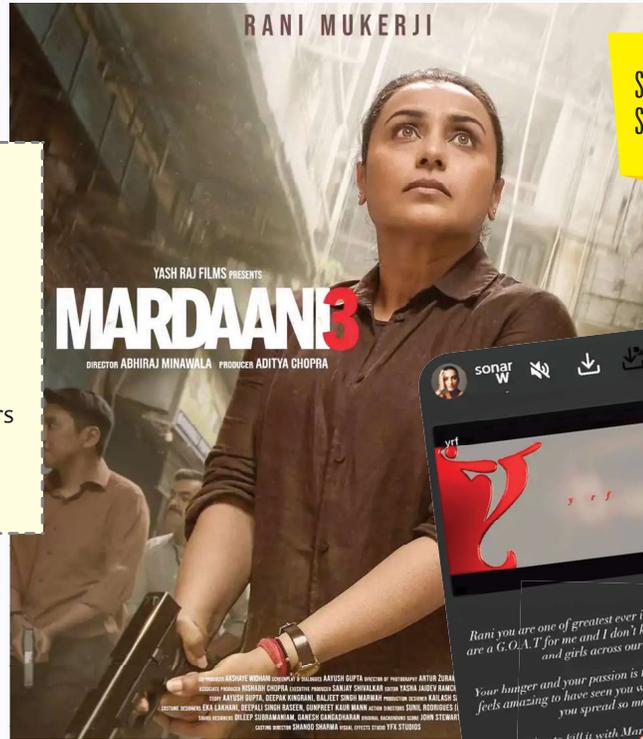


Janhvi Kapoor’s Boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya Makes A Cute Cameo In Her ‘Life Lately’ Post



**J**anhvi Kapoor recently dropped a photo dump. The actress gave a peek into what she called “life lately.” The first picture from the carousel showed Janhvi striking a mirror pose. Next, she posed with her friends. However, what caught our attention was her boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya’s cute cameo. Janhvi looked gorgeous in a red outfit.

**S**onam Kapoor penned a moving note for the “G.O.A.T” Rani Mukerji and praised the trailer of her upcoming film Mardaani 3. Ever since the trailer of Rani Mukerji’s action entertainer Mardaani 3 was released, not only netizens but also members of the film fraternity could not help but express their excitement for the sequel.



Sonam Kapoor Calls Mardaani 3 Star Rani Mukerji ‘Greatest Ever’



Salman Khan Steals The Spotlight At Stebin Ben—Nupur Sanon Wedding Reception



**A**fter getting married in Udaipur, Stebin Ben and Nupur Sanon hosted a glittering wedding reception in Mumbai on Tuesday. Superstar Salman Khan turned heads as he arrived at singer Stebin Ben and Nupur Sanon’s wedding reception in Mumbai. The superstar was warmly welcomed by the newlyweds, with groom Stebin bowing respectfully to the actor. **We**

# Care Beyond

# Romance

Moments that many women recognise but rarely articulate.

By Deepshikha Pandey

Love does not usually enter women's lives as a declaration. It arrives quietly and settles in through repetition. Through noticing. Through the habit of staying attentive long after the moment has passed. While popular culture often frames love as something spoken, confessed, promised or announced, women learn early that love is something practised.

It is practised in remembering what others forget, in adjusting schedules, in anticipating needs before they are voiced, in carrying emotional weight without naming it. Love, in this form, becomes less about intensity and more about continuity.





For many women, love begins with learning how to hold things together.

Take Anjali, thirty-six, balancing a demanding job, a household and ageing parents. She remembers when her husband has a presentation, when her son needs a project submitted, when her mother's blood pressure medication is running low. None of this feels extraordinary to her. It feels normal. It feels like care. It feels like love in motion. What Anjali does not remember, however, is the last time she went for a health check-up herself. There was always something else that needed attention first.

In Indian households, this neglect is rarely questioned because it is normalised. A woman in her thirties balances work and home while surviving on poor sleep and skipped meals, promising herself she will get things checked later. A mother postpones tests because school schedules and family needs feel more urgent. A woman in her forties dismisses recurring discomfort as just age and carries on. Her strength is praised. Her endurance admired. Her silence mistaken for resilience.

Medical attention, when it finally happens, is often crisis-driven. Women rarely go for routine health check-ups unless symptoms escalate or interfere with their ability to function. Preventive care is treated



as optional and sometimes even indulgent. Time spent at a clinic feels like time taken away from others. There is guilt attached to prioritising the body unless illness forces permission. Women are taught to associate love with endurance. To push through discomfort quietly. To normalise fatigue. A headache becomes background noise. Irregular sleep is explained away. Digestive issues, hormonal changes and recurring pain are absorbed into daily life and rarely acknowledged as signals worth attention.

What complicates this further is that women are often the primary health managers of families. They book appointments, manage medicines, track symptoms and follow up on reports for children, partners and parents. They are vigilant observers of everyone else's well-being, yet distant from their own.

In relationships, this imbalance quietly persists. A woman may insist her partner see a doctor while brushing off her own symptoms. She may recognise warning signs in others long before acknowledging them in herself. Her concern flows outward naturally, while turning it inward feels unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

Meera and Raghav have been married for twelve years. Their early years were marked by affection expressed openly through notes, messages and small surprises. Now, love looks different. It looks like shared calendars, unspoken coordination and quiet understanding. Meera notices when

Raghav skips meals or works late too often. She reminds him to eat, to rest, to see a doctor when a cough lingers.

When Raghav finally agrees to a check-up after months of persuasion, Meera accompanies him. She sits beside him in the clinic, scrolling through her phone while mentally noting the tests prescribed. The results reveal early signs of a condition that could have worsened if left unchecked.

Relief follows. So does a familiar thought she does not voice. Why did it take so long?

Later that evening, Raghav thanks her for insisting. Meera smiles, but something else settles quietly within her. She realises she cannot remember the last time anyone insisted on her health with the same urgency.

There are moments many women recognise but rarely articulate. Sitting in a doctor's waiting room for a loved one while silently noting symptoms they have ignored for years. Encouraging rest for others while dismissing their own exhaustion. Saying after this phase again and again, without realising that phases rarely end. They only shift.

Loving women are often careless with themselves not because they do not value their health, but because they have been taught that care

is something they provide, not something they claim.

This imbalance is rarely dramatic. It unfolds slowly through habit and expectation. Women continue to function, so their discomfort goes unquestioned. Strength, after all, is admired when it is silent.

Take Shanta, fifty-two, a homemaker in a joint family. For years, she experiences joint pain, fatigue and irregular cycles. She dismisses them as age, as stress, as normal. There are weddings to plan, grandchildren to care for, rituals to manage. Doctor visits feel indulgent, almost selfish. When she finally collapses one morning, the diagnosis comes with a quiet shock. The condition has been developing for years.

No one blames Shanta. Everyone praises her strength. But strength, in this context, has come at a cost.

The cost of this neglect accumulates quietly. Hormonal imbalances go unmanaged. Lifestyle conditions develop unnoticed. Mental fatigue deepens into burnout. By the time medical attention is sought, women often find themselves saying, I did not realise it had become this serious.

That sentence carries no drama. Only regret.

What remains unexamined is how love has been defined around women. Love meant adjusting. Love meant enduring. Love meant not becoming a burden. And so care was postponed until crisis forced it into the open. But love is not meant to be a one-way current.

Perhaps the more uncomfortable truth is that women should not always have to be the ones learning this lesson alone.

If love is truly mutual, then care cannot remain one-sided. The women who remember everything, manage everyone and hold lives together should not also have to be the sole guardians of their own well-being. Love is not only about how much a woman gives, but also about how much she is protected.

Partners, families and those who depend on women often grow



accustomed to their endurance. Her tiredness is overlooked because she continues. Her discomfort is minimised because she adapts. Over time, her ability to cope becomes an excuse not to notice. But love asks for attentiveness in return.

**CARE, IN ITS TRUEST FORM, IS INTERVENTION BEFORE CRISIS. IT IS MAKING SPACE FOR HER APPOINTMENTS, ENCOURAGING REST WITHOUT GUILT, TREATING HER WELL-BEING NOT AS OPTIONAL, BUT ESSENTIAL.**



To love a woman deeply is to notice when she is running on less sleep than she admits. When her laughter comes with fatigue. When she dismisses pain too easily. It is to insist, gently but firmly, that her health matters as much as her reliability. That she does not have to fall sick to earn concern.

Care, in its truest form, is intervention before crisis. It is making space for her appointments, encouraging rest without guilt, treating her well-being not as optional, but essential. It is recognising that her presence is not guaranteed simply because she has always managed. Women have long been taught to hold everything together quietly. Perhaps it is time the people who love them learned to hold them, instead.

Because love that truly values women does not celebrate how much they endure. It notices when endurance has gone on too long. It steps in before strength turns into strain. It protects not just what women do for others, but the women themselves.

And maybe that is the kind of love worth aspiring to. One that does not wait for collapse. One that chooses care early. One that understands that loving a woman also means taking responsibility for her well-being, so she does not have to carry that burden alone.

We

# POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN DISEASE (PCOD)

A common yet often misunderstood hormonal condition that impacts quality of life in women.

By Dr. Sanjay Teotia

**P**olycystic Ovarian Disease (PCOD), also referred to as Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, is a common hormonal disorder that affects women of reproductive age. It is characterized by the presence of multiple small cysts in the ovaries and an imbalance of reproductive hormones, which can lead to a variety of health issues. Though PCOD is not life-threatening, it significantly impacts a woman's quality of life, fertility, and mental health. With increasing awareness and timely management, many of its effects can be controlled or even reversed.



PCOD occurs when a woman's ovaries start producing higher than normal levels of androgens (male hormones). The hormonal imbalance interferes with the normal functioning of the ovaries. As a result, eggs may not develop properly or may not be released during ovulation, leading to irregular menstrual cycles and other complications. In PCOD, the ovaries often become enlarged and contain multiple small fluid-filled sacs called follicles. These follicles contain immature eggs that do not get released, which can lead to the formation of cysts. It is important to note that while the terms PCOD and PCOS are often used interchangeably, there are subtle differences. PCOD is generally considered a milder form, whereas PCOS can involve more severe symptoms and complications, including metabolic issues.

The exact cause of PCOD is still not fully understood, but several factors are believed to play a role. An increase in androgens (male hormones) can disrupt the normal menstrual cycle, prevent ovulation, and lead to the development of cysts. Many women with PCOD have insulin resistance, which means the body's cells do not respond effectively to insulin. This can cause an increase in insulin production, which in turn can trigger excess androgen production. PCOD often runs in families. If your mother or sister has PCOD, you are more likely to develop it too. Specific genes related to insulin resistance and hormonal regulation may be involved. A sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy eating habits, and obesity can exacerbate hormonal imbalances, especially insulin resistance, increasing the risk of developing PCOD.

The symptoms of PCOD can vary from woman to woman, but some of the most common signs include irregular or missed periods, heavy menstrual bleeding, excess facial or body hair, acne and oily skin, weight gain especially around the abdomen, thinning hair or hair loss, difficulty in



## **LIFESTYLE CHANGES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IN MANAGING PCOD, SUCH AS WEIGHT LOSS, A BALANCED DIET, AND REGULAR EXERCISE.**

getting pregnant, and darkening of the skin especially around the neck or armpits. These symptoms can start at puberty or develop during the later reproductive years. Because of the wide range of symptoms, PCOD often goes undiagnosed for years.

If not managed properly, PCOD can lead to various long-term health problems, including infertility due to anovulation, type 2 diabetes as a result of insulin resistance, high blood pressure and increased risk of heart disease, sleep apnea, endometrial cancer, depression, and anxiety.

There is no single test to diagnose PCOD. A combination of the following may be used: medical history and physical exam,

pelvic exam, ultrasound, and blood tests. There is no permanent cure for PCOD, but its symptoms can be managed effectively with a combination of lifestyle changes, medication, and in some cases, fertility treatments. Lifestyle changes are the most important step in managing PCOD, such as weight loss, a balanced diet, and regular exercise. Medications include hormonal birth control pills, anti-androgens, metformin, and fertility medications. In rare cases where medication does not work, a surgical procedure called ovarian drilling may be used to trigger ovulation.

The emotional impact of PCOD should not be underestimated. Irregular periods, weight gain, acne, and fertility issues can contribute to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Psychological support, therapy, or counselling can be very helpful for women dealing with the emotional toll of this condition. While PCOD cannot be completely prevented, early detection and timely management can reduce the risk of complications.

**We**

# Curveball Crushing

How to fall for someone who looks nothing like your wishlist.

By Samriti Dhatwalia

The times we are living in are crowded, not just with people, but with personalities, opinions, and a thousand micro-cultures that have somehow blended into one large digital *cha-cha*. Once upon a time, we simply complained about the “generation gap,” usually referring to how our grandparents could never understand why we liked ripped jeans or why popping bubble wrap counted as stress relief. But today, it feels less like a gap and more like a full-blown generational wrestling match: Gen Z vs. Everyone.

And if there’s one thing Gen Z does better than any generation before them, it is inventing new social terms and metaphors. They coin words the way older generations forwarded chain SMS, relentlessly, unapologetically, and with the confidence that one day, it will end up in the Cambridge Dictionary. The hottest addition to this linguistic buffet is: Curveball Crushing.

A term that has started slipping into conversations, captions, and reels, slowly but surely making its

way to everyone’s lips. To put it simply, curveball crushing means catching feelings for someone completely outside your type, someone you never predicted or prepared your heart for. They don’t look like your usual crushes, they don’t talk like them, and often, they don’t even exist in the same universe as your mental checklist.

It’s an attraction born out of surprise, a feeling that knocks the wind out of your lungs, not because it’s too intense, but because it arrived unannounced.



## What Curveball Crushing Really Means

In psychological terms, curveball crushing is an attraction that breaks previous rigid patterns. It is when someone, after years of gravitating toward a certain type, suddenly develops feelings for someone entirely different. Think of it as your emotional algorithm glitching, then updating itself. Or your taste in people evolving in one sharp, unexpected turn.

Imagine someone who has always dated confident extroverts suddenly falling for a quiet introvert who folds their pizza slice and reads Murakami. Or someone who always preferred creative artists getting drawn toward a finance guy who thinks “Excel” is poetry.

The mismatch is precisely what makes it meaningful. This kind of attraction signals two things. First, emotional openness. You are no longer limiting love to your curated preferences and authenticity; your heart is reacting to energy, not surface. Psychologists suggest that curveball crushing reflects how love forms when our inner needs change, or when life nudges us into emotional spaces we never imagined stepping into. In simple terms, the universe throws a curveball, and for once, you don’t duck.

## The Psychology Behind Unexpected Attraction

Our attraction patterns are shaped by several things: familiarity, past experiences, attachment styles, and cultural influences. We think we know what we want because we’ve been trained to respond to a certain kind of person. But curveball crushing happens when emotional safety feels more attractive than the “type,” subtle qualities begin mattering more than the checklist, we outgrow who we used to be attracted to, and timing allows someone unexpected to become meaningful. It is a moment where the subconscious leads the way, where you want someone not because they mirror your past likes, but because they feel right now.



**KABIR WAS THE KIND OF GUY WHO BLENDED INTO THE CORNER OF THE ROOM, POLITELY OBSERVANT, PATIENTLY SMILING. BUT WHEN MIRA LOST A ROUND OF CARDS, HE JUST CHUCKLED AND OFFERED HER THE LAST SLICE OF GARLIC BREAD. KABIR WAS THE CURVEBALL. AND MIRA WAS HAPPILY HIT.**

Psychologists compare it to walking into a bookstore and accidentally picking up a genre you never read, only to realize it’s exactly what you needed. Before you know it, your carefully constructed “type” collapses like a badly built Jenga tower. And suddenly, you’re crushing on someone you wouldn’t have glanced at six months ago.

## A Small Story Of A Big Curveball

Last winter, Mira was convinced she knew her type: Tattoos. Loud laugh. Loved road trips. She had a history of falling for men who lived

loudly, who dyed their hair blue impulsively and made impulsive travel plans. Her love life was basically a montage of biker jackets, flight tickets, and heartbreak playlists. Then she met Kabir.

He worked in cybersecurity. Owned exactly two jackets, both black. Drank *chai* the same way every day. Quiet, predictable, and soft in ways Mira never considered attractive.

She met him at a friend’s game night, and initially, she didn’t register him at all. He was the kind of guy who blended into the corner of the room, politely observant, patiently smiling. But when she lost a round of cards and groaned dramatically, he just chuckled and offered the simplest thing: “You want the last slice of garlic bread? I saved it for someone who looks like they had a long day.”

No one had ever saved Mira anything, certainly not the last slice of garlic bread. Somehow, she felt seen, without the theatrics, without the performance. Over the next few weeks, she noticed things she wasn’t supposed to notice:

How he listened more than he spoke, how he remembered tiny details she forgot she’d mentioned, how he didn’t try to impress her, how he wasn’t chaotic, and was simply peaceful.



One evening, she caught herself smiling at his text about a new cybersecurity scam and realised: She was crushing. Hard. On a man who had never dyed his hair, never impulsively travelled, and who thought the perfect evening was reading in bed.

Kabir was the curveball. And Mira was happily hit.

### Why Curveball Crushing Is Trending Today

If you think about it, curveball crushing aligns perfectly with the modern dating landscape. People today are emotionally exhausted by the endless swipes, the predictable types, and the repetitive patterns. We live in a time where everyone starts sounding the same and people curate themselves like Instagram grids. In such a world, attraction is

often based on aesthetics instead of emotional compatibility.

Here, curveball crushing breaks that monotony. It offers something raw, unpredictable, and real. It pushes people out of their own rigid “type traps.” For years, dating advice revolved around “knowing your type” and “setting standards.” But as people grow, their emotional needs evolve too. Something that once felt attractive could become triggering. Someone who once felt stable may start feeling boring, or vice versa.

Curveball crushes remind us that attraction is fluid, preferences change, emotional chemistry matters more than surface aesthetics, and people can surprise us in beautiful ways. It comes with genuine surprise, genuine emotion, and a genuine connection. It is, in many ways, the dating plot twist everyone secretly hopes for.

### Why Do Curveball Crushes Feel So... Right??

Because unexpected attraction often comes from qualities you needed, not qualities you wanted.

Your past “type” might have matched your old wounds, your old patterns, or your old insecurities. Curveball crushes, on the other hand, often arise from someone who speaks to your healed side, matches your present emotional state, and

reflects who you are becoming. These crushes help people break cycles, challenge previous choices, and move toward more emotionally stable connections. They show you that your heart is capable of expanding in directions you never anticipated.

### The Role Of Timing

Curveball Crushing is deeply tied to timing. You often fall for someone unexpected when you’re emotionally available, mentally rested, done repeating old patterns, and curious about something new. It is rarely the person alone; it is who you are when you meet them. Timing transforms an ordinary person into a possibility.

### The Cultural Shift Toward Unpredictable Love

Modern dating culture has become increasingly self-aware. People have started rejecting the idea that they must stick to checklists or fixed archetypes while choosing partners. From movies to memes, there is a visible shift: The brooding hero is out. The soft-hearted, emotionally literate character is in. Curveball crushing fits into this shift perfectly. It symbolises a world where compatibility is more important than aesthetics, and stability is more attractive than drama. Here, unpredictability is celebrated, not feared. People don’t limit love to their “ideal type.”

In the end, Curveball Crushing is not just a Gen Z term. It is a universal experience disguised in trendy packaging. It is proof that human hearts evolve, attraction is flexible, and love is unpredictable. And sometimes, the best connections arrive unannounced.

In a world obsessed with predictions, curveball crushing is the sweet reminder that some of the most beautiful things in life still refuse to be predicted. So if you find yourself catching feelings for someone who doesn’t fit your checklist, relax. The universe just threw you a curveball. And maybe, just maybe, it’s the best one you’ll ever catch.



# Iconic Local - Mumbaikars'

## Lifeline

The usual hustle of Mumbai local trains in lives of people. By Vidya Arun Mujumdar



It is 8 in the morning. I am right in front of the Ghatkopar railway station, about to alight from a rickshaw. At that moment, I hear the railway announcement: train coming on platform 4 is Karjat to CST fast local. I jump off the auto, pay the fare, and prepare for the 100-meter dash to platform 4, notwithstanding that I am wearing a cotton starch *sari* and not a tracksuit, and also wearing 1½-inch high-heeled sandals instead of sports shoes. This proposition seems difficult, but at 25 years, young and energetic, it is not impossible.

A run up the 35-odd steps, a sprint across the railway overhead bridge, and again a run down the 35-odd steps to reach platform number 4 on time to receive the 8.02 fast local charging in on the platform is an achievement. Luckily, I am blessed that the Ladies' first-class compartment I travel in halts right near the landing of the staircase. This saves me the obstacle race to catch my compartment on a crowded platform.

This fast local was my regular on working days to reach my office in Ballard Estate, which was around a 15-minute walk from CST station.

Sometimes I would reach platform 4 a few minutes early and feel mighty pleased that I avoided the sprint, but when I hear the announcement that the local is going to platform 2 instead of 4, I have to charge with the crowd to reach my destination. Some commuters wait

on the overhead bridge till the final announcement—wise people, I say!!

Once on the platform, the next herculean task is to get into the compartment. Many a time, we train friends debated whether it is tough to get in or out. Finally, we concluded that getting in is tougher, as it is survival of the fittest, whereas getting out is relatively easy. If you position yourself in the middle of the crowd, you get automatically pushed out and land on the platform.

Once you enter, you are gheraoed by your friends, which is the incentive of travelling on the same local every day—you make whole lots of friends. Let me explain how the scene looks like in a first-class compartment. It is one full-length bench and two half benches in front. The official seating is for 13, but the ladies are so innovative that they angle their butts in such a way that about 18 are accommodated. Equal numbers will be standing in aisles. Some will be reading magazines or books, one or two will read from a prayer book, some will pursue their hobbies of knitting, etc., and a few will try to catch up on their sleep, sometimes falling on the neighbour's shoulder. When they suddenly get up, they give a sleepy smile and again doze off.

For me, this 45-minute train ride is to gel with my friends. Lots of topics are discussed and debated. The topic which heads the list is of maids, and how they are indispensable and how they manipulate the working woman.

Meena will rant about how her maid has absconded for a few days, while Asha insists that she would not take back her maid but can't, as she has loaned her a few thousand rupees. The next favourite topic on the list is mother-in-law and the office boss. All pent-up feelings are vented out. This is a stress-relieving session. Another topic ladies fondly discuss are recipes, birthdays, festivals, and children's achievements. All are celebrated by distributing sweets. Membership to this group is open to all regular commuters.

It is always advisable to join these groups because you are then taken care of. By a process something akin to musical chairs, all members get to sit sometime. If you are not well or tired, you get to sit for longer.

As the train enters CST, there is hustling and bustling as the ladies gather their belongings and get ready to alight. With bye-byes, see-you-laters, and take-care said to each other, each one is on her own. Some rush to take a bus, while others walk to their workplace.

We



# Health Is Not A Hashtag

Beware of social media's  
wellness minefield.

By Rama Kashyap

While casually scrolling streaming platforms, the web series 'Apple Cider Vinegar' caught my attention. I was one of those religiously downing a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar in a glass of warm water first thing every morning. Although little scientific evidence supports its extravagant health claims, the concoction has become a full-scale fad—the “magic potion” often peddled by social media wellness gurus.

Loosely based on the terrifying real-life story of Belle Gibson, a wellness influencer from Australia, this Netflix series is an alarm bell for anyone blindly taking medical advice from unqualified sources.



Gibson famously claimed she cured her terminal brain cancer with alternative therapies and nutrition—though she never actually had cancer. Based entirely on falsehood and deception, she built a massive following by preying on the vulnerability of gullible followers to create a business empire.

Not every influencer is a Belle Gibson chasing a quick buck; some may simply be advocating therapies for getting attention and ‘likes’. In one viral social media video, cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu was seen crediting alternative remedies like *neem* and *haldi* (turmeric), and a strict diet plan, for his wife’s cancer recovery. The Director of Tata Memorial refuted his claim in a statement on X signed by 262 oncologists. The doctors clarified that Sidhu’s wife was cured with proven treatments like surgery and chemotherapy, not just lifestyle changes.

Social media is a minefield of quack cures, dubious health trends, and bizarre treatments for all kinds of issues—from weight loss to skin radiance, and even cures for deadly diseases like cancer. Scroll for five minutes, and you’ll find a dozen self-proclaimed experts promising a quick fix, all of whom recommend a “natural cure”.

But we must understand that “natural” doesn’t always mean safe and effective. The cures propagated by unqualified influencers can have disastrous side effects. A few years ago, under the influence of a random online tip, I started consuming five glasses of water every morning, supposedly to flush out toxins. I am unsure what good it did, but it certainly increased the urgency and frequency of my visits to the washroom.

Some seemingly harmless wellness trends, like a high-protein diet, intermittent fasting, and increased water intake, may do more harm than good when taken to the extreme. For example, taking a pinch of black salt with *ajwain* (carom seeds) in curd for improving digestion may appear appealing, but



it can dangerously spike the blood pressure (BP) of a hypertensive person.

The fact is that overconsumption of supplements and vitamins that many of us pop mindlessly can also be risky. Qualified medical practitioners and nutritionists

say that supplements can be life-enhancing only when taken in the right dose and for a precise duration. Prolonged and high doses of any vitamin—whether Vit E or Vit D, even iron and magnesium—can cause toxicity.

Lately, there has been a glut of videos and reels elucidating the benefits of intermittent fasting. However, assuming a one-size-fits-all approach is a myth. Qualified doctors warn that fasting may harm diabetic patients and may aggravate problems for those prone to acidity. While the benefit of obsessively limiting the eating window to a few hours a day may be debatable, there can be no doubt about the advantage of restricting screen time. That is one “fast” that will surely increase physical activity and improve mental agility.

Talking about fad foods and diets that are seen trending online, we must remember that our health is not a trend. It is not a hashtag. Unverified health advice may be freely available on social media platforms. However, we must be cautious of the free advice given by self-proclaimed wellness experts. Their advice may be free, but our health is not. It is too precious to be left in the hands of unqualified quacks. I end the piece with an age-old, time-tested proverb: “*Neem hakeem khatra-e-jaan*” (“A half-doctor is a threat to life”).



**LOOSELY BASED ON THE TERRIFYING REAL-LIFE STORY OF BELLE GIBSON, A WELLNESS INFLUENCER FROM AUSTRALIA, THIS NETFLIX SERIES IS AN ALARM BELL FOR ANYONE BLINDLY TAKING MEDICAL ADVICE FROM UNQUALIFIED SOURCES.**

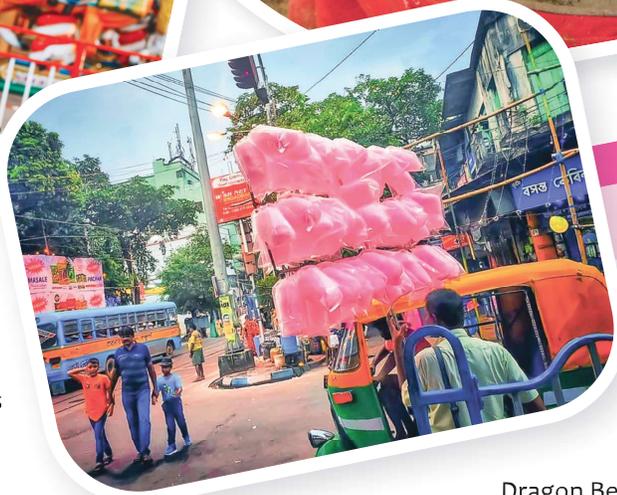


# The Candy Nostalgia

One bite of cotton candy is all it takes to travel back in time.

By Amrita Besra

Last week, I visited a local *haat* near my house located in Kolkata. As I was busy looking into the stall collections, I heard tinkering bells somewhere in the busy crowds. I jostled my way through the crowd and found myself in front of the candyfloss seller. He said, smiling in Bengali, “*Ay nin Didi Moni, burhir chul!*” (Sister, take this old woman’s hair!). As I savoured the light, sticky, white candy—popularly called *burir chul* or *hawa mishti* in Bengal, rather than candy floss—I was reminded of my childhood days when we used to visit the annual village fair on *Dussehra* held in Jharkhand. Other than the giant Ferris wheel, a man walking on a long bamboo stick, tribal men and women singing and dancing to traditional folk music, even today, I remember the time when I innocently stopped with my friends on seeing the candyfloss seller, whom we called *badal bikreta* (a cloud-seller). We would watch wide-eyed with amazement as the candyfloss seller started spinning the candyfloss machine manually and, using a stick, he collected the sticky, whitish candyfloss—which looked like scattered clouds.



Interestingly enough, the candyfloss has travelled all over the world with different names, but it has the same ingredients. With time, modernised electric candyfloss machines appeared—which were much easier to operate than labour-intensive manual machines.

Looking back, a glance through fascinating historical records tells us that candyfloss was invented by the dentist William Morrison in 1897 and graced the aristocratic tables of kings and queens in several European countries, way back in the early 15th and 19th centuries.

Gradually, it spread to different countries, where it was known by varied names.

For instance, in China, during the Han Dynasty, one of the royal chefs was known to have prepared a type of caramelised sugar; then, repeatedly hand-pulling and stretching it using rice flour until thin, silky threads were formed. So, it came to be known as the light, airy, whitish Dragon Beard candy, which stuck to the Emperor's chin while savouring it!

With time, based on popular preferences, the candy chefs used different ingredients—like desiccated coconut, peanuts, sesame seeds, glutinous rice flour and maltose syrup—which were put inside the

**IN CHINA, DURING THE HAN DYNASTY, ONE OF THE ROYAL CHEFS WAS KNOWN TO HAVE PREPARED A TYPE OF CARAMELIZED SUGAR; THEN, REPEATEDLY HAND-PULLING AND STRETCHING IT USING RICE FLOUR UNTIL THIN, SILKY THREADS WERE FORMED.**



Dragon Beard candy; then, wrapping it with a woolly-looking candy, similar to the present-day candy floss.

Yet, however, preference for this much-loved aristocratic European candyfloss was lost with time. In fact, in recent times, one would only find the candyfloss seller on beaches, village fairs, zoos and, of course, the weekly *haat*—selling those candyfloss candies, once popular as delightful treats during the time of royal kings and queens, in transparent pouches.

At the same time, our childhood favourite candyfloss has been given a *desi* twist. For example, the *soan papdi* or *sohan papdi*—rather our own Indian candyfloss—back in the early days, was sold loosely in glass jars. This ‘melt-in-the-mouth’ sugar confectionery was prepared by repeatedly hand-pulling the caramelised sugar while adding the mixture of *ghee*, toasted aromatic gram flour and refined flour or corn flour. This light and delicate sweet is very popular during festivals, especially on the northern side.

We

# Building Integrated, Personalised Oncology Ecosystems for Better Outcomes

Yashoda Medicity delivers integrated, patient-centred cancer care, combining advanced technology and multidisciplinary expertise for better outcomes.



## Dr. Upasana Arora, Managing Director, Yashoda Group Of Hospitals

Cancer remains one of the most complex healthcare challenges of our time. In India, over one million new cancer cases are diagnosed each year. The evolving lifestyle patterns, sedentary lifestyle, environmental factors, and improved diagnostic capabilities have collectively contributed to this growing burden. With early detection, accurate diagnosis, and timely intervention, many cancers are now manageable and, in several cases, curable. This shift has underscored the importance of moving beyond fragmented models of care toward integrated, patient-centred systems that prioritise outcomes, safety, and quality of life.

As cancer incidence increases, traditional treatment pathways are proving inadequate to address the complexity of modern oncology.

Effective cancer care today requires coordinated frameworks that seamlessly integrate prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, survivorship, and palliative care. Collaboration across specialties, precision-driven decision-making, and continuity of care have become as critical as clinical expertise itself.

When we established Yashoda Institute of Cancer Care, our emphasis on integration, accessibility, and personalised healthcare has shaped its foundation. The objective was clear to create an integrated, comprehensive cancer centre that brings advanced care closer to patients. The Institute was conceived as a unified platform where multidisciplinary teams work together within structured clinical pathways, ensuring that each patient benefits from collective expertise and evidence-based decision-making. Medical oncology, radiation

oncology, surgical oncology, hemato-oncology, bone marrow transplantation, women's cancers, and supportive care services function as interconnected components of a single system.

Cancer care at Yashoda Medicity extends well beyond active treatment. It encompasses early detection initiatives, accurate diagnostics, coordinated therapy planning, rehabilitation, survivorship support, and palliative care when required.

## Dr. Manish Singhal, Vice Chairman, Medical Oncology

The practice of oncology has evolved significantly in recent years. While chemotherapy and radiation



continue to play an essential role, contemporary cancer treatment is increasingly guided by tumour biology, molecular profiling, and a deeper understanding of individual patient resilience. At Yashoda Medicity, medical oncology integrates chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapies, antibody-drug conjugates, hormone therapy, CAR-T cell therapy, and access to clinical trials within personalised treatment pathways. Prehabilitation strategies that focus on strengthening patients before and during treatment have demonstrated meaningful benefits in outcomes and quality of life.

Oncology psychology has moved from the sidelines to the centre of the clinic. Equitable access to cancer

care remains an important aspect; technological and therapeutic advances hold value only when they are accessible. Tele-oncology, inclusive research practices, and efforts to reduce financial barriers are essential to expanding the reach of high-quality oncology services.

**Dr. Gagan Saini,  
Vice Chairman And Head,  
Radiation Oncology**

Radiation oncology has evolved into a discipline defined by precision, adaptability, and patient-centred planning,



particularly in the management of women’s cancers. Modern radiation therapy is no longer just about delivering prescribed doses; it is about delivering treatment intelligently, safely, and with respect for each patient’s anatomy and quality of life.

At Yashoda Medicity, every woman’s radiation treatment is personalised using advanced technologies that guide, monitor, and adapt therapy in real time, ensuring optimal outcomes while minimising impact on healthy tissues.

In breast cancer, radiation therapy following surgery plays a critical role in preventing recurrence. Surface-guided systems such as IDENTIFY SGRT enable real-time monitoring of patient positioning, ensuring high accuracy without added discomfort.

For endometrial cancer, radiation is often advised post-surgery to reduce future risk. Using ETHOS Hypersight with adaptive radiotherapy, keeping radiation focused on the target while protecting surrounding organs.

Cervical cancer relies heavily on radiotherapy for a cure. Here, advanced external beam radiation is integrated with high-precision brachytherapy, supported by adaptive and image-guided techniques that allow daily refinement of treatment.

**Dr. Satinder Kaur,  
Senior Director And Head,  
Gynecological Oncology &  
Robotic Surgery**

Women’s cancer continues to present a significant public health challenge, often compounded by delayed diagnosis and limited awareness.



Many women, balancing professional commitments and family responsibilities, may inadvertently deprioritise their own health. The message is simple: listening to your body can save lives. Ignoring early symptoms can delay diagnosis and limit the effectiveness of timely, less complex interventions.

At Yashoda Medicity, our approach to women’s cancer care emphasises early detection, timely intervention, and holistic management. Cervical cancer, one of the most preventable malignancies, continues to affect many women due to inadequate screening and low vaccination uptake. Regular HPV DNA testing and Pap smears for women aged 25 to 65 years and HPV vaccination for both girls and boys between 10 and 26 years are critical tools for reducing disease incidence.

Ovarian cancer presents unique challenges because its symptoms are often non-specific and population-wide screening is not currently available. Persistent or unexplained symptoms, particularly in women with a family history of cancer, require prompt evaluation. Uterine cancer often gives early warning signs such as abnormal or post-menopausal bleeding.

Breast cancer outcomes improve significantly with early detection through self-awareness, regular clinical examinations, and timely mammography. At the Women’s Cancer Centre, we combine advanced surgical techniques, including robotic surgery and complex procedures such as HIPEC, with systemic therapies and precision radiation.



**Dr. Nivedita Dhingra, Director  
And Head, Hematology,  
Hemato-Oncology And Bone  
Marrow Transplant**

Cancers of the blood and bone marrow require specialised expertise, advanced technology, and dedicated



infrastructure. At Yashoda Medicity, we provide comprehensive care for leukemias, lymphomas, multiple myeloma, marrow failure syndromes, and inherited blood disorders.

Our hemato-oncology services integrate advanced diagnostics, molecular and genetic testing, targeted therapies, immunotherapy, and comprehensive transplantation programmes.

Bone marrow transplantation services, including autologous, allogeneic, haploidentical, and unrelated donor transplants, are supported by HEPA-filtered units, apheresis facilities, stem cell processing laboratories, and cryopreservation services.

Modern cancer care is no longer defined by individual interventions but by how effectively expertise, technology, and compassionate care are integrated around the patient. The Yashoda Institute of Cancer Care embodies this vision, creating a seamless continuum from early detection to advanced treatment, rehabilitation, and long-term survivorship.

At Yashoda Medicity, our commitment is to deliver care that is precise, comprehensive, and grounded in clinical excellence. By uniting leadership vision, multidisciplinary expertise, and advanced technology, we aim not only to treat cancer but also to support patients throughout their journey with clarity, dignity, and confidence.



Title : Pankh Pushpa  
Size : 24" X 36"  
Medium : Oil Based 2024

# Artist Priyanka Sharma

The Soul of the Feminine, Rendered in Colour. By Our correspondent

Priyanka Sharma is an accomplished Indian artist known for her evocative mixed-media works that seamlessly blend semi-abstract and realistic styles. Her artistic journey began in childhood, rooted in quiet hours spent sketching and experimenting with crayons, colour pencils, and watercolours—an early exploration that laid the foundation for her expressive visual language. Though formally trained in Fine Arts and armed with advanced academic learning, it was her unwavering passion for painting that



Artist Priyanka Sharma

ultimately guided her to embrace art as her true calling.

**Could you walk us through your latest collection—what’s the title, and what sparked the inspiration behind it?**

My latest collection is titled **“Mohini — The Desire.”** It stems from a lifelong fascination with the many layers of feminine identity and emotion. In this body of work, I draw upon the soulful allure and complexity of Indian goddess archetypes, blending them with modern artistic sensibilities inspired by Pablo Picasso’s experimental approach and Jamini Roy’s folk expressions.

The series brings to life figures such as **Mohini** (the beauty of the soul), **Maya** (richness and illusion), **Trishna** (desire), and **Rati** (delight)—each representing facets of a woman’s inner and outer worlds, and celebrating femininity in all its emotional and spiritual depth.

**What’s the heartbeat of your latest work? Is there a central theme that ties the pieces together?**

The heartbeat of this collection lies in uncovering the hidden treasures of womanhood—emotional depth, spiritual beauty, and powerful desire. Each piece is unified by the belief that true allure emerges from within. Through rhythmic forms and dynamic colours, I explore the connection between the personal and the divine, weaving together emotion and universality. The works collectively speak of an inner radiance that transcends time and circumstance.

**In today’s world, who do you feel is most drawn to your work, and has this audience changed over time?**

When **Woman’s Era** first profiled me in 2011, my audience largely consisted of Indian collectors who appreciated cultural narratives and traditional storytelling. Over the years, that circle has expanded



Title : Surmani Size : 48" X 48"  
Medium : Oil Based 2024



Title :Swaropika 1 Size : 20" X 20"  
Medium : Oil Based 2024



Title : Swaropika 3 Size : 20" X 20"  
Medium : Oil Based 2024

significantly. My work resonates with women seeking affirmation of their strength, as well as younger, global audiences who connect with the fusion of tradition and modernity. My paintings now speak across age groups, geographies, and cultural boundaries.

**Looking back at your last three exhibitions, how did each influence the direction of your current work?**

Each exhibition has been both a challenge and a catalyst for growth. Interactions with viewers and conversations with fellow artists encouraged deeper introspection and experimentation. Reflecting on Pablo Picasso's spirit of reinvention and Jamini Roy's commitment to authenticity inspired me to push boundaries—embracing bolder narratives, richer palettes, and a stronger spiritual undercurrent in my recent work.

**How do you ensure your work remains timeless while connecting with both seasoned collectors and newer audiences?**

By anchoring my art in “universal themes—beauty, spirituality, desire, and resilience” I aim to create works that transcend generations. My semi-abstract language allows multiple interpretations, inviting viewers to find personal meaning within the canvas.

I strive to create art that moves beyond trends and speaks directly to the human experience.



Title : Roopmaya Size : 36" X 48"  
Medium : Oil Based 2024

**How have your themes and artistic approach evolved across your last three collections?**

My earlier works focused more on external forms and social motifs. Gradually, my gaze turned towards emotions, symbolism, and spiritual narratives. In my recent collections, I integrate mythological and goddess imagery into a semi-abstract framework, creating layered compositions. This evolution mirrors both my artistic growth and my personal journey as a woman and concept artist.

**As you look ahead, what themes or ideas are calling to you for future projects?**

I feel drawn towards themes of

**resilience and transformation—** the ways in which women rise from challenges with grace, strength, and creativity. I am eager to explore multimedia and collaborative formats, creating immersive art experiences inspired by the boundary-breaking legacies of my mentors. My aim is to celebrate feminine identity in bold, contemporary, and innovative ways.

**Is there an artist—international or Indian—whom you consider a role model?**

I deeply admire Pablo Picasso for his revolutionary vision, Jamini Roy for reviving indigenous aesthetics, Satish Gujral for his versatility, K. G. Subramanyan for storytelling, and Salvador Dalí for his surreal imagination. Each has inspired me to embrace originality, risk-taking, and heartfelt expression.

**What advice would you offer young artists stepping into the art world today?**

Stay authentic and fearless. Learn from the masters, but always return to your own inner voice. Take risks, embrace failure as part of growth, and allow yourself to evolve. An artist's true legacy lies in creating work that is honest, soulful and enduring.

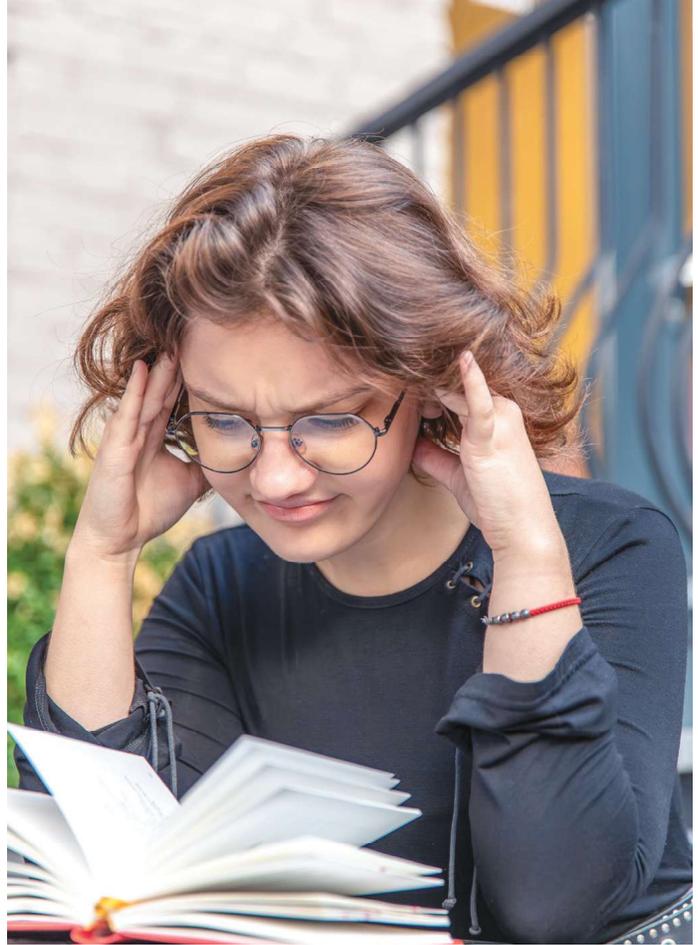
The artist also has an upcoming solo show on 24th May 2026 at Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.



# Trying To Keep Up

Struggles of a slow learner.

By Neha Shukla



Many a time it feels like the world wasn't exactly built for people like us. You give almost 9 years of your life to a job, struggling to adjust to the work culture and the environment, yet you are constantly reminded of how you are not good enough and probably are never going to be.

People often say being a school teacher, for example, is a lot easier than a corporate job. Really!! I agree, it did feel like I had achieved something in life. Watching the children come running to hug you each day. Listening to their silly stories every day honestly had wiped off all the negativity that surrounded me every time I went to the principal's office or the staffroom.

Those children were the only reason I would wake up each day and go to work. And then the Covid-19 pandemic struck, and in a matter of weeks, I was left jobless.

Suddenly it all started coming back. The taunts, the comments, each one reminding you that this place, this job, was never meant for you. I was upset for a while and then, after almost 2 years, I got my second job as a secretary—and see

the irony—it was an organisation that treated children with learning disabilities just like myself.

I thought this would be the perfect place of work for someone like me. I believed I would be understood. My capabilities, being a slow learner, would be considered. I was happy to hear that they would observe me for fifteen days, because this would give me time to learn something new and hone my skills in this new role.

But within a week, I was told to go from there too, because I wasn't fast enough, they said.

Next, I was hired as a facilitator at a private daycare, but after about a year and a half, that was gone too. They said I wasn't agile enough. I wasn't fit to take care of the little ones. After that, I did a few odd jobs here and there. There's this one place I was hired, and after telling my interviewer everything about myself, I was taken on for a week's trial. There too, I had to go through the same.

I was told to leave within a day—yes, a day—when I was clearly told I would be tried for a week. The person here didn't even give me the

time to learn, to make mistakes, or to get accustomed to a new role.

It broke me. My confidence was shattered. I started praying more and more each day. Cried sometimes. Screamed out loud, looking up at the sky.

Why!!!!?? Why is there no place in today's world that would trust a person and give him/her a chance to work, based on their capability and understanding and not the speed with which they perform? Give them time.

Be it corporate or any field today, I fail to understand what this obsession is with speed and meeting deadlines. Why? What about the ones who are equally good, skilled enough, but are looked down upon just because they are not fast enough to match the standards of the other members of the team?

So are employers today trying to tell us to just stick to submitting on time and forget about the quality of work? If that's so, then there is a serious problem. And I think it's time we became more human and less of the machines that we will eventually—or have already—turned into.

We

# Aeroplane Fmcg

CELEBRATE WITH LOVE



Also available in all leading stores

amazonfresh

zepto

blinkit

b bigbasket

Jio Mart

zomato  
hyperpure

insta  
mart

shop.aeroplanerice.com

Flipkart

METRO  
Cash & Carry

Flipkart  
Wholesale

D Mart

www.aeroplanerice.com | Email: info@aeroplanerice.com | Ph.: +91-8595591248

follow us on: <https://www.facebook.com/aeroplanericeacjk> @insta@aeroplane\_rice

# SUPERIORITY ARMOUR OR ANCHOR ?

Confidence doesn't conquer—it connects!

By Aditi Maheshwari

There's a peculiar silence that follows someone who walks into a room believing they're better than everyone else. Not the confident kind, not the kind that lifts others up—but the brittle kind. The kind that carries more noise inside than it ever shows outside. That, right there, is the shadow of a superiority complex—not always loud, but always lonely.

A superiority complex isn't the voice of a person who thinks they're superior; it's often the echo of someone who's deeply afraid they're not enough—and hides it behind a mask of control, comparison, and condescension. Unlike confidence, which is quiet and generous, superiority feeds off proving, posturing, and positioning. And strangely, it never finds peace.

PEOPLE WITH  
SUPERIORITY  
COMPLEXES OFTEN  
SOUND LIKE THEY  
HAVE IT ALL FIGURED  
OUT. THEY DON'T SEEK  
ADVICE; THEY OFFER  
IT—UNSOLICITED. THEY  
DON'T ASK QUESTIONS;  
THEY CORRECT YOUR  
ANSWERS.



## The Polished Veneer Of “Better”

People with superiority complexes often sound like they have it all figured out. They don't seek advice; they offer it—unsolicited. They don't ask questions; they correct your answers. But look closely, and you'll see it's not strength—it's a constant, exhausting performance. Because when you live to be better than, you lose the ability to be better with.

The truth? Nobody feels truly superior; they just feel compelled to be seen as such. A superiority complex isn't a crown—it's armour. And beneath it? An unattended ache—of not being validated, of having been ignored or undermined for too long. And now, the only way to survive is to become undeniable, untouchable, unchallenged.

## A Cry For Recognition!

We often mistake a superiority complex for arrogance. But arrogance is a symptom, not the source. At its root, this complex may stem from past wounds—growing up where affection had to be earned, where flaws weren't forgiven, where comparison was a parenting tool. Somewhere along the way, the soul learned: “If I'm not better, I'll be forgotten.”

But the problem with superiority is that it burns bridges before it even crosses them. It looks down when it should reach across. It seeks validation, not connection. It wins arguments but loses people. And eventually, even victories feel empty because they were designed to impress, not to fulfil.

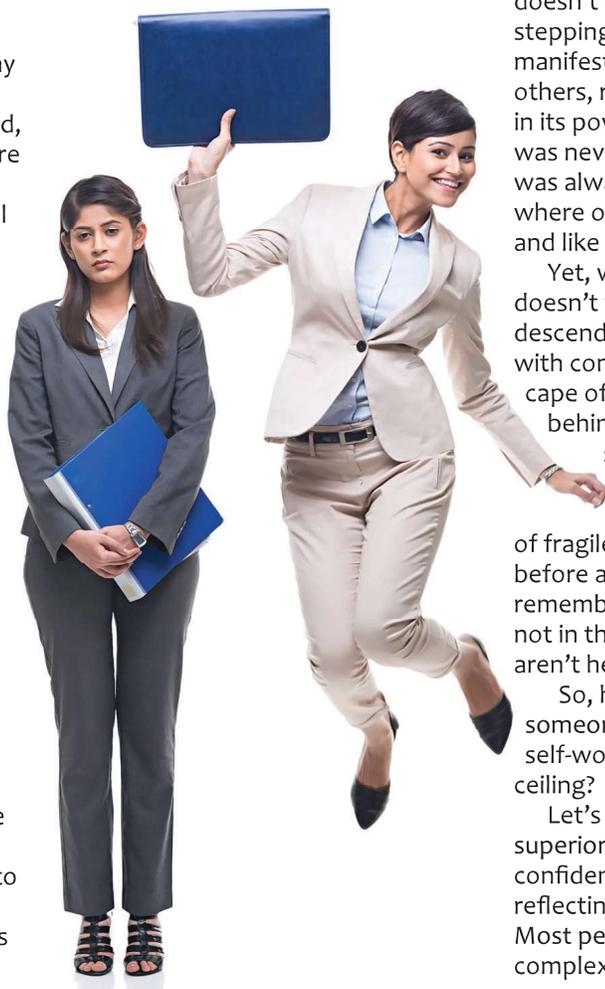
## Healing Through Humility!

Humility is not the opposite of superiority—shame is. And that's the trap: many people hide behind superiority to avoid drowning in shame. But humility? That's where healing happens—when you realise you don't need to be more than someone to matter. You just need to be present. Honest. Real.

True self-worth never announces itself. It simply allows others to be

worthy too. It listens as much as it speaks. It doesn't diminish others to glow—it radiates because it accepts the truth: we're all patchworks of strengths and insecurities.

**A SUPERIORITY COMPLEX IS NOT CONFIDENCE—IT'S CAMOUFLAGE, A CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED FAÇADE TO MASK HIDDEN INSECURITIES. TRUE STRENGTH DOESN'T ASSERT DOMINANCE BY STEPPING AHEAD OF EVERYONE ELSE; IT MANIFESTS QUIETLY, WALKING ALONGSIDE OTHERS.**



## Need To Be The Best.

If you find yourself always needing to be right, to outshine, to prove—pause. Ask not what you're trying to show the world, but what you're trying to protect inside. Because no one is born needing to dominate a room—that urge is taught by pain. And it can be unlearned with love.

You are allowed to rest. To not have all the answers. To admire someone else's light without feeling your own dimmed. Your worth doesn't increase when someone else's is questioned. You were never meant to be better than everyone—you were meant to be whole.

## Be Gentle, Not Stereotyped.

Let's stop confusing loudness with leadership, or control with competence. A superiority complex is not confidence—it's camouflage, a carefully constructed façade to mask hidden insecurities. True strength doesn't assert dominance by stepping ahead of everyone else; it manifests quietly, walking alongside others, rooted in authenticity, gentle in its power. The best version of you was never about towering above; it was always about creating spaces where others felt seen, respected, and like they truly belonged.

Yet, we all know someone who doesn't walk into the room—they descend. Chin tilted, tone lacquered with condescension, an invisible cape of imagined royalty fluttering behind them. The person with a superiority complex is less a personality and more a performance—a play of fragile grandeur staged daily before an involuntary audience. But remember, you're not a prop. You're not in their court. And you certainly aren't here to applaud illusions.

So, how do you deal with someone who has mistaken their self-worth for everyone else's ceiling?

Let's begin by knowing this: superiority is rarely born from true confidence. It is a house of mirrors—reflecting not clarity, but distortion. Most people with a superiority complex are battling an internal

drought of validation. They inflate themselves not because they feel full, but because they feel less. It's a balloon of borrowed air—one sharp word away from deflation.

And you? You're the pin. But here's the secret: don't pop them. Don't play that game. Instead, disarm their act by refusing to act along.

**Don't Wrestle with a Peacock in a Mirror Room:** Superiority thrives on reaction—rolling eyes, fidgeting hands, or the tightening silence of passive surrender. If you argue, they win the spotlight. If you agree, they win the stage. But when you observe them like art in a gallery—detached yet present—you remove their power source. You're no longer an actor in their fantasy; you're the audience that stopped clapping.

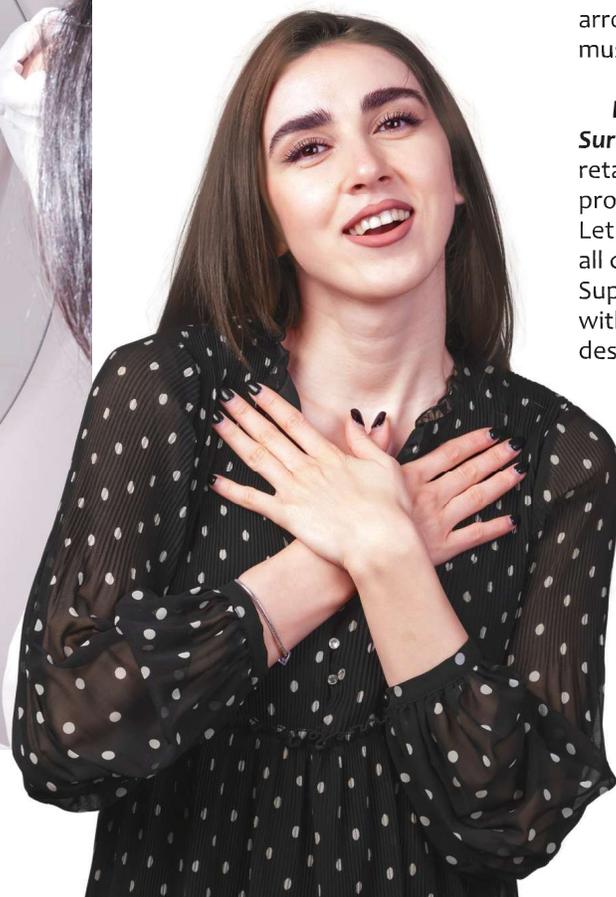
Be polite but firm. Let your silence carry the weight of discernment, not defeat. They expect a duel of egos—offer a mirror instead.



**Understand: They're Not a Mountain, Just Wearing a Facade:**

People with superiority complexes love to loom tall. But often, they're just standing on shaky stilts made of comparison, past praise, or outdated status. Understand the engineering behind the elevation—it's not height, it's illusion. Their volume does not equal value. Their dominance does not equal depth. You don't have to

**THERE IS STRENGTH IN NOT RETALIATING. IT ISN'T WEAKNESS TO NOT PROVE YOU'RE BETTER—IT'S WISDOM. SUPERIORITY NEEDS CONTRAST TO SHINE — WITHOUT HUMILITY AROUND, IT LOOKS DESPERATE. YOU DON'T NEED TO OUTSHINE THEM; YOU JUST NEED TO OUTGROW. AVOID THE PETTY STUFF.**



shrink to accommodate them. Walk at your height. Confidence faces the truth; insecurity hides from the truth.

**Curate Your Boundaries Like You Curate Art:** Not every gallery allows flash photography. Not every room must host noise. In the same way, you decide how much access someone has to your emotional landscape.

Set limits—gently, but unapologetically. You don't need to explain why their superiority doesn't impress you. You just need to choose when to exit the performance. If they constantly belittle, compete, or one-up, it's time to pause the subscription. Sometimes love and peace wear the same shoes as distance.

**Decoding Their Language Without Translating It Into Your Worth:** The person with a superiority complex speaks in dialects of dismissal. They'll make your achievements sound like errands, your insights like footnotes. But never, ever use their language to define your self-worth—that's like measuring your wingspan with a ruler meant for thumbtacks.

Smile internally. Let their arrogance float past you like elevator music—there, but not your song.

**Humility Is Your Armour, Not Your Surrender:** There is strength in not retaliating. It isn't weakness to not prove you're better—it's wisdom. Let them flex. Let them speak in all caps while you master italics. Superiority needs contrast to shine—without humility around, it just looks desperate.

You don't need to outshine them; you just need to outgrow the need to. Avoid the petty stuff. But, having said that, remember that sometimes it is wise to speak up—especially for justice, for integrity. Discernment is the key to wisdom.

**Don't Diagnose—Observe Like a Scientist, Not a Judge:** It's tempting to label them:

MCJ<sup>®</sup>

Beauty With  
Purity



**MANIK CHAND<sup>®</sup>**  
**J E W E L L E R S**  
**GOLD • DIAMOND • PLATINUM**



Founder Member

Manik Chand & Sons (Jewellers) Pvt. Ltd. Christian Basti, G.S. Road, Guwahati-5, Phone: 2343186, 2343189

Manik Chand & Sons ( J ) Pvt. Ltd. Shoppers Point, 1st Floor, Shop – F-2, 4, 6 & 8, H.B. Road, Phone: 2732767, 2736102

Manik Chand Jewellers Pvt. Ltd. K.C. Road, Fancy Bazar, Guwahati-I, Phone: 2547454, 2516922

Manik Chand & Sons Jewellers (Int) LLP. Times Square mall, Ground Floor, RG Baruah Road,  
Sunderpur Guwahati-781005 (Assam) Mob. No. 9678068936

Manik Chand & Sons Jewellers (Int) LLP. Imperial Mall, G. Floor, Silchar, Phone: 03842-236002, 236004

Manik Chand & Sons Jewellers (Int) LLP Hotel Courtyard By Marriott, Ground Floor, Shop No.H-101,  
Jail Road, Police Bazar, Shillong-793001 (Meghalaya) Phone: 0364-2912990 Mob. No. 9678068930

E-mail: [Info@mcj.net.in](mailto:Info@mcj.net.in) | [www.manikchandjewellers.com](http://www.manikchandjewellers.com)



[manikchandjewellers.mcj](https://www.facebook.com/manikchandjewellers.mcj)



[manikchandjewellers.mcj](https://www.instagram.com/manikchandjewellers.mcj)



9678068937

narcissist, arrogant, insecure. But labelling limits your lens. Instead, observe. What triggers their behaviour? What makes them puff up or shut down? You'll often notice patterns—they praise themselves when feeling invisible, or interrupt when afraid they'll be forgotten.

This awareness is not for pity, but for perspective. It shifts you from being reactive to being reflective. You stop being the target and become the telescope.

**Reclaim the Room Without Raising Your Voice:** Some people roar so loud just to mask the echo of their emptiness. But you? You reclaim the room by anchoring in stillness. Speak with gravity, not volume. Ask questions that require honesty, not drama. When they brag, respond with curiosity, not competition. It unnerves the performance.

Their identity is built on a castle of validation. You, on the other hand, are a continent of calm. Let them feel that tectonic shift.

**When Their Crown Slips—Offer Grace, Not Glee:** Eventually, the façade cracks. The superiority falters. Their performance has an intermission. And in that moment—when they're vulnerable—don't gloat. Extend grace. That's your real superiority: you can be kind without needing to be vengeful.

Because handling those with superiority complexes isn't about putting them down—it's about rising above the dance of egos.

### Final Word!

The person who constantly reminds the world how tall they are has forgotten the beauty of being grounded. But you? You've learned how to walk next to them without shrinking—or overpowering. You've learned that true confidence doesn't belittle; it stands firm in truth yet humble with grace.

So, when you meet the next self-declared monarch of mediocrity, remember: you don't need a crown to know your worth. You just need a mirror that reflects truth, not titles. **We**

## Love Thy Mountains

**N**ature is the best friend and the ultimate healer. It asks for nothing but gives everything. It nurtures, absorbs all the fatigue, and becomes our confidante. It listens, inspires, and gives us strength.

### But Alas;

The HIMALAYAN terrain is worst affected. HUMAN-induced global warming is the harbinger of all the catastrophic events, be it flash floods, glacial bursts, landslides, etc., etc. The fragile ecosystem is extremely vulnerable.

JUST the other day; 2 months back, I was immersed in the beauty of a small hamlet in Uttarkashi dist. of Uttarakhand. Mere mention of The Women's village, aka BUARI GAON, brings nostalgia.

When I rang up Pradeep, the caretaker; he said, "Madam, yahan sab thik hai." Dharali-like flash flood has not reached us. NOT AS YET. I could feel the tinge of pain in his voice.

The time has arrived. WE need to serve beyond the self and for a greater cause. Evolve strategies for long-term ECO PRESERVATION, keeping in mind the current scenario. Local communities, environmentalists, the government bodies, and some passionate individuals must pool to chalk out a long-term solution.

### All Said And Done.

I still reminisce the time spent in BUARI village with some swawlambi women, who tilled the fields, looked after their cattle and families, took us for a village trip, and a 7 km trek that unearthed some of the hidden treasures of the forest.

We relished the bayberries; aka KAFAL, the Uttarakhand state fruit; the Himalayan raspberries (HISALU); blackberries (BLACK HISALU); Pulam, the fruit; Molu walnut trees; and of course the beautiful CHAMOMILE FLOWER interspersed all through the trek.

Our trek guides, Savita and Sarita—the women guides—and Pradeep with his charming daughter Simran were fun to be with. I could identify the flora and fauna of the trek under their expert guidance.

The taste of the yummy feast of Pahadi Rajma and rice, cooked right there in the meadow at the top of the trek, still lingers on. Whatever food was left, it was offered to the local shepherds and their goats and sheep.

The lasting taste, enduring flavours of local and seasonal delicacies, and a platter of rich GARHWALI culinary heritage endlessly tickled my taste buds. Mandua, Zhangora, Gehat Daal, Pahadi Rajma, mint, and apricots. The list is endless.

Dr Sudhi Agarwal **We**



# Aeroplane Fmcg

CELEBRATE WITH LOVE



Also available in all leading stores

amazonfresh

zepto

blinkit

b bigbasket

Jio Mart

zomato hyperpure

insta mart

shop.aeroplanerice.com

Flipkart

METRO  
Cash & Carry

Flipkart  
Wholesale

D Mart

www.aeroplanerice.com | Email: info@aeroplanerice.com | Ph.: +91-8595591248

follow us on: <https://www.facebook.com/aeroplanericeacjk> [insta@aeroplane\\_rice](https://www.instagram.com/insta@aeroplane_rice)



# Spice Route Rewritten

From Bengal to Bangkok, Seoul to Sri Lanka —  
Asia's flavours find a new form. By Roma Ghosh

## LUCHI BURGER

You can make a chicken or vegetarian version of this burger.

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the Luchi (Puri made with Maida)

1 cup flour  
½ tsp salt  
3 tbsps ghee

Ghee or white oil for frying

#### For the Patties

2 cups mashed potatoes or 2 cups  
minced chicken  
3 slices bread, crushed into fresh  
breadcrumbs  
2 tsp rice flour  
Salt  
1 tsp red chilli powder

1 tsp roasted cumin powder  
2 tsp lemon juice  
1 tsp *anardana* powder  
Oil for frying the patties

#### For Assembly

Tomato sauce  
Green or red chutney  
Chilli sauce (as per choice)  
Lettuce leaves



Luchi Burger

Tomato slices  
Cucumber slices  
Green chillies.

#### Optional:

You may add cooked minced chicken or sautéed vegetables to the potato mixture. If doing so, increase rice flour by 2 tps.

#### METHOD

To prepare the *luchi*, sift together flour and salt. Add *ghee* and rub it in with fingers. Add enough water to knead into a stiff dough. Divide into portions and roll into circular puris. Deep fry one at a time in hot oil, pressing gently so they puff up. Keep aside. You will need two *luchis* per burger.

For the patty, mix all ingredients together. Divide into 5–6 portions and shape into round patties slightly smaller than the *luchi*. Deep fry or pan fry until golden and cooked through.

To assemble, replace bread with fried *luchis*. Layer sauces, patty, lettuce, tomato, cucumber, and chillies between two *luchis*. Secure with a toothpick and serve hot.

3 tps sambar powder  
Salt  
1 tsp turmeric powder  
2 cups vegetables (carrot, drumstick, beans, pumpkin)  
2 tsp tamarind pulp

**For the Idli**  
2 cups idli batter  
Salt  
2 tps coconut oil  
3 tps Gochujang Korean sauce

**For Tempering**  
1 tsp mustard seeds  
Curry leaves  
1 tsp urad dal  
1 tsp chana dal

**For Curry Leaf Dust**  
Handful of curry leaves, washed, dried and powdered



#### METHOD

Heat oil in a pressure cooker, add vegetables and stir fry for 3–4 minutes. Add spices, mix well, add 5 cups water, salt and pressure cook till *dal* is cooked. Open cooker, mix in tamarind pulp and keep aside. Prepare small *idlis* using mini moulds. Heat oil, add mustard seeds, *dals* and curry leaves. Once they splutter, add *idlis* and lower heat. Mix Gochujang with 3 tps water and add to *idlis*, stirring gently.

Serve sambar in glasses with flavoured *idlis*, garnished with curry leaf dust.

## SAMBAR SHOTS WITH CURRY LEAF DUST & GOCHUJANG FLAVOURED IDLIS

#### INGREDIENTS

##### For the Sambar

1 cup arhar dal  
2–3 tps sesame oil

Sambar Shots with Curry Leaf Dust and Gochujang Flavoured Idlis



## INDIAN RATATOUILLE RICE BOWL

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the Bottom Layer

300 gms long green brinjal  
1 onion, sliced  
2-3 tsp mustard oil  
2 chopped tomatoes  
2 tsp ginger garlic paste  
Salt  
1 tsp turmeric  
1 tsp curry powder  
2 cups cooked rice

#### For the Third Layer

2 cups chopped radish leaves  
1 cup radish pieces  
1 tsp chopped ginger  
2 tsp oil  
Salt  
½ tsp turmeric  
1 cup grated cheese

### METHOD

Heat oil and fry brinjals till soft. Add onions, tomatoes, ginger garlic, spices and cook till vegetables are fully cooked. Keep aside.

Indian Ratatouille Rice Bowl

Prepare radish leaves similarly by heating oil, adding radish leaves and spices. Cook covered till wilted.

To assemble, layer cooked brinjal in an ovenproof bowl, top with rice, then radish leaves, followed by another rice layer. Top with grated cheese and bake until cheese melts. Serve hot.

Variation: Any vegetable preparation can be used.

## INDIAN KULFI FLAVOURED WITH LEMONGRASS/CHIVES

### INGREDIENTS

500 ml milk reduced to less than half  
2-3 tbsps jaggery powder  
2 slices brown bread  
2 tbsps milk powder  
2 tbsps almonds  
2 tpsps chopped lemongrass or chives

Indian Kulfi Flavoured with Lemongrass/Chives

### METHOD

Crush almonds in a mixer. Add bread slices and grind into dry powder. Add milk powder and reduced milk and blend gently. Transfer to a bowl, mix in chopped lemongrass or chives. Pour into kulfi moulds and freeze. Unmould and serve.



Honey Glazed Lemongrass Water Chestnuts with Masala Puris



## HONEY GLAZED LEMONGRASS WATER CHESTNUTS WITH MASALA PURIS

### INGREDIENTS

- 12–14 water chestnuts
- 2 tbsps sesame oil
- 2 tbsps honey
- 2 tbsps Asian red curry paste (or less)
- 1 tsp chopped lemongrass
- Wheat or *maida* puris for serving

### METHOD

Wheat or flour puris for serving peel the water chestnuts and leave whole. Heat oil and stir fry the chestnuts for one minute. Add the spicy sauce and lemon grass and continue to stir fry for 2-3 minutes more. Serve with *masala puris* or *bhaturas*.



Mutton, Dal, Spinach & Macaroni Soup

## MUTTON, DAL, SPINACH & MACARONI SOUP

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup mixed *dal*
- 250 gms boiled boneless mutton
- 1 cup chopped spinach
- 1 cup boiled macaroni
- 3 tbsps *ghee*

### Spices

- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp curry powder

- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- 2 tpsps ginger garlic paste

### METHOD

Cook the *dal* and mutton pieces adding 4 cups of water in a pressure cooker till cooked and mushy. Heat a pan and add the *ghee*. Mix in the cooked *dal* and mutton. Lower the heat and mix in the spinach, ginger garlic and spices. Mix well. Add 1-2 cups of water and allow to simmer. Let the spinach blend into the *dal* mutton soup. Mix in the boiled macaroni. Allow to simmer further for ¾ minutes. Serve hot.

# FRIED POINTED GOURD STUFFED WITH SALSA

## INGREDIENTS

6–8 pointed gourds (*parval*)  
Salt and turmeric  
Oil for deep frying

## For Stuffing

1 chopped onion  
1 chopped tomato  
1 tsp salsa spice

Prepare the salsa by mixing all ingredients together. Stuff each of the fried parval pieces with this salsa and serve as a starter.

# PAYESH CUSTARD APPLE PUDDING

## INGREDIENTS

1 litre milk  
150–200 gms sugar  
150 gms small-grain rice  
200 gms custard apple pulp (seedless)  
2 beaten eggs

## METHOD

Soak the rice in water for 1 hour. Bring the milk to boil in a thick bottomed pan. Lower the heat and mix in the soaked rice, draining out all the water. Continue to stir and mix, cooking on very low heat till milk is reduced to more than half and rice is cooked. Add sugar. Stir and mix well. Cool completely.



Fried Pointed Gourd Stuffed with Salsa

1 tsp lemon juice  
1 tsp fresh thyme

## METHOD

Very lightly scrape the *parval*. Cut into halves horizontally. Remove the seeds. Sprinkle salt and turmeric and deep fry each piece till golden brown.

Payesh Custard Apple Pudding

When the mixture is cooled down add the custard apple pulp and the beaten eggs. Blend very well, preferably with a hand blender. Pour into muffin moulds and steam in a steamer till set. Should take around 12-15 minutes. Cool completely. Unmould. Garnish with either chocolate chips, black currant or cake decorations.



Szechwan Flavoured  
Prawns with Indian  
Bread

## SZECHWAN FLAVOURED PRAWNS WITH INDIAN BREAD

### INGREDIENTS

300 gms large prawns  
3 tbsps sesame oil  
3 tbsps spicy Szechwan sauce  
1 tsp cinnamon powder  
2 tbsps coconut milk

### METHOD

To prepare the prawns - make a paste with the sauce, cinnamon powder and 2 tbsps of water. Blend well and keep aside.

Heat the oil and add the prawns. Lower the heat and cook for 30-40 seconds adding the paste. Stir and cook for a further 2 minutes. A quick recipe but delicious. Serve with Indian bread.

## GOLGAPPAS WITH MASHED POTATO & WASABI JAL JEERA

### INGREDIENTS

10-12 golgappas



Golgappas with Mashed  
Potato and Wasabi  
Jal Jeera

### Filling

1 cup mashed potatoes  
2 tbsps butter  
1 tsp chilli flakes  
2 tsp lemon juice

### Liquid

200 mL water  
3 tps *jal jeera* powder  
3 tpsps lemon juice  
Salt  
Basil leaves (optional)  
Wasabi paste (2-4 pinches)

### METHOD

Prepare the filling by mixing all ingredients and fill each golgappas puri with this mixture.

For the liquid. Mix the *jal jeera*, salt, wasabi paste and lemon juice. Mix well. Pour into shot glasses and place the filled golgappas on the shot glasses. Please adjust the amount of wasabi paste according to your taste because wasabi paste has a very sharp and pungent taste. So start by using 2 pinches and add more if you can enjoy the sharpness. But it gives a kick to the preparation.



Cauliflower, Carrot and Pumpkin Soup with Thedcha

## CAULIFLOWER, CARROT & PUMPKIN SOUP WITH THEDCHA

### SOUP INGREDIENTS

- 6–8 cauliflower florets
- 1 carrot
- 1 potato
- 150 gms pumpkin
- ½ inch ginger
- 3 garlic pods
- Salt
- 3 tsps butter
- 2 tsps lemon juice

### Thedcha

- 6 garlic cloves
- 3 green chillies
- 60–70 gms roasted peanuts
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- Basil or coriander leaves

### METHOD

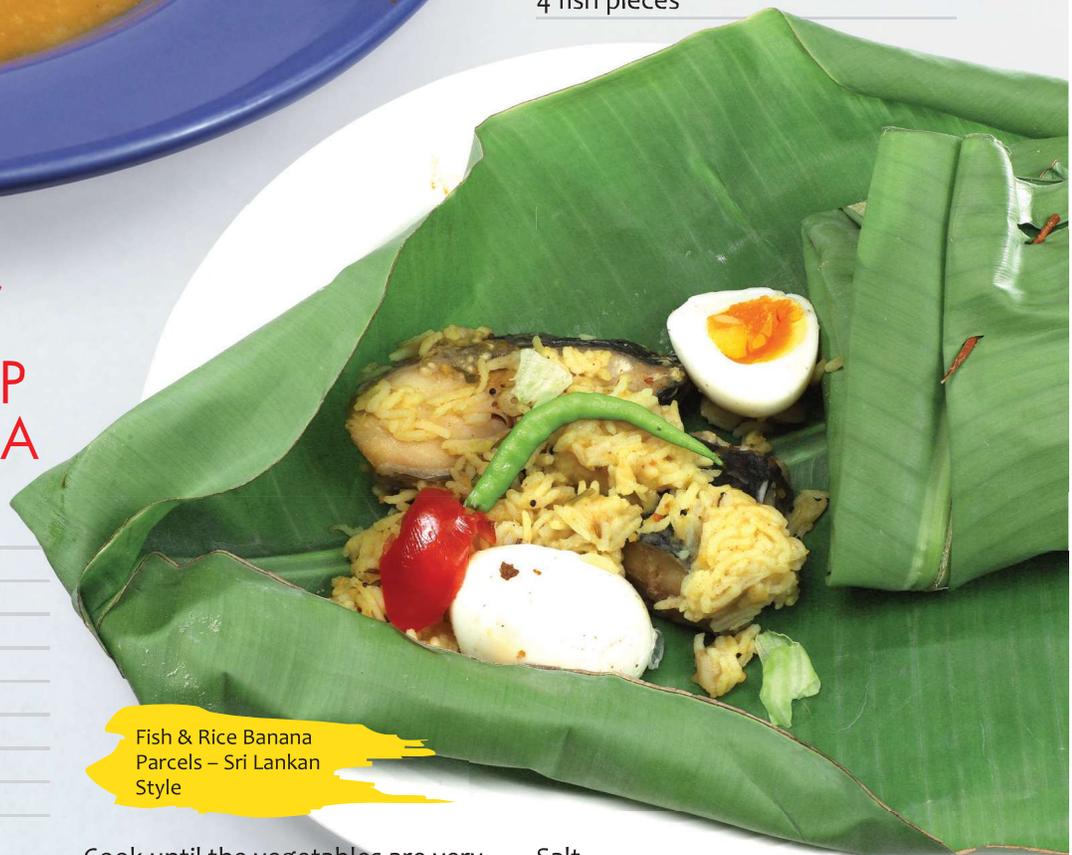
Prepare the soup by cooking all the veggies with ginger garlic in a pressure cooker with 1 cup water.

coarsely crush all the ingredients in a mortar and pestle.

## FISH & RICE BANANA PARCELS – SRI LANKAN STYLE

### INGREDIENTS

- Banana leaves
- 1 cup rice
- 2 tsps *moong dal*
- 1 cup mixed vegetables
- 4 fish pieces



Fish & Rice Banana Parcels – Sri Lankan Style

Cook until the vegetables are very soft. Cool to room temperature. Blend in a mixer to obtain a thick soup consistency.

Bring the soup to a simmer. Add the butter and put off the heat. Mix in lemon juice or serve with lemon wedges separately. Serve topped with *thedcha* for the added flavour and taste.

To prepare the *thedcha* -

- Salt
- ½ tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp chopped lemongrass
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 3 tsps oil
- Boiled egg

### METHOD

Sprinkle salt and turmeric on the fish pieces and keep aside.

Heat the oil and stir fry the vegetables. Add the rice and add all the spices and stir gently. Add coconut milk and cook until the rice is cooked 90 percent and only slightly soggy. Now use the banana leaves. Place a portion of the almost tender rice and one piece of the fish in each parcel. Fold leaves into parcels and steam for 10-11 minutes so that the fish pieces are cooked and the rice is also fully cooked and tender. This steaming process ensures that the rice is steaming hot when it is served. You could serve it with a boiled egg. Looks good and retains the flavour.

Indian Style Egg Curry with Ramen



## INDIAN STYLE EGG CURRY WITH RAMEN

### INGREDIENTS

2 boiled eggs

#### For the Curry

2 tbsps brown onion paste  
2 tsp ginger garlic paste  
1 tsp red chilli paste  
Salt  
1 tsp turmeric  
2 tps cumin powder  
1 tbsp coriander powder  
2 tbsps tomato purée  
3 tps mustard oil

### METHOD

To prepare the egg curry/ heat the oil and fry the boiled eggs lightly. Remove and keep aside . In the pan add all the pastes and spices. Stir fry for 2-3 minutes. Add one cup of water and let the gravy simmer. Add the boiled fried egg into the gravy. Allow to simmer and put off the heat once the gravy is of the consistency you need. Serve with ramen.



Medu Vada with Chocolate Fondue

## MEDU VADA WITH CHOCOLATE FONDUE

### INGREDIENTS

#### For Medu Vada

1 cup urad dal  
2 tbsps fine sooji  
Salt  
3 pinches soda bicarbonate  
3-4 crushed peppercorns  
Oil for frying

#### For Fondue

1 cup chocolate sauce  
2 tbsps cream

### METHOD

Soak the *dal* overnight. Drain out water and grind the *dal* and *sooji* together into a fine paste. Remove to a mixing bowl. Mix in pepper, rice flour and soda and blend well with your fingers. Beat with your fingers to obtain a fluffy batter.

Fry *vadas* with a hole in the centre. Deep fry in hot oil on medium heat. Turn once or twice and fry till golden brown. Serve with fondue .

To prepare the fondue. Mix in the chocolate sauce and cream. Bring to a light simmer in a thick bottomed pans and serve warm with pieces of *medu vada*.



Idli with Mushrooms in White Sauce

## IDLI WITH MUSHROOMS IN WHITE SAUCE

### INGREDIENTS

4 steamed idlis

#### For Mushroom Sauce

3 tbsps butter  
3 tsps olive oil  
200 gms mushrooms  
Salt and pepper  
Fresh thyme  
Microgreens

#### For Sauce

3 tbsps flour  
150 ml milk

### METHOD

If you are using button mushroom wash and prick but keep mushroom whole. If Oyster mushrooms, cut into medium pieces.

Heat the butter and oil together. On medium heat stir fry the mushroom with salt pepper till mushrooms have shrunk in size.

In the meantime mix in the flour and milk in a mixing bowl. Stir and blend to form a smooth paste like a slurry. Add the thyme. Pour over the mushroom and stir gently to ensure



Tandoori Chicken Iceberg Lettuce Rolls

lumps don't form. Once the sauce begins to thicken, put off the heat at once. Serve over hot steaming idli garnished with micro greens. A few drops of chili oil is a good option for the garnish.

## TANDOORI CHICKEN ICEBERG LETTUCE ROLLS

### INGREDIENTS

Iceberg lettuce  
1 cup shredded tandoori chicken or

sabji

Salad

Farsaan / bhujia

### METHOD

Wash and pat dry the lettuce. Place a portion of shredded

tandoori chicken / any sabji, a portion of fresh salad, a few tiny cubes of cheese if you like and some farsaan, bhujia, or French fries or any Indian hot gram. Roll the lettuce and serve at once as a starter.

## THAI GUAVA INDIAN CHAAT

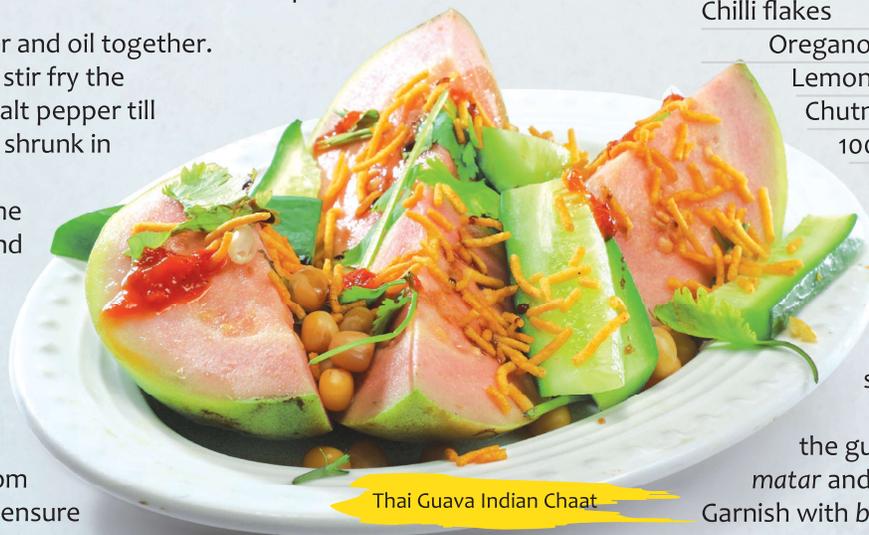
### INGREDIENTS

1 Thai guava  
1 cup safed matar  
Pink salt  
Anardana powder  
Chilli flakes  
Oregano  
Lemon juice  
Chutneys  
100 gms bhujia

### METHOD

Soak the safed chana in water overnight. Pressure cook with salt to taste.

To assemble: mix in the guava pieces, safed matar and spices and chutneys. Garnish with bhujia.



Thai Guava Indian Chaat

# A Plea for the Planet

Book review of *Fariyaad* by Minu Bakshi. By Samriti Dhatwalia

**F**ariyaad—meaning a plea—is the latest poetry collection by Minu Bakshi, and it speaks not of romanticising nature but of urgently protecting it. The book becomes a voice for the silent anguish of the environment, worn down by relentless human exploitation. Through evocative verse, Bakshi urges readers to listen, reflect, and act before it is too late.

## About The Author

Minu Bakshi is a multifaceted cultural force. A trained *Hindustani* classical singer, she is also a Professor of Spanish at Jawaharlal Nehru University, an accredited interpreter for the Government of India, and a renowned *Urdu* poet. Beyond academia and literature, she has served as the Chairperson of the NGO *Savera*, working towards the upliftment of underprivileged women and children, and as the former Chairperson of the UK Asian Film Festival, London. Her life reflects a seamless blend of art, empathy, and social commitment.

## Environment As The Core Theme

*Fariyaad* is divided into four sections, each marking an emotional and thematic shift from lament to hope. What begins as a cry of pain gradually transforms into a surrender filled with a belief that humanity can still heal its relationship with nature.

## Part A: Aah – A Nature's Cry

The opening section confronts environmental degradation head-on. Bakshi addresses deforestation, pollution, forest fires, erratic weather, and climate imbalance, placing responsibility squarely on

human actions. Her poetry does not accuse aggressively, instead, it awakens conscience and urges accountability.

## Part B: Chup Ka Shor – Pandemic Vs Minu

The second section reflects on the COVID-19 pandemic. A time suspended between fear and fragile hope. Bakshi personifies the virus as a *janib-maraz*, capturing its terrifying omnipresence, while her verses echo collective grief, anxiety, and resilience.

## Part C: Khushnuma Manzar – Where The Heart Sings

This section celebrates the monsoon and the season of *sawan* as a healing force. Rain becomes joy, memory, and renewal, offering relief



and reminding readers of nature's enduring beauty.

## Part D: Surrender – Regret, Forgiveness, Hope

The final section calls for responsibility and repair. Bakshi urges humanity to acknowledge its role in ecological destruction and act before opportunities vanish. She beautifully writes to bring nature back to its beauty, make it a bride again, so the beast never finds a place in its heart.

## Why Read *Fariyaad*

*Fariyaad* is both a lament for what we are losing and a celebration of what can still be saved. Published by Sterling Publishers, priced at ₹495, and spanning 250 pages, it is a poetic reminder that the planet is still listening, only if we choose to respond. The words jump outside the book, and pierce deep into our souls.



Flirty and fearless, *Lover Girl* is designed for moments when confidence does the talking. Featuring playful hemlines and soft movement, this dress captures youthful romance with a modern edge—perfect for nights that begin spontaneously and end memorably.

# Love Looks Better on an IT GIRL

There's an IT GIRL in every woman—defined by style with intention, quiet sensuality, and a confidence shaped by life lived on her own terms. This collection celebrates today's IT GIRL: self-aware, instinctive in her styling, and unapologetic in choosing what she wears and how she wears it.

This Valentine's edit from the label IT GIRL is an ode to modern romance—bold, playful, and powerfully feminine. Red takes centre stage in all its moods, from flirtatious scarlet to sultry cherry hues, softened and elevated with luminous touches of gold. Fluid silhouettes, statement western dresses, and thoughtfully crafted details come together to create looks that feel effortless yet undeniably impactful.

Inspired by contemporary celebrity style moments, this edit isn't about dressing for anyone else. It's about dressing for yourself—romance, redefined the IT GIRL way.

A subtle showstopper, *Alexandria Gold* introduces luminous accents that elevate classic red into something strikingly modern.



Playful yet polished, *Babygirl Red* is designed for the IT GIRL who leads with confidence and charm. Rendered in a vibrant red hue, the dress features a flattering silhouette that feels both youthful and refined.



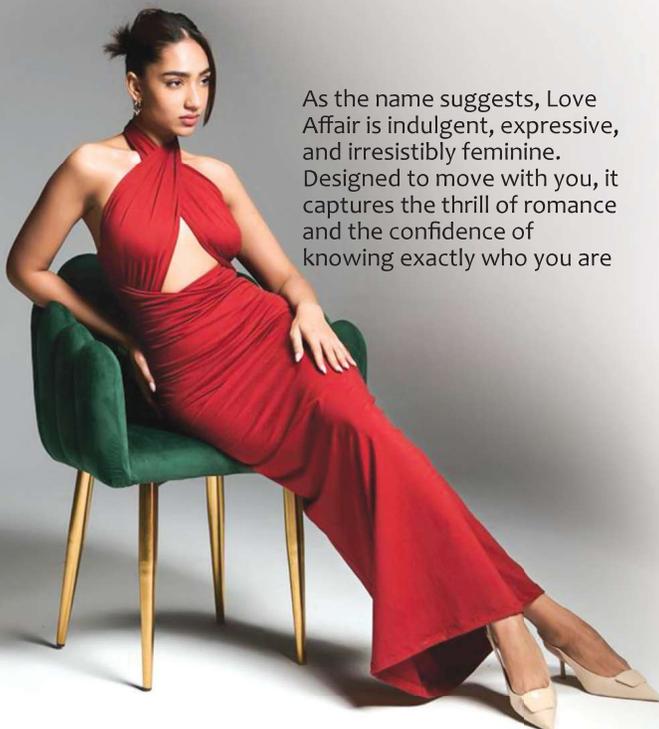


Sleek, sculpted, and contemporary, *Carla* is for the woman who commands attention without trying. Clean lines and a confident fit make it ideal for elevated evenings where understated glamour speaks volumes.

Drama meets grace in *Rosalina*. With its flowing form and statement presence, this dress is designed for grand entrances and unforgettable impressions—romance at its most cinematic.



Romantic with restraint, *Lily Red* balances femininity with structure. Its fluid lines and refined red hue make it a timeless Valentine's silhouette—effortlessly elegant, yet unmistakably bold.



As the name suggests, *Love Affair* is indulgent, expressive, and irresistibly feminine. Designed to move with you, it captures the thrill of romance and the confidence of knowing exactly who you are



I have curated this special Valentine's Day edit from the label IT GIRL, with today's IT GIRLS at the heart of the story. Each look is styled to empower choice and versatility, encouraging women to express romance through their own lens—where confidence leads, styling feels instinctive, and self-love remains the starting point.

**Keerti Aggarwal**  
Creative Director & CEO, KA  
@keertiaggarwalofficial



IT GIRL was launched as a love letter to confident women, celebrating individuality and self-expression. I design each line to resonate with today's IT GIRL energy - capturing that subtle spark of ease, where personal style feels instinctive, effortless, and true.

**Riya Mohnot**  
Founder, IT GIRL  
@riyamohnot\_

# Friendships *That Fade*

Why women grow apart — and how to heal.

By Vinita Rk

I didn't wake up with a realisation. It happened gradually while we were still in touch, while we still exchanged the reels and the messages. I just came to realise that days and weeks and months passed, life moved on, and so did our friendship.

We were still friends. We would always be friends. But we don't know each other's whereabouts; we don't discuss every ridiculous thought that comes to our mind like we used to. We might still reach each other at a time of crisis, but we are replaced by others who are more needed today.

That doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. There is a particular kind of heartbreak women rarely speak about — the quiet ending of a friendship that once felt unshakeable. We celebrate best friends through college, first jobs, weddings, and 3 AM conversations. But no one prepares us for the slow drift that happens with age, responsibility, and changing versions of ourselves. And unlike romantic breakups, friendship endings don't get rituals, labels, or closure. They simply slip away between texts not replied to and phone calls postponed “for when things settle.”



## Why Women Grow Apart

Life shifts faster than friendships can keep up. Women move through life stages at different speeds — marriage, career leaps, motherhood, caregiving, health transitions. When one friend is navigating sleepless nights with a newborn and another is exploring a new career or relationship, the emotional rhythms no longer match. The distance isn't intentional; it's circumstantial.

The emotional labour becomes uneven. Women often carry the weight of nurturing relationships, but sometimes a friendship becomes one-sided without anyone realising it. One person checks in, remembers birthdays, plans meetings. The other is overwhelmed or distracted. Over time, imbalance creates quiet resentment, and the bond thins thread by thread.

We change, and our friendships don't always change with us. The girl you were at 16 or 25 or 35 isn't the woman you are now. As identities evolve — boundaries, beliefs, confidence, emotional needs — friendships built on old versions of you can feel misaligned. Growth is beautiful, but it also means outgrowing some relationships.

Unspoken hurts accumulate. Women often avoid confrontation to keep peace, but small disappointments leave tiny cracks. A missed milestone. A careless comment. Support that didn't arrive when needed. With time, silence becomes a wall neither person knows how to climb.

Life becomes crowded. Between work deadlines, managing homes, caring for children or ageing parents, and tending to our own mental health, friendship becomes something squeezed between responsibilities. Not lost — just pushed aside until it withers.

## How To Heal When A Friendship Fades

Acknowledge the loss without blaming yourself. The end of a friendship is still a form of grief. It's okay to miss the closeness, the shared language, the comfort. But



**FRIENDSHIP FADING ISN'T FAILURE — IT'S A NATURAL, TENDER PART OF ADULTHOOD. WOMEN CARRY SO MANY ROLES THAT SOMETIMES OLD BONDS SIMPLY CANNOT FIT INTO NEW LIVES. BUT EVERY FRIENDSHIP, SHAPES US IN WAYS THAT STAY.**

it's also important to remember: not all endings need villains. None of you is a bad character. Sometimes life simply rearranges people.

Reach out once, with honesty and without expectation. If the friendship matters, reach out — not to fix, but to express. A gentle message like "I miss you and hope we can reconnect" can open doors or bring closure. What matters is the sincerity, not the outcome.

Let the friendship evolve — even if that means fading. Some relationships return in a gentler form. Some settle into occasional check-ins. Some end quietly. Healing comes from accepting that friendships don't always stay the same, and that

change doesn't erase what they meant.

Make space for friendships that align with who you are now. As women grow older, friendships become more intentional. We seek bonds that are reciprocal, calming, and supportive — those that allow you to be imperfect, vulnerable, and real. These friendships don't demand constant presence, just consistency.

Cherish the ones that have stayed. There are always a few friends who ride out the storms and seasons with you — the ones who remember your favourite flavour of coffee, who show up without being asked, who don't measure conversations in frequency but in depth. These are the women worth investing in.

Friendship fading isn't failure — it's a natural, tender part of adulthood. Women carry so many roles that sometimes old bonds simply cannot fit into new lives. But every friendship, whether it lasted a decade or a season, shapes us in ways that stay.

There's comfort in knowing that endings can be gentle. That drifting apart doesn't make the friendship any less real. That we can love people and still let them go. And that sometimes, years later, life brings old friends back — wiser, softer, and better aligned with the woman you will be.

We

## Beauty Queries



# Q & A

**I WEAR A HELMET DAILY WHILE commuting, and my forehead has started breaking out in small bumps. Is this acne or irritation?**

This is commonly known as frictional acne or acne mechanica, triggered by heat, sweat, and friction caused by helmets or headgear. Clean your helmet inner lining regularly. Post-commute, gently cleanse your face with a salicylic acid or tea tree-based face wash. Apply a light anti-acne gel or niacinamide serum in the evenings to soothe inflammation. If breakouts persist, a dermatologist may prescribe a topical retinoid.

**I'VE RECENTLY NOTICED THAT MY LIPS tan faster than the rest of my face, especially when I step out in the sun. Is that possible?**

Yes, lips have less melanin and no oil glands, making them especially vulnerable to UV-induced pigmentation. Use a lip balm with SPF 30 or higher daily, especially before sun exposure. Reapply every few hours. Ingredients like licorice root, kojic acid, or vitamin C in lip care products can help reduce existing pigmentation. Avoid lemon and DIY scrubs—they can worsen sensitivity.

**MY HAIR FEELS STICKY AND sweaty within a day of washing, even though the weather isn't hot. Is this due to pollution or a scalp issue?**

It could be seborrheic overproduction—your scalp's way of compensating for external stress like pollution, stress, or poor water quality. Wash with a mild clarifying shampoo (once weekly) and a pH-balanced daily-use shampoo. Use scalp serums with zinc PCA or salicylic acid to regulate oil. Avoid conditioner near the roots and switch to a microfibre towel to dry hair, which reduces build-up.

**I'VE BEEN NOTICING VERTICAL CRACKS on my heels that don't go away even after pedicures. Is this just dryness or something deeper?**

Chronic heel cracks, also known as heel fissures, are often caused by a mix of dryness and prolonged standing on hard surfaces—common in Indian households. Use a urea-based heel balm at night and cover feet with cotton socks. Avoid walking barefoot on hard tiles. Weekly foot soaks with Epsom salt, followed by gentle scrubbing and occlusive moisturisers, help in long-term management.

**MY UNDER-EYE AREA LOOKS dark and sunken even after 8 hours of sleep. Is this a hydration issue or hereditary?**

It could be a mix. Structural hollowness plus thin skin in the under-eye can exaggerate shadows. Dehydration, allergies, and sun exposure also worsen pigmentation. Apply a caffeine- or peptide-infused eye cream twice daily. Use sunscreen around the eyes and wear UV-protective sunglasses. Cold tea bags or under-eye patches can help temporarily. For long-term results, under-eye fillers or laser resurfacing can be discussed with a dermatologist.

**I KEEP GETTING TINY WHITE PATCHES on my skin during winters, especially on arms and legs. Could this be a sign of vitiligo?**

Not necessarily. These could be pityriasis alba—common in Indian children and young adults—or post-inflammatory hypopigmentation due to dryness. Moisturise twice a day with a ceramide-rich cream. Avoid using harsh soaps or scrubs. If the spots grow, consult a dermatologist. Avoid self-diagnosing vitiligo without medical input.

**I LOVE PAINTING MY NAILS BUT LATELY they've started yellowing and getting brittle. Is this due to nail polish?**

Yes, frequent application of dark polishes without breaks can stain nails and weaken keratin. Take regular "nail polish holidays" for at least a week each month. Always apply a strengthening base coat. Massage cuticle oil with vitamin E or jojoba oil every night. For yellowing, gently buff the surface or apply lemon juice + glycerin twice a week.

Readers are invited to send their problems of child care and child rearing. Woman's Era will provide the answers, solutions to problems usually encountered by mothers, young and old. Address your letters (neatly written on white paper) to:

**Woman's Era** E-3, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055.



# Wedding Now And Then

Evolution of weddings;  
from rituals to reels.

By Renuka Krishnaraja



As the first light embraced the earth, the air felt fresh with the fragrance of the exquisitely adorned, colourful flowers all around us. The day was bright and pronounced with rituals and emotions in equal measures. The evening events turned out to be fun-filled and dazzling, with the stars having descended in the form of our lovely couple. It was truly a dream wedding. Yes, the wedding season has begun.

And a recent wedding in the family has made me reflect on how our Indian weddings have evolved in recent years. Gone are the days when marriages used to be simple ceremonies that were merely ritual-centric and family-

oriented. Weddings nowadays exhibit an interesting blend of traditions and modernity, making them remarkably experiential affairs rather than mundane. First of all, what appealed to me was the choice of the venue and the emphasis laid upon the aesthetic aspect. I am quite sure these elements would have been fairly basic a couple of years ago. From colour scheming to illumination, stage settings, and entrance designing, the attention given to each and every detail is mind-boggling.

After all, your special day has to be the best. Couples today themselves readily get involved in the planning and execution of their wedding events, while back in the day, these were the duties of the bride's and groom's parents and elders of the family. Also, it's apparent that present-day couples are more expressive and casually unveil their personalities at weddings.

We hardly see any shy brides or quiet grooms. Another major factor currently is the photo-shoots, or capturing all the special moments magnificently. Photographers have creative ideas that can take your

pictures to the next level. Likewise, couples too don't shy away from romantic poses. It seems like all of these render fairy-tale vibes to the occasion. Now, let's talk about the bridal outfits and their stunning craftsmanship.

Luxurious silk *saris* and *lehengas*, elegant blouses, make-up, hairstyles, *mehendi* designs, myriad accessories—the list goes on. Bridal makeover has become a roaring business all in itself. One more fanciful feature we notice these days is the show-stopping entry of the bride and groom. This extravagant sequence is meticulously navigated, making it the highlight of the D-day. Last, but not the least, talk about weddings and how could we forget the feast.

Past or present, our regional multi-course meals are an inseparable part of weddings, in honour of our traditions. And then, for the reception and other evening events, an array of popular Indian and global delicacies is set up that entirely steals the show. Well, putting it in a nutshell, our weddings are definitely getting ingenious in modern times. Indeed, that's why they call it 'the Big Fat Indian Wedding.'

We





# When Love Meets *Lifestyle*



Romantic love often begins in abstraction—late-night conversations, heightened emotions, idealised versions of each other. But the true test of intimacy arrives much later, when love steps out of fantasy and into everyday life. Into morning routines, mismatched schedules, shared wardrobes, personal habits, and emotional weather that isn't always predictable.

This is the moment when love meets lifestyle.

Here, romance is no longer measured by intensity, but by attentiveness. By how deeply partners observe each other's rhythms—what calms them, what exhausts them, what makes them feel quietly taken care of. Gifting, in this phase, sheds its performative layers. It is no longer about impressing or surprising, but about understanding.

A thoughtful lifestyle gift doesn't interrupt a partner's world; it integrates into it. It finds its place in their mornings, their workdays, their self-care rituals, their need for rest, and their moments of solitude. These gifts become gentle affirmations that say, I know how you live, and I choose to love you there.

The following curation explores lifestyle gifts not as material objects, but as extensions of care—items that support, soften, and silently strengthen the bond between two people learning to grow together.



## Care That Begins At The Body

Skinvest brings science-backed, sustainability-led skincare into everyday routines with products that feel intuitive, effective, and modern. From the **Light It Up Sunscreen Body Spray**, a lightweight SPF 40 PA++++ oil-mist that protects, hydrates, and brightens year-round, to the **Bomb Bum Cream**, a dermatologist-approved firming formula with a built-in massager for improved texture and elasticity, and the **Smoothie Body Conditioner**, an in-shower hydrator that delivers instant, non-sticky softness—Skinvest turns daily body care into a thoughtful self-care ritual. **Website:** [skinvest.care](https://skinvest.care) **Instagram** - @skinvest.skincare

## Rituals For Hair, Rooted In Care

Traya brings together science and tradition with a thoughtfully curated haircare lineup designed for long-term results. The **Anti-Dandruff Shampoo Combo** offers a 360° approach to winter scalp care, addressing stubborn dandruff. Complementing this is **Her Nourish**, an Ayurvedic formulation crafted for women experiencing hormonally driven hair fall, working gently from within to restore balance. Rounding off the routine, **Hair Actives Serum** delivers targeted, science-backed care with clinically proven actives that strengthen follicles, reduce hair fall, and improve hair density—making this trio a truly meaningful, wellness-led gift.

**Website:** traya.health **Instagram:** @traya.health



## Skin, Seen And Supported

Alive+Well curates a results-driven skincare wardrobe that blends clean formulations with visible performance. From the **No Baggage Under Eye Cream Gel**, powered by caffeine, vitamin K, and peptides to lift, brighten, and de-puff tired eyes, to the **Vitamin C Serum – C-cret Potion**, which targets dullness and uneven tone for instant radiance, the range focuses on everyday skin correction. The **Soothe Me Away Gel** calms sensitive or post-treatment skin, also ensures hydration, protection, and a healthy glow.

**Website:** aliveandwellshop.com  
**Instagram:** @aliveandwellofficial

## Mindful Selfcare

LEAFBERRY's **Valentine Glow Ritual Hamper** offers a thoughtfully curated duo that blends romantic botanicals with skin-loving science. Featuring the **Floral Fusion Face Wash** infused with Rose, Hibiscus, and Hyaluronic Acid, the hamper gently cleanses while maintaining essential hydration and softness. Paired with the **Veti Glow Toner**, enriched with Rose, Vetiver, Red Ginseng, ceramides, and Hyaluronic Acid, it calms, balances, and strengthens the skin barrier for lasting radiance.

**Website:** leafoberryskincare.com  
**Instagram:** @Leafoberry



## Everyday Haircare

Pantene strengthens everyday haircare with the launch of its **Bond Repair Conditioner**, a high-performance formula designed to help reverse up to three years of visible hair damage by rebuilding broken hair bonds. Powered by **Pantene's advanced Melting Pro-V technology**, the conditioner targets damage caused by frequent styling while keeping hair soft, smooth, and resilient. The product is available on Amazon.

**Website:** pantene.in  
**Instagram:** @pantene\_india





### The Modern Touch-up

**Luxiora Cosmetics** redefines modern makeup with a skin-first philosophy crafted for Indian undertones, climate, and everyday wear. At the forefront is the **Blurre Pudding Blush**—India’s first pudding-texture blush—featuring a plush, cushiony formula that melts like a cream, sets like a powder, and delivers a soft-focus, natural flush. It nourishes while staying breathable and long-wearing. Completing the lineup are **Luxiora’s Lip Kit Trios**—three-in-one sets with a crème-matte lipstick, kiss-proof liquid matte, and high-shine gloss—infused with Vitamin E, Candelilla, and SPF 15+ for effortless day-to-night beauty.

**Website:** luxioracosmetics.com

**Instagram:** @luxioraofficial

### The Go-To Skincare Kit

**Magical Blends** reimagines skincare with its **All-in-One Skin Solutions Kit**—a patented, personalised system designed to adapt to your skin’s changing needs. Perfect for beginners and minimalists alike, the 3-week kit features two hydrating bases and six targeted serums made with plant-based actives to address concerns ranging from acne and pigmentation to dryness, dullness, and early ageing. Easy to mix and match, the routine allows complete flexibility and blended together safely. Dermatologically tested and free from harsh additives, this kit simplifies skincare into one intuitive, travel-friendly solution.

**Website:** magicalblends.in

**Instagram:** @magicalblends\_mb



### A Scent That Stays Close

**Fonzie Folksy’s Evenfall** is a winter fragrance that captures the quiet poetry of slow, unhurried evenings. Opening with a soft brightness of Bergamot and Saffron, the scent gently unfolds into a warm heart of Cardamom and Leather. As it settles, rich notes of Oud and Patchouli create an enveloping, lingering trail that feels both grounding and indulgent. Deep, intimate, and comforting, **Evenfall** mirrors the calm strength of winter nights—perfect for candle-lit dinners, reflective moments indoors, or crisp evenings under the stars.

**Website:** fonziefolksy.com

**Instagram:** @fonziefolksy



### Love, Lived Thoughtfully

As relationships mature, love stops demanding proof and begins valuing consistency. It learns to exist in shared silences, familiar routines, and unspoken understanding. In this landscape, the most meaningful gifts are rarely the most extravagant. They are the ones that feel accurate—chosen with insight, timing, and emotional awareness.

Lifestyle gifts, when given with intention, become part of a relationship’s quiet architecture. They occupy shelves, desks, bedside tables, and daily habits—but more importantly, they occupy emotional space. They remind partners that care doesn’t always arrive loudly; sometimes, it arrives gently, exactly where it’s needed.

When love aligns with lifestyle, gifting transforms into something deeply personal. It becomes a language of observation, empathy, and sustained attention. Because in the end, lasting romance is not built on grand gestures alone—it is built on the small, thoughtful ways we show up for each other, again and again.

Elegant and timeless, the Emerald Noor Set is crafted for moments that call for quiet sophistication. The embroidered sleeveless kurta is paired with pleated palazzo pants and a soft sheer dupatta.



This Ivory Floral Set is all about soft elegance and graceful movement. The delicate printed jacket paired with flowy pleated bottoms creates a timeless look that feels light and refined.

## Styled With Grace for *Growing Moments*

The Celebration Collection at Darshana curated by Founder Darshan Kumar Sharma.



Rich in colour and detail, the Plum Jacket Set blends classic craftsmanship with modern styling. The embroidered jacket adds depth and character, while the pleated pants keep the look fluid and comfortable.



This Coordinated Set features a collared shirt paired with straight-fit trousers in a fresh lime green tone. The shirt is finished with floral prints, while the pants are detailed with subtle side lace accents.



Bold yet beautifully balanced, the Crimson Heritage Set blends traditional craftsmanship with a modern silhouette. The intricately detailed top is paired with draped dhoti-style pants and layered with a floral printed jacket for a striking contrast.



# Floating into Fitness With GetWetFit™

Redefining wellness with India's first wellness-on-water concept.



In a world where wellness is evolving beyond gyms and studios, GetWetFit™ is making waves—quite literally. Introducing a first-of-its-kind aquatic wellness concept, GetWetFit blends movement, mindfulness, and water therapy to create immersive experiences that feel less like workouts and more like soulful escapes. At the heart of this innovation lies FLAABH Fit—that is, Fitness on Water—a dynamic yet accessible activity conducted on specially designed AquaCharge boards. Participants engage their core, improve balance, and build strength while floating atop calm

pool waters. The gentle instability of water activates deep muscle groups, enhancing coordination and posture while significantly reducing impact on joints, making it suitable for beginners, athletes, and wellness enthusiasts alike.

Unlike traditional fitness routines, GetWetFit's aquatic sessions invite participants to slow down, tune into their breath, and connect with their bodies in a refreshing new way. Each movement becomes intentional, every breath more conscious—amplified by the soothing presence of water. The result is a workout that energises without exhausting and challenges without overwhelming.



**AT THE HEART OF THIS INNOVATION LIES FLAABH FIT—THAT IS, FITNESS ON WATER—A DYNAMIC YET ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITY CONDUCTED ON SPECIALLY DESIGNED AQUACHARGE BOARDS.**

Taking aquatic wellness even further, GetWetFit proudly presents the first-ever on-water healing experience, FLAABH™ Heal—Spa for the Soul. Conducted on Aquacharged boards, these transformative sessions combine the calming rhythm of water with sound healing, meditation, breathwork, and other holistic healing modalities. As participants lie comfortably on the boards, sound bowls, chimes, and therapeutic frequencies travel through the water, creating a deeply immersive sensory experience.

Water acts as a natural conductor of sound, allowing vibrations to resonate through the body more effectively. This unique combination

helps release stress, improve mental clarity, support emotional balance, and promote deep relaxation. Many participants describe the experience as meditative, grounding, and profoundly restorative—an antidote to modern-day burnout.

What sets GetWetFit apart is its seamless fusion of luxury, sustainability, and science-backed wellness. The brand is now launching Beyond Waters, offering premium wellness services on land as well—bridging the gap between physical vitality and mental clarity. While FLAABH masters water-based practices, this new suite of indoor experiences focuses on nurturing the mind and body beyond water.

Each GetWetFit experience is thoughtfully curated and hosted at five-star hotels, luxury resorts, wellness retreats, corporate offsites, expos, and marquee fitness events. The brand has already created waves across major Indian cities including Delhi, Gurugram, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Goa, partnering with premium hospitality and lifestyle brands.

GetWetFit is not just an activity; it is a movement towards mindful living. By harnessing the healing properties of water, sound, and conscious movement, the brand invites individuals to reconnect with themselves in the most elemental way.

**We**

# AN APPARITION PERSONIFIED

*Finding self through meditation and writing.*

*By Col Madhur Goyal, Sena Medal  
(Gallantry)*

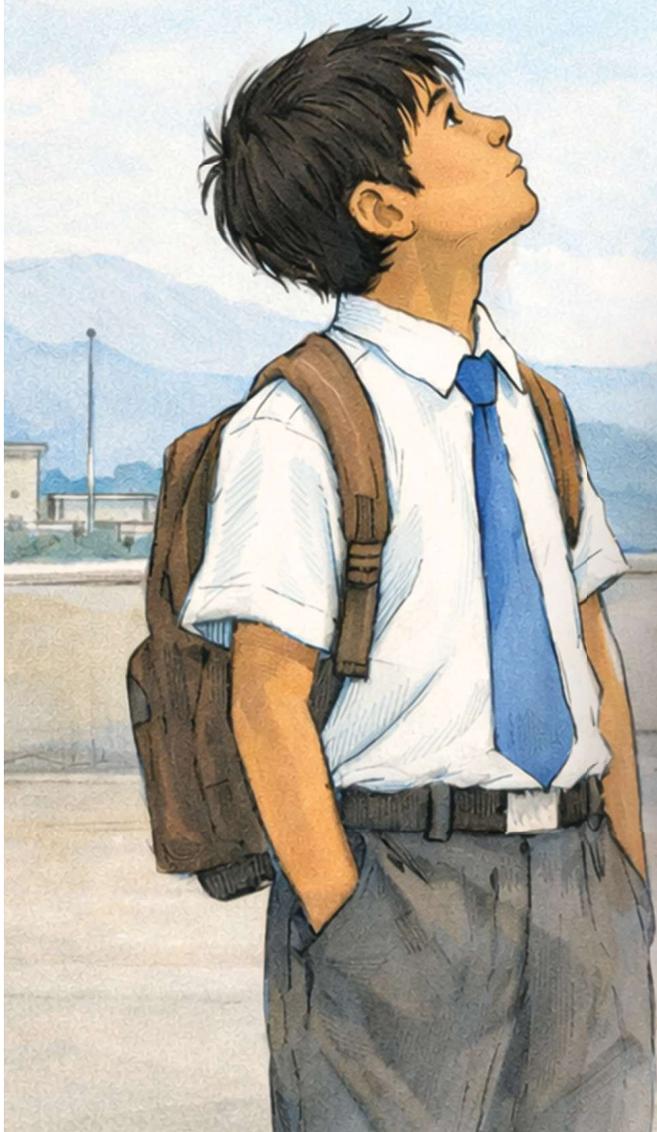


From my school days, I still remember a few lines of poetry that I often used to murmur.....

*"If I could soar like an eagle, in the sky so blue,  
I could see for miles, I did have the best view.  
If I could soar like an eagle, I'd visit the mountain high,  
I'd fly over the ocean and fish would watch me glide....."*

**O**ur destiny as human beings is to soar high and see life as a whole. But, virtually all of us have been caught in the net of separateness. By what Einstein once called "a kind of optical delusion of consciousness," though we are part of the whole creation, we see ourselves as set apart from the rest of creation. Somehow 'I' stops at my skin; beyond that is "everything else." And all my concern is with this little island 'I'. "This delusion," Einstein continues, "is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of creation in its beauty."

When and where did I get the inspiration to think like a 'saint'? I asked myself. Well, I think, rather funnily, a heartbreak triggered it. When you love someone ardently and they don't reciprocate after some time, you start





questioning yourself. Self-esteem takes a toll, and soon, you find your relationship has become a terminal disease, with you counting days to a certain end. The moment it reaches an end, your focus shifts from yourself to love, and you start to question love instead. After all, you have given so much but to no avail.

At that point, you see two roads: one downhill towards unhappiness, which convinces you to never love again; the second is the uphill one, which inspires you to love everyone instead. Why be dependent on one person's love when you can flood the love within you to so many people who might never have felt loved? That's the juncture when you start to think like a 'saint'.... When giving becomes your primary nature, when your sense of self leaves with the ones departing from your life. Becoming a saint might sound cool, but it's a perpetual battle. It's not as easy as I made it sound above. It's a constant battle of ego versus selflessness, of enthusiasm versus lethargy, of passion versus passiveness.

Luckily, my passion for making the world supersedes my passion for writing; even though that's the medium I chose to find myself. I have had the privilege of reading and writing for the past many years of my life, and it has changed me drastically as a person, giving me both the voice and the understanding to find the meaning and purpose of my life..... and it's only through that transformational journey that the itch to make the

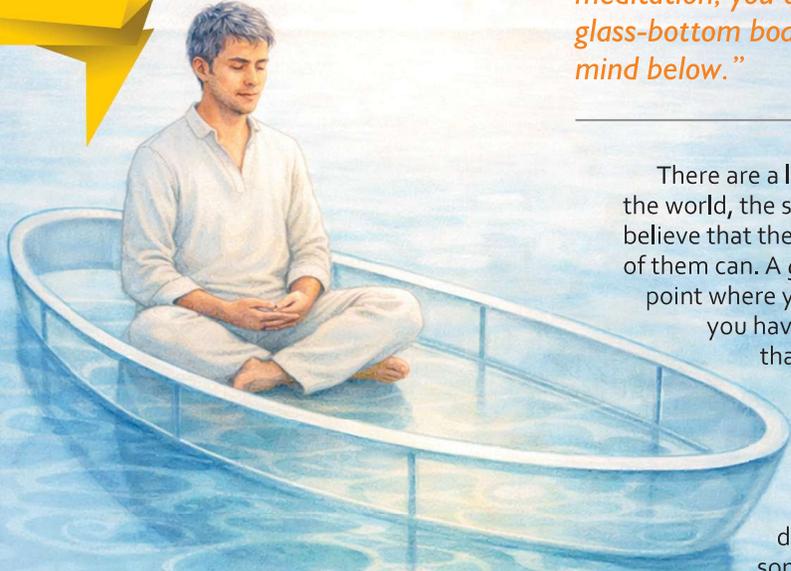
---

*“When your sense of self leaves with the ones departing from your life. Becoming a saint might sound cool, but it's a perpetual battle. It's not as easy as I made it sound above. It's a constant battle of ego versus selflessness, of enthusiasm versus lethargy, of passion versus passiveness.”*

---

world write got reinforced, because I want everyone to experience the very same transformation that I underwent over these years.

When I started attempting to write, I was pretty much like everyone else who starts writing. A wannabe. I wanted to be called a writer, I wanted to be famous, and I wanted appreciation. I would write simplistic prose and send it to my friends to read, and if anybody criticised it, I would be super defensive and try to explain to them why what I wrote was fresh and original. Ultimately, I started living in a bubble – a bubble of those friends and readers who either feared to say the truth, i.e., my writing was shit, to my face, or those who didn't really care about my writing. At that phase, luckily, I started reading more avidly, primarily to arm myself with better vocabulary, but reading had something better in store for me. It made me fall in love with the craft.



This is a good description of what happens in meditation.

My reading graduated simultaneously, and I jumped ship to reading literary fiction, the books that didn't answer questions, the books that left me with too many questions, uncomfortable ones about my notions of the world, politics, history, gender, society and religion. I read authors that I had not heard before, authors that none of my friends were reading, authors from all across the world, authors who wrote to provoke, not just to entertain. It was a difficult shift for me, but now I understand not only the world better, but also myself. For example, reading the book "The Buddha in The Attic" put me in the shoes of the unmarried Japanese women during World War and their ambitions and struggles; reading "The Interpreter of Maladies" got me thinking about identity and politics among men and women of Indian diasporas living in the US; reading "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" humanised people of terror, and one could see what drives one to such extremities.

None of these books took sides and left it to me to take the sides I believed in. It taught me that the right answer is not what I agree with the most, but what I disagree with the least. This turned my understanding of what writing can do, what writing should do, and turned me into a seeker more than a writer.... and as I went on this journey for more than five years, I was stumped to witness the sheer joy and empathy that filled me every single time I wrote (and read). Reading not only armed me with a better vocabulary but also a better grasp of human nature. And then something interesting happened. My transformation as a writer was so simple yet so profound that I wanted others to experience it with me. The quest to share this happiness was bigger than the quest for fame that eluded me when I began writing.

---

*"This is a good description of what happens in meditation. Consciousness expands, and as it does, the mind clears. After many years of meditation, you almost feel you are riding in a glass-bottom boat, gazing into the depths of the mind below."*

---

There are a lot of God men and God women in the world, the self-proclaimed gurus who make you believe that they can change your life. Truth is, none of them can. A *guru's* only job is to take you to a point where you realise you don't need a guru. That you have you, and there's no better teacher than yourself. The mediums to come to that realisation are different across religions, across nations. Some find a way through philosophy and knowledge, some through decade-long practice or 'tapa', some through devotion and complete surrender, and some from art and sports. For me, no, I have not realised myself, and I don't think anyone ever does, but all I know is that every day I come to know myself a little better, love everyone a little more than yesterday.

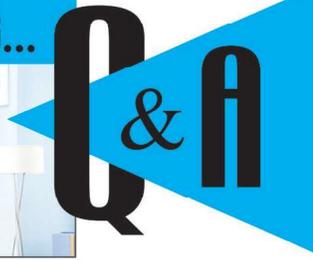
This is a good description of what happens in meditation. Consciousness expands, and as it does, the mind clears. After many years of meditation, you almost feel you are riding in a glass-bottom boat, gazing into the depths of the mind below. You can watch thoughts arising long before they reach the surface of consciousness, while it is possible to quiet or transform them. Not only that, when a wave of some powerful passion like anger is rising, hundreds of disturbing changes take place in the body as well as in the mind; all these can be observed.

Most practically, when you contemplate a course of action, you see that action together with its consequences. Whenever the mind becomes excited, we cannot consider the consequences of what we are about to do because we do not even see them. Actually, actions and consequences are inseparable, like an oak tree and the acorn from which it grew.... And as meditation deepens, even before you can see the consequences clearly, you can catch glimpses of them sharpening their claws and hear them getting ready: "Hey, old man, put on your fangs!" It doesn't look so good. The intellect reports, "Do you see what you're letting yourself in for?" And you reply, "I think I won't do that after all."

Eventually, after the strenuous practice of meditation and its applied disciplines, this delusion of separateness can be lifted from consciousness completely. When that is done, we no longer see only our small corner of existence; we see life whole. Now we see only in part, but then we shall see directly, "An Apparition Personified."

We

## My Family, My Friends and Me...



**I'M A 25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN FROM Jaipur, dating a Muslim man. My family is liberal on the surface but deeply biased underneath. I fear losing them if I marry him, but I fear losing myself if I don't. How do I choose between my future and my roots?**

This isn't just a love story—it's a collision of identities, histories, and inherited fear. First, know that your love is not wrong. But navigating it will require courage, not just emotion.

Start by strengthening your foundation as a couple—shared values, resilience, and a long-term plan. Prepare for turbulence. Then, talk to your family one-on-one, not as a "proposal" but as an introduction to the truth. Expect resistance. Respond with patience, not panic.

If they disown you, mourn the loss—but don't assume it's permanent. Many families resist change before learning to live with it. Your life is yours to build. Don't shrink it to fit someone else's prejudice.

**I'M A 31-YEAR-OLD WOMAN. MY BEST friend just had a baby, and ever since, our conversations revolve only around motherhood. I feel left out and irrelevant, even though I'm happy for her. Am I being selfish for missing the "old us"?**

You're not selfish—you're grieving a version of the friendship that's changed. Reach out gently: "I miss how we used to talk. I know your world has shifted, but I'd love to still share parts of mine with you too." New motherhood is consuming—but true friendship survives if nurtured, not resented. Meet her where she is—and bring your world along.

**I'M A 42-YEAR-OLD DIVORCED WOMAN living with my parents. My younger cousins—some even unmarried—**

**look down on me at family gatherings, making passive comments like "Don't end up like her." My silence is killing me. Should I speak up or ignore them?**

Silence won't protect your dignity—voice will. The next time, look them in the eye and say: "I didn't end up like this. I chose a better life for myself."

You don't owe them silence just because you're older. You owe yourself respect. Divorce isn't failure. In fact, enduring a bad marriage quietly would've been.

**I'M A 39-YEAR-OLD MAN. MY PARENTS live with us, and my wife wants separate living arrangements due to frequent clashes—mostly over child-rearing and finances. I feel torn. My mother says moving them out would "kill her spirit." How do I choose without breaking someone?**

Start by reframing the narrative—it's not rejection; it's reallocation. Suggest nearby housing, not exile. Say: "This is about preserving peace for everyone—not isolating you." Set up daily visits, shared meals, or weekend sleepovers. In India, living separately still carries stigma—but sometimes it saves relationships. Choosing your marriage doesn't mean abandoning your roots.

**I'M A 29-YEAR-OLD WOMAN IN A live-in relationship in Pune. We've been together for three years and are very happy, but my parents still think I'm "ruining my future" and "disrespecting our values." They refuse to meet him or visit my home. I'm exhausted trying to justify a life that feels perfectly valid to me. Can I ever bridge this gap?**

What you're experiencing is the emotional taxation of living ahead of your family's timeline. In India, love often demands legitimacy through

marriage. But remember, their discomfort doesn't invalidate your choices—it reflects their fears.

Start by lowering the intensity of your explanations. Don't argue. Instead, share your day-to-day happiness: a meal you cooked together, a small success he supported you through. Introduce him casually in conversation, not as a defense but as presence. Emotional familiarity often precedes formal acceptance.

With time, your stability may erode their rigidity. But even if you don't know this: a life built with love, trust, and clarity is worth more than outdated approval.

**I'M A 32-YEAR-OLD MAN IN AN arranged marriage for two years. We get along respectfully, but there's no passion, no deep emotional intimacy. She's a good person, but we feel more like flatmates. I feel selfish even thinking this, but is companionship enough for a lifetime?**

This is heartbreak wrapped in politeness—one many Indian couples quietly endure. Our culture often emphasises compatibility over connection, but the absence of intimacy, if left unspoken, becomes a slow grief.

Have an honest, vulnerable conversation with your wife. Ask: "Do you feel the same emotional distance as I do?" Don't frame it as blame. Frame it as curiosity. If she's aware, you can work on rebuilding—through therapy, quality time, shared vulnerability. If she's not, then it's time to ask yourself: is this silence sustainable?

Respect is a good foundation, but love deserves more than polite cohabitation. The question isn't whether this is enough for a lifetime—but whether you're willing to live halfway.

This column will tackle queries related to family, social environment and personality development. Please address your queries to:

**Woman's Era** E-3, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055. or log on to [Womansera.com](http://Womansera.com)



# When Nostalgia Becomes Palpable

Recycling architecture as a creative act of remembrance.

By S. Radha Prathi

When old homes or tenements are brought down for safety reasons, our heart aches. Many of us would like to retain a palpable memory of it besides pictures.

Lots of memories and nostalgia are associated with old buildings. They become landmarks and

conversation pieces over a period of time. However, when their presence in the locale is modified or removed, many familiar and well-loved designs disappear without a trace.

A little thought, effort, and money can salvage a good deal of the accessories, especially the fabricated ones, if given a new avatar.

Design is the name of the game. When all those windows, grills, gates, and screen doors are brought down from an old building, they are invariably sold as scrap or trashed. That makes sense if the material is in bad condition. However, it would be a shame if they are thrown away when they are still strong and intact.



**A LITTLE IMAGINATION AND THE COMPANY OF A VERSATILE FABRICATOR CAN HELP YOU CREATE NEW DESIGNS. REUSING AND RECYCLING MATERIAL HAS BECOME THE NEED OF THE HOUR FOR BOTH ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS.**

The fabricated iron rods that embellished window grills, fencing around balconies, windows, porches, and walkways can be reused as they are.

Yet, if the design of the new buildings cannot accommodate them, they can be taken apart and redeveloped as different designs.

A little imagination and the company of a versatile fabricator can help you create new designs.

The rods with the thinnest gauge can be turned into letters that can be used to name a building, musical instruments that can adorn walls, birds and flowers that can be fixed as garden accessories.

They can also be welded into clotheslines on the terrace or service veranda of homes, hotels, and laundries.

Stronger thin rods can be fabricated into grills that manifest as vertical gardens, pot holders, or trellis that can support creepers.

Old gates and screen doors can be fitted against pillars and walls on the exteriors of buildings and on the terrace in the capacity of pot holders.

When they are fitted in the basement of buildings, they can become raincoat and helmet holders, and the more ornate ones can be fitted inside the house or office space as semi-private dividers or demarcations. They can become



a part of the staircase or balcony railings. The shorter ones can also be used as child doors or even laundry baskets or kitchen baskets to hold tubers and onions.

Reusing and recycling material has become the need of the hour for both ecological and economic reasons. Many people follow this *mantra* diligently, but a little

resourcefulness can make this exercise into a creative one.

Once you start working on these ideas, you may come up with something unique yourself. The pride of having added your personal touch to something that you cherished will not only be light on your purse, but Mother Earth will also appreciate your kindness!

**We**

## Personal Problems

# Q & A

**I'M 38 AND STUCK IN A FRIENDSHIP** where I am manipulated and emotionally drained. I stay out of loyalty or fear confrontation but increasingly feel resentment and depression. How do I extricate myself without guilt or damaging my social life?

Emotional boundaries are essential for mental health. Identify toxic behaviours and their impact. Gradual disengagement, assertive communication, and structured exit strategies are recommended.

Therapy and supportive networks provide guidance and validation. Prioritising emotional health allows safe separation while preserving long-term social well-being.

**I'M 33 AND SUFFER FROM CHRONIC** insomnia. Even when I'm exhausted, I lie awake, ruminating about work, relationships, or past mistakes. Sleep deprivation is affecting mood, focus, and health. How can I break this cycle and restore restorative sleep?

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) is the gold-standard treatment. Combine this with sleep hygiene: consistent schedules, limiting screens, and calming bedtime rituals. Relaxation techniques (progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing) and mindfulness reduce rumination. Professional assessment ensures underlying medical or psychological conditions are addressed, restoring sleep quality.

**I'M 36 AND CONSTANTLY FEEL ANXIETY** about aging, mortality, and the uncertainty of the future. I obsess over appearance, health, finances, and time lost. The fear makes it hard to enjoy daily life, and I feel paralysed. How can I manage existential anxiety effectively?

Existential anxiety can be managed with acceptance-based therapy, mindfulness, and cognitive reframing. Focus on actionable, controllable behaviours—healthy habits, social connection, purposeful activities. Reflective journaling and philosophical exploration contextualise mortality. Professional therapy helps manage intrusive thoughts and promotes emotional resilience, allowing engagement with life despite uncertainty.

**I'M 35 AND FEEL INVISIBLE AT WORK.** Colleagues exclude me from conversations and decision-making, leaving me demoralised. I want to assert myself but fear backlash or appearing "pushy." How do I navigate workplace exclusion without compromising my career?

Organisational psychology emphasises strategic visibility, assertive communication, and alliance-building. Document contributions and present them tactfully. Seek mentorship for advocacy. Focus on collaborative achievements while highlighting individual contributions. Structured interventions foster recognition while maintaining professionalism.

**I'M 32 AND FEEL EMOTIONALLY NUMB** most days. I struggle to connect with family, friends, or even my partner. Activities that used to bring joy feel meaningless. I'm afraid therapy won't help, but I can't continue feeling detached. How do I reconnect with emotions and regain a sense of fulfillment?

Emotional numbness often stems from depression, trauma, or chronic stress. Evidence-based treatments include CBT, EMDR, and experiential therapies (art, movement). Gradual engagement in meaningful activities and mindfulness practices restores emotional sensitivity. Therapy provides structured processing, validation, and safe skill-building for emotional reconnection.

**I'M 34 AND FEEL TRAPPED IN DEBT** and financial instability. Worrying about bills and loans consumes my thoughts, affects sleep, and strains relationships. I feel paralysed and hopeless about regaining control. How do I manage both financial stress and the anxiety it creates?

Structured financial planning and financial therapy reduce stress and restore control. Break debts into manageable steps, track expenses, and explore professional guidance. Cognitive reframing and mindfulness help manage anxiety about finances. Combining practical action with emotional coping strategies builds



both financial and psychological stability.

●  
**I'M 36 AND COMPULSIVELY USE SOCIAL media to the point it disrupts work, sleep, and relationships. I feel addicted but guilty. How do I reclaim time and reduce compulsive engagement without feeling isolated?**

Behavioural interventions for digital addiction include identifying triggers, setting time limits, using blocking apps, and replacing screen time with rewarding offline activities. CBT and professional guidance help address underlying anxiety or validation-seeking behaviours. Structured reduction restores focus, productivity, and emotional balance.

●  
**I'M 33 AND FEEL OVERLY DEPENDENT on my partner emotionally. I fear abandonment, overcompensate in the relationship, and neglect personal needs. This makes me exhausted and anxious, yet I can't imagine leaving. How do I regain autonomy without harming the relationship?**

Attachment-focused therapy and CBT address co-dependency. Develop routines, hobbies, and social networks independent of the partner. Set gradual boundaries and practice self-reliance. Therapy strengthens self-worth, assertiveness, and relational balance, allowing healthier dependence.

●  
**I'M 31 AND CONSTANTLY RUMINATE on past mistakes. I replay scenarios repeatedly, feeling guilty and anxious, which prevents me from living fully in the present. How do I stop self-punishment and move forward?**

Rumination is linked to depression and anxiety. Evidence-based techniques include cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, and self-compassion exercises. Journalling and therapy provide structured processing. Focus on actionable growth rather than past errors. Repeated practice fosters emotional resilience and reduces compulsive self-blame.

●  
**I'M A 35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN, married for seven years, and I feel emotionally suffocated by my in-laws. They are not openly cruel, but**

**every choice I make—what I wear, how I raise my child, how I manage my home—is quietly scrutinised. Their comments are framed as concern or tradition, making it hard to object without seeming ungrateful. My husband insists I should "adjust" for peace, but I feel like I'm shrinking inside my own marriage. How do I reclaim my emotional space without causing irreversible family damage?**

What you're experiencing is chronic emotional intrusion, which often goes unrecognised because it lacks overt hostility. Over time, however, it erodes self-worth and autonomy. The first step is internal clarity—identify which areas of your life must remain yours. These are non-negotiables tied to dignity and mental health.

Next, focus on spousal alignment. Research in family psychology shows that marriages weaken when partners fail to protect each other emotionally. Frame conversations with your husband around impact rather than blame. Boundaries do not require confrontation. They can be implemented through consistent behavioural changes, limiting explanations, disengaging from unnecessary discussions, and asserting preferences calmly.

●  
**I'M A 40-YEAR-OLD MAN SUPPORTING my parents financially and emotionally, while my wife feels increasingly neglected. I constantly feel torn—if I prioritise my parents, my marriage suffers; if I focus on my marriage, I feel overwhelming guilt. I feel emotionally exhausted and resentful, yet trapped in responsibility. How do I navigate this conflict without destroying my marriage or becoming emotionally numb?**

This situation reflects role overload, a common issue in adult caregiving dynamics. Guilt-driven responsibility often leads to burnout and marital strain. Begin by quantifying what you're giving—time, money, emotional labour—rather than vague obligation.

Transparent financial and emotional planning is essential. Support must be sustainable, not sacrificial. Marriages require intentional protection.

Involving your spouse in decision-

making restores partnership and trust. Family responsibilities should be structured. Balance is not abandonment, it is responsible adulthood.

●  
**I'M A 33-YEAR-OLD WOMAN DEALING with a mother-in-law who constantly positions herself as the victim. If I express discomfort, I'm portrayed as insensitive. If I stay silent, I feel emotionally crushed. She never insults me directly, but her sighs, stories, and subtle comments make me feel small. How do I handle this without becoming the villain?**

Victim-based manipulation relies on emotional reactions. The healthiest response is emotional neutrality—calm, and non-defensive communication. Avoid over-explaining or justifying yourself. Limit emotionally charged interactions and redirect conversations when necessary. Internally, validate your experience. Therapy can help you develop detachment and assertiveness. You are not required to absorb another person's emotional instability to prove respect.



**D**o you find yourself constantly saying “yes” to every request and invitation that comes your way?

- You have a habit of automatically agreeing to your friends’ and colleagues’ ideas and suggestions?
- You often struggle with saying “no” or asserting your own ideas?
- Bringing this down to your workplace, there are decisions that are constantly being taken by your bosses or senior colleagues that you don’t really agree with?
- You attend business meetings where constructive ideas are needed which will be of benefit to the organisation, but you don’t say anything, and when asked to contribute, you lie that you totally agree with everybody in the room.
- You fear that declining a request or expressing a different viewpoint will lead to conflict, disappointment, or rejection? If so, you may be stuck in the “yes person” cycle.

# YES OR NO?

Say yes but don’t be a yes person.

By Pushpa Bhatia

## Why Break This Habit

We live in a world where saying YES is rewarded by reinforcing social habits—whether in professional situations, sharing responsibilities at home, or even navigating intimate relationships. While it may seem like a noble trait, constantly saying YES can have negative impacts on your life, including a lack of time for yourself, a decline in self-confidence, and a decrease in overall happiness. The result is that it's unfortunately common to overfill your schedule with things that you're not really down for. Constantly saying yes to everything leaves you feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or even burnt out.

Living as a YES PERSON can be exhausting and overwhelming. You may find yourself constantly juggling commitments, never having a moment to relax or pursue your own interests. Additionally, always prioritising others over yourself can lead to a decrease in self-esteem and a sense of losing your identity.

## Root Causes Of Being A Yes Person

Being a YES PERSON is not a random behaviour. It stems from deeper-rooted causes that shape your mindset and actions. By understanding these underlying factors, you can gain valuable insights into why you have become accustomed to always saying "YES" and make conscious efforts to break free from this pattern.

**Fear of disappointing others:** One of the primary reasons people become YES PEOPLE is the fear of disappointing others. We are conditioned to believe that saying NO will result in negative consequences, such as rejection or disapproval. This fear can be rooted in childhood experiences or social pressures, making it challenging to prioritise our own needs and desires.

**Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence:** When you don't value yourself or your opinions, you seek validation from others by constantly saying YES. You believe that fulfilling others' expectations will earn you acceptance and approval, even if it comes at the expense of your own well-being.

**Desire for external validation:** The need for external validation often drives individuals to become YES PERSONS. They hope to gain recognition and praise, reinforcing a

**ONE OF THE PRIMARY REASONS PEOPLE BECOME YES PEOPLE IS THE FEAR OF DISAPPOINTING OTHERS. WE ARE CONDITIONED TO BELIEVE THAT SAYING NO WILL RESULT IN NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES, SUCH AS REJECTION OR DISAPPROVAL. THIS FEAR CAN BE ROOTED.**



cycle of seeking external validation rather than cultivating self-worth from within.

**Difficulty setting boundaries:** Many YES PEOPLE struggle with setting boundaries. They find it challenging to assert their own needs and desires, fearing that it may strain relationships or result in conflict. This difficulty in setting boundaries can stem from a desire to be liked or a fear of confrontation. As a result, YES PEOPLE end up sacrificing their own well-being and personal priorities to maintain harmony in their relationships.

By recognising these root causes, you can begin to dismantle the YES PERSON mentality and regain control over your life. It's important to remember that breaking free from this cycle is not about being selfish or uncaring towards others; rather, it's about finding a healthy balance between our own needs and the needs of others.

## How To Stop Being A Yes Person

Stopping the habit of being a YES PERSON involves a combination of self-awareness, assertiveness, and setting boundaries. Here are some steps to help you—

**Understand your triggers:** Reflect on situations where you tend to say YES. Is it due to pressure, fear of disappointing others, or wanting to be liked? Recognising these triggers can help you prepare for them.

**Assess your priorities:** Clarify your personal and professional goals. Knowing what truly matters to you can help you make more informed decisions about where to invest your time and energy.

**Set boundaries:** Your time and energy are valuable; it's okay to decline if you need to focus on self-care, rest, or your own priorities. Knowing your boundaries can empower you to say NO more confidently when someone asks for something outside those limits.

**Rehearse saying NO:** You should say NO when a request makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or uneasy, or when it would negatively impact your physical or mental health due to burnout or lack of energy.

**Use positive language:** Frame your NO in a positive way. For example—

“I can't take that on right now, but I appreciate you thinking of me.”

“I am flattered you asked, but I need to focus on my own tasks.”

“I appreciate the opportunity, but I must respectfully decline.”

“I'd love to, but...”

This makes it clear that you're not rejecting the person—just the request.

Paradoxically, saying NO when necessary and expressing your ideas can actually foster good relationships by showing that you value your commitments and can be honest about your capacity. Say it. Be confident. No one is going to kill you.

Always remember that intellectualism is the ability to put your ideas out there and be ready to defend them, whether or not the world believes in you.

So, as you wake up every morning to hit the road, determine not to be a yes man.

We

## A Rainy Day Reminder

The sky wore a dull grey look that morning. Rain fell in steady sheets, drumming on rooftops and flooding the streets. The wind howled through the lanes, bending trees and scattering leaves. My mother was feeling unwell and urgently needed a particular medicine to ease her discomfort. As it was unavailable at home, I stepped out into the storm, hoping the nearby pharmacy would have it.

To my dismay, the shop, barely five minutes away, was closed for renovation. The next one was nearly half an hour's walk away. The rain grew heavier as I trudged along the slippery, waterlogged road, clutching my umbrella against the gusts of wind. Vehicles splashed muddy water as they sped by, and my clothes clung to me uncomfortably. When I finally reached the small pharmacy, drenched and weary, relief washed over me to see the medicine in stock. But that relief was short-lived. The shopkeeper informed me that he accepted only digital payments. In my haste, I had left my cellphone behind and carried only some cash. Seeing my dismay, the man smiled kindly and said that because the weather was dreadful, I could pay him the next time I passed by his store.

His words warmed me more than any shelter could. At a time when hurried transactions often overshadow human connection, his gesture touched me deeply. I thanked him sincerely, took the medicine, and made my way home through the downpour. But as I reached the door, my heart sank—I couldn't find my house keys. I had left in such a hurry that I carried neither a handbag nor my phone, just the keys and cash. Panic set in. Had I dropped them on the road? What if someone with ill intent found them?

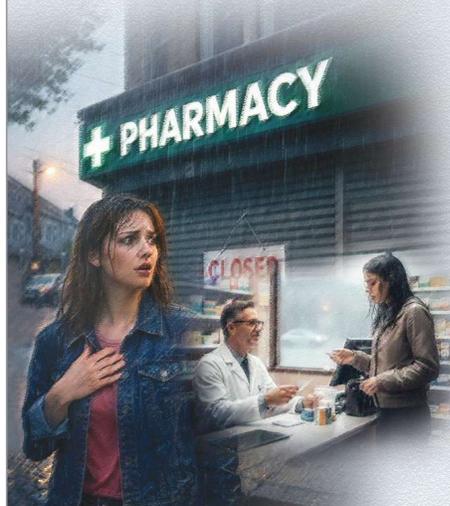
With these thoughts whirling in my mind, I rang the doorbell repeatedly until my mother, despite her weakness, opened the door. Listening patiently, she asked me to check the medical shop again, as she believed that there was a high chance I left it there.

Though weary, her calm tone gave me hope. I set out once more, eyes scanning the wet pavement for a glint of metal. The rain showed no mercy, yet I pressed on, half expecting disappointment. The streets were nearly deserted, and puddles mirrored the dim grey sky. When I finally reached the shop, the owner's face lit up. “Madam, I found your keys!” he said cheerfully. “I even came out to look for you after you left.”

Relief and gratitude flooded me. I thanked him profusely and paid for the medicine. The man simply smiled, as if kindness were the most natural thing in the world.

As I walked back home, the rain no longer felt harsh—it had turned gentle, almost melodic, as if sharing my joy. That day reminded me that even amid life's fiercest storms, kindness still shines through, lighting the way home. A gentle empathetic gesture is of course the best magic pill and can do wonders to our moods.

By Sripriya Satish



## Kitchen queries



# Q & A

**I** KEEP MY MASALA BOX ON THE counter for easy access, but the powders lose aroma quickly. Should I be storing them differently?

Spices degrade faster when exposed to heat, light, and air. A *masala* box is fine for everyday use but shouldn't sit near the stove or oven. Keep it in a shaded corner away from steam. Always use dry spoons and close the lid tightly after each use. Refill in small amounts from bulk storage jars, and consider rotating contents seasonally. For potent aroma, toast whole spices and grind small batches weekly instead of buying pre-ground.

**I** USE ALUMINIUM UTENSILS FOR boiling milk and tea. Over time, a dark layer forms on the base. Is this safe or should I switch materials?

The dark layer is oxidation of aluminium, especially when exposed

to milk sugars or tea tannins. While aluminium is lightweight and conducts heat well, it's reactive and not ideal for acidic or dairy-rich foods. Prolonged use can affect taste and safety. Switch to stainless steel or enamel-coated vessels for daily boiling. If continuing with aluminium, clean regularly with lemon juice and baking soda, and avoid using metal ladles that can scratch the surface.

**I** LOVE TRYING NEW GRAINS LIKE quinoa and millets, but my family complains about the texture being gritty or chewy. Am I cooking them wrong?

Many whole grains require different prep than polished rice or wheat. Always rinse them thoroughly—millets in particular can have sand or dust. Soak for at least 30 minutes before cooking. Use the right water-to-grain ratio: for most millets, 2:1 works best. Pressure cooking or steaming gives softer results. For quinoa, rinse until foam disappears to remove bitterness. Let grains sit covered after cooking to finish steaming—this improves fluffiness. You can also mix these grains with regular rice or dal for gradual acceptance.

**I** N OUR HOME, WE USE ALUMINIUM vessels inherited from my grandmother. They're lightweight and easy to use, but are they still safe for everyday cooking?

Aluminium cookware was a staple in Indian homes for decades, valued for even heating and affordability. However, with acidic or salty dishes—like

tamarind *sambar*, tomato *rasam*, or lemon rice—aluminium can react and leach into food over time. While occasional use is unlikely to cause harm, daily cooking, especially of sour foods, should shift to stainless steel, iron, or anodised aluminium. If the vessels are blackened, pitted, or dented, it's best to retire them.

**W** E USE TAP WATER FOR BOILING pulses and vegetables. But I've heard it affects taste and texture. Should I switch to filtered water for cooking too?

Yes, tap water in many regions of India contains high levels of chlorine or hardness (lime and mineral content) that can alter the cooking time and flavour of *dals* and veggies. Hard water toughens pulses, while chlorine can mask natural flavors. Using filtered or RO water—at least for soaking and final cooking—can make a noticeable difference in texture and taste. You'll also use less salt and spices since the food retains more of its natural essence.

**A** FTER YEARS OF USING A STONE grinder (*sil batta*), we recently switched to a mixer grinder. But our chutneys taste bland now. Why is that?

Traditional stone grinders crush ingredients slowly, releasing oils and aromas gradually, whereas electric mixers cut them at high speed, often generating heat that dulls flavours. To enhance taste, use chilled ingredients and pulse in short bursts.

Add tempering (*tadka*) with mustard seeds, curry leaves, and hing after grinding—it restores depth. For authenticity, try grinding part of the chutney (like coconut or ginger) on a mortar pestle and blending the rest. The combo brings back old-world flavour.

If you have any problem in cooking or kitchen, write to Woman's Era. We shall try to help you sort it out.

Address your queries to:

**WOMAN'S ERA**  
E-3, Jhandewala Estate,  
New Delhi-110 055.



# ROOTED IN ASIA, OPEN TO THE WORLD



A thoughtful blend of asian techniques and global ideas designed for today's adventurous home cook.

By Roma Ghosh

## NAAN FRITTATA

### INGREDIENTS

1 whole wheat tandoori naan, cooked and butter smeared on it

### For the frittata

2 cups grated vegetables like carrots, cabbage, capsicum, spinach – any combination

Slices of tomato

Salt

2 tsps ginger garlic paste

1 tsp red chillies paste

2 tbsps tomato sauce

1 tsp red chilli powder

1 tsp cumin powder

1 tbsp coriander powder

3 eggs, beaten

### METHOD

Take a non-stick pan and grease it well. Use a pan that is almost the size of the naan, maybe just half



Naan Frittata



an inch bigger, so that it is easy to unmould once cooked.

In a large mixing bowl, mix the vegetables with all the spices. In another bowl, beat the eggs and add salt to taste. Mix the beaten eggs into the spiced vegetables and blend well.

Heat the non-stick pan and allow it to warm slightly. Place the naan in the pan and gently pour the vegetables–eggs mixture over it. Swirl lightly so that the mixture spreads evenly over the naan. Place tomato slices on top.

Cover with a lid and cook on medium heat for 2–3 minutes. Reduce the heat further and continue cooking on low heat with the lid on until the eggs are fully set. This should take around 2–3 minutes on medium heat and 5–6 minutes on low heat.

Once the eggs are set and the top is firm, test by piercing a toothpick in the centre. If it comes out clean, the frittata is cooked. If not, cook for another minute or two. Switch off the heat and allow

it to rest with the lid on. After 3–4 minutes, remove the lid, gently loosen the bottom with a spatula, slide onto a plate, cut into slices, and serve with green chutney.

## CARAMEL PUDDING WITH LADOO CRUMB

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the caramel pudding

100 gms sugar (for caramel)

1 litre milk, reduced to half

5–6 tbsps sugar or as per taste

4 eggs, beaten

#### For the besan cashew ladoos

2 cups gram flour

200 gms sugar or as per taste

100 gms cashew powder

½ tsp cardamom powder

2 cups ghee

Motichoor ladoo for garnish

### METHOD

Prepare the ladoos by heating

half the quantity of ghee. Roast the gram flour in the ghee on low heat, stirring continuously until it turns light golden brown. Mix in the cashew powder, cardamom powder, and sugar. Continue stirring and add the remaining ghee gradually. Mix until the sugar melts and is fully absorbed. Allow the mixture to cool slightly and shape into ladoos.

To prepare the pudding, melt the sugar and line a baking dish with the caramel. Allow it to cool and set.

In the meantime, reduce the milk to half in a thick-bottomed pan and allow it to cool completely. Once cooled, add the beaten eggs, mix well, and pour into the caramel-lined mould. Steam for 20–25 minutes or until set. Cool completely and refrigerate for 3–4 hours.

Invert the pudding and garnish with crumbled ladoos and cashew pieces. You can also use crumbled motichoor ladoo or any variety of ladoo for a flavour twist.



Indian Style Chicken  
Khao Suey

## INDIAN STYLE CHICKEN KHAO SUEY

This version is prepared using *dahi ki kadhi* instead of coconut milk.

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the gravy base

- 1 cup sour curd
- 1½ tbsp *besan*
- ½ tsp turmeric
- Curry leaves
- 3 tsp white oil
- ½ tsp fenugreek seeds
- 2 dried red chillies

#### To serve

- 1 cup boiled noodles
- ½ cup fried browned onions
- 60 gms roasted peanuts, crushed or whole
- Lemon wedges
- Chopped boiled eggs
- Cooked shredded chicken
- Chopped spring onions
- 1 cup sautéed vegetables (beans, carrots), cooked till tender

### METHOD

Heat oil in a thick-bottomed pan. Add fenugreek seeds and dried red

Rajma Pate on Rice Crackers

chillies and allow them to splutter. Add the *besan* and roast on low heat until light golden.

Blend the curd with 3 cups of water and add to the roasted *besan* while stirring continuously to avoid lumps. Add turmeric and curry leaves. Simmer on low heat, stirring constantly, until the *kadhi* thickens. Cook for at least 30 minutes, adjusting consistency with water as needed.

Use this *kadhi* as the base. Serve

with boiled noodles and arrange all accompaniments on top.

## RAJMA PATE ON RICE CRACKERS

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups spicy *rajma*
- 3 tbsps fried onions
- 6–7 pods fried burnt garlic

Rajma Pate on  
Rice Crackers



#### To serve

- Garlic toast, bruschetta, or rice crackers
- Roasted sesame seeds for garnish

### METHOD

Drain all excess gravy from the cooked *rajma*. Grind the *rajma* with fried onions and burnt garlic into a smooth paste.

Serve on rice crackers garnished with roasted sesame and optional green chillies.



Steamed Chinese Bao with Indian Flavoured Chicken Filling and Curry Leaf Tadka

## STEAMED CHINESE BAO WITH INDIAN FLAVOURED CHICKEN FILLING AND CURRY LEAF TADKA

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the bao

2 cups flour  
 2½ tsp dry yeast  
 2 tsp sugar  
 3 pinches salt  
 2 tbsps butter

#### For the filling

2 cups minced chicken  
 2 tsp ginger garlic paste  
 2 tsp red chilli paste  
 3 tsp tomato paste  
 2 tsp *tandoori* chicken *masala*  
 2 tbsps white oil

#### For the tadka

2 tsp sesame oil  
 1 tsp mustard seeds  
 Curry leaves  
 ½ tsp red chilli powder

French Toast with Charred Picador Chillies



### METHOD

Heat oil and sauté the minced chicken for 2–3 minutes. Add remaining filling ingredients and cook for another 2–3 minutes. Keep aside.

Activate yeast by mixing it with sugar and lukewarm water. Let it rest for 5 minutes. Sift flour and salt, add to yeast mixture, and knead into a dough. Rub butter over the dough and allow it to rise for 4–5 hours covered with a moist cloth.

Divide dough into portions, roll into discs, fill with chicken stuffing, and steam for 15–18 minutes. Let cool slightly before opening the steamer.

Prepare the *tadka* by heating sesame oil, adding mustard seeds, chilli powder, and curry leaves. Pour over the baus and serve.

## FRENCH TOAST WITH CHARRED PICADOR CHILLIES

### INGREDIENTS

4 bread slices  
 4 eggs, beaten  
 3 pinches salt  
 1 tsp powdered sugar

1 tsp pepper powder  
 3 pinches cinnamon powder (optional)  
 2 tbsps milk  
 Butter mixed with white oil for frying

### METHOD

Mix eggs, salt, sugar, pepper, cinnamon, and milk. Heat butter-oil mixture. Dip each bread slice in batter and fry until golden brown on both sides.

Char picador chillies over open flame, slit and deseed if desired. Serve alongside French toast.



Samosa Chicken  
Burrito

## SAMOSA CHICKEN BURRITO

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the samosa

6 samosa patti  
Oil for deep frying

#### For the filling

1 cup cooked rice  
Few strands saffron mixed in 3 tsps milk  
1 cup mixed vegetables like carrot,

beans, peas, broccoli, mushroom  
½ cup grated cheese  
1 cup cooked mutton or chicken,  
minced or shredded  
1 tsp oregano  
1 tsp Italian spices  
1 tsp red chilli flakes  
Salt  
2 tsps lemon juice  
4–5 tsps olive oil

#### For the slurry

2 tbsps flour  
1 cup milk

### METHOD

Prepare the slurry by blending flour and milk into a smooth paste and keep aside.

To prepare the filling, chop all vegetables finely. Heat olive oil in a pan and sauté the vegetables till tender. Add salt, spices and stir gently. Mix the cooked mutton or chicken and stir for a minute. Add cooked rice, saffron milk, and lemon juice. Mix well. The filling is ready. Work with one *samosa patti* at a time. Fold into a cone, fill with the saffron rice mixture, and seal the top using the slurry. Prepare all *samosas* and deep fry in medium-hot oil for 3–4 minutes. Lower the heat and continue frying until golden brown and crisp. Serve with chipotle sauce.

## BANANA LACED WITH MAPLE SYRUP, GLAZED WITH SWEET PLUM AND STRAWBERRY SAUCE, GARNISHED WITH CRUSHED PAPAD

### INGREDIENTS

2 ripe bananas  
4–5 tbsps maple syrup  
1 cup freshly grated coconut  
1 cup strawberry sauce



Banana Laced with  
Maple Syrup, Glazed with  
Sweet Plum and Strawberry  
Sauce, Garnished with  
Crushed Papad

1 cup crushed roasted papad

#### For the strawberry plum sauce

1 cup halved strawberries  
1 cup plums, seeds removed  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 tsp red chilli flakes  
1 tsp rosemary powder  
2 pinches salt

#### METHOD

Prepare the plum sauce by boiling the fruits with 100 ml water. Add spices and brown sugar and simmer until fruits soften. Switch off heat, blend the mixture, strain through a sieve, and keep aside.

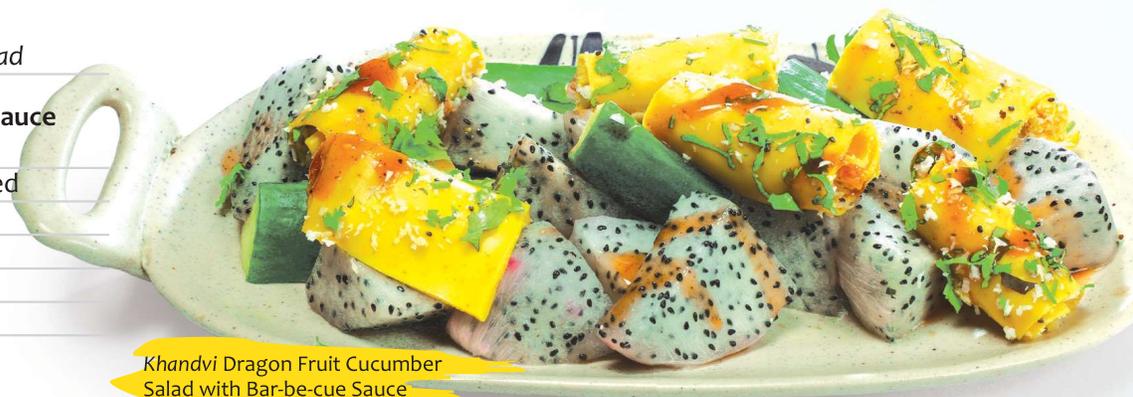
To assemble, peel the bananas and slit lengthwise. Spread maple syrup on a plate and coat banana pieces evenly. Roll the bananas in freshly grated coconut until fully coated. Drizzle plum strawberry sauce over the bananas and top with crushed papad. Serve immediately to retain crunch.

## KHANDVI DRAGON FRUIT CUCUMBER SALAD WITH BAR-BE-CUE SAUCE

#### INGREDIENTS

##### For the bar-be-cue sauce

2 tbsps tomato sauce  
1 tbsp red chilli sauce  
2 tps Worcestershire sauce  
2 tps vinegar  
1 tsp mustard powder  
1 tbsp onion powder  
1 tsp garlic powder  
2 tps pepper powder  
4 tbsps brown sugar  
3 tps butter  
2 tps chopped garlic



Khandvi Dragon Fruit Cucumber Salad with Bar-be-cue Sauce

#### For the salad

1 medium dragon fruit  
1 English cucumber with skin  
250 gms Gujarati khandvi

#### METHOD

Heat butter and lightly fry garlic till translucent. Lower heat and add all sauces with 1 cup water. Simmer and add brown sugar, stirring until dissolved. Mix spice powders with 2 tps water and add to the sauce. Cook till desired consistency and switch off heat.

To assemble, arrange khandvi, cucumber pieces, and peeled dragon fruit. Top with barbecue sauce just before serving.

Cheese and Crackers with Spicy Mirchi Ka Aachar



## CHEESE AND CRACKERS WITH SPICY MIRCHI KA AACHAR

#### INGREDIENTS

##### For the mirchi ka aachar

300 gms thin green chillies  
100 gms mustard seeds  
Salt  
2 tsp turmeric powder  
400 ml mustard oil

#### To serve

Salted biscuits or cream crackers  
Cheese varieties like Gouda, Parmesan, or any preferred cheese

#### METHOD

Wash and completely dry the chillies. Remove stalks. Coarsely grind mustard seeds. Add chillies and pulse once or twice so they remain chunky.

Heat mustard oil till smoky and switch off heat. Add crushed mustard seeds, chillies, salt, and turmeric. Mix gently and cool completely. Transfer to glass jars and sun for 3-4 days. Serve by topping crackers with cheese and mirchi ka aachar.

Chocolate, Chutney Sandwich



on one slice, top with another buttered slice, spread chutney, and continue layering. Grill or serve plain. Serve with *papad*, fries, or chips.

## CHOCOLATE, CHUTNEY SANDWICH

### INGREDIENTS

Milk bread or brown bread slices  
4-5 tbsps butter or peanut butter

### For the filling

1 cup chocolate sauce  
1 cup spicy green chutney or South Indian style tomato chutney

### METHOD

Remove bread crusts. Spread butter or peanut butter on all slices. Spread chocolate sauce

## INDIAN QUESADILLA COLESLAW WRAP

### INGREDIENTS

2 *bhatura* or *puri* or *lachcha paranthas*

### For the coleslaw

1 cup grated carrot  
1 cup grated cabbage  
1 grated capsicum  
Grated beetroot  
2 chopped green chillies  
2 tsp chopped garlic  
2 cups mayonnaise  
1 tsp lemon juice (optional)  
2 tsps chopped parsley

### METHOD

Mix all coleslaw ingredients thoroughly. Fill wraps with coleslaw, roll, and serve with *papad* and chutney or sauce.

Indian Quesadilla Coleslaw Wrap





Pyaz Kachori with Scrambled Eggs

## PYAZ KACHORI WITH SCRAMBLED EGGS

### INGREDIENTS

2–3 Rajasthani pyaz kachori

#### For the scrambled eggs

3 eggs, beaten  
Chopped tomato (optional)  
Chopped onion (optional)  
Chopped green chillies  
Salt and pepper  
4–5 tbsps milk  
3 tbsps butter  
2 tps olive oil

mixture, and scramble gently. Cook briefly without overcooking. Serve with pyaz kachori.

## MUSHROOM ZATAR PULAO

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups cooked rice  
3 tbsps ghee  
2 tps zatar spice

#### For the mushrooms

200 gms mushrooms  
3 tbsps butter  
Salt and pepper  
½ tsp cinnamon powder  
1 chopped onion (optional)

### METHOD

Mix all ingredients with eggs. Heat butter and oil, add egg

### METHOD

Sauté onions and mushrooms in butter with spices until moisture evaporates. Heat ghee, add rice and zatar, mix gently, add mushrooms, and serve hot.

Mushroom Zatar Pulao





Indian Dessert with Mixed Seeds Brittle

## INDIAN DESSERT WITH MIXED SEEDS BRITTLE

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the brittle

1 cup sugar  
 ½ cup mixed seeds like chia, sesame, musk seeds

#### To serve

Mishti doi, kheer, or shrikhand

### METHOD

To make the brittle you will need a thick bottomed pan or frying pan. Heat the pan and add the sugar. Allow the sugar to melt. Mix in the nuts once the sugar has melted. Gently mix and immediately spread over an oiled silicon mat or oiled *Chakla* used to roll out *chapatis*. Grease the *chakla* well so that it is easy to take out or pull out the brittle. Once you spread the sugar mixer, allow it to set completely till it sets completely. This should only take 8-10 minutes. Once set, break into pieces and serve as a brittle to go with any Indian dessert.



Pasta with Chutney Paneer

## PASTA WITH CHUTNEY PANEER

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup boiled pasta

#### For chutney paneer

1 cup green coriander mint chutney  
 2 tbsps tomato purée  
 2 tbsps ginger garlic paste  
 Salt

1 tsp turmeric  
 2 tsps cumin powder  
 2 tbsps coriander powder  
 2 tsps green chilli paste  
 100 gms paneer  
 4-5 tbsps oil  
 1-2 tbsps vegetarian mayonnaise

### METHOD

Fry paneer cubes in oil. In same pan, cook chutney and spices. Add paneer, cook briefly, switch off heat, mix in mayonnaise, and serve with pasta or noodles.

# CHICKEN WITH BEETROOT MAYONNAISE

## INGREDIENTS

4 chicken legs

### For the marinade

3 tbsps *tandoori* masala

1 cup thick curd

2 tbsps ginger garlic paste

1 tsp green chilli paste



Chicken with Beetroot Mayonnaise



Indian Style Chicken on Spicy Noodles, Fried Rice, Jasmine Rice or Ramen

2 tbsps mustard oil

### For the mayonnaise

1 cup mayonnaise

1 grated beetroot

1 tsp lemon juice

## METHOD

Marinate chicken for 20 minutes. Grill, air-fry, or barbecue till cooked. Mix mayonnaise ingredients and serve alongside. Optional accompaniments include coleslaw, chipotle sauce, and potato wedges.

# INDIAN STYLE CHICKEN ON SPICY NOODLES, FRIED RICE, JASMINE RICE OR RAMEN

## INGREDIENTS

4 chicken breasts

4 tbsps ginger garlic paste

2 tbsps green chilli paste

3 tbsps brown onion paste

4 tbsps tomato paste

4 tbsps ghee

Salt

2 tps turmeric

2 tbsps coriander powder

2 tps cumin powder

2 tps *anardana* powder

2 tps red chilli powder

### To serve

Cooked noodles, fried rice, jasmine rice, or ramen

## METHOD

Make insertions in chicken. Rub with salt and turmeric and rest for 10 minutes. Fry chicken till golden. Add pastes and spices, cook briefly, add water, simmer covered till tender. Remove bones and serve over rice or noodles.

We



# Sweets Or Memories?

Why sweet isn't always on the plate.

By Suchi Sargam

Today I want to eat a sweet. After dinner. It's been a few months now that I stopped craving for this happiness. Been some time that I didn't stretch my hand to find what's in the dessert box at the corner of the dining table to gobble down. Sweets are dear memories. Of good things – good neighbours who sent homemade chickpea *ladoo*s every now and then when I was about 5 years old. These *ladoo*s were weaker but perennial substitutes of the version our grandma sent us once a year all the way from Chennai.





Sweets are good memories of cartons of Fruit-tella that arrived at least once a month from New Delhi when we were a little older, around 7 years of age. Each rectangular cuboid pack in the carton contained about 10 tinier solids of our desired strawberry-flavoured chewy candy that washed our senses just with its smell. They made us forget that father was away at work two weeks a month to build us a better future.

Sweets are good memories of delicious carrot *halwa* made with pure love by Mom for her heir on chilly December mornings. The joy a mother feels on her firstborn son's recurring birthday is unparalleled. Memories, not just sweets, are cooked!

Sweets are good memories of the Dairy Milk we got on a few rarely happening Sundays. When cash was limited, but noticing the yearning for a treat in the eyes of his children, father gave a Rs 10 note to go buy this apt *Zindagi ka swad* brown block from the local grocer. Sweets are memories of three children dancing to the tune of the 1994 ad, *Kya swaad hai zindagi... mein!*

On every festival, the wrap was a whole wheat halwa – a sweet. It wasn't ever easy for the woman

**SWEETS HAVE THUS BECOME MEMORIES OF ALL THE TINY FIGHTS I FOUGHT IN THIS HOUSE. AS MY MISTER GETS UPSET WITH ME, AND I WITH MYSELF, SWEETS COME TO THE RESCUE WITH THEIR TRUCKLOAD OF MEMORIES, TO KEEP THINGS GOING. LIFE BECOMES EASY WITH SWEETS. GRAB A BITE OF SWEET!**

of the house to cook for 5 hungry stomachs daily and elaborately on festivals. She too was tired, but never out of enthusiasm. Her own childhood memories of sweets kept her going, perhaps. Sweets are memories of duties done to perfection.

Sweets are also memories of licking ketchup as a ten-year-old. When no one's watching, slithering into the refrigerator to get a dollop of the rich red lickable vegetable purée. No, no, not alone. With the

hungry sister in tow. When mom was just busy with her chores and no snacks to spare, ketchup became the memory maker.

Sweets are memories of the kiss Mom gave us. The imaginary kiss. Oh! So sweet. I don't remember a single small, tiny peck on my cheek from my mother. Why? Do I suffer from childhood memory loss? Hah! You would – why should I! Every day, mom spent a few dozen minutes on us to teach us manners. When we stayed quiet through it, she'd get frustrated, slip in a slap on the white cheek on the right, mostly. Hitting lightly, maybe, in her opinion. But we kids, just in the double-digit club, missed the sweetness of the kiss. Every child remembers this kiss from its parents. The sweet kiss, sweet memories.

Sweets are memories of the ice creams we relished. After the occasional restaurant meal to celebrate, picking the chilled orange

ice candy was a sweet treat we all waited for. The ice cream Mom always had was chocobar. I think it was the sweetest ice cream till she was alive. Once, while in Mumbai, we went to the ice cream mecca Natural's after a lavish dinner fare at our uncle's. As expected, the queue at Natural's was too long. Standing purposefully for a few flavours of the iconic brand was not the thing grownups were in the mood for. We smelled the sweet smell of freshly churned fruity pulp with milk and dry fruits and cardamom and what not in it. And left. Sweets are memories of this waiting.

Sweets are memories of that meal Mom denied us in anger. That day when our punishment was staying hungry because we were unable to stand up to defend Mum as father scolded her yet again. Wheat is sweet, so is okra. When you get nothing to eat, the stomach churns, the heart burns; the thought of food is sweet. Sweet is memory of mouthfuls of mouthwatering,

tempting, satisfying meals I missed.

And sweets are memories of the birthday cake Mom always spoke of from her childhood and had the golden opportunity to cut on her last birthday at the age of 65 while in the ICU, fighting every cell of her being. The sweetness of life added to the sweetness of that cake.

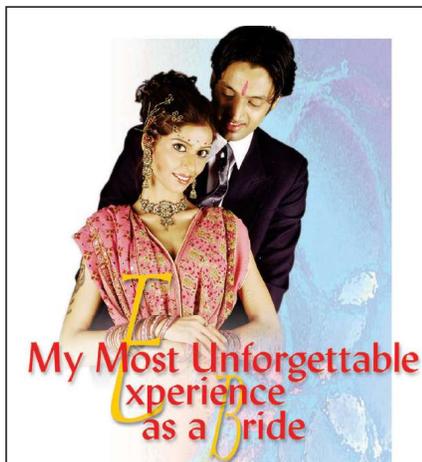
Sweets are memories I carefully collected through my childhood, packed in a suitcase and brought with myself after marriage to this house. As and when the mother-in-law got upset over my foolish acts, I took out an episode of childhood and ate it like a sweet to keep the blood flowing. Balancing the bitter with the sweet bite.

Sweets have thus become memories of all the tiny fights I fought in this house. As my mister gets upset with me, and I with myself, sweets come to the rescue with their truckload of memories, to keep things going. Life becomes easy with sweets. Grab a bite of the ever-present sweet on the table and

create memories. Then, I can smile and laugh and forget the fight and chaos. Until some time ago, when someone explained I need to refigure 'what is sweet'.

Sweet has to be a person. Sweet has to be a moment. Sweet has to be an experience. The confectionery 'sweet' has to go beyond the rush, beyond the burden of memories of good and bad. Thus, I tried to feel the new sweetness. Relive everything without the burden of calories. Life became a good, conscious, new sweet, I admit. Guilt-free.

But today, as my world came crumbling down with the heartbreak of losing a dear friend, with no one to hug, I cheat. I inch back to the dining table, to find the basic sweet. I feel the urge to stretch my hand to find that sweet, to keep me going. A person disappears. A moment ends. An experience is fading. My sweetness is evaporating. I need to restock. Let's begin afresh, how I did best in childhood. With a thick slice of sweetness. **We**



### LOVE THAT HELD ME

It was three and a half months before my marriage. I had gone shopping with my mother and sister—excited, smiling, discussing colours and jewellery. We had just stepped out of a shop and I called an auto rickshaw to take us to the next market. The auto stopped a little ahead, and I walked forward to get in. That is the last normal moment I remember.

Before I could reach the

auto, a speeding car appeared from nowhere. I heard my sister scream my name, but before I could even turn fully, the car hit me. The impact threw me to the side of the road. My leg bent in a way it never should have. Pain shot up so sharply that I couldn't even cry at first. Within seconds, everything became chaos—my mother shouting for help, my sister crying, people gathering around. I could barely move. My right leg was throbbing, and my elbow was bleeding badly.

At the hospital, the doctor looked at my X-ray and said the words that shattered all of us: "Fracture. She needs at least five to six months of bed rest." My marriage was in just two months. My mother broke down. My sister blamed herself. I stared at the ceiling feeling like my future had been punched out of my hands.

When my to-be husband heard the news, he rushed to the hospital. I was scared—what if he changed

his mind? What if his family refused to continue? It was an arranged marriage, after all. But the moment he walked in, all my fears became meaningless. He held my hand gently and said, "We are in this together. I'm not going anywhere." His parents came soon after, offering full support to my family. They arranged better treatment, brought home-care nurses, and visited me almost every day.

Slowly, with therapy and help, I improved. I still couldn't walk properly, but the wedding date was fixed and he refused to postpone it. "I want to marry you as you are," he insisted. On the wedding day, I sat in my bridal dress, my right leg still a little weak. Everyone worried if I could manage the stage. My groom came forward, lifted me in his arms. The entire hall clapped. I felt tears in my eyes. He carried me to the stage, carefully placed me on the seat, and whispered, "I promised I would stand by you."

- Shikha

## Teenache



# Q & A

**I'M 15 AND I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I'M being too much—too loud, too emotional, too ambitious. I try to shrink myself to fit in, but it never feels right. Why does existing fully feel like a burden?**

Because somewhere along the line, someone told you that your bigness was a threat. Maybe it was a classmate who mocked your enthusiasm, or a parent who told you to calm down. But the truth is: the world doesn't need smaller versions of you. It needs you, fully alive. Take up space. Speak with conviction. Dream as big as you want. The right people will never ask you to shrink—they'll sit beside you and say, "Go bigger." You're not too much. You're exactly the right amount of real.

**I'M 17 AND I FEEL EMOTIONALLY older than my age. I don't relate to my peers, I find small talk draining, and I enjoy solitude. People call me "boring" or "too serious." Am I missing out on my teenage years?**

You're not missing out—you're living them differently. Not all teens thrive on chaos, parties, or trends. Some are reflective, intuitive, and drawn to depth early on. You're an old soul in a loud world, and that's okay. It might be lonely sometimes, but your tribe exists—they might just be scattered or older. Protect your quiet joy. You're not "less fun"—you're just anchored in a deeper rhythm. And one day, others will wish they had your peace.

**I'M A 17-YEAR-OLD BOY AND I'VE BEEN secretly questioning my faith. I come from a very religious family, and any doubt is considered betrayal. But I've started feeling disconnected**

from rituals and beliefs that once gave me comfort. I feel guilty and afraid of what this means for my identity. What do I do?

Doubt is not betrayal—it's often the first step toward a more meaningful connection with your beliefs (or a shift toward new ones). Faith, like identity, evolves. You're not wrong for asking questions; you're human. Try to separate personal spirituality from family expectations. You don't have to announce your doubts immediately—begin by exploring quietly through reading, interfaith dialogue, or



journalling. Faith that's questioned often becomes stronger or more authentic. Guilt may show up, but let it be part of the process—not the end of it.

**I'M 15 AND I GET PANIC ATTACKS WHEN I think about the future. I don't just mean careers—I mean the climate crisis, politics, the economy. I lie awake worrying about wars or the planet collapsing. My parents say I'm overthinking, but I feel paralysed. How do I live with this fear?**

You're not overthinking—you're feeling the emotional weight of a world in crisis. This is called eco-anxiety, and it's increasingly common among sensitive, aware teens. The world feels unstable, and your brain is trying to plan for chaos. The first step is to ground yourself in the present—anxiety thrives on imagined futures. Focus on what's within your control: your choices, your voice, your well-being. Get involved in local or school-level sustainability initiatives. Action reduces helplessness. Your worry is a sign of deep care—just don't let it steal your capacity for joy.

**I'M 16 AND I DON'T FEEL ANY attachment to my family. They haven't hurt me exactly—but I don't feel close to them either. I don't miss them when I'm away, and I don't feel safe opening up. Everyone says "family is everything," but I feel like I'm missing something essential. Am I broken?**

You're not broken—you're unbonded. And that can happen even in families that appear 'normal' from the outside. Emotional neglect is harder to name because it's the absence of connection, not the presence of abuse. Not feeling safe or seen at home can make attachment difficult. It doesn't mean you're incapable of love—it means you may need to build chosen families in the future. Focus on nurturing meaningful friendships, mentorships, and spaces where you're emotionally safe. Family is important, but it doesn't always come from the people who raised you.

# The Cost of Care

Never undermining a caregiver's role. By Taru Bahl

Caring for the sick and ailing has always been considered a noble act. We remember Florence Nightingale, most of all, for her gentle and tender care of wounded soldiers in a war-ravaged country. Yet, in our mundane daily lives, we tend to bypass caregivers, ignoring their emotional and physical needs and failing to recognise that there are times when they need care too.

The evolution of a caregiver's sense of responsibility involves moving from learning about the illness to accepting that they are in it for the long haul. Initially, many caregivers believe that consulting good doctors will resolve the problem. Gradually, they come to terms with the reality that the illness may not altogether 'disappear', and they must find ways of coping while continuing to love.

With advancements in medical science, human life is being prolonged. Research has helped manage complex diseases and conditions, but this longevity also raises pressing questions about who will care for ageing populations.



## Understanding Family And Interpersonal Dynamics

A sick person may be bedridden, terminally ill or mentally unwell. Each situation demands a different set of services, temperaments and coping mechanisms. It requires immense patience and maturity to navigate a path that often calls for constant adjustment and realignment.

Illness disrupts family life and exposes the usually invisible boundaries of social relationships. Prolonged sickness places sustained demands on spouses, children and siblings, testing the strength of familial bonds.

Globally, the family unit is weakening, and marriage as an institution is under strain. Closer home in India, although families remain bound by patriarchs and matriarchs, children are often studying or working abroad. With the rise of one-child households, caregiving increasingly falls to professionals, with children making periodic visits home. In families with multiple siblings, responsibilities may be shared, but not without overlap, resentment and misunderstanding arising from differing viewpoints, finances, emotional histories and communication gaps.

Caregiving may involve attending to the frailties of old age or the far more demanding task of caring for someone with a terminal illness such as cancer, kidney failure, or while awaiting an organ transplant. In every case, it is essential to recognise the stage of caregiving one is in.

Caregivers' perspectives are shaped by their position within the family. Parents, spouses, children and siblings experience varying degrees of obligation, guided by what they believe they owe others and themselves. Family hierarchies play a powerful role in determining these responsibilities.

Care is not always distributed based on emotional closeness. Physical proximity, personal capacity and life circumstances often dictate who shoulders the burden. A daughter caring for ailing in-laws may be unable to tend equally to her own



**FAMILY HIERARCHIES PLAY A POWERFUL ROLE IN THESE, CARE IS NOT ALWAYS DISTRIBUTED BASED ON EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS. PHYSICAL PROXIMITY, PERSONAL CAPACITY AND LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES OFTEN DICTATE WHO SHOULDERS THE BURDEN.**

parents. An only child living overseas may need to take extended leave or work remotely. The uncertainty of how long caregiving will last can be deeply exhausting. Nevertheless, obligations are strongest towards immediate family, particularly spouses and dependent children.

Spouses are expected to rely on each other before seeking help from children. Parents' claims on their children diminish once the latter marry and raise families of their own. Many elders therefore make prior

arrangements—employing live-in help, cohabiting with relatives or moving into assisted-living facilities. While such systems help manage emergencies, unexpected illness or accidents can still disrupt even the best-laid plans. When the sick person is unable to make decisions, immediate family members must step in with both short-term and long-term solutions.

### The Four Stages Of Caregiving

**Hoping and Learning:** New caregivers often rely heavily on medical treatment, believing the illness will be temporary. They gather information, manage logistics and strive to keep hope alive.

**Revising Expectations:** Caregivers eventually confront the reality that the illness may be chronic. Seeking information, multiple opinions and counselling helps them plan more realistically.

**Assessing Responsibility:** Caregivers must determine how much responsibility the sick person can reasonably assume. Clear boundaries and realistic planning are crucial.

**Preserving Oneself:** Caregiver burnout is real. Prioritising one's own health—sleep, nourishment and mental well-being—is essential to sustaining care for others.

Caregiving often brings families closer, but it can also lead to conflict, resentment and even severed relationships.

### Gender And Caregiving

When both men and women are potential caregivers, women usually take on greater responsibility. Mothers are more involved in childcare, daughters are expected to care for ageing parents, and sisters often lead caregiving efforts among siblings. Gender remains the most influential factor in determining caregiving roles.

Women are socialised to nurture and tend to be more tolerant caregivers. Men, often solution-

oriented, may experience quicker burnout. However, this divide is narrowing. With more one-child families and professional caregiving services available, responsibilities are increasingly shared regardless of gender. Social media and family WhatsApp groups now help families coordinate care, share updates and make decisions efficiently.

**CAREGIVERS STRUGGLE TO DRAW BOUNDARIES BETWEEN SUPPORT AND AUTONOMY. SOCIETY'S FEAR AND STIGMA AROUND MENTAL ILLNESS—REFLECTED IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE AND SENSATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE—ONLY DEEPEN THE CHALLENGE.**

### Caring For The Mentally Ill

The unpredictability of mental illness places immense strain on caregivers. Symptoms may fluctuate between depression, mania, psychosis and periods of wellness, with each episode differing from the last. Caregivers struggle to draw boundaries between support and autonomy. Society's fear and stigma around mental illness—reflected in everyday language and sensational media coverage—only deepen the challenge. Despite evidence that mentally ill individuals are less likely to commit violent crimes, misconceptions persist.

Mental illness remains difficult to define and accept as a legitimate disease. While acknowledged in theory, it is often misunderstood in practice, including within legal frameworks.

### Equip Yourself With Information

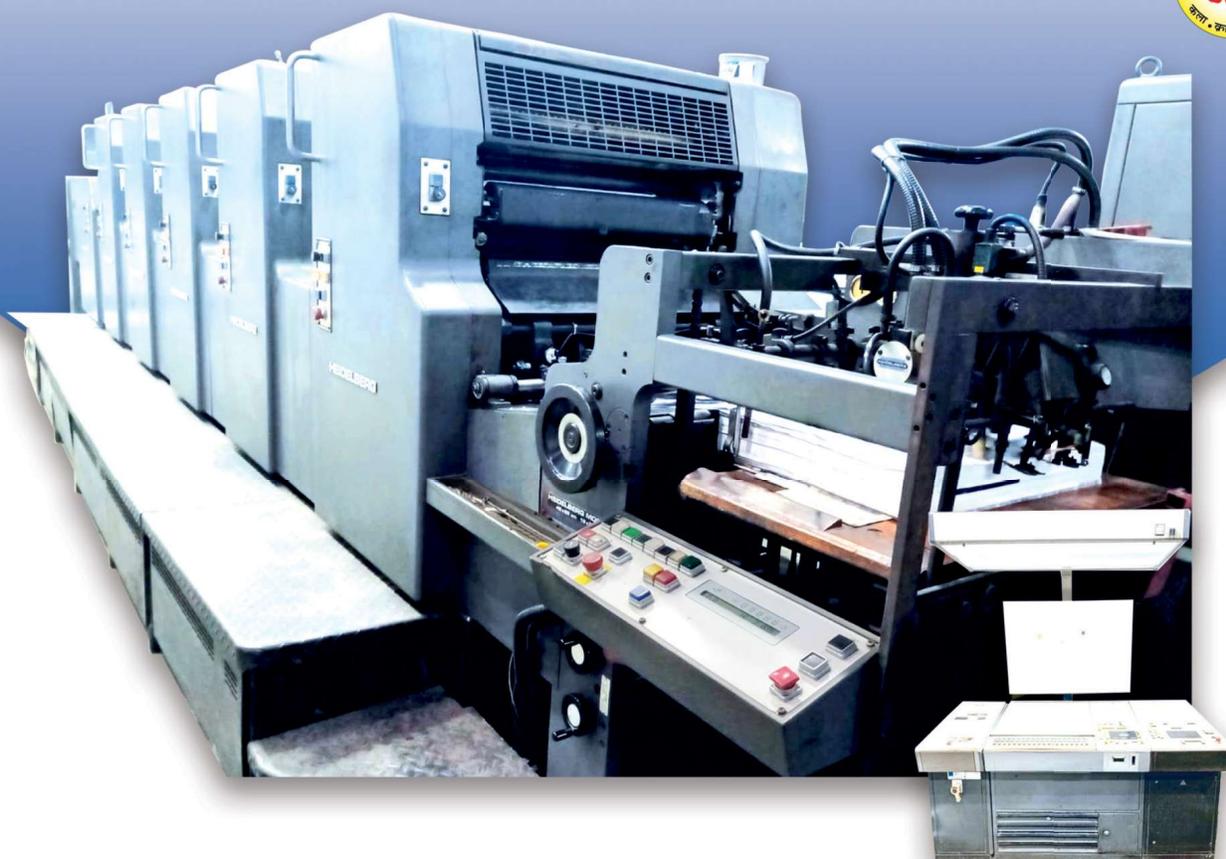
Learning about the illness from credible sources helps reduce fear and uncertainty. Caregivers often cycle through emotions such as guilt, anger, sadness and hopelessness. Over time, many shift from information-seeking to advocacy.

Maintaining records, tracking symptoms, recognising relapse signs and understanding treatment options are vital. Flexibility in approaches—medication, therapy, counselling or stress management—is important. Separating emotional responses from clinical decision-making, though difficult, is part of self-care.

### Preparing For The Post-Caregiving Phase

Caregiving eventually ends—whether through recovery or loss. The transition can leave a profound void. Returning to life beyond caregiving takes time, patience and support. Seeking help from friends, family or counsellors and rebuilding daily routines are essential steps forward. Grief affects everyone differently, and kindness towards oneself is key to navigating this phase with maturity.





# DELHI PRESS

House of beautiful printing

Offers printing and finishing of...

- Text Books
  - Coffee Table Books
  - Magazines
  - Balance Sheets
  - Novels
  - Presentation
  - Folders
  - Diaries
  - Calenders
  - Directories
  - Publicity Posters
  - Newsletters
  - Leaflets
  - Catalogues
  - Brochures
- Any Special Printed Fabrication.

We offer the best combination of price, quality & service.

Call to discuss a quote

DELHI PRESS (since 1938)

E-3 Rani Jhansi Road, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110055

WhatsApp | Call | Sms: 9810160122 • info@DelhiPressCo.com



# Trek to the Himalayas

From lush meadows to snow-laden trails, discovering strength amid the mountains. By Amrutha S Rao

I never concluded myself to be a trekker in my life, but this year made me do so. With a group of 36, including my spouse, amidst the lush green meadows and snow patches of the *Pir Panjal* range, walking with the fauna, embracing the flora, the journey to the Himalayan destination—*Bhrigu Lake* (Manali)—begins.

**THE ACTUAL TREK EXPERIENCE WAS ON THE DAY FROM GULABA TO ROLA KHOLI, WHICH HAD SWINGS OF VARIATIONS FROM SUN TO RAIN, RAIN TO SUN, TREES TO BARREN LAND, BREATHING FLUCTUATIONS.**



**The expedition went like this:**

**Day 1**

YHAI (Youth Hostel Association of India) orientation in the base camp

**Day 2**

Base camp to *Gulaba* by bus (around 8500 ft), followed by a 1.5 km trek to the camp (10300 ft).

**Day 3**

*Gulaba* meadows to *Rola Kholi* trek for 5–6 hrs, covering 5–6 km (12500 ft)

**Day 4**

*Rola Kholi* to lake snow trek for 4 hrs (14100 ft)

During the first day of our trek, we vouched for *Hanuman Tibba*, *Friendship Peak*, and a trail of the *Beas Kund* trek.

A Himalayan trek can never be easy for beginners. You must ensure at least a mid-level fitness and practise pranayama to sustain the



fluctuating air pressure. Although I practised all this constantly for two months, it seemed a little tedious task to hold on to that persistence. Credit goes to all the trek members and the fellow trekkers who helped each and every other person to achieve every milestone.

Unlike a few other treks, this doesn't even have a 20 m straight path; 98 per cent of the path is a steep ascent with many rocks and stones at par. Amidst the tiredness in your body after a long ascent, the only confidence you can have in this kind of adventure is that when you feel you can climb more and more just to see what is waiting for you at the end!

As said that anything can be accomplished when your team is strong and supportive, this too has been an epitome of support and coordination of the entire crew. The actual trek experience was on the day from Gulaba to Rola Khohi, which

had swings of variations from sun to rain, rain to sun, trees to barren land, breathing fluctuations. The only one which was static was the steepness of the path, which kept us walking only higher and higher and not descending at all.

My husband, as the strongest support, was always with me. No matter how energetic he was, he beheld himself to wait for me when I went slow. Since dusk was early, we settled down fast, and from dusk to dawn, it was only the tent and Himalayan air which we could experience.

The dawn was the most beautiful part of our journey, which we neither had nor can witness ever in our life. The opulent meadows on one side, the musical tone of the river, and sun-kissed snow-capped mountains on the other side when we were nearing the destination.

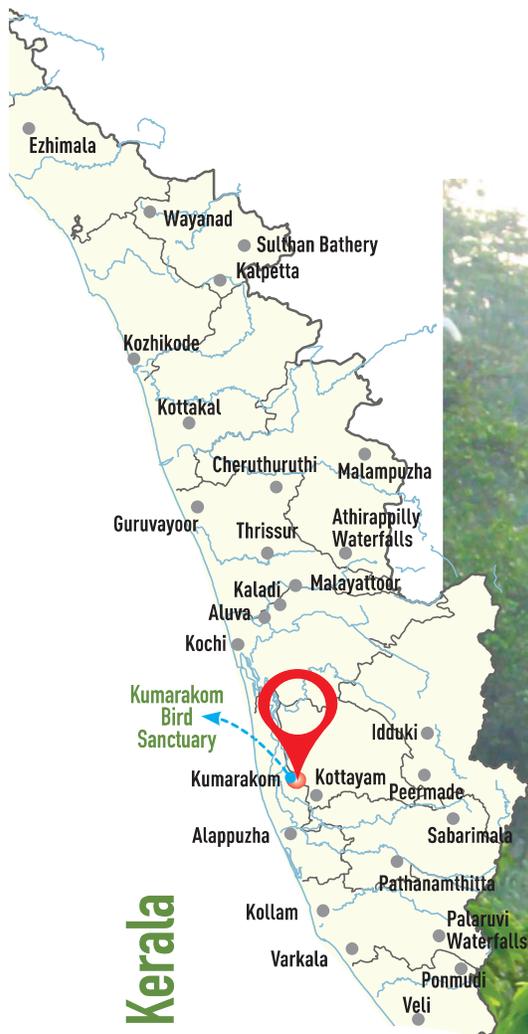
Another most intriguing thing was the food there! With utmost

love and care, just like a mother, the cooks served us quirky foods like hot *parathas*, *chole bhatura*, *dal*, *sabzis*, *pakodas*, *daliya*, *jamoon*, and what not! A platter of North Indian cuisine. Also, a *khadak kadha* to beat the cold wave on a heavy rainy night.

People who made it to the *Bhrigu Lake* said that it was as magical as ever known. Amidst so much snow, the lake emulated a human eye that looked divine. They said, "Could there be something like this?" Throwing snowballs at the other person and falling in the snow, walking somewhere in a remote mountain was my childhood dream. By experiencing it in reality, it seemed I had done something beyond the threshold.

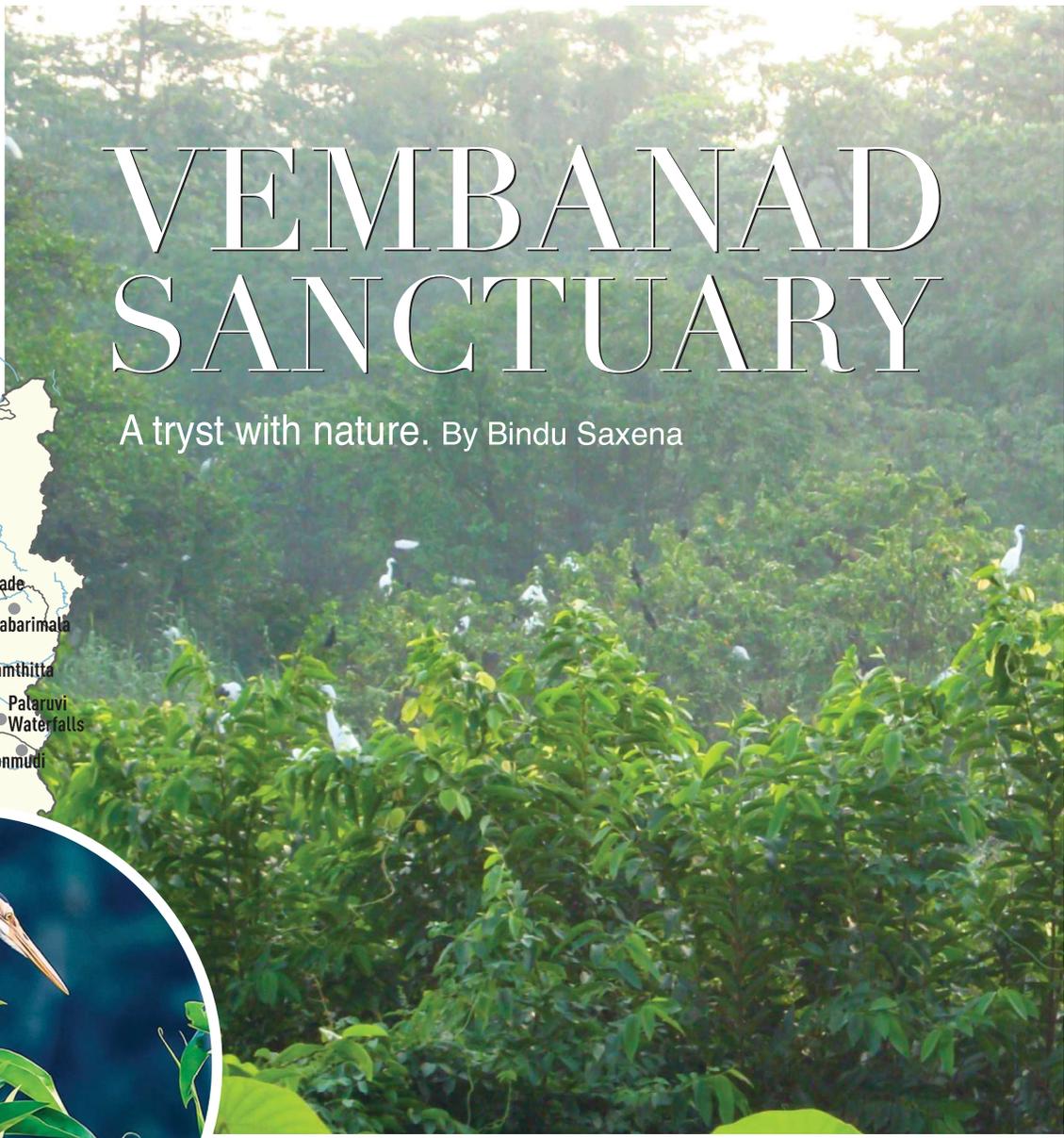
All I can say is, whatever you possess—be it money, fame, authority, good physique—when you start figuring out nature like an expedition, you feel you're a drop in an ocean.

We



# VEMBANAD SANCTUARY

A tryst with nature. By Bindu Saxena



I went there to witness the winged creatures—those feathered, warm-blooded vertebrates from Class Aves. I wished to observe their flight as free agents in their natural habitat.

My destination was the Bird Sanctuary at Kumarakom. It's a picturesque, sleepy village hamlet on the banks of the mighty Vembanad Lake and a stunning tourist spot near Kottayam, Kerala. Those travelling by train, it is just 15 km from

Kottayam railway station and about 94 kms away from Kochi airport. The two-and-a-half-hour cab ride costs anywhere from 1300 to 5000, depending upon the type of vehicle you choose to travel with.

This wasn't just about ticking off another tourist destination from my list. It was about connecting with something primal—the simplicity of nature, and perhaps, discovering something about myself in the process.



I had recently nurtured a secret passion for bird watching and decided to take the plunge. I wanted to witness the freedom of their flight but was unaware that a 2 km trek awaited me before my eyes would meet theirs.

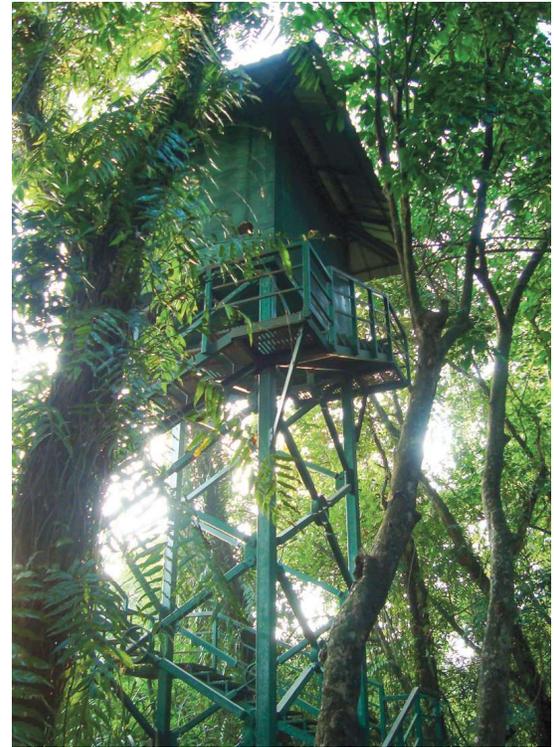
It was 5 am. Here we go at the main gate of this sanctuary. Vehicles are not allowed to enter beyond this point. A few steps further brought us to the entrance, where the security guard checked our tickets and informed us that Tower No. 1 was closed. This meant an additional 100 steps to reach Tower No. 2, our designated viewing point for those graceful creatures.

He also advised us to follow our noses and the path—until the end.

From the moment we landed at Kochi airport, one thought played repeatedly in my mind: “I MUST visit the Bird Sanctuary.” Throughout the journey, nature remained zero kilometers away... and it was wonderful.

Kerala’s lush landscapes unfolded before us like pages in a storybook, where each turn revealed coconut groves and glimpses of waterways that define this land. Every time I visit this state, I fall in love with the people and the places.

My husband and I launched our journey to witness the birds. After barely 15 minutes of walking, we encountered a concrete bridge over the backwaters with a crumbling edge that we had to cross. This



**THE BACKWATERS TEEMED WITH LIFE. WE STOPPED TO WATCH SMALL FISH DARTING IN THE SHALLOWS, THE WATER STRIDERS SKATING ACROSS THE SURFACE, AND AQUATIC PLANTS CREATING MINIATURE FORESTS BENEATH THE WATER.**

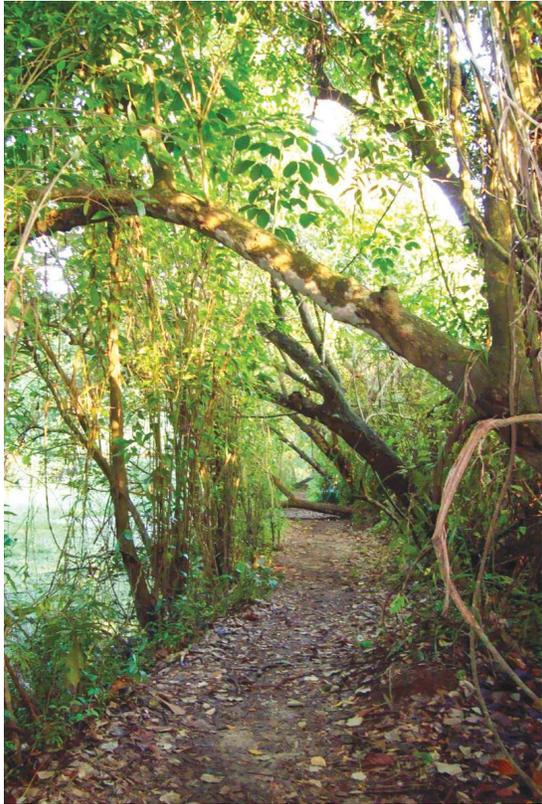
weakened my fragile confidence. The bridge seemed to mock my urban sensibilities, reminding me how removed I’d become from natural, unpaved paths.

I stood there for a moment, frozen with indecision, feeling the weight of my hesitation, but my husband’s gentle persuasion helped me find my footing and continue with conviction.

It was a long walk punctuated by manageable obstacles.

The previous night’s rain left the soil damp beneath our feet as we navigated the narrow lanes alongside the backwaters. Each step left an





With no vehicles, no urban noise, no digital distractions, the path itself became a meditation. I found myself truly present. The air was thick with moisture, and the earthy scent of rain-soaked soil mixed with decomposing leaves.

Life smelled in its most organic form. The only way to reach the watchtowers was on foot, and this enforced slowness allowed me to notice things I would have otherwise missed. I admired the intricate patterns of bark on trees. I was amazed at the way light broke through the clouds, creating dancing shadows of the unborn lives.

**THE SANCTUARY OFFERS MORE THAN JUST BIRD WATCHING. IT PROVIDES AN ESCAPE FROM URBAN CHAOS, A CHANCE TO RECONNECT WITH NATURE, AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHALLENGE ONESELF IN GENTLE WAYS. THE WALK ITSELF IS THERAPEUTIC, THE SCENERY IS BEAUTIFUL.**

Apart from a few hoardings by Kerala Tourism at scattered corners, we only had our thoughts for company on this straightforward path. Our visibility extended barely ten steps ahead—the eleventh would reveal a new vista.

The path wound through dense vegetation, and around each bend, anticipation built. Though it wasn't quite the crookedest Lombard Street of San Francisco, it was an uneventful stretch where the path ahead remained a mystery, keeping us curious and engaged.

As we walked, I began to appreciate the sanctuary not just as a bird habitat but as a complete ecosystem. The backwaters teemed with life. We stopped to watch small

fish darting in the shallows, the water striders skating across the surface, and aquatic plants creating miniature forests beneath the water.

The mangroves, with their distinctive prop roots, stood like natural sculptures. The wetlands around us served as nature's kidneys, filtering water and providing habitat for countless species.

I understood then why Alfred George Baker had chosen this location and why his vision had succeeded so remarkably. The water, the trees, the birds, the insects, and the interconnectedness and harmony of it all formed a delicate web that humans could observe.

Finally, we reached Tower No. 2. The structure rose before us like a beacon of achievement. We climbed the zigzagging iron stairs to the observation point, each step bringing us higher above the canopy. The narrow staircase allowed only one person per level, creating a sense of individual accomplishment as each of us made the ascent.

Much before reaching the top rung, we met a potentially frustrating sight. There was a padlock! It restricted further ascent. Thankfully, the guard appeared shortly with five other couples in tow to unlock the gate.

It was a sigh of relief for all the bird-lovers who weathered the path.

Finally, we all met our goal—the ultimate destination—the viewing platform. It offered a 360-degree view of the sanctuary. Suddenly, the long walk made perfect sense.

From this vantage point, we could see the expanse of Vembanad Lake stretching toward the horizon, the network of waterways creating natural corridors, and the dense canopy we had walked beneath now spread out like a green carpet below us. What a ravishing scene!

Since we visited during the off-season, many species were absent. To our dismay, the egrets, waterfowl, cuckoos, owls, and herons had all migrated. What we could see were white pelicans circling the treetops with their large wingspans. Their flight was indeed impressive, even



impression on the soft earth, a temporary mark of our passage.

The silence was interrupted only by occasional bird calls and the soft lapping of water against the banks. The trees on both sides of the path stood silently as massive custodians of time that had witnessed countless seasons and visitors before us.



from a distance. They moved with an effortless grace that made flight look easy, though as a science student, I knew the mechanics behind it were anything but simple.

The journey was worthwhile, despite the rugged terrain.

Sometimes the act of seeking is as rewarding as the finding. I framed nature forever in my mind, creating a mental photograph more vivid than any camera could capture.

On the return journey, I felt like a free bird myself. The path that had seemed daunting on the way now felt familiar, almost welcoming. I could smile, chat, and walk confidently.

What had seemed fearful at the start felt liberating after the visit. I learned that tourist destinations are designed to be safe, not hazardous. The Tourism Department ensures safety, joy, and adventure, and this experience gave me the perfect start to the day.

More than that, I learned about the limitations I had imposed upon myself. The bridges I had feared crossing were perfectly stable. The path I had worried about was well-maintained.

My anxieties had been products of imagination rather than reality. This realisation extended beyond

the sanctuary. It made me wonder what other experiences I had denied myself due to unfounded fears.

Now I am ready to say, Yes, to scuba diving in the Andaman Islands, enjoy the Yas Islands of Abu Dhabi, and will not fear walking on the long bridge with a glass-floored deck at the Dubai Frame. I was proud to have redefined my limits and completed this walk in my birth month. Now you have to wait for my return to this land between November and February, when migratory birds are abundant, so I can witness and share their stories with a newfound joy.

On our way back, I captured a few photographs infused with morning dew and the forest's density before sunlight filtered through.

For bird enthusiasts: Visit during the season as mentioned above. You'll witness one of nature's greatest spectacles.

It would be a congregation of migratory and resident birds in numbers that will leave you breathless. Bring binoculars, a field guide, and patience. The early morning hours offer the best viewing opportunities when birds are most active.

For everyone else: Go anytime. The sanctuary offers more than just bird watching. It provides an escape from urban chaos, a chance to reconnect with nature, and an opportunity to challenge oneself in gentle ways.

The walk itself is therapeutic, the scenery is consistently beautiful, and the experience of being surrounded by unspoiled nature has its own rewards regardless of the season.

The beauty of this place has no season, nor does it migrate. It's like everlasting love—constant and enduring.

Whether you come for the birds or for the journey, Vembanad Sanctuary offers something precious. It reminds us that we are part of nature, not separate from it, and that sometimes the best discoveries are the ones we make about ourselves.

### Value Addition: Courtesy Google

- This is India's first scientifically developed and preserved bird sanctuary, hosting about 200 species of birds. Its history dates back to 1840, when founder Alfred George Baker developed Kumarakom village by reclaiming 500 acres of wetlands from the lake and planting mangrove trees across 14 acres to create a habitat for birds. The region's unique climate further supported this endeavour.
- Baker's foresight was remarkable for his time. In an

era when conservation wasn't yet a widespread concept, he understood the value of creating protected spaces for wildlife. His work laid the foundation for what would become a crucial stopover point for migratory birds travelling along the Central Asian Flyway. Today, the sanctuary welcomes both resident birds and seasonal visitors from as far as Siberia, creating a truly international gathering of avian species during peak season.

We



Rekha with grand daughter



Guests from Sainikpuri

# Love, Legacy & Lunch

When friendship meets celebration. By Mira Pawar

Rekha and her husband Sumant Bayankar welcoming the guests



I had the pleasure of attending the very first grand birthday celebration of 2026 at Secunderabad Club in Secunderabad on the 7th of January, and it set the bar impressively high. It was my friend Rekha Bayankar’s 75th birthday lunch party—and trust me, “grand” is an understatement. The guest list included writers, entrepreneurs, fashion designers, artists—you name it, they were there. Rekha and her husband, Sumant Bayankar, made it a point to welcome each and every guest personally.

Adding extra sparkle to the evening was Rekha’s son Sudhir, who flew in from the U.S. with his

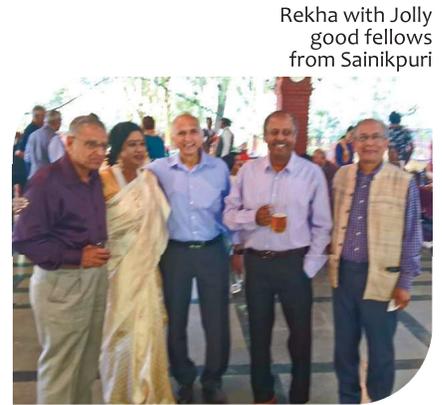
wife Marian and their adorable little daughter Eleanor. Rekha’s sister Rama Bhol’e also arrived from the States, proving that when her sister celebrates seventy-fifth, international borders don’t really matter. Among the distinguished guests present from Sainikpuri were Jayanti Jaisimha, Sudha Gorthy, Iona D’Cunha, Selvi, Vijaya Naidu, Dr. Kiran Suman Chakravarty, Jayashree Uppal, Vimala Madon, members of the managing committee of AFOCHS Sainikpuri, and Zubin Vakil—a fashion designer. Also present were the members of Ohara School of Ikebana – Hyderabad Chapter, members of the Friends Bonsai Society, and members of *Ikebana International*



Rekha's Son Sudhir, daughter-in-law Marian and granddaughter Elenoir



Rekha with guests



Rekha with Jolly good fellows from Sainikpuri



Elenoir singing for Rekha



Rekha with lady guests



Rekha with Iona D'Cuna and Selvi

– Hyderabad Chapter. I even found myself chatting with a guest who had travelled all the way from Illinois and another one from Johannesburg, South Africa—clearly, this party had a global appeal!

The food was incredibly exquisite and sumptuously delicious, featuring an endless array of dishes. The spread featured the classics: *mutton dum biryani, murg makhan wala, grilled chicken, bagare baingan, malai kofta curry, veg lasagne, paneer butter masala, subzi dum biryani, naan, and papad*. Dessert was a delightful duo—fruit trifle pudding and a pure chocolate cake that doubled as Rekha's birthday cake. And of course, for those who wished to raise a toast, there was no shortage of liquid cheer.

Just as the party was winding down, Rekha received the greatest gift of the day. In a voice as clear

as crystal, full of emotion, her granddaughter Elenor stepped forward to sing two songs for Rekha. The guests paused to listen! The air filled with the tender connection between a grandmother and the girl who clearly carries her heart.

I have known Rekha for over a decade now. She was one of the first few ladies I connected with in Sainikpuri, and over the years our bond has only grown stronger. Rekha is a wonderfully multi-faceted person, always juggling so many roles with grace and enthusiasm.

Many of you already know how deeply she has been associated with the Sainikpuri Club, Secunderabad, for years, contributing her time and energy selflessly. Even today, she continues to hold a responsible position there, a true reflection of her dedication and leadership. Her love for creativity shines through

her long association with Ikebana, the beautiful Japanese art of flower arrangement.

What I admire most is her thoughtfulness in bringing people together. She organises the ladies' meet at M.K. Memorial, Sainikpuri, on the first Wednesday of every month, planning different activities and events to keep the women of Sainikpuri connected, cheerful, and entertained. Rekha also has the biggest heart—always present at birthdays, weddings, and casual get-togethers, never missing an opportunity to celebrate life with friends and loved ones.

She is full of life, youthful in spirit, and always eager to travel and explore new places. My heartfelt wish is that Rekha remains just the way she is—young at heart, active, and radiant—for many more years to come.

We



Mountain trekking is a challenging and strenuous task. Mountains are beautiful; when you see them from afar, they look splendidly serene and magnificent. The colours of the sky merge with the hues of the mountains, the peaks touch the roof of the sky, the white mist floats gently, and the tall mountain trees glimmer with changing shades under the sun. Our eyes never tire of watching the mountains.

# The Tiger's Nest

Trekking The *Taktsang* Monastery, Bhutan.

By Vijaylaxmi Sarmah



Yet going into the mountains is not easy. The roads are rugged and steep, with dangerous bends, sudden climbs and falls, deep gorges, and slippery rocks. If you do not know your way, you can easily be lost in the wilderness.

Still, the mountains beckon you, often calling you lovingly into their lap, inviting you to feel them wholeheartedly and submerge yourself in their beauty and calmness. When you hear the voice of the mountains, you long to retreat into their affection to find solace in their silence. The mountains hold a Divine Power, a magical pull that you cannot ignore. This is why we go to the mountains, despite the dangers and disadvantages, the challenges and obstacles, and the unpredictability of mountain weather.

In the early part of this November (2025), our girls' gang decided to trek the *Taksang* Monastery or the Tiger's Nest Monastery trail at Paro in Bhutan. Perched at an altitude of 10,240 feet above sea level, it is considered a relatively difficult trekking destination. There were seven of us, and none had done hard mountain trekking before, nor lived a life in the mountains.

Perhaps it was the Divine Calling each one of us felt that pushed us to visit a monastery that stands on a precarious cliff at great heights.

Our trip started from Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. We stayed for two nights in a beautiful guest house in *Damdin* Tea Estate in the Dooars. From there, we began our journey to Bhutan early in the morning.

After crossing Jaigaon, the last Indian town at the Indo-Bhutan border, we entered Bhutan's Phuentsholing, where our guide, Kota Jumba, a cheerful young Bhutanese boy, was waiting for us. We had to get our passports stamped and pay the required tourism fee at the immigration office. With Jumba's help, all formalities were completed smoothly.

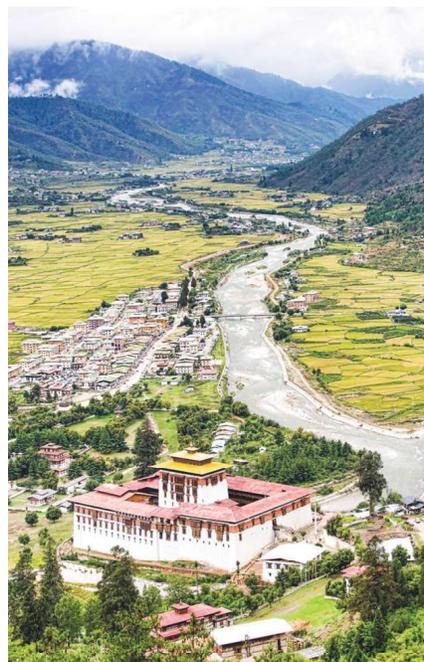
From Phuentsholing, we drove to Thimphu in our hired vehicle, reaching around 5 PM after a seven-hour journey.

After checking into our hotel and refreshing ourselves with hot *masala* tea, we ventured out to explore Thimphu. The city's roads, winding into roundabout bends with continuous ups and downs, helped our feet to familiarise with the hilly terrain. It is always advisable to acclimatise oneself to the conditions of the trail before undertaking any trek.

It eases tension in the feet and prepares the mind.

Coincidentally, the day we arrived was also the 70th birth anniversary of Bhutan's former king Jigme Singye Wangchuk. The whole town was

## PARO BOASTS A BEAUTIFUL DUAL LANDSCAPE OF MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS. THE MAIN TOWN RESTS COSILY IN THE ARMS OF STEEP MOUNTAINS, WITH LINES OF PINE AND CYPRESS TREES (THE NATIONAL TREE OF BHUTAN) DECORATING THE SLOPES.



glowing with lights and filled with festive joy. Prayer flags fluttered everywhere for His Majesty's long life and good health.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji had been invited as the Special Guest of Honour to join the celebrations and participate in a prayer meet for World Peace, held for the first time in Bhutan. Seeing Modiji's posters around the town filled us with pride. Hearing from Jumba that the Bhutanese regard India as their elder brother and depend on us for economic and security support touched our hearts with a tinge of pride.

On the second day, we visited the towering Dordenma Buddha statue at the Buddha Point, the largest Buddha statue in Bhutan. Later, we



drove to the Dochula viewpoint, where we saw the snow-covered Himalayan range stretched out in serene silence. After enjoying an authentic Bhutanese lunch in a traditional restaurant, we proceeded to Paro.

Paro boasts a beautiful dual landscape of mountains and valleys. The main town rests cosily in the arms of steep mountains, with lines of pine and cypress trees (the national tree of Bhutan) decorating the slopes. Traditional houses with intricate designs dot the valley like a postcard picture. The crystal-clear Paro *Chhu* river flows quietly through the town, humming softly with the mountain wind.

In the evening, we walked around the quiet marketplace and bought chocolates and candies for the next day's trek on Jumba's advice. Mountain trekking drains energy

quickly, and sugar provides instant replenishment.

The next morning, after a light breakfast, we drove fifteen minutes to the trail base. It was already crowded with early trekkers, which immediately lifted our spirits. We hired trekking sticks from a kind Bhutanese woman while Jumba arranged all our entry tickets; the fee was ₹1000 per person.

We began slowly, placing careful steps on the large stones at the base. A cool mountain breeze stirred gently, brushing against our windcheaters. We kept our voices low and climbed quietly at our own pace. To start early and walk slowly is the golden rule of mountain trekking.

Jumba walked ahead but constantly looked back to check on us. After about forty minutes, we reached an elevation from where the Paro valley came into full view. No words or pictures can describe

**REACHING THE MONASTERY FELT SURREAL. IT WAS THE COMPLETION OF NOT ONLY A CHALLENGING TASK BUT A FULFILLING MOMENT. THE MOUNTAINS TESTED OUR STRENGTH AND PATIENCE.**

the breathtaking beauty of the valley when seen with naked eyes. The landscape glittered in the warm winter sun.

We took a few photographs and continued upward. As the sun grew warmer, we tied our jackets around our waists. After two hours of hard climbing, some of the girls stopped at the *Taktsang* Monastery Café for a tea break, while Devika and I continued without stopping.

The ascent grew more difficult. Our breathing turned shallow, and we stopped every few minutes. Benches along the trail offered us rest to sit and relax our feet.

But we didn't linger too long at one place, another important advice by our guide — "If we rest too long during mountain trekking, our body gets cold, and it takes effort to warm up and get back the energy."

Finally, we reached the viewpoint from where one can see the monastery. It was crowded with people taking pictures and selfies.

For the first time in our lives, we saw such a gorgeous sight of a monastery clinging to a cliff, the sky above it, and the mountains around it, all merging into one Divine Profundity that humbled us to silence.

But the hardest part was still ahead. We were still 800 steps away from the monastery. A steep descent straight down awaited us, followed by an equally steep ascent in the shape of a V. Our feet were already sore, our breath heavy. We were close, yet it felt so far.

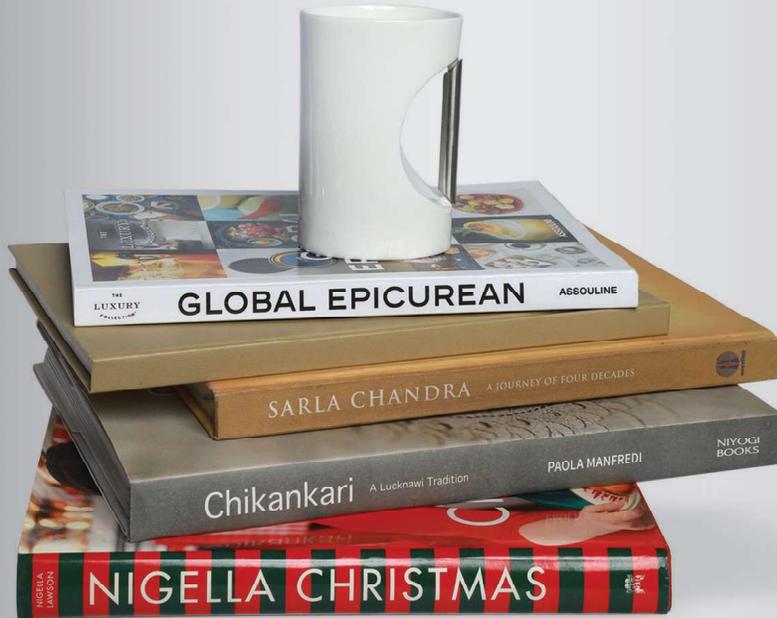
We held each other's hands, assuring ourselves in silence, boosting our spirits; "We have made it this far. We can make this last stretch too." The monastery stood right before us; we could not abandon the climb now. Somehow, strength found us.

In complete silence, we walked on. Our tired feet gained new energy, almost Divine, and step by step, we climbed the steep stairs to the monastery. The girls who were behind us also followed soon, making our adventure complete and fulfilling.

Reaching the monastery felt surreal. It was the completion of not only a challenging task but a fulfilling moment. The mountains tested our strength and patience. Our bodies were exhausted, but there was a sense of gratification in our hearts. Standing before the monastery, suspended between earth and sky, we realised that the mountains do not call us to conquer them; they call us to discover ourselves.

Every step we climbed brought us closer not only to the monastery, but to a deeper sense of gratitude. Gratitude for friendship, for faith, and for endurance.





# Printing Coffee Table Books

Upto  
500  
Copies in  
short time

Many Samples  
to Choose from

## Delhi Press

Printers since 1938

Call to Discuss

**9810160122**



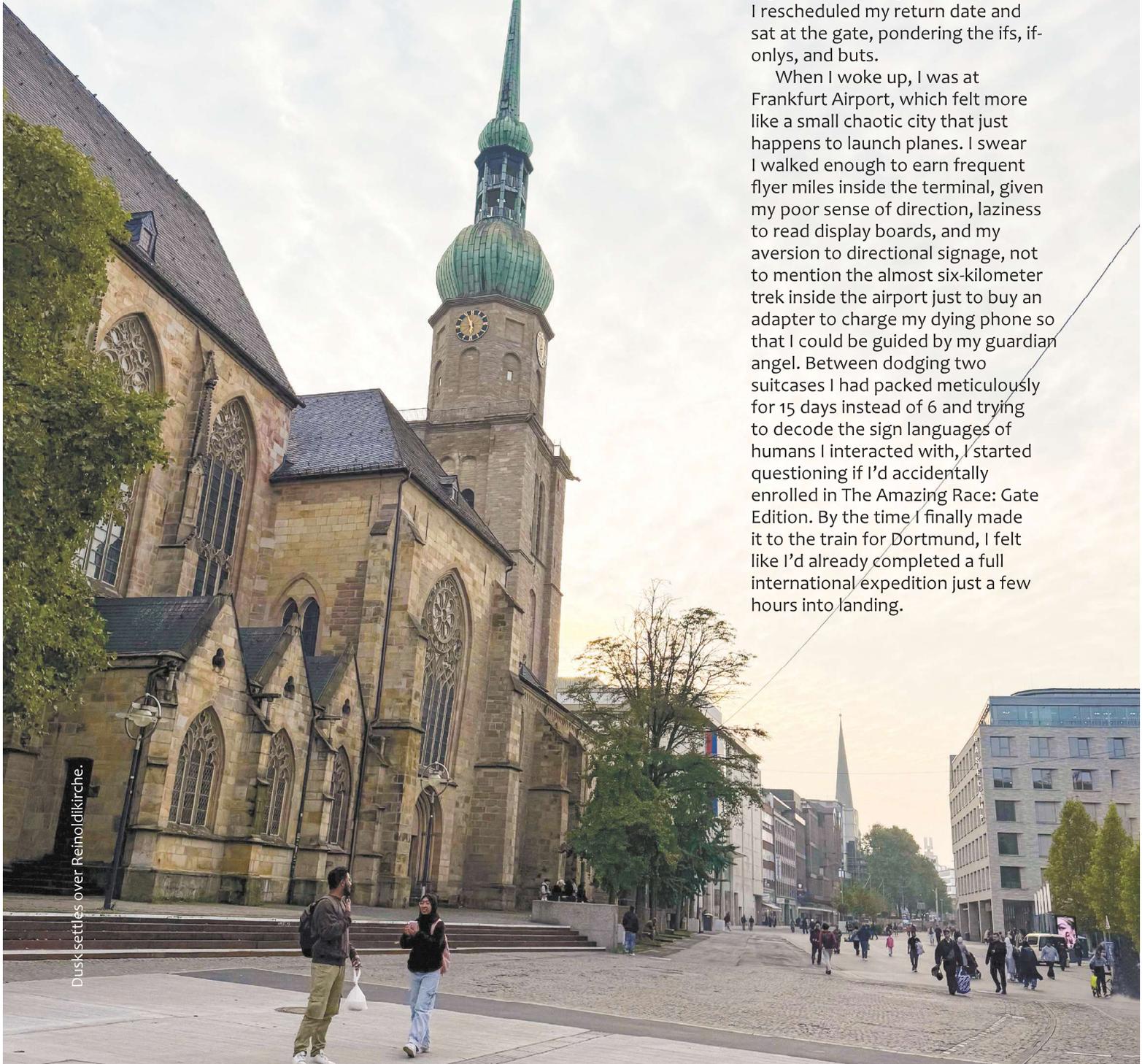
# The Amazing RACE

Frankfurt gate to Dortmund streets.

By Dr. Elsa Lycias Joel

Just when the sun decided to turn up its heat in Chennai, I took off to Dortmund. Me turning out to be unlucky is unusual. Yet, I was held up at the check-in counter because I hadn't realised the precise duration of my permitted stay in the Land of Poets and Thinkers. That got my bestie and me thinking and acting really fast, except for the short 20-minute nap she took, assuming my getting stuck was just a nightmare. Setting aside trepidation, I rescheduled my return date and sat at the gate, pondering the ifs, if-onlys, and buts.

When I woke up, I was at Frankfurt Airport, which felt more like a small chaotic city that just happens to launch planes. I swear I walked enough to earn frequent flyer miles inside the terminal, given my poor sense of direction, laziness to read display boards, and my aversion to directional signage, not to mention the almost six-kilometer trek inside the airport just to buy an adapter to charge my dying phone so that I could be guided by my guardian angel. Between dodging two suitcases I had packed meticulously for 15 days instead of 6 and trying to decode the sign languages of humans I interacted with, I started questioning if I'd accidentally enrolled in The Amazing Race: Gate Edition. By the time I finally made it to the train for Dortmund, I felt like I'd already completed a full international expedition just a few hours into landing.



The train ride to Dortmund felt like watching a movie unfolding through the window. A serene blend of meadows, cosy houses in both modern German architecture and charming old heritage styles, people bundled in winter coats, rolling hills, and the gentle hints of autumn painted the landscape. My co-passenger, Tim, an artist and bespoke perfumer who creates custom fragrances using herbs and flowers inspired by personalities, made the journey even more special. He described the passing scenery with such warmth and detail. As a parting gift, he handed over a mini perfume bottle.

It was 8 degrees in Dortmund; the wind caressed me aggressively. With open arms, Navina Johnson welcomed me. It was her birthday. We didn't shed tears or embrace dramatically like in the movies, yet our hearts understood. Meeting her in this dreamland she called her second home—the place she had longed for me to see, at least once—felt quietly perfect. After being energised by a handful of Ferrero Rocher chocolates, a mug of hot tea, and a few slices of bread, we walked through the Old Market Square and the main shopping street.

Christian, a good friend of Navina's, gracefully roped into our chaos—or maybe we just let him be the official third wheel so that we transformed from a dysfunctional to a functional team. Along the way, candelabra streetlamps in a shopping arcade caught my attention. For a moment, I half-expected the place to turn into Diagon Alley.

Winged rhino sculptures in every nook and corner of the city granted me a touch of its own enchantment, such as it could fly me to Oz, help me enjoy whispering winds, and Black Forest heartbeats. This animal was chosen as the heraldic animal of the Westphalian Philharmonic, a prominent symphony orchestra in the Ruhr area of Germany. It is interesting to note that this orchestra has almost 120 musicians from across 20 nations, performing around 300 events per season,



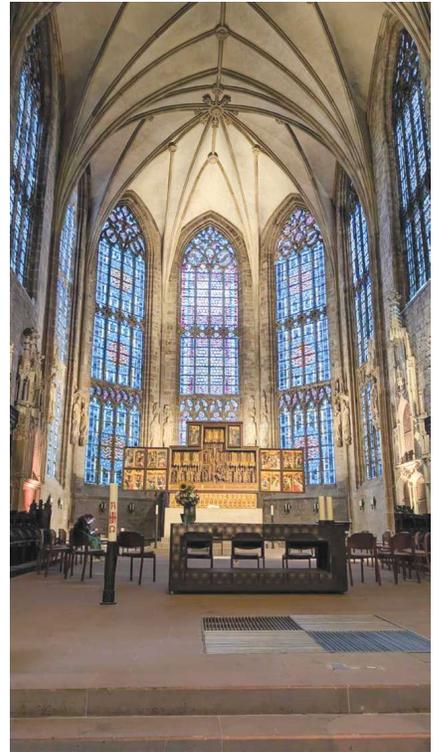
Just two Muggles under the candelabra lights



A single candle for countless hearts

including concerts, opera, and ballet productions.

Whether or not this snorty winged wonder complements the city's emblem—an eagle—is anybody's guess. To me, these two are delightful emblems. One soars high above and watches over the city with eyes that can find the tiniest shimmer of adventure and future, while the other turns streets into a place where the ordinary as well as the imaginative feels a little bit like Oz. I clicked the heels of my shoes thrice many times. Yet, I couldn't mount a Do-Rhino or ride the candelabra post like a magical broom to the misty Thuringian Forest.



Bathed in colour and light



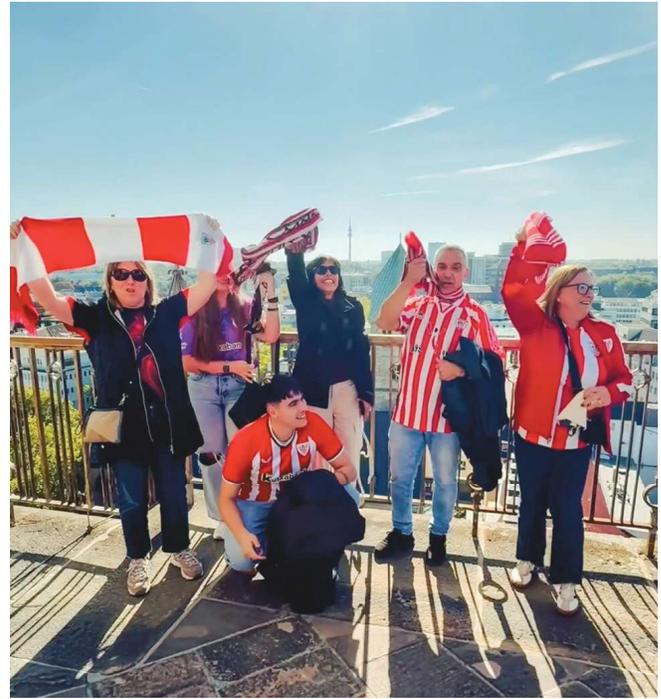
Do Rhino

The occasional chiming of bells I heard in the neighbourhood steered our conversation from food, people, and Do-Rhino to chapels. Christian suggested we peep into St. Reinold's Church, aka Reinoldikirche, dedicated to St. Reinold, the patron saint of Dortmund. Built from 1250 to 1270 and heavily damaged in WWII, it is 'extant'. Though Christian belonged to Bochum, he seemed to know more of Dortmund.

My attempt to joke about this failed when he mentioned that the large set of six steel bells was made by the Bochumer Verein foundry. At the entrance rested a large bell with no glimmer or shine and heavy with



Flag in hand, heart in Bilbao



A top Reinoldkirche

silence. I've always loved bells, big or small, for their voices that carry good tidings of joy. So, I wrapped my arms around her, grateful for the days she cheerfully ding-donged. A kind passerby told me *Kaiserglocke*—this bell, originally cast in honour of the German Emperor Kaiser—sits here as a solemn reminder of the war's devastation. In that still moment, it looked less like metal and more like a heart that once thundered with pride and happiness but was now at rest and at peace.

The interiors of *Reinoldkirche* were lit by sunlight, candlelight, and a divine radiance unseen to the human eye, for the material world is but a partial expression of that divine light. Seated in silence, I reassured myself that my body isn't composed of dust or conceived in sin but is the temple of God, a divine beauty. Only in silence and solitude have I witnessed the majesty and beauty of God—a process of spiritual

## IT IS A CELEBRATION OF HERITAGE, SPIRIT, AND UNWAVERING PRIDE, ESPECIALLY WHEN PLAYED AT DORTMUND'S LEGENDARY SIGNAL IDUNA PARK, HOME TO THE CONTINENT'S MOST AWE-INSPIRING STANDING TERRACE, THE YELLOW WALL.

alchemy. An eagle lectern, a carved wooden figure of St. Reinoldus, and a Belgian altar stood as symbols of faith, endurance, and the fragile bridge between devotion and history. Paying heed to a whisper, I decided to light a candle and say a prayer. I know what Navina prayed for, and her prayer was answered the moment I told her I'd be visiting next autumn.

The moment my candle glowed, I remembered victims of wars—gas chambers, Alligator Alcatraz, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and a few more. I remembered reading somewhere that to know what the victims of 'Little Boy' and 'Fat Man'

endured, we must try to hold the tip of our little finger in the flame and multiply the pain by a factor of 1,000 plus. That is how almost 150,000 Japanese perished 80 years ago at 8.15 a.m. Well, some of them were soccer players. I write this because, as the candle flickered to life, the chants of Bilbao fans began to rise in the air—faint at first, then echoing second after second. Inside Reinoldkirche, how could a country founded upon Judeo-Christian principles be vicious enough? I can't recite Kaddish. I tried visualising the colour of the walls of gas chambers. Hydrogen cyanide being a colourless gas, the walls would have had an

invisible colour of cries, pain, and the silence after them, all blurred into something beyond any hue that no spectrum can hold.

Soon after, we were racing up the steps to the bulbous green spire for a better view of the sea of red—the Bilbao fans filling the whole city beneath us. On our way up, we even caught sight of the magnificent set of six bells, and the music from the pipe organ that never played resounded in my mind. What a sight and sound that was! But the real surprises awaited us at the top. A few Bilbao supporters greeted us, shared stories about their beloved team, and even lent us their sashes, which soon transformed into my impromptu turban.

We danced together, learned their chants, exchanged laughter, and somewhere between all that merriment and rhythm, I became a fan of Bilbao. And perhaps, in that same moment, they became fans of India too.

From atop the circular walkway that offered a breathtaking aerial view of the city, the world looked small and beautifully connected. I watched as media crews, YouTubers, vendors, locals, and tourists blended into one vibrant, pulsating sea of celebration, with hugs, cheers, and good cheer overflowing in all directions. Goodness defied gravity too.

Then, I couldn't wait to rush down and lose myself in that magnificent sea of red. Just a few hours among them were enough to understand what the Champions League truly means—not merely to the teams, but to the hearts and histories they represent. For the Bilbao family, a Champions League journey is far more than a football match. It is a celebration of heritage, spirit, and unwavering pride, especially when played at Dortmund's legendary Signal Iduna Park, home to the continent's most awe-inspiring standing terrace, the Yellow Wall. What struck me most was their steadfast devotion to their roots—a proud philosophy reflected in their 'Basque-only policy'.



A MVP holds the stool

The idea that only players from the Basque Country, or those nurtured within its soil, are chosen to play is a testament to belonging, a living reminder that what is deeply rooted endures the longest. Beer flowed like wine, filling every corner from terrace to street.

Amid waves of red and white, cheer and camaraderie became contagious, and for a fleeting, beautiful moment, love felt like an epidemic the whole city had gladly caught. Young or old, drunk or sober, known or unknown.

On our way to the Pfefferkorn restaurant, I waved the Bilbao flag with unabashed delight, much to the delight of a small handful. Cheering for a team I had just met, yet instantly felt connected to, filled me with an indescribable joy. Laughter rippled through the air, catching the attention of passersby, who soon joined us with their flags to pose. We left behind a group of people rippling with giggles. Amid the bustle of the Pfefferkorn restaurant, waiters and Navina turned translators to

help me with ordering food. The ambience seemed casual, eclectic, and easy-going, where one did not need to dress up to go—or dress down either. With happy hearts and full bellies, we strolled, jingled, and sometimes sprinted through Old Market Square until yawns and thirst sent us home.

The next morning, I was back at Reinoldikirche, repeating the day before but with new faces and completely different energy. And I thought to myself: if I ever return, I would volunteer here for a while, to dwell a little longer in the silence that feels like a bridge to the divine. To be calm amidst the storm, to strengthen my spirit so that I might understand the unspoken wishes of those who kneel here, their tears speaking more than words ever could. For in places of deep silence, when we truly listen to our heart and mind, we discover a quiet power—the power to hear even the silent prayers around us.

And just like that, the idea of church hopping hopped into my head.

We

# THE RETURN OF THE MATRIARCH

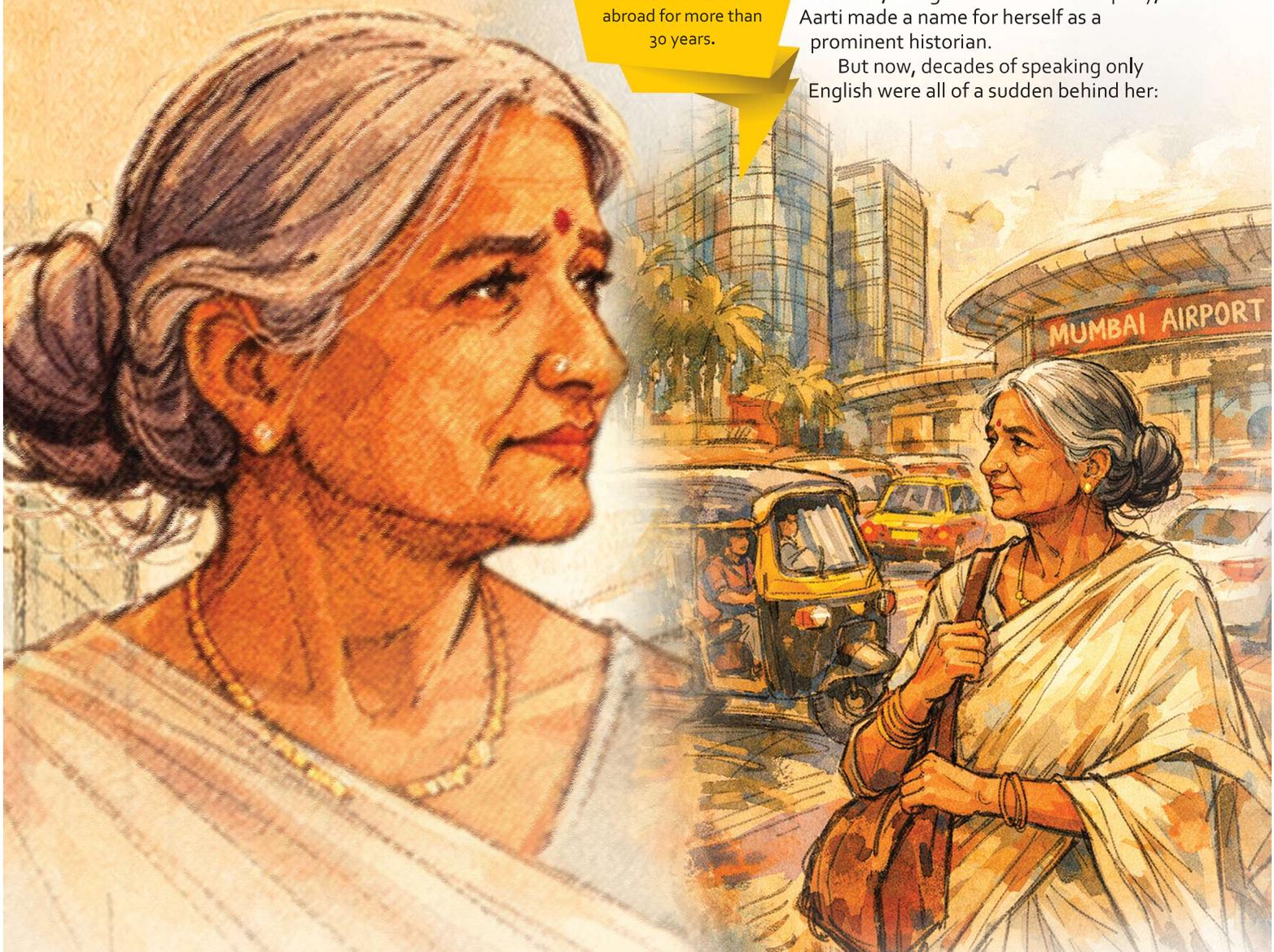
*Navigating the modern world.* By Supreena Narayanan

In the frenetic nucleus of Mumbai, where honking cars, clattering rickshaws, and the hum of life fill every alley and sidewalk, the Dutta family's home in Juhu had long been both a private center of attentiveness to each other and a quiet oasis. For decades, it had been a conventional place, where the wall clock's tick-tock was a reminder of time's passage but not of its haste. Generations passed; the home stood observer to it all. Nonetheless, soon the past, present day, and the future would all collide in a way that no one could have ever imagined.

Matriarch of the Dutta family, Mrs. Shalini Dutta had been a resident abroad for more than 30 years. Once the queen bee of their family hive, her steely wit and charisma had turned her into an unwelcome guest at the dinner table. Now she had relocated to the UK for a life of peace with her sister, after her husband had prematurely headed off to the other side. Through the years, she had watched her own children, Rohan and Aarti, grow into happy, successful professionals, becoming independent and making their own lives. While Rohan took over the family business, a large construction company, Aarti made a name for herself as a prominent historian.

But now, decades of speaking only English were all of a sudden behind her:

Matriarch of the Dutta family, Mrs. Shalini Dutta had been a resident abroad for more than 30 years.



Shalini was coming home. Not just as the grandmother who was well past her own legacy, but also as the woman who had been living her own life in a world of its own, where technology, gadgets, and social media were their best friends. She was accustomed to the life pace overseas, to the ease of the digital universe, to the indulgence of life freed from the weightiness of social mores. Yet India had also changed, and the world she was returning to was far different from the one she had left behind.

On the first morning after Shalini deplaned, she felt the intensity—heat, sound, energy—of Mumbai. The city had changed, and so had she. Her eyes did not well as they searched for the peace and silence of her former world; they absorbed the brilliant colours around her, the skyward-towering high-rises, the gleaming motorcars, the endless malls. The rickshaw ride back to the house had, too. The honking, the noise, the dust—it all felt more intense somehow.

As the car arrived at the house, she registered the slight variances. Now dwarfed by the high-rises that had closed in on it, the Dutta home still somehow felt smaller. The ancient oak out front was pruned back, and the jasmine of their garden was now the scrubby smell of the city.

Her children, Rohan and Aarti, were waiting at the door. Rohan welcomed her in a starched white shirt, his smile slightly more professional than warm. Aarti, the more gregarious of the two, wrapped her in a hug that spoke louder than the years they had spent on opposite ends of the planet.

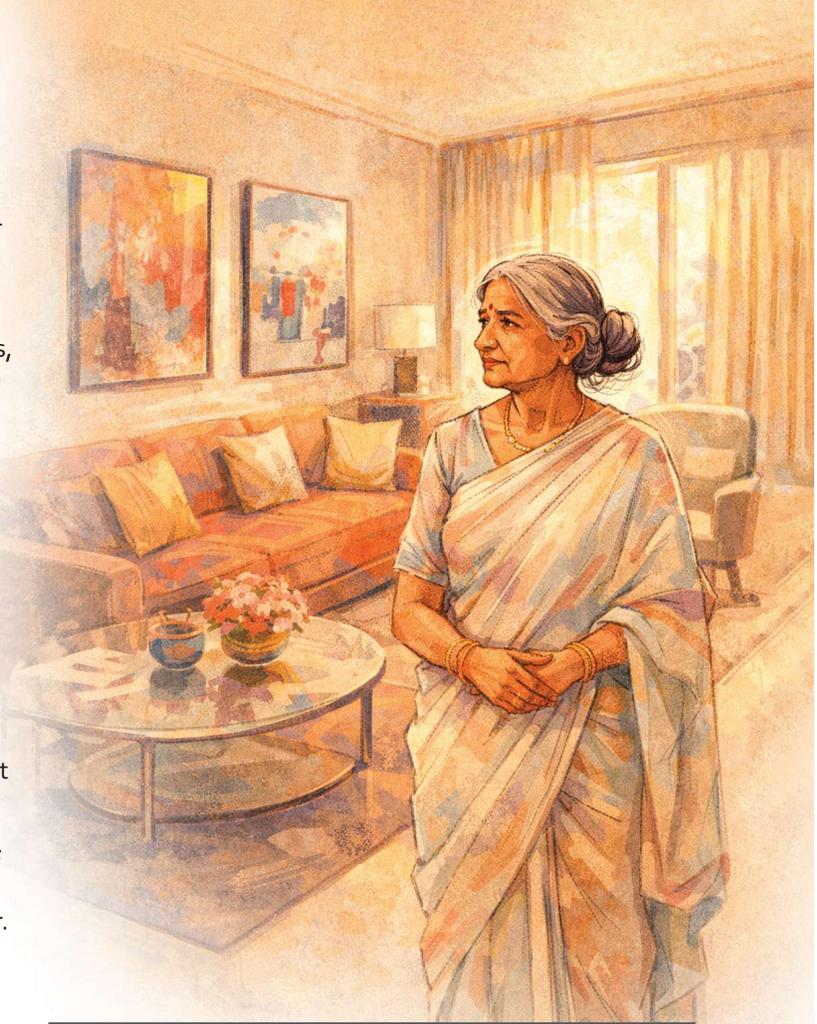
"Ma, you're back," Aarti cried, her voice vibrating with feeling. "It's been so long."

Shalini smiled faintly. "It feels like a lifetime."

But inside the house, the familiar place felt like a foreign land. The living room had been refurbished with modern furniture, sleek couches, and glass tables. The house itself was sparsely decorated, but with a modern flourish that had stitched together its roots and afternoon light—abstract art on the walls, an entertainment system that might as well have been more complex than just a television.

Shalini could immediately feel the difference. She had gotten into a habit of simpler places, creaky wood floors, and heavy drapes. She didn't see this world of gadgets and smart devices coming.

"Ma, I have done an upgrade of the house," Rohan said, smiling. "All the things are smart now—the lights, the security system, even the fridge."



*The living room had been refurbished with modernity. The house itself was sparsely decorated, but with a modern flourish that had stitched together its roots and afternoon light—abstract art on the walls, an entertainment system that might as well have been more complex than just a television.*

Shalini gazed at him in a confused state. "What do you mean? The fridge?"

Rohan gestured to the gleaming appliance in the kitchen. "It tracks groceries, sends reminders, all of that, and it even tells us when something's going to expire."

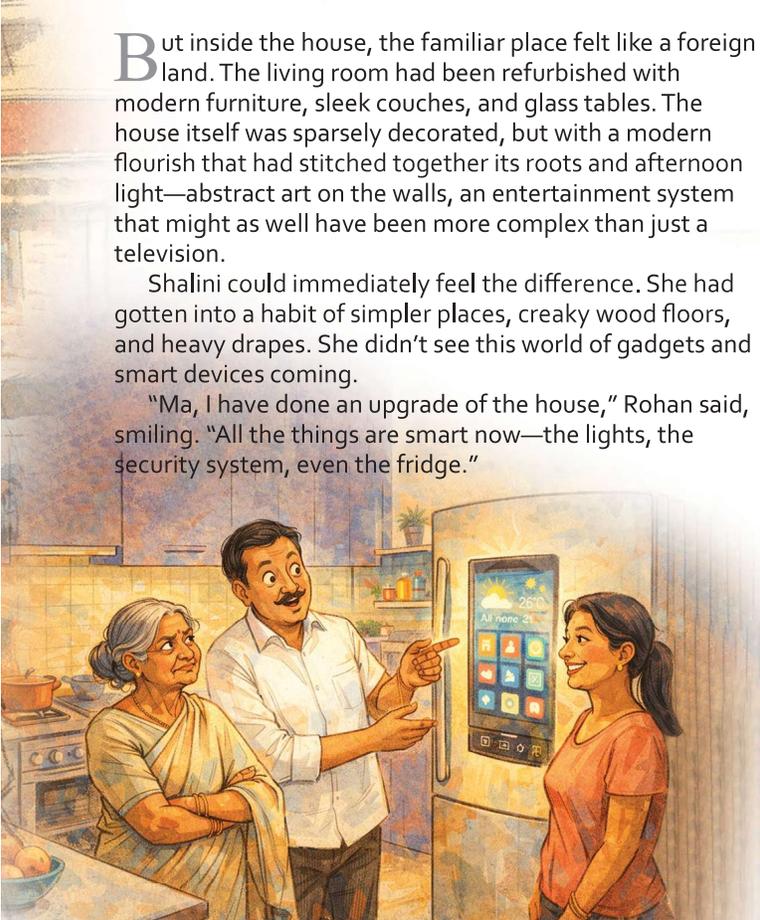
Shalini's brow furrowed. "Let's hope it doesn't start talking to us as well."

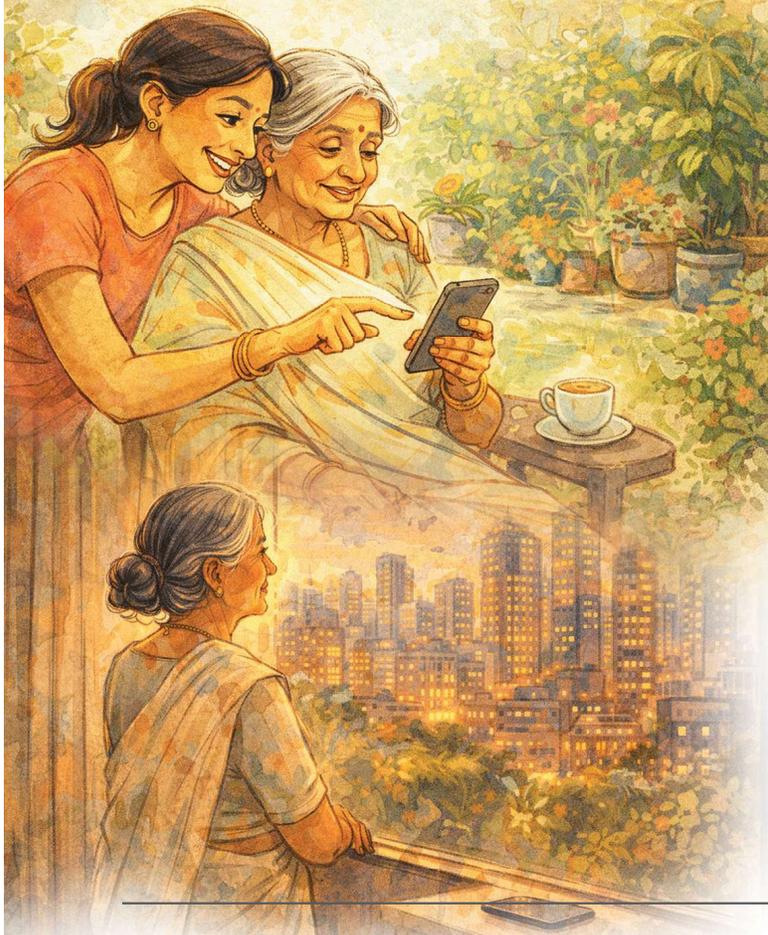
Aarti laughed. "Don't panic, Ma, it's not there yet."

For the next few days, blindsided, they readjusted. Shalini just couldn't keep up with a world that was happening too quickly. The kitchen used to be her domain, but now felt foreign. Aarti was already used to a comfy life; she started ordering on her smartphone, taking reminders of her work, contacting her friends on video calls, etc. Shalini felt that it was all a bit too much.

One day, sitting in the living room, she noticed Aarti scrolling through her phone. "You know what you're watching, Aarti?" she asked.

"Instagram," she said, not looking up. "I'm just experimenting with some new recipes."





*But Aarti was determined. She made an Instagram account for Shalini, and one of the first settings she would create would be a picture of her sitting in the garden, drinking chai. Now, “you can follow the family,” Aarti said, “and see what everyone’s doing.”*

“Instagram?” Shalini said, the word strange on her tongue. “What is that?”

Aarti smiled and explained. “It’s a social media platform, Ma. You post photos, videos, stories. You can find people from all over the world.”

Shalini’s eyes widened. “People from around the world? Just like that?”

“Yeah,” Aarti said, laughing. “It’s the place where everyone throws everything. You should try it too!”

Shalini hesitated. “I don’t think I’m prepared for all that. It sounds too... flashy.”

But Aarti was determined. She made an Instagram account for Shalini, and one of the first settings she would create would be a picture of her sitting in the garden, drinking chai. Now, “you can follow the family,” Aarti said, “and see what everyone’s doing.”

Over the next few days, Shalini found herself spending

more time on her phone, taking a crash course in Instagram. She began posting photos of the flowers in the garden, the street-food vendors outside, her morning walks along the beach. Her old friends began commenting on it, and slowly she was pulled into that new world.

One evening, she was sitting at the dining table, scrolling through her phone, when Rohan and Aarti came inside.

“Ma, what are you doing? Really?” said Rohan, a little surprised.

Shalini glanced up, smiling. “I’m just watching my Instagram. Look, I have more followers than you now.”

Aarti burst out laughing. “Mom, you’re a sensation! You should write a blog or something.”

But this was the first time in weeks that Shalini felt she belonged to something new. It was an alien world at first, but now it was one that she could put her stamp on.

Her heart, her love for Yash—a soft beat, exactly what was needed—threads of memory that made the bustling streets, small narrow alleys that heard only their footsteps. The majority of them liked this new form of Shalini. The gadgets, the devices, the social media were not so scary after all. She started using the voice assistant in the house, asking it to play her favorite songs or read out the news. She had always been very independent, but now she realized technology could be her supporter.

The family was also getting used to her. Rohan was no longer using jargon when they were around; he would attempt to explain the concepts to his mother in layman terms, as she was still getting acclimatised to the pace of change, although he knew that she was not technology-challenged. Sharing her life with her mother via social media was particularly comforting to Aarti, who had always exercised her independence with delight.

As Shalini spent the days, she became far more in tune with her surroundings. She started attending events, held a few low-key gatherings in her home, introducing her old friends to this new universe of digital conveniences. People with whom she hadn’t spoken in years started contacting her on WhatsApp, and she was becoming a frequent participant in video calls with relatives living in foreign countries. At that moment, the Duttas’ life had changed entirely, going from an isolated island into a nexus of humanity that was intertwined virtually and physically. One day, she was sitting with her grandchildren and smiled at them. The world had shifted in ways she hadn’t anticipated at all. But in the end, it’s not change that we need to fear; it is simply a part of life. She had always been the family fulcrum, and now she was both a link to the past and a bridge to the present, between traditions and transformations.

As the sun dipped behind a jungle of tall, glass-and-steel skyscrapers of Mumbai, Shalini Dutta watched the city she had returned to out of the window. It was lively, it was loud, it was never not going somewhere in the wrong and dull direction. But in her weeping heart, she knew that what had always defined family and love and home had never changed, and it never would. And that was enough for her. **We**

## Child Challenges



**M**Y DAUGHTER REFUSES TO GO into the bathroom after dusk. She says it's too cold and echoey and that sounds bounce on her head. She insists someone stands by the door.

Bathrooms with tiled walls and marble floors can be acoustically harsh and physically uncomfortable in winter. Keep a nightlight plugged in and lay out a warm bath mat. Play soft music or use a battery-operated lamp shaped like a cartoon character to make the environment inviting. Let her carry a comfort toy and promise to stay nearby. Acknowledge her perception without ridicule—it's not a refusal, it's sensory overload.

**M**Y 3-YEAR-OLD SON KEEPS biting his woollen sleeves and collar. He says "it tastes like winter." Should I be worried?

Wool chewing is a common oral fixation in toddlers during colder months. The texture can be soothing or simply habit-forming. Redirect the behaviour by offering safe chew toys, silicone teething rings (even at this age), or crunchy snacks like carrots. Don't scold him—instead, say, "Let's chew something yummier!" Also ensure his garments are washed with mild, edible-safe detergent to avoid ingesting fibers or chemicals.

**M**Y DAUGHTER IS REFUSING TO go to birthday parties or family get-togethers this winter. She says, "Everyone coughs and sneezes there."

This shows awareness of sickness transmission—perhaps from a recent illness or a conversation about colds. Validate her concerns. Explain immunity and hygiene in simple words: "Yes, people cough more in winter, but we wear scarves and wash

hands." Offer to carry hand sanitiser and masks, and let her observe parties from a distance first. Empowering her with small protective routines gives a sense of control.

**M**Y 2.5-YEAR-OLD CRIES WHEN we light incense or dhooop in the house during winter pujas. She says "the smell is spicy" and holds her nose shut.

Winter air circulation is often poor due to closed windows, making smells feel stronger. Dhooop and incense contain camphor and resins that may overwhelm sensitive noses. Instead of forcing tolerance, switch to milder alternatives like sandalwood sticks or electric diffusers with natural oils. Let her 'help' by fanning the incense gently or placing flowers. Over time, the sensory aversion can shift with controlled exposure and involvement.

**M**Y SON KEEPS WIPING HIS FACE with his kurta sleeve during weddings or winter functions. He says "napkins are too cold." This ruins his outfits every time.

Children often dislike the coldness of paper napkins or wet wipes, especially in outdoor settings. Carry soft cloth handkerchiefs warmed in your pocket and hand them to him like a treasure. You can even clip a warm napkin to his sherwani and call it his "gentle knight cloth." With familiarity and comfort, the sleeve habit fades.

**M**Y CHILD (AGE 5) BECOMES possessive of quilts and pillows during winter. If we visit family, he refuses to share with cousins and says, "Only my blanket is warm."

This stems from attachment to personal comfort and a sense

of scarcity—especially during cold weather when warmth equals safety. Instead of insisting on sharing, carry his specific blanket or a duplicate for such occasions. You can also create a "sharing story" around his quilt—how warmth doubles when shared. Let him choose which pillow to give away. Respecting comfort doesn't mean encouraging selfishness—it's about making security extendable.

**M**Y 2.5-YEAR-OLD HAS STARTED crying every time we try to dress him for going out. He throws off his jacket, cap, or socks, saying "I can't move!" even when it's cold. We're struggling every morning.

This could be a combination of sensory aversion and a need for bodily autonomy. Winter layers can feel bulky or restrictive, especially for toddlers used to lighter clothing. Look for thin thermals, fleece-lined hoodies, and soft wool blends rather than rough textures. Offer choices—"red jacket or green one?"—to restore a sense of control. Use playful association: "Let's dress like a ninja panda!" Dressing during playtime before actual outings also eases resistance. Over time, once she's warm outdoors, the layers will begin to feel more like protection than imprisonment.

**M**Y SON, 5, WAKES UP MULTIPLE times in the night during winter, saying he's "too hot and too cold at the same time." We layer him well, but he keeps tossing blankets and waking the household.

This contradiction is surprisingly common in children during colder months. Their internal temperature regulation isn't fully developed, so they may feel overheated under blankets but cold without them. Use breathable layered bedding—like a cotton sheet, light quilt, and fleece blanket—rather than a single thick *razai*. Avoid synthetic nightwear and opt for cotton thermals. Keep the room comfortably warm, not hot, and consider a warm water bottle wrapped in cloth to provide steady warmth. Addressing this balancing act helps them sleep longer and more peacefully.



# NEWS IN PICTURES

Prestigious Icon Award



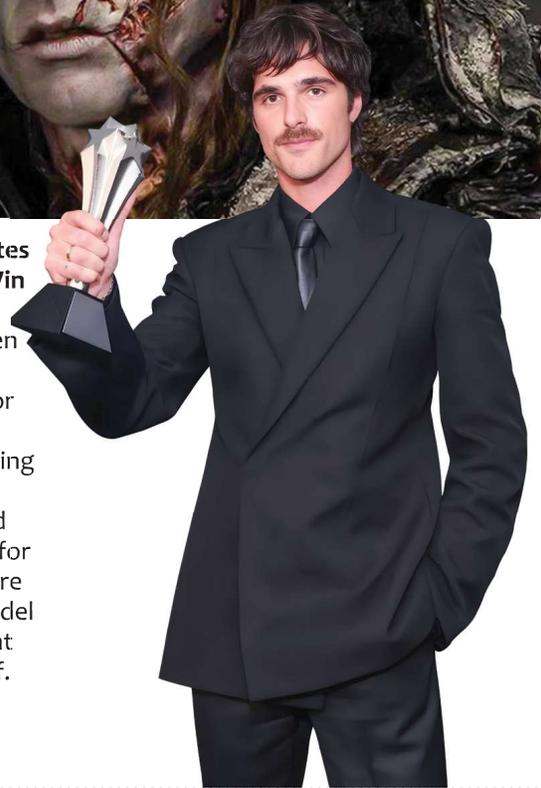
**Michael B. Jordan Wins Icon Award At Palm Springs Film Awards**  
Hollywood's biggest stars officially descended on the desert Saturday night as the Palm Springs International Film Awards rolled out the red carpet on January 3. Jordan received the Icon Award, Actor for his dual performance in the film.

Elordi's Big Win

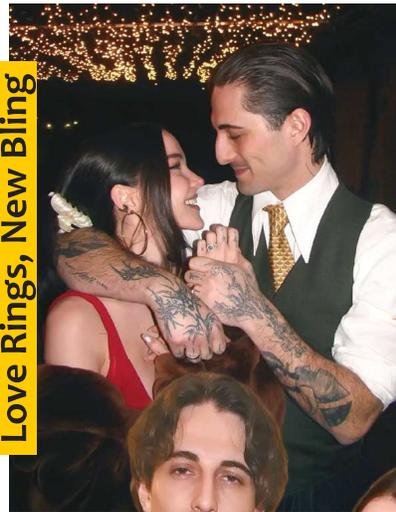


**Jacob Elordi Celebrates First Critics Choice Win for Frankenstein**

Jacob Elordi had taken home the award for Best Supporting Actor at the 2026 Critics Choice Awards, marking his first major acting award win. Elordi had received the honour for his role as the Creature in director Guillermo del Toro's Frankenstein at in Santa Monica, Calif.



Love Rings, New Bling



**Dove Cameron Is Engaged to Maneskin Frontman Damiano David**  
The couple announced their engagement on Instagram on Jan. 3. Cameron shared a snapshot showing off her engagement ring with her fiancé and captioned it, "my favourite part of being alive, happy new year."



### Princess Charlotte Charms Fans with Selfies on Royal Christmas Day Outing

Princess Charlotte took pictures with well-wishers during the royal family's annual Christmas Day outing. On Dec. 25, Princess Charlotte, 10, stopped for a selfie after the royal family had attended the Morning Service at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene on the Sandringham Estate.



Royal Christmas Selfie



Reflections of Royal Life

### Duchess Meghan Markle Says Royal Life Helped Strengthen Her Boundaries

In a candid Harper's BAZAAR interview Duchess Meghan Markle reflected on royal life and addressed intense public scrutiny. She said that leaving royal duties had helped her build stronger boundaries, protect her mental health, regain personal control, and focus on growth, resilience, and defining her identity beyond public expectations.

### A Historic Night at Ally Pally: World Darts Championship Wraps Up

The 2026 PDC World Darts Championship concluded on 3 January 2026 at London's iconic Alexandra Palace, marking one of the biggest editions ever. Featuring an expanded 128-player field and a record £5 million prize pool. Star Luke Littler energised the fans throughout the tournament.



### Darts Fever Hits London



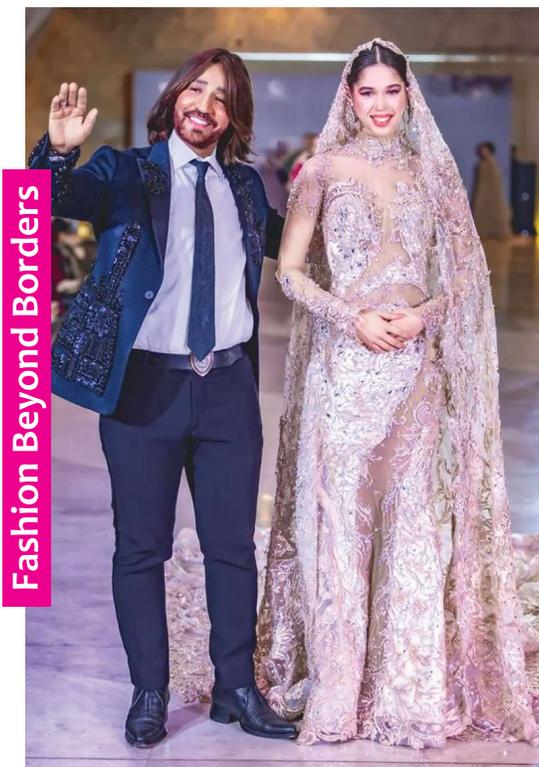


**Sindhu's Unstoppable Form**



**Sindhu Beats Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun in Opening Round**

Indian badminton star P.V. Sindhu made a confident start to her campaign by defeating Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun in the opening round. Sindhu showcased her experience and control throughout the match, winning in straight games to advance comfortably. The victory underlined her strong form as she continued her success in the tournament.

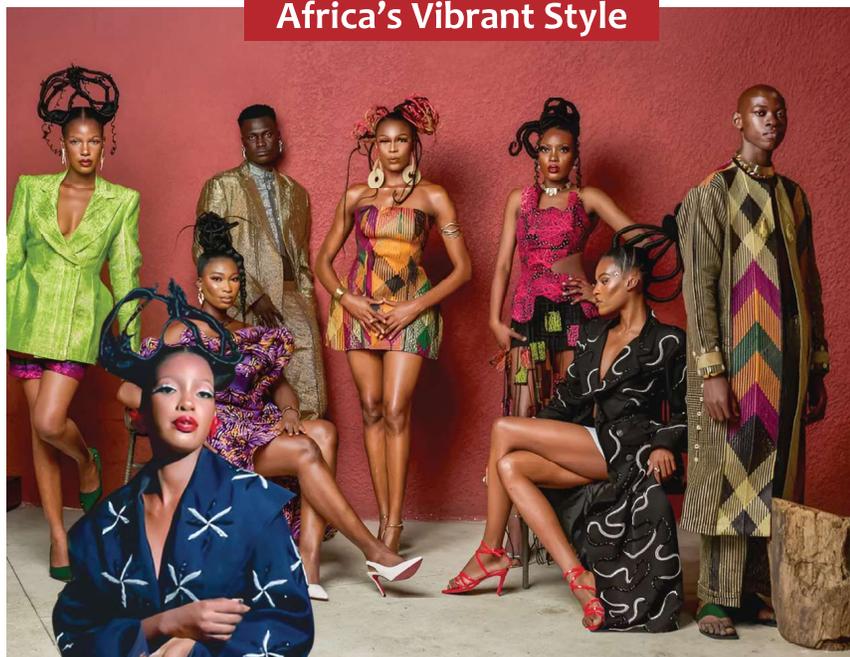


**Fashion Beyond Borders**

**Cultural Craft Meets Contemporary Style At Baku Fashion Week**

Hany El-Behairy and other designers had participated in the *Azerbaijan International Fashion Week*, held in Baku in December 2025, which had united local and international talents to present contemporary fashion inspired by cultural identity and innovation. Azerbaijan's global fashion presence by showcasing traditional craftsmanship with modern silhouettes.

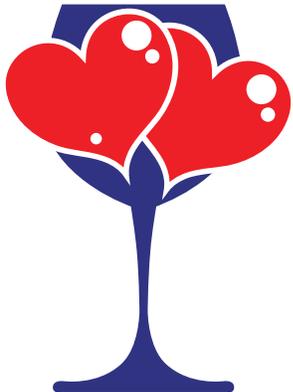
**Africa's Vibrant Style**



**Africa Fashion Week Nigeria Celebrates African Creativity**

The 11th *Africa Fashion Week Nigeria* 2025 concluded on 20–21 December in Lagos, celebrating the theme "The Naija December Experience." Featuring collections from over 30 designers, the event showcased culturally rich designs and innovation that were shaping contemporary African fashion on the global stage.





# Dating Hangover

## Dating App Actually Worked

Being a single mother at 32, I never thought I'd dive into the world of online dating. But after one of my friends insisted I created an account, I decided to give it a try. I had recently moved to India from Canada, and I was immediately surprised by how many matches I started getting on apps like Tinder and eHarmony.

At first, it was exciting to see so many people interested, but as I began chatting, I realised most of them were only looking for something physical. There was hardly any meaningful conversation, and I felt like I was just another profile to swipe on.

I went on a few dates, hoping to meet someone genuine, but it quickly became exhausting. Most men spent the entire evening talking about themselves, their careers, and their wealth. I wanted someone I could connect with, laugh with,

and share small joys with, not someone who measured his worth by the size of his bank account. Each disappointing encounter made me feel more reluctant to continue, but I reminded myself that not all men were the same.

One evening, while browsing the Woo app, I noticed a profile that caught my attention. He was 35, from a business family, and had experienced loss in his life—his wife had passed away after a battle with cancer. There was something in the gentle warmth of his smile that made me curious. We started talking, and to my surprise, we shared a love for the same cuisines—Mexican being our favourite. Our conversations flowed effortlessly, filled with humour, shared stories, and a surprising ease I hadn't felt with anyone else in a long time.

As days turned into months, our bond grew stronger. Today, a year later, he is my best friend—and maybe something more. The connection we share is genuine, built on understanding, laughter, and shared experiences. Looking back, I realise that my friend was right to push me to try online dating. For those who believe dating apps are just a fad or a waste of time, my experience proves otherwise. Sometimes, the right person is just a swipe away, waiting to change your life in ways you never imagined.

—Arpita



## Tinder Twice Over

Yes, I'm an Indian girl, and I ended up sleeping with a guy I met on Tinder—twice. Some people might say, "Lucky man," but honestly, I felt like I was the lucky one. I had just come out of a serious three-year relationship and was struggling with the heartbreak. I needed something to distract me. That's when I decided to try Tinder. At first, it felt like just an experiment, but to my surprise, I had a 100% match rate. After feeling so rejected and abandoned, that sudden attention was a huge boost to my confidence. I didn't engage much at first because I was busy with exams, but once they were over, I went back to the app. That's when a guy I had matched with a week earlier finally sent me a message.

He lived in my building, spoke my native language, went to my ex's college, and had co-founded a startup with my ex's best friend. Our chats lasted a week before we decided to meet for a walk. And when I saw him—tall, well-built, and extremely attractive—I turned into a teenage girl crushing over looks alone.

I even found myself thinking, "Who ex?" What drew me to him, surprisingly, was his unapologetic confession of being a womaniser. A serious four-year relationship had ended, and he had been with twelve or thirteen women in a year, with dozens of Tinder matches. He smoked, did drugs, and seemed like the last guy I'd ever date. Yet, that made him the perfect choice for a one-time hookup. I wasn't a casual sex person; my only partner had been my ex, but I wanted to break free from being "perfect" for a while.

That night was unforgettable. But he wasn't just the player he claimed to be; beneath that facade, he was unexpectedly kind and attentive. We ended up being together once more, and it was even more intense than the first time.

I knew if we continued, I knew it could never work. So, we made the difficult decision to stop talking. It was painful, but it had to be done.

—Mehek

# AS YOU SAY

## IMPULSIVE SHOPPING

The article *Buy Now, Regret Later?* by Anmol, January 2026, truly describes the harmful effects of impulsive shopping on individuals. Due to social media platforms, many shopping options are easily available where one can get desired items or clothes with just one click. Retailers offer catchy advertisements such as “stock is limited” and “scarcity,” while highlighting the attractive qualities of the products.



Apart from this, reward points on credit cards and online influencers spare no effort in impressing customers, resulting in impulsive buying. Impulsive shopping gives pleasure, positive feelings, and emotional satisfaction, but these feelings soon subside. When the item arrives, one painfully realises that it was not needed at all. Many people incur losses due to this habit. Therefore, we should buy with intention and not on impulse to save money, and learn to strike a balance in our purchases and finances to avoid regret later on.

– Harinder Kaur

## LIVING THE PROCESS

This refers to the thought-provoking article titled *Soft Goals and Strong Intentions* (*Woman's Era*, January 2026). As known, the core difference between strong goals and strong intentions lies in their focus

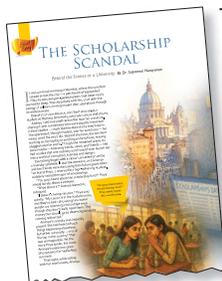
on the future versus the present, and outcome versus process. Soft goals represent what you want to do in the future, while strong intentions embody who you want to be in the present moment, reflecting a mindset or way of living. Strong goals, often framed as New Year resolutions, are generally vague and broad desires for change that lack specific actionable steps, often beginning with “I will...”. Strong intentions, on the other hand, are behaviour-oriented, process-driven, and purposeful, focusing on the journey rather than the destination.



– Beena Mathur

## STUDENT'S FIGHT FOR TRUTH

*The Scholarship Scandal*, published in *WE December 2025*, is a compelling piece of contemporary campus fiction that deftly blends suspense with social relevance. Set against the vibrant yet unforgiving backdrop of Mumbai, the narrative follows Ananya, a young university student whose curiosity leads her into the murky underbelly of academic corruption. One of the fiction's strengths lies in its pacing. The author allows the tension to build organically, moving from subtle suspicion to palpable danger, without ever losing narrative clarity. The portrayal of student life—cramped apartments, late-night laptop sessions, social media trails, and quiet fear—feels authentic and sharply observed.



The story also succeeds as a social commentary. By exposing how power, privilege, and influence can distort welfare systems meant for the deserving, it raises uncomfortable but necessary questions about transparency in educational institutions. Importantly, the

resolution avoids melodrama; justice is hard-won, collective, and grounded in institutional process.

– Shikha Shukla

## WHEN LIFE DEFIES EXPECTATIONS

Appropos to *Commander Is Thrilled* by Snigdha Jauhari is a charmingly eccentric story that blends humour with deep emotional insight. What begins as a retired Commander's earnest—and hilariously misguided—attempt to find a groom for his daughter evolves into an unexpected joy of second chances and unexpected love.



The narrative sparkles with wit, particularly in its portrayal of the Commander's larger-than-life personality, whose rigid ideas of pedigree and honour are delightfully undercut by life's own plans. The narrator's calm, observant voice serves as the perfect foil, allowing the absurd situations to unfold naturally.

The twist surrounding the Commander's marriage, along with the unforgettable image of the pillow-divided bed, adds both comic brilliance and symbolic depth.

– Shivpriya

## Woman's era

invites readers' opinions and reactions on articles, short stories and features published in *Woman's Era*. E-mail to: [letters@womansera.com](mailto:letters@womansera.com) or by post to:

As you say

Woman's era

E-3 Jhandewala Estate,  
New Delhi-110055.  
[Womansera.com](http://Womansera.com)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly ₹ 100  
**Woman's era**

DIVE INTO  
HIDDEN REALMS

SHACKLES OF  
HOME-COOKED  
FEASTS

THE DIGITAL  
BRAIN DRAIN

BEAT THE  
MONSOON BLUES

REDEFINING  
MASCULINITY

KOREAN BEAUTY  
TRENDS

PURSuing YOUR  
BOLDEST DREAMS



**SUBSCRIBE  
TODAY!**



Yes! I would like to  
subscribe to  
**Woman's era**

Please Tick (✓) box applicable

**1** Year   
Woman's Era  
**₹ 1200**

**2** Year   
Woman's Era  
Delivery Via  
Registered Post  
**₹ 2400**

**Free Digital  
Subscription for  
2 Years and 2 Extra  
Print Issues**

**Book my Subscriptions Now!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Pin \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque/D.D. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Drawn on (Bank/Branch) \_\_\_\_\_

Amount  /  in favour of

Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt.Ltd.

Mail with payment to:

Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt.Ltd., E-3 Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110055

Call: 9810160122 | info@DelhiPressco.Com

# THE LONG ROAD OF 52 YEARS: WOMAN'S ERA MAGAZINE

The Woman's Era magazine has travelled a long road of 52 years depicting the women of India. This magazine has picked up every issue pertaining to women. Launched in 1973, the magazine reaches millions of readers in India. It covers fashion, cookery, serial episodes, relationships, health and articles on everything that goes around us.

But as said, "The only constant is change", the magazine has changed a lot. The glossy papers might have remained the same, but the articles and thoughts printed in 1973 have changed with the changing times.

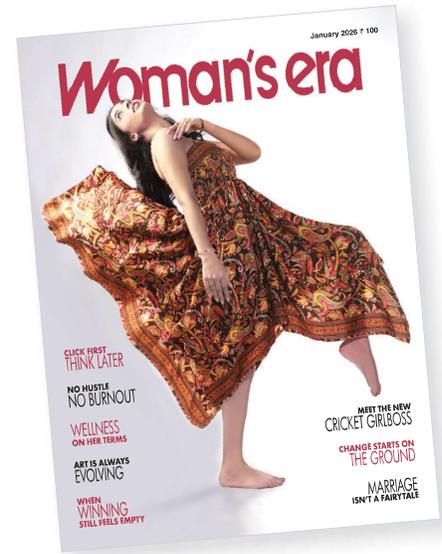
When one looks at India of the 1970s, we see that women were taught to serve their husbands, and take care of the household. The idea of education was present (in rich classes), but with the thought of work and running a business, was something women were barred from. Their life revolved around their husbands, in-laws and children. These women were regarded as the dignity of the household, and the pressure of holding it was on their shoulders.

This was also the period when the west was talking about the 'Bra-Burning Feminism', and Woman's Era fought it by talking about how Indian Feminism is different from that of the west.

So, as a true representative of women of the 70s, Woman's Era represented these Indian women. The magazine revolved around topics related to the household. The majority of the topics talked about how women can maintain healthy relationships within their house, and the term 'Homemaker' was coined by the magazine.

In the 80s and 90s, the magazine went a step ahead and talked about working women. This woman was able to work, she was aware of her rights, and she was also deemed to work for her household. With the advent of the Computer Revolution, soft skills were a major requirement. Indian Parents did not prefer seeing their daughters in fields such as civil or mechanical engineering, but when it came to working in an office, with a computer, they could not be anymore proud.

Woman's Era talked about the computer revolution and how it began to change the lives of women in India. These women played an active part in the office, but their part was not diminished in the house. The number of jobs surpassed the number of women in the country.



Here, Woman's Era came up with a new term 'Super Woman' for Indian women. The magazine depicted these women as creatures who can do everything. Be it at office, or home, these women were a one-hundred-percent Super Women. No one could stop them, no one could strip off their wings. The magazine showed women of the 90s that they can fly, as high as they could imagine.

## Today The World Has Changed.

Technology and Communications in the 21st century has turned everything upside down. Women who were once destined to be married are now turning into single women, divorced women, and also single mothers. Woman's Era as a magazine accepts all these positions but does not advise. The magazine believes that women are capable of every single thing, society once stopped them from doing, but it strongly opposes being a single woman.

Even today, when the magazine talks about marriage, it wishes for everyone to enjoy the happy parts it has to offer. It believes that marital rape is not permitted. And since, sex and intercourse are such private themes, it should only happen naturally, and not by force. The magazine says that, the partners can have and should have sex, be it during the day time or night, but the coitus should always be consensual.

The magazine has and even today supports education of women. It believes that educated women are a boon to society. When it comes to marriage, women should get married at an appropriate age, and plan kids according to their financial condition. There was a time when the magazine talked about sex, merely as a part of the marital act, but now it views it as a need, every human being has.

It has stood by women in every transiting phase of their life. Or one can say, the magazine has transformed with the Indian Woman. Woman's Era surely justifies its name, as it has been with women and will be by their sides, with every change that comes in its way, in the upcoming eras.



Brightens Skin,  
Charming Glow



# Mera Roop Shringar



Face Wash & Soap

9896134500  
9896277535

A Complete Cosmetic Range  
Available at all leading chemist stores

Online Shopping:  
[www.wellncare.com](http://www.wellncare.com)

Scan Code  
for Shop Now





Acquire Curated Artworks of  
Masters • e-Masters  
• Commissioned Works • Sculptures



The Lexicon Art  
@Delhi Book Company,  
M-12, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001  
011-41618159 • 9810160122 • 9560358880  
info@TheLexiconArt.com • TheLexiconArt@gmail.com