

SANIDHYA DAS

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AAROHI DALVI

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The Young Sound Wave

This World Music Day, we discover how disciplined parenting and social media power are shaping India's teenage generation of professional musicians

By WRIDDHAAYAN BHATTACHARYYA

Music shapes civilisations. The number of young Indian prodigies trained in classical tradition with a formal education is growing. This is a novel trend considering the scale. New horizons are opening up for them to take up music as their sole profession, more open and more exciting than ever before. Independent music scenes are growing across cities, empowered by easy access to digital platforms, and audiences eager for fresh voices. Forming a band and performing on stage is no longer a fantasy. As with any serious discipline, it takes will, relationships, and resilience to sustain a career in music. Millennial parents are recognising budding talent early, and backing their children. From Bengaluru to Mizoram, these whiz kids are not just learning music; they are releasing originals, performing with legends and building a global audience. Their prowess points to a shift in Indian parenting towards talent.

Megan Rakesh from Bengaluru was only nine when she shot to fame after appearing in an Instagram Live session with renowned musician Ehsaan Noorani during the Covid-19 lockdown. She gathered praise from pop icons Alicia Keys and Shania Twain for her vocal skills. Around the same time, she released the single *Find My Way*, produced by Grammy-nominated artistes Aaron Sarkar and Jaicko Lawrence. Now 14, she is preparing for the release of her debut EP. Her American accent—something that catches the audience's attention immediately—is acquired, says her father and manager, Rakesh VG. "It was inevitable when you interact with global musicians and rappers. She sang in at least 1,000 online sessions before hitting the stage," he says.

Megan often performs with her rock band, Meg and the Miracles. She has also played with the iconic Parikrama, and Girish and the Chronicles. When she has free time, she reads and at other times, works on her music. "Literature is my favourite subject," says Megan. Her mentors are international vocal coaches such as Talia Dean who is one of Brian May's students, and Korin Deanna Lane. "I feel happiest when I perform. I believe the best form of expression is music. I read a lot of poetry. I love Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf. Music is always going to be there, irrespective of good and bad days."

The teenage singer picked up the nuances of rock music from her father, Rakesh, whose band Out of Office gave her the initial push. "When she was just a kid, she would come and perform at my gigs. It would be a surprise since people never expected a kid to scream out a Led Zeppelin number," Rakesh says. He and his wife, Anne, run a cloud kitchen, but Megan's schedule keeps them on their toes. "Her mother designs her clothes for the stage and also travels with her as her manager when she plays with big names," he says.

Rakesh noticed Megan's musical productive streak during the pandemic, when school education went online. The couple prepared a home schooling syllabus. Now, Megan's knowledge extends beyond the confines of a classroom. "We give her books and materials, not for any particular grade, but to learn every subject. She doesn't have to go to school literally. When she is close to reaching Class X, we will enroll her for exams and follow a syllabus. As of now, she is covered for science, maths, and literature," he says.

Megan hopes to strike a chord with her new EP. "I am working on the songs and making sure every minuscule detail is perfect before I hit the studio. I have to be proud of my songs even after 50 years. The songs take shape as I keep performing with my band," she says, adding that she is aware of the power of the spotlight. "I am grateful. I have grown up performing, and being on stage feels like home. One day, I dream of playing my own songs at the Hornbill Festival."

With 45.1K followers on Instagram, she often reviews

books. "She can read a 400-page book in a day and recall it with remarkable accuracy. Publishers send her books; we have almost 1,000 of them. They reached out to us after watching some of our videos in which we discussed books," says Rakesh.

A kilometre down the road from the Rakesh household lives the 12-year-old drummer, Sanidhya Das, who has been turning heads. In 2024, after he turned 10, Sanidhya performed with one of the oldest Indian rock bands, Indus Creed, at the Independence Rock Festival in Mumbai. "He was probably the youngest drummer in the festival's history," says Subhashish, his father, who fed him on rock music. Sanidhya has also been a guest drummer with Parikrama and Junkyard Groove. He got the opportunity when Subhashish shared his drum covers of Indus Creed songs by Uday Benegal. "Nobody could do Indus Creed songs at this age. He played *Trapped* and *Sleep* in 2023. I sent it to Uday, and he messaged me saying they were playing in Bengaluru, and that I should bring Sanidhya to the concert. Next year, they performed in Bengaluru again, and this time, he called Sanidhya to guest in the song *Fireflies*. And then I-Rock happened," he says.

Sanidhya recalls the experience of playing with legends. "It was exciting, and I was living my dream. I was nervous, but the whole crowd was cheering me a lot, which felt very good. I made mistakes at the I-Rock show because I was nervous, but my father felt I was fine, since that was my first band performance ever."

When he was a toddler, Sanidhya would make drum kits with kitchen utensils. Later, videos of Casey Cooper, Matt McGuire, and Gavin Harrison helped as lessons. Like Megan, who imbibed music from her father, Sanidhya has the genes of his grandfather, who taught Hindustani Classical music. "I used to sing and play a bit of guitar during my college days, but my father played five instruments despite his government job to support the family. When Sanidhya was born, an aunt said she recognised my father's image in him. Being a traditionalist, my father didn't support my liking for Western music," recalls Subhashish, who, despite the demands of his career in data science and marketing, began taking drumming lessons with his son, hoping that learning together would help his child progress faster.

Subhashish and family lived in Lucknow and then Delhi before moving to Bengaluru. At that time, Sanidhya was too young to learn drums, although the father hired a local music teacher. "When we moved to Bengaluru, I realised that I would have to sit with him if he was to learn music in the proper fashion. So we applied for admission to the music school, Neptune Music Hub. Our teacher was the famous metal drummer, Karthik Jayaprakash. I understood that if I learned patterns,

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MEGAN RAKESH

She was only nine when she shot to fame after appearing in an Instagram Live session with legendary musician Ehsaan Noorani during the Covid-19 lockdown



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grooves, triplets, and the other rudiments of music, I could help my son," he reasons. The classes stopped a few months after the Covid-19 lockdown. Since then, Sanidhya is on a personal journey of self-discovery through music.

He was the only Indian performer at the UK drum show in 2025, where he met Harrison, the drummer of Porcupine Tree and King Crimson. "Harrison's playing introduced him to polyrhythms," reveals Subhashish. Armed with an iPad, Sanidhya has been trying to produce music using GarageBand software. He wants to study at the Berklee School of Music. "I feel he should get a degree in music production from the US or UK. Being only an instrumentalist is not enough. There is money only if you can understand production or become a drum teacher like drummer Darshan Doshi, who has so many students. Bollywood also brings big money, but that will not be a daily affair," says his father. Sanidhya recently completed the eighth grade in drumming with distinction from Trinity College, London.

He is currently in Class VII at Vibgyor High School. "My wife is a teacher. She takes care of his education," he adds. Sanidhya's goal is to keep practising and secure a jazz drumming degree from Trinity. Inspired by odd time signatures and complex music, he wants to continue his exploration and research by listening. "Simple drumming is fairly easy, and I already know many songs. Even though I like it, it can get boring. I want to push the boundaries. My father tells me to write my own songs which I am doing. I want to pick up on songs by Animals as Leaders, a progressive metal instrumental band. I wish to focus on practising on an acoustic drum kit," says the youngest Mapex artiste in India, who is currently polishing his skills on an electronic kit. "Practising in a residential apartment, it is challenging to play the acoustic kit because of its loud sound," adds Subhashish.

Around 350 km from Bengaluru, in Coimbatore, lives a bass guitar player with a hunger to conquer the world. Sixteen-year-old Deshna Chitturi, again nurtured by a musician father Arun, picked up bass only five years ago. "Since I was a guitar player, I could give her inputs to fast-track her learning. The coaching was quite intensive, and she spent five hours practising. At some point, she also felt the instrument was not for her, but I did not give up," says Arun.

Two prominent women from the bass guitar fraternity, Mohini Dey and Nilanjana Ghosh Dastidar, inspired Deshna. "She was fascinated by Italian bass player Davie504," says Arun, who handed her the bass to accompany his electric guitar. Coimbatore doesn't have a thriving live music scene, which is a deterrent for Deshna. But knowledge never stops. "She is trying to complete her grade in rock and pop from Trinity. She is somehow managing, but at times, she takes lessons from Nilanjana, who plays with AR Rahman. She has learned the bass from Akashdeep Gogoi too. Currently, Avishek Dey is teaching her jazz," says Arun.

Deshna attended a regular school till Class X. Things soon changed once she landed an official endorsement deal

DESHNA CHITTURI

Things soon changed once she landed an official endorsement deal with Mark Bass & Procraft India



AANIKA PAI

The 13-year-old announced her arrival with a guitar cover of Ozzy Osbourne's classic, *Crazy Train*. Kelly Osbourne, Ozzy's daughter, commented on it, cementing her rise

with Mark Bass & Procraft India, a company that manufactures, imports and distributes musical instruments. "Eight hours of school was no longer the right choice for her career. We registered her through the National Institute of Open Schooling portal, and now she is taking her Class XI exams. She has to attend online classes by a tutor and take her exams when the time comes," he adds.

The teenager has no qualms about picking up an instrument that not many dare to. "I have a lot of things to learn in terms of techniques and genres. I really like how the bass guitar feels. The instrument sounds majestic. I have released one bass instrumental song, and three more are in the pipeline. My father and I composed the first track that highlights the bass slap technique. Now, I am working on a funk piece. My father will play the guitar. I am inspired to compose my numbers after listening to people like Mohini and Vincen Garcia," says Deshna, who already has 54.3K followers on Instagram.

Arun took a break from his corporate job in 2022 to guide her while his wife, Rincy, still holds one. "My wife is a huge support for us. She never thinks twice before buying a new bass for Deshna. She works and does more than a mother is supposed to do," he says.

Aanika Pai, another prodigy from South India, is making waves in the guitar world. It is a coincidence that Aanika played with Megan at a gig in Bengaluru when she last visited India. She collaborated with Sanidhya and Deshna for a funk jam video, recorded remotely. Currently living in Gibraltar because her parents work in the British Overseas Territory, the 13-year-old from Hyderabad announced her arrival with a guitar cover of Ozzy Osbourne's classic, *Crazy Train*. "Before that, she had 600 followers on Instagram, then it reached 20,000. Kelly Osbourne, Ozzy's daughter has commented on it," reveals her father, Avinash.

Aanika's teacher is the veteran Indian guitarist Sumith Ramachandran, who is particularly known for his finger-picking technique. "We moved to Gibraltar from Hyderabad in 2010. My wife is a data analyst, and I work in the marketing sector. Aanika started taking guitar and piano lessons in Gibraltar since she was six. My father is a multi-instrumentalist, but we seem to have skipped a generation. My brother, Anoop, and I played cricket for Hyderabad; he played the Ranji Trophy," adds Avinash,

whose parenting moment was introducing his daughter to Yousician, a music-learning app. "It was interactive, engaging and had a gamification component. You earn stars and badges on it. Aanika started playing on it as if it was like a video game. She finished nine levels in six months and was about to start the 10th. That's when Sumith sir stepped in. Initially, he was not keen on teaching a teen, but watching a few of her videos convinced him. He is the reason for Aanika's growing success."

These lessons helped the young girl cover avant-garde guitar players Kiko Loureiro and Guthrie Govan. "It is difficult to teach kids that young. But I was also a child prodigy with



ESTHER LALDUHAWMI HNAME

She became a sensation after covering AR Rahman's *Maa Tujhe Salaam* in 2020 at four. She also sang *Jana Gana Mana* and shot a video with the Indian Army and Assam Rifles, who supported the production

no teacher at the age of three. I know what it is like. When you interact with Aanika, you know how they think. Not all children are like her. Since I am a self-taught guitarist, I shared my experiences with her, and knew she had the talent," says Ramachandran, adding, "She made my job as a teacher



easier, and she would nail all the exercises in the one-hour online class despite the time difference and internet disruptions. She is ready to play with the big guys." Aanika played with Jetstream, a rock band from Gibraltar. "They gave her the platform when she was just 11. She played *The Final Countdown* (Europe) and *Sweet Child O' Mine* (Guns N' Roses) with them. She also did *Bohemian Rhapsody* (Queen) in one of the shows in Gibraltar. Her solo video went viral again," adds Avinash, who handles her Instagram page which has 75.3K followers.

Being good in studies doesn't place added pressure to balance education and music. "She studies on her own and is in Class VIII at Westside School. Music doesn't interfere with her education, but let's see where it goes," he adds.

The guitar prodigy has released three singles in 2026: *Inception*, *Grootalicious*, and *Electric Joyride*. "I hope to do a full-length album after practising a bit more and increasing my vocabulary," says the youngster, who has a method to

her madness. "How I normally start a composition is through riffs and ideas when noodling. If I find something I like, I record it, and then I have a library where I store the ideas. We have been in touch with Swedish musician Mattias Eklundh, who has co-written the music with me," says Aanika, who also picked the brains of Loureiro and Govan at guitar camps. "My dad and I went to Loureiro's guitar camp, where he taught me a lot of things. After every master class, he calls everyone on stage for a jam. I got to improvise over one of his tracks. Guthrie was a special guest at one of the other camps," she adds.

Aanika has performed at the National Association of Music Merchants event for two consecutive years. She also played a gig in London with Japanese prodigy drummer Yoyoka Soma. "I would love Aanika to play everywhere around India, Europe, South America, Australia, and everywhere," Avinash sums up.

Away from the urban noise and tucked into the serene hills of Lunglei in Mizoram lives Esther Lalduhawmi Hnamte, a nine-year-old vocalist. Born to taxi driver Lalrinenga Hnamte and R Lalawmpui, a retired church soprano, she became a sensation after covering AR Rahman's *Maa Tujhe Salaam* in 2020 at four. She also sang *Jana Gana Mana* and shot a video with the Indian Army and Assam Rifles, who supported the production. "Mizoram has a rich musical culture. Music is deeply rooted in everyday life, and the environment is encouraging. It helps children like Esther grow confidently," says her uncle, R Lalrambeiseia.

She inherited the pitch from her mother and often sang in churches and community gatherings since she was two. She would surprise everyone by memorising Hindi and English lyrics of songs despite speaking only Mizo. The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar in 2025 encouraged her to dream big.

"I enjoy singing patriotic songs like *Vande Mataram*, and *Made in India*, Hindi songs, Mizo songs, English, and other meaningful music that connects with people. I want to become a good singer and make my family, my state, and my country proud," says the youngster, who attends the Assam Rifles Public School with her brother in their area. "She balances studies and music well by following a routine, giving equal importance to both," adds Lalrambeiseia, who is her guide in the musical career. "My role is to identify opportunities beyond the state and make the necessary arrangements. I collaborate closely with Esther's parents to ensure we maintain a shared vision. I am also involved in selecting suitable songs for her and finalising music videos."

In Mumbai, a contemporary of Esther is making people dance at nightclubs with a turntable. Meet 10-year-old Aarohi Dalvi, the youngest club DJ in the world.

The youngster, who discovered her love for the console at the age of four, now goes by the moniker DJ Lil Aarohi. Her father, Ashish, who owns the Echos DJ Academy in the city, guided her. She mentored under DJ Sumit Gehlot (Echosmith) and Ritik Uke (UKE). "She was fascinated by the sounds and lights of the console. At seven, she became the youngest club DJ to play non-stop for over an hour at the Wings on Fire club in Mumbai, thereby entering the Guinness World Records," says Ashish.

By six, Aarohi had completed a beat juggling, basic and advanced scratch course. "She was learning faster than other kids at our academy. We were taken aback by how she was scratching as a four-year-old. People from all over the world began liking her videos on Instagram, which now has 116K followers. Then we applied for the 'youngest DJ' certificate," adds Ashish.

Last year, Aarohi finished in the top five at the DMC Open World DJ Championship. She was the first female DJ from India, and also the youngest to break into the top-flight competition. "DMC had numerous experienced DJs from around the world," says her father, adding that Aarohi was awarded the Global Child Prodigy Award 2025 in British Parliament house when she was nine. Ashish and his wife, Archana, who is a homemaker, are not worried about their talented daughter missing school. "She is getting support from her school, St. Anne's Convent. On a day she has to practise, we don't send her to school. Then she tries to make up for lost time," he adds. Inspired by influential Swedish DJ Avicii, Aarohi dreams of creating her own songs and remixes. "Waiting For Love is my favourite track. I would love to be a music producer someday, and make my own music," says the young turntablist.

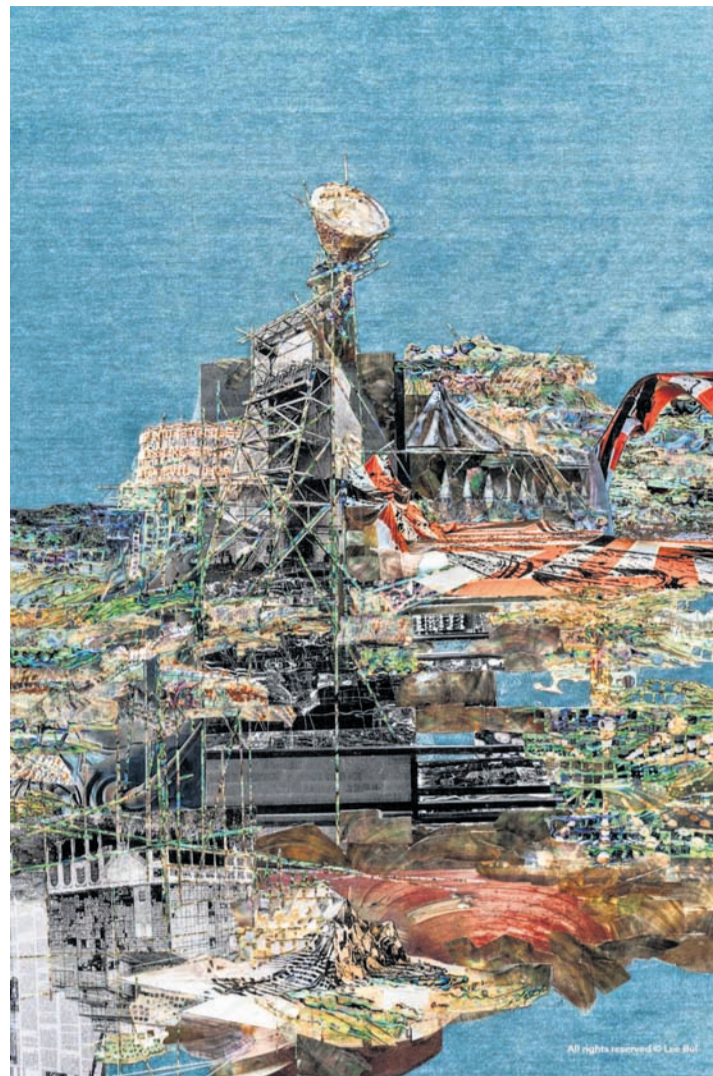
These kids are not the only ones who are supported and encouraged by their parents, who take their offspring's skills seriously. Father-daughter band The British Raj, comprising guitarist Rajkumar Sengupta and daughter, Aria, and Dad N' Daughter, helmed by guitarist Chandresh Kudwa and his daughter, Eva, are rocking the new Indian musical world with youth and ambition.

Obviously success rarely arrives overnight. It comes incrementally, growing through countless rehearsals, small gigs, experiments, and of course, learning to stay true to one's inner melody. To be on stage can be exhilarating, but also demands commitment, humility, and constant evolution. For those teenage prodigies willing to put in the work, music can become not just a profession, but a powerful way to build community, tell stories, and create something that resonates far beyond the spotlight.





Lee Bul; (right) a collage at the exhibition



Iron Maiden

In Hong Kong, a major exhibition traces how South Korean artist Lee Bul turns dreams of perfect futures into shimmering, broken landscapes

By MEDHA DUTTA YADAV

Walk into the West Gallery at M+ in Hong Kong and the room feels like a scene from another time. Silver structures stretch across the floor. Mirrors scatter light across the walls. A skeletal architectural form hangs overhead like the remains of a futuristic city. The space looks like a dream of the future—half built, half broken. This is the world of South Korean artist Lee Bul. The exhibition, *Lee Bul: From 1998 to Now*, brings together more than

200 works made over the past three decades. The famously reclusive artist was born in 1964 in Yeongju, a small city in South Korea. Her childhood was shaped by a country under military rule. Her parents were political activists, and the atmosphere of protest and change was never far away. In the decades that followed, South Korea transformed rapidly—from an authoritarian state into a global economic power. Lee grew up watching that transformation. It left a deep mark on her work. She first became known in the

late 1980s and early 1990s for provocative performances and installations that challenged social expectations, especially around the female body. "In one early work she walked through the streets wearing grotesque, soft sculptures attached to her body, confronting passersby with distorted versions of beauty and femininity. Over time, her work moved toward sculpture and large installations," says M+ artistic director and chief curator Doryun Chong.

The exhibition unfolds in three parts, each opening a different window into her imagination. Large sculptural installations from Lee's ongoing *Mon grand récit* series dominate the first part. Made from steel frames, mirrored panels, beads and

industrial materials, the works resemble fragments of utopian cities. They glimmer and sparkle under the lights, but they also appear incomplete—as if the dream they represent has already collapsed. Nearby are quieter works on paper from the *Perdu and Willing to Be Vulnerable—Velvet* series. "These pieces use delicate textures and layered surfaces. Organic shapes sit beside hard geometric forms. Together they suggest a tension between nature and machines," says Chong.

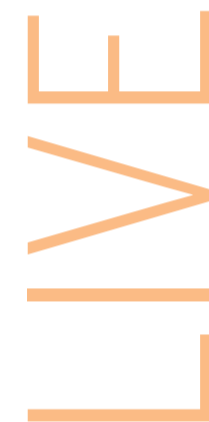
Then come the sculptures from her *Cyborg* series. At first they resemble classical statues—smooth limbs and elegant bodies. But something is missing. Arms are cut off. Heads are absent. Surfaces gleam like polished

machinery. The figures look human, but also mechanical, as if they belong to a future where the body has merged with technology. Next to them are works from the *Anagram* series. These sculptures twist together natural shapes and mechanical parts. Some resemble strange creatures. Others look like organic growths made of metal. They blur the line between biology and technology, beauty and mutation.

The final section of the exhibition offers a surprise. Instead of large sculptures, visitors encounter rows of drawings and small models. Nearly 100 sketches and dozens of carefully built maquettes fill the space. "These pieces show how Lee's ideas take shape. It is a rare chance to see the artist's thinking

before it becomes monumental," adds Chong.

Seen together, the works reveal the full scale of Bul's imagination. Her art moves from the intimate scale of drawings to vast architectural structures. Yet the questions running through it remain deeply human. Her work looks at how societies dream about the future—perfect cities, perfect bodies, perfect systems—and why those dreams so often fail. In many ways, Hong Kong forms the perfect setting for this story. Outside the museum, the skyline rises in glass and steel towers. The city itself feels like a vision of the future. Inside the gallery, Bul's glittering structures echo that ambition—but they also remind us how fragile such visions can be.



Lee Bul first became known in the late 1980s and early 1990s for provocative performances and installations that challenged social expectations, especially around the female body

Lessons in Belonging



By INSHA RASHID

Javed Ahmad Tak with students

Inside a small school building in Kashmir's Bijbehara, a man in a wheelchair moves between tables, smiling at the children around him. Some are visually impaired, some have hearing or intellectual disabilities, and others are on the autism spectrum. This is the Zaiba Aapa Institute of Inclusive Education, South Kashmir's first school for specially-abled children, and the man is its founder, Javed Ahmad Tak. "This is not just a school," Tak says. "It is a place where children learn to believe in themselves."

Javed's own life changed after a gunfire incident damaged his spinal cord and left him bedridden for years. A doctor once told him he could only do "table jobs." The remark hurt, but it also gave him direction. "If that is all I can do, then I will do it," he decided. Using ₹75,000 he received as relief compensation, Javed started teaching six children with disabilities in a rented room. "I wanted to give children dignity, something that I was denied," he says.

The school soon became a safe space for children who had struggled to find acceptance elsewhere. "Many were told they were unfit for education," Javed recalls. One of his students, Zakiya, a visually impaired girl who was once denied admission to a government school, later went on to study at Jawaharlal Nehru University. She had told

him, "It's not my disability, sir, it's the teachers' inability to see."

By 2008, the school had more than 30 students, and support from an NGO helped it expand. Today, the institute educates over 280 children with disabilities. Alongside academics, students

In 2020, Javed was awarded the Padma Shri for his contribution to social work. Physiotherapists, special educators, and speech therapists work alongside him, ensuring every child receives individual attention

participate in activities such as making paper bags and selling Kashmiri dried apples. "It teaches them independence and helps them build confidence and real-life skills," Javed says. When Javed enters a classroom, children rush towards him, eager to greet their

teacher. Physiotherapists, special educators, and speech therapists work alongside him, ensuring every child receives individual attention. But challenges remain. "Society looks at the word 'special' and forgets the person," Javed says. "We must educate parents and the community as much as we educate the children." In 2020, Javed was awarded the Padma Shri for his contribution to social work. Sitting in what he calls his "King's Chair," surrounded by children's laughter, he reflects on the journey that began with six students in a rented room. "Every challenge has a purpose," he says. "My disability was not a punishment. It was a blessing in disguise. It gave me a reason to live for others."

LEISURE CORNER



SHADES OF INDIAN BEAUTY

This exhibition by Julia Usmanova centres around the image of the young Indian woman. Through distinct clothing, gestures, jewellery, jasmine flowers, birds, dragonflies, and symbolic imagery such as the tiger, Julia reflects on "Indianness" through her own artistic lens. *When India Became Home*; June 18 - 23; Bikaner House, New Delhi; Entry: Free

TO BE A WOMAN



It is a female-led multidisciplinary project that connects women through the arts, supporting survivors of sexual abuse. Only for women, this is a safe space to explore movement, sound, and conversation, all around the complexities of womanhood, and mediums. *WomanEwer*; July 8-17; BIC, Bengaluru; Entry on RSVP; Details: bangaloreinternationalcentre.org



LOVE AND LONGING

Written and directed by Omkar Bhatkar, this is an intertwined tale of lives across places and time that draws you into chance encounters, unresolved love, and unspoken longing, revealing the fragile beauty of unfinished endings. *Winter Rain*; June 21, 6:30pm; Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, Mumbai; Entry: ₹450 onwards; Details: nmacc.com

Tuning in to Language

In Jharkhand, a radio helps the Asur community in preserving the stories, oral histories and identity of Asuri, spoken by fewer than 10,000 people



By MOHD SHEHWAAZ KHAN

An episode of Asur Radio being recorded; (below) Asur women discuss their lives

At the weekly village *haats* of Jharkhand's Latehar and Gumla districts, a catchy jingle crackles through the public address system: "*Dahan dahan turrrrr; dhak dhina din turrrrr.*" For most listeners, it is a familiar cue to sing and dance. But here, the broadcast is followed by local news, traditional stories, discussions on agriculture, and updates on weather patterns.

Welcome to Asur Adivasi Radio, a community-led initiative working to preserve Asuri, an endangered tribal language spoken by fewer than 10,000 members of the Asur community, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group spread across Gumla, Lohardaga, Palamu, and Latehar districts of Jharkhand. The radio is crowd-funded and also depends on donations.

Run by the Asur Adivasi Wisdom Akhra in collaboration with the Jharkhandi Bhasha Sahitya Sanskriti Akhra (JBSSA), the radio is operated by a team of around 15 people, including farmers, labourers, homemakers, storytellers, singers, and schoolchildren. "There are very few efforts to preserve the languages of smaller tribal communities," says Vandana Tete, General Secretary, JBSSA. "We started this radio through crowdfunding. There were elderly Asur speakers who carried the knowledge of the language, rituals,

and customs. We wanted to preserve that knowledge, and the radio emerged from that effort."

The origins of the project lie in a practical challenge. Many Asur settlements are located in forested and mining regions where communication infrastructure has historically been weak. Even today, the radio reaches most listeners through loudspeakers installed in *haats*. "We upload many of our episodes on SoundCloud for better access," says Tete.

Each half-hour programme, broadcast twice a month, combines news with discussions on language, culture and Indigenous rights. Much of the content is rooted in everyday Asur life. "In many tribal communities, histories are not preserved in books but in stories, songs, and collective memory," says Tete. "So, we also run discussion programmes focusing on how Asur people live."

The recordings themselves often

carry the sounds of village life. Goats bleat in the background, children interrupt conversations, and birdsong drifts through interviews. The radio has also become a platform for younger speakers. "Young people send us poems, jokes, songs, and everyday gossip on WhatsApp," says Tete.

Financial constraints have often forced the radio into brief periods of inactivity. Yet volunteers continue to sustain the project. The radio's role extends beyond cultural preservation. It also serves as a forum for discussing practical issues. Tete points to the bureaucratic challenges faced by many Indigenous people, whose names are frequently misspelled or altered in official documents, creating difficulties in accessing welfare schemes. "We discuss these issues in our programmes and organise public discussions," she says. "Awareness is an important part of what we do."

The challenge of language loss remains equally urgent. Formal education is conducted largely in Hindi, creating pressure on younger generations to abandon Asuri. Yet Tete believes the radio has helped change attitudes. "Earlier, many people thought there was no value in learning Asuri," she says. "Today, they understand that their language is part of who they are. Preserving it means preserving their identity."



The Selective Sanctity of the Ganga

RESURRECTING FAITH

Devdutt
Pattanaik

Mythologist,
Author, Speaker



On March 16, 14 Muslim men held an Iftar party on a boat on the Ganga in Varanasi during Ramadan. They ate chicken biryani. They threw the leftover bones and food remains into the river. One of them posted a video on Instagram. The video went viral. The Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha filed a complaint. The men were arrested the next day. The Allahabad High Court, hearing their bail application in May, observed that throwing non-vegetarian food waste into the Ganga could hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindu community. Bail was granted, on the condition that they and their families had expressed remorse for the pain caused to society at large. The judges were a Shukla and a Sinha. Do surnames matter in law?

Now consider what is already in the Ganga.

The Central Pollution Control Board has documented for decades that the Ganga receives approximately three billion litres of sewage daily, of which a fraction is treated before entering the river. Tanneries in Kanpur discharge chromium and other heavy metals.

Cremation *ghats* release partially burned human remains. Entire corpses, of those too poor for full cremation or those considered exempt from it by custom, float downstream. Agricultural runoff carries pesticides and fertiliser. Industrial effluent from paper mills, distilleries, and chemical plants enters the river at multiple points along its length. Faecal coliform counts at Varanasi's bathing *ghats* routinely exceed safe limits by hundreds of times. Cockroaches are everywhere!

None of this has produced a single FIR for outraging religious feelings. No tannery owner has been arrested for defiling a place of worship. No municipal corporation official has been charged with promoting enmity against Hindus for allowing sewage outfalls to empty into the sacred stream. No cremation authority has been asked to express remorse for the human remains it deposits daily in the goddess's body.

The Ganga, it appears, can absorb unlimited quantities of sewage, heavy metals, partially burned corpses, and chemical effluent without her sentiments being hurt. It is specifically chicken biryani, consumed by Muslim men during Ramadan, that crosses the threshold.

This distinction is not incidental. It is the point.

But there is a deeper irony here, one that the court was not equipped to notice because it would have required the judges to open a copy of the Valmiki Ramayana. In Ayodhya Kanda,



verse 52.89, Sita stands before the Ganga before crossing into exile and makes a vow. The Sanskrit is unambiguous. "Sura-ghata-sahasrena": a thousand pots of wine. "Mamsa-bhuta-odanena": cooked rice mixed with meat (the original Vedic biryani?). These are the offerings Sita promised the river goddess in exchange for a safe return to Ayodhya. Not metaphorical offerings. Not divine substances available only to the gods. Wine and meat, in the plain Sanskrit of Valmiki, offered to the Ganga by the most revered woman in the Hindu

tradition.

Traditional Hindi rendering often converts wine into "rare and divine substances" and meat-rice into a "robust grain dish". The translators are not being dishonest in any crude sense. Sanskrit's etymological system, the *dhatu-path*, permits such manoeuvres. *Sura* can be broken down differently. *Mamsa* can be read as an adjective meaning pulpy or dense rather than a noun meaning flesh. Devotional hermeneutics has always worked this way: begin with a conclusion about divine purity, and allow grammar to

accommodate it.

But this is a theological choice, not a philological finding. Western Indologists and literalist scholars read the same verse and see what the words say: a Kshatriya queen making a conventional vow involving meat and wine, because in the epic era such offerings to river goddesses and *yaksha* spirits were honourable and routine. Both readings exist. What is not honest is pretending only the traditional version is Hindu and the other is an insult.

The Ganga of Valmiki received such vows without

complaint. The Ganga of the Ramayana presided over a world where Kshatriyas hunted and ate what they hunted. The sanitised, vegetarian, teetotal Ganga of contemporary Hindu nationalism is a recent invention, shaped by the reformist sattvik ethos of the 19th and 20th centuries, hardened into political identity in the 21st, who equate meat-eating with Islam and Christianity, and deny Hindu goddess worship and subaltern Tantrik practices which involves meat, fish, and alcohol.

What the Varanasi case actually demonstrates is not that the Ganga is sacred. Everyone agrees she is sacred. What it demonstrates is that her sacredness is now selectively enforced. Industrial polluters are not prosecuted under laws protecting places of worship. Municipal sewage is not charged with promoting enmity. The river can be killed slowly by those with capital and caste standing, and no court will observe that this hurts Hindu sentiments.

But 14 men eating biryani on a boat during Ramadan most express remorse to society at large.

Sita promised the goddess wine and meat. She crossed safely. The exile ended. The goddess, presumably, accepted the offering and was pleased. What the Allahabad High Court, with judges like Shukla and Sinha, would have made of that transaction is best left to the imagination.

Posts on X: @devduttmyth

Love and Loathing Laid Bare Between Breasts

BY INVITATION

Anuja
Chandramouli

Author and new
age classicist



Recently, hypersexualised images of Janhvi Kapoor had the perpetually pugnacious on social media furiously fulminating about the portrayal of women in cinema especially the tendency to objectify them in the name of entertainment. What followed was the usual empty influencer talk about starting conversations on female agency and the treatment of women's bodies as eye candy for male gratification. Never mind that the rage baiting can only be counted on to start a conversation, never to sustain it and actually bring about meaningful change. The director issued something of a non-apology and *Peddi*, the film in question having successfully dominated social media feeds thanks to its heroine's willingly or unwillingly bared breasts, seems to have raked in a significant chunk of change at the box office.

The entire business is a depressing reminder that we can expect more of the same in future. We have allowed ourselves to become trapped in an

attention economy, where the algorithm Gods insist on rewarding only the most controversial and divisive elements. It is awful to think that only the provocateurs and purveyors of porn are going to be awarded with cultural significance. Even scarier are the implications for the already troubled and nihilistic Gen Next. Raised and groomed on algorithmic appeasement not to mention brain-addled from Instagram meme carousels, escalating self-destructive behaviour and a value system centred solely on monetary

Reducing a woman to nipples and curves will always be an issue. When feminists point this out, we are accused of being spoilsports who are preventing men from having a good time

gains is becoming the norm.

The discourse around Janhvi is indicative of a broken world and its simultaneous obsession with and revulsion for the feminine figure. Where women are reduced to products on the meat market to be used and discarded when not subjected to a permanently voyeuristic and judgemental gaze. Young girls are conditioned to think they must expend all their limited resources on grooming to ensure that they score high on 'key metrics' (bigger bosoms, smaller brains and waists)

guaranteeing that toxic males will be willing to expend cash and clout on them, gifting them access to the so-called good things in life. This has resulted in an increasing number of girls becoming complicit in their own exploitation and victimhood by the commercial sex industry lulled by faux success stories about women who have monetised their bodies and become empowered by serving up porn garbed as content.

Personally, I have nothing against the celebration of the female form in all its naked glory in art or real life because it is about time people stop telling women to be ashamed of their breasts and butts and cover up from head to toe in this stifling heat to avoid getting raped or slut-shamed. However, reducing a woman to nipples and curves will always be an issue. When feminists point this out, we are accused of being spoilsports who are preventing men from having a good time. When supporting a woman's right to post pics of her bikini-clad bod, we are told that feminism is the reason tradition and culture has been defiled and women are off having affairs instead of staying home making perfectly round chapatis and raising well-behaved children. Yet again, for women, their limits in reality and fantasy are defined by men who can only stand them in two roles—trad wife, sugar baby.

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Double Dealing of Persecution Does Not Shame Conscience

PROVOCATEUR

Ravi
Shankar

ravinewindianexpress.com



khatre mein hai!"

I hate to tell you this: the Indian Muslim is doing just fine. In the 2011 Census, India's Muslim population is 172 million. It is the second-largest religious community both in the country and on earth. The success record of this 'persecuted' minority is stellar. Philanthropist and founder of Wipro, Azim Premji has donated \$21 billion on free education and healthcare. Yusuf Hamied of Cipla gave the world affordable AIDS medication. AR Rahman's music is played in both temples and night clubs. The list of Muslim Presidents, Chief Justices, cricket captains, film dynasties, and media moguls is long. They are a community with spokespeople, media presence; they have political parties devoted entirely to Muslim concerns. They possess an international solidarity network, and top lawyers to defend constitutional protections. Saudi and Qatari petrodollars fund the building of splendid mosques and run legion of madarasas. Till recently there was even a Haj subsidy. Sure, Muslim representation in Parliament, in state assemblies, in the civil services is proportionally lower than the community's population. The Muslim male work participation rate is just 536 per thousand population—below Hindu males at 760 and Sikh males at 568. If you add women to the equation, all the numbers fall by 30-40 per cent. These are problems which deserve policy attention, sustained public investment and structural redress. Though the victim trope is part of daily subconscious like a populist tapeworm, the Muslim goes about his business, building empires and winning elections. This is thus inconvenient to both narratives. But inconvenience is not persecution. And optics is not data.

There is data, hidden in the cortex of national shame that nobody wants to talk about. Here we go. Thirteen Dalits murdered every week; 27 atrocities against Dalits recorded every day; approximately Over 50,000 cases of anti-Dalit violence registered each year; 10 Dalit women raped every day. In rural India, Dalit students are neither allowed to sit at the front of classrooms, nor permitted to eat with others. The "two-tumbler system"—separate cups for Dalits in cafes and tea stalls—are prevalent in many parts India. In some churches, Dalit Christians—is there a darker joke in the equalisation of conversion?—have to stand in the back of the pews during sermons. Cases of rape of Scheduled Caste women account for 7.64 per cent of all rape cases reported—2,63,512 cases of atrocities against SCs came up for trial in 2021 alone. The courts are full; hence most perpetrators get off free while the numbers climb. Or are out on bail to terrorise witnesses.

Then there is the vocation that Indian democracy refuses to acknowledge that it exists. In July 2024, Social Justice Minister Ramdas Athawale told Parliament that "no report of the practice of manual scavenging in the country in the last five years has been recorded"; that year 116 manual scavengers are drowned. Government data shows 97 per cent of manual scavengers are Dalits. A shocking 80 per cent of male scavengers die before they are 60, descending without safety equipment into sewers that release fatal fumes of hydrogen sulphide and methane; and drown to death, unconscious, in human waste—one every five days. Their caste is their job description and their job description is their death sentence prepared before birth. The Indian postmodern discourse about identity has no language to enunciate this horror.

Opposition leaders stroll through the country, holding up the Constitution and speaking of trees in danger. Ask them the name of the last manual scavenger who died in a sewer in their constituency. Ask them about Mahapadma Nanda—the first great Indian emperor who was a 'Shudra'. Ask the BJP's ruling elite why Parliament still has so few representatives from the communities that perform some of the country's most essential and least acknowledged work? They can't even phone a friend: their tribe do not know the answer. India's real democratic crisis is not that the Muslim is persecuted. It is that the Dalit has disappeared, not from the country, but from the Indian conscience. He is present, but 'unseen' in every gutter, every dry latrine, every village well that refuses him water, and every classroom where he sits in the back row. He is there in every crime statistic but not read out at prime time. He is the oldest, unhealed wound of this ancient civilisation. Aren't we too busy performing grief for others to acknowledge the unspeakable tragedy he is?



In Politics, the Only Consistency is Inconsistency

HABITS MATTER

Shampa
Dhar-Kamath

Delhi-based writer,
editor and
communication coach



As a vociferous (and often undiscerning) reader, I tend to read whatever I can lay my hands—and eyes—on. I've been doing it since I was a child. Back then, I'd read the dictionary and atlas, or even labels when I could find nothing else. Today, the internet has replaced those simple joys with a bottomless pit of perdition or pleasure (depending on what you find), and reading online means spiralling down a rabbit hole of endless content.

I recently started out reading an *HBR* article on Difficult Conversations ('It's what you say, not what you think, that matters, by the way') when I noticed a hyperlink to Stress Patterns. But of course, I clicked on it, and then I was gone. One article led to another and another, with me scoffing but lapping up everything. Finally, I arrived at the 11-3-6 rule of friendship.

I don't know how I've reached my advanced age without knowing that you need a framework to turn an acquaintance into a close friend, but now I'm wiser. One freewheeling chat following a chance encounter in the canteen or a session on the playground may have done the trick

in school and college. No longer. To turn an acquaintance into a bonded friend, adults apparently need 11 interactions, lasting at least three hours each, spread over six months. Did you know that?

Former FBI agent Jack Shafer has another formula to offer. In his book *The Like Switch*, he says: Friendship = Proximity x (Frequency + Duration) x Intensity. The higher the numbers, the more solid the friendship.

That's not all. Once you are friends, as per my reading, you need to move onto the Four Cs to build loyalty. Start with Commitment; stick by each other through thick and thin. Communicate constantly

and honestly about what you like and what you don't. Be consistent and reliable so they know they can depend on you. Finally, know when to Compromise; handle disagreements gracefully to keep the relationship balanced and healthy. You may have been doing all that instinctively already, but did you know the framework?

I can see how the 4Cs also work when demonstrating loyalty to one's organisation—provided the feelings flow both ways. (Most modern employees feel and practise loyalty only when they feel valued and respected. Good organisations understand that.) But there's one place of work in India where loyalty

seems to be left at the door and formulas have little meaning. That's the world of our *Aaya Ram-Gaya* Ram politicians.

Here, the 11-3-6 rule seems to apply to how many hours it takes to hop to a new party especially when a juicy carrot is dangled. As for *The Like Switch* rule's Proximity angle, our chaps are only proximate to whoever holds the largest bag of resources. Intensity? Oh, the intensity is high—when directed at a television camera.

For the average Indian voter, loyalty is still an intense, ideological allegiance. People stick by their parties through sick and sin, offering Commitment to the symbol and Consistency at the ballot box. Some politicians, however, seem to operate on the formula of Power = Opportunism x (Defection + Timing). In this ecosystem, the old Four Cs of loyalty play absolutely no role. Commitment doesn't last even as long as the coalition. Communication is limited to explaining why the enemy they attacked yesterday is their ally today. Consistency is found only in their desire to stay in office, and Compromise is something they do with their principles.

We normal adults may need six months of sustained investment to build a single true friendship; a politician can find soulmate-level loyalty with a rival party overnight. Do you think it's time for a Penalise the Party Hopper framework?

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The Hidden Cost of Standing Out

Tall Poppy Syndrome explains why success often attracts criticism, resentment, and attempts to cut high achievers down to size

By SURUCHI KAPUR GOMES

Why do people cheer success in theory but resent it in practice? Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) offers one answer: It describes the tendency to criticise, undermine, ostracise, or diminish those who stand out because of their talent, ambition, achievement, or rapid rise. The term comes from the image of a garden where the tallest flowers are cut down so that no one grows above the rest. Its roots are often traced to sixth-century BC Rome, where King Tarquin the Proud reportedly sliced off the heads of the tallest poppies as a message that those who rise above others should be brought low.

Today, TPS appears wherever success becomes highly visible—offices, classrooms, social circles, and increasingly, social media feeds. Fueled by envy, insecurity, or a desire to preserve the status quo, it can manifest as ridicule, exclusion, passive-aggressive behaviour, or outright sabotage. While the phenomenon is most closely associated with Australia, New Zealand, and the UK, psychologists argue that it flourishes just as readily in India's deeply hierarchical institutions. From government services and the military to corporations and educational settings, exceptional performers often discover that standing out can make them as many enemies as admirers.

HOW TO SPOT IT

1. Credit Theft

Your ideas, work, or achievements are repeatedly claimed by others, particularly those in positions of authority

2. Constant Criticism

Achievements are minimised, dismissed, or met with disproportionate scrutiny compared to others

3. Gaslighting

You are made to question your own abilities, memories, or contributions despite clear evidence of success

4. Social Exclusion

Friends, colleagues, or peers become distant as your achievements grow

5. Passive-Aggressive Behaviour

Backhanded compliments, sarcastic remarks, and subtle digs replace genuine appreciation

6. Resistance to Recognition

Promotions, awards, or praise are met with resentment rather than support

7. Online Hostility

Trolling, ridicule, and negative comments increase as visibility and success increase



DR PULKIT SHARMA, Clinical Psychologist

“Envy is a very integral part of Indian culture, although it is not spoken about. If someone sees anyone doing well, it triggers an inherent desire to pull people down.”

DR MANOJ SHARMA, Professor and Psychiatrist, SHUT Clinic, NIMHANS

“Whenever this feeling of goodness is threatened—by someone excelling, gaining recognition or reward—it creates anxiety.”

WOMEN MORE PRONE TO IT

Successful women are often:

- Bullied or belittled
- Forced to justify their achievements
- Made to feel they occupy “too much space” professionally or socially
- Challenged more harshly than their male counterparts

HOW IT APPEARS IN THE WORKPLACE

- Dismissive comments during meetings
- Eye-rolling or scepticism toward new ideas and processes
- Colleagues becoming colder or less supportive as someone gains recognition
- Reduced warmth and collaboration toward high performers



WHERE TPS FLARES MOST

- TPS is especially visible when younger employees begin outperforming peers or seniors
- The friction is often not between people at vastly different levels, but between those perceived as equals
- Success achieved through competence, objectivity, and structured thinking can trigger resentment among peers

WHAT TPS REVEALS ABOUT SOCIETY

- Insecurity and fear of being left behind
- Competitive comparison culture
- Fragile idea of self-worth
- Erosion of supportive family and community values
- Difficulty celebrating others' success

HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

Build Internal Validation
Develop a sense of self-worth that is not dependent on external approval or praise

Document Your Contributions
Keep records of ideas, achievements, and communications to protect against credit theft

Set Boundaries
Limit engagement with persistently negative individuals and refuse to participate in toxic dynamics

Find Supportive Networks
Seek mentors, peers, and communities that celebrate growth rather than resent it

Avoid Comparison Traps
Social media often presents edited versions of reality rather than complete lives

Focus on Growth, Not Approval
Direct energy toward growth and meaningful goals rather than winning over critics

Seek Professional Help if Needed
When criticism leads to anxiety, or depression, counselling can help rebuild confidence

SKINNING IT Dr Deepali Bhardwaj



The Skin Pause After 40

Sometimes, the skincare routine that worked flawlessly for years suddenly seems to stop delivering. The glow fades, the skin feels drier, fine lines become more noticeable, and the face looks tired despite a full night's sleep. For many women, this shift arrives sometime in their forties and often feels frustratingly abrupt.

The truth is that skin doesn't age overnight. What appears to be a sudden change is actually the result of several biological processes quietly unfolding for years before becoming visible. The biggest culprit is collagen loss. Collagen acts as the skin's support structure, keeping it firm, smooth, and resilient. Production begins to decline gradually from the late 20s, but by the 40s the slowdown becomes more noticeable. Existing collagen fibres also become fragmented and less organised.

The result is familiar: softer contours, fine lines, reduced firmness, and skin that no longer appears as plump as it once did. Think of collagen as the mattress beneath a bedsheet. When the mattress is firm, the surface looks smooth. As it thins and sags, every crease becomes more visible.

Hormones add another layer to the story. For many women, the 40s coincide with perimenopause and menopause, when estrogen levels begin to decline. Estrogen plays a crucial role in maintaining skin thickness, hydration, and elasticity. As levels drop, the skin often becomes drier, thinner, and more sensitive. This is why products that worked perfectly for years may suddenly feel ineffective.

Then comes the cumulative effect of sun exposure. Ultraviolet rays quietly break down collagen and elastin over decades. In younger years, the skin is often able to repair much of this damage. By the 40, however, the repair process slows considerably. The consequences start to surface as pigmentation, uneven skin tone, enlarged pores, and deeper wrinkles. Dermatologists often point out that two people of the same age can look remarkably different depending on how consistently they protected their skin from the sun over the years. The good news? It's never too late to start using sunscreen.

Another reason skin appears duller is slower cell turnover. Younger skin renews itself efficiently, shedding dead cells and replacing them with fresh ones. As we age, this process becomes slower. Dead cells linger longer on the surface, making skin appear rough, tired, and less radiant.

Lifestyle choices leave their mark too. Chronic stress increases cortisol levels, which can weaken the skin barrier and accelerate visible ageing. Poor sleep reduces the body's ability to repair damage overnight. Excess sugar contributes to glycation, a process that stiffens collagen fibres and reduces their flexibility. Smoking and pollution only add to the burden.

Fortunately, there is plenty that can be done to support skin health after 40. The first and most important step is daily sunscreen. A broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher remains the single most effective anti-ageing product available. Consistent use helps prevent further collagen breakdown and protects against pigmentation.

Hydration is equally important. Ingredients such as ceramides, hyaluronic acid, and glycerin help strengthen the skin barrier and retain moisture. For those looking to actively improve skin texture and firmness, retinoids remain the gold standard for stimulating collagen production, while vitamin C helps brighten skin and defend against environmental damage.

Lifestyle matters as much as skincare. Adequate protein intake, colourful fruits and vegetables, healthy fats, regular exercise, and quality sleep all contribute to healthier skin from within.

In some cases, skincare alone may not be enough. Treatments such as microneedling, radiofrequency, fractional lasers, chemical peels, and collagen-stimulating injectables can help restore firmness and improve skin quality when performed by qualified professionals.

Ageing is not a flaw to be corrected but a natural process to be understood. The goal isn't to look 25 forever. It's to have healthy, resilient, radiant skin at every stage of life. Once the reasons behind these changes become clear, the path forward becomes much easier.

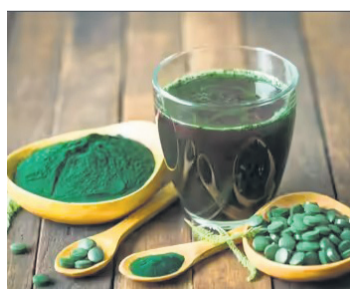
Anti-Skin Allergy Specialist & Dermatologist at Centre for Skin and Hair Put Ltd, Defence Colony, Delhi askdrdeepali@yahoo.com

FIT BIT



SUGAR FREE

For years, “quit sugar” has been wellness gospel. But a new study presented at ENDO 2026 in Chicago suggests that going completely sugar-free may not be the health hack it's often made out to be. Researchers found that mice fed a sucrose-free diet developed poorer blood sugar control, higher inflammation and disruptions in gut bacteria compared to those consuming small amounts of sugar. The findings challenge the all-or-nothing approach, suggesting that balance may matter more than elimination. While experts suggest excess added sugar remains harmful, cutting it out entirely could have unintended consequences for metabolic and gut health.



SPIRULINA CHECK

Lately spirulina has earned a reputation as a superfood on social media feeds. The blue-green algae contains around 60-70 per cent protein by dry weight, making it one of the most protein-dense foods on the planet. But experts caution against viewing it as a standalone protein source. While rich in antioxidants, iron and essential nutrients, spirulina is typically consumed in small quantities, limiting its overall protein contribution. Spirulina's real strength lies in complementing a balanced diet rather than replacing conventional protein sources. Think of it less as a miracle food and more as a nutrient-packed booster.

Rewiring the Brain

Can Exomind therapy, a drug-free brain stimulation, really fix the mental overload?

By ANJALI AWASTHI

A therapy session that lasts just 30 minutes, requires no medication, involves no talking, and lets you return straight to work afterwards sounds almost too convenient for modern life. Yet that promise is exactly what is drawing attention to Exomind therapy, a non-invasive brain stimulation treatment that is increasingly being discussed as a potential tool for managing depression, anxiety, menopause-related brain fog, and even cravings associated with weight-loss drugs. Exomind therapy uses advanced Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) technology—a non-invasive brain treatment—to deliver gentle magnetic pulses to specific brain regions. The goal is to improve emotional regulation by activating areas of the brain that may be under-functioning. Its growing popularity reflects a broader shift in mental healthcare. Treatment is becoming a blend of traditional support, lifestyle interventions, and newer neurotechnologies designed to engage directly with brain function. Psychologist Pranati



“Exomind therapy can fit into a busy schedule, and does not demand continuous introspection or verbal processing.” PRANATI KAPOOR, psychologist

Kapoor describes this trend as a move toward a “neuro-functional view of mental health,” where distress is increasingly understood “not just as an emotional experience, but as a form of neural dysregulation—something that can be ‘recalibrated’ at a biological level.” The approach appears particularly attractive to urban professionals navigating constant

stimulation, packed schedules, and growing resistance to emotionally intensive processes. “Exomind therapy sessions can fit into a busy schedule, and it doesn't demand continuous introspection or verbal processing,” Kapoor explains.

But not everyone is convinced that convenience should drive treatment decisions. Psychologist Simran Ochani cautions

that the technology should be used selectively. “TMS should only be paired for patients who are truly not responding to general treatments such as pharmacology and counselling, and should not be used as a trend,” she says.

The therapy builds on decades of research into TMS, a neuromodulation technique that is already well established within psychiatric practice. “These tools can be powerful, but they do not replace the need to address underlying lifestyle patterns, emotional processes, or environmental stressors,” Kapoor adds.

This raises a bigger question: are therapies like Exomind a genuine leap forward in mental healthcare? The neuroscience behind the treatment undoubtedly represents a meaningful advance in our ability to understand and influence neuroplasticity. Yet psychologists warn against viewing it as a simple “reset button” for the mind. The promise of quicker relief, measurable outcomes, and less emotional friction is compelling. But the human brain—and the experiences that shape it—rarely lends itself to instant recalibration.

PRODUCT REVIEW

Fuss-free Skincare

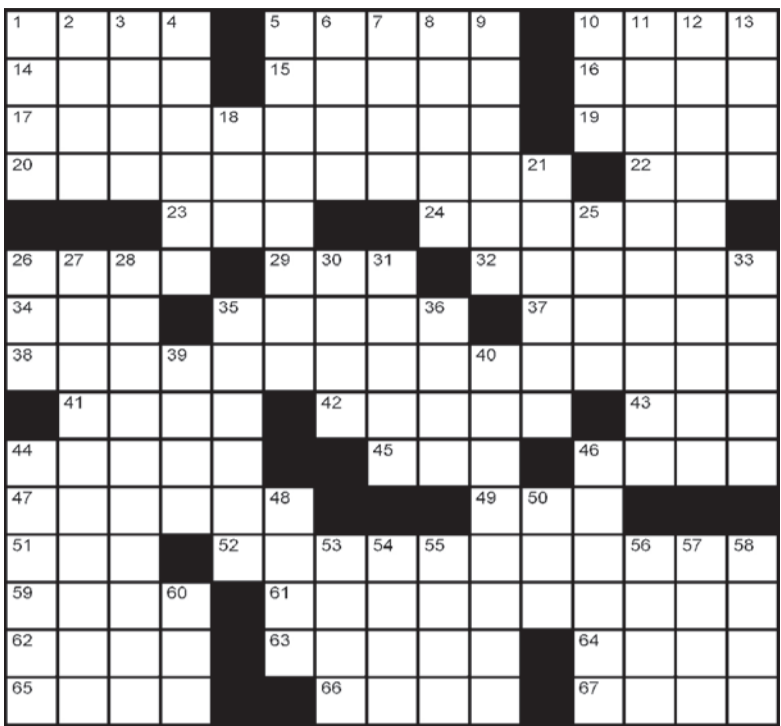
One frustrating part of using a serum is not the product itself but the routine around it: finding the time, washing your face, and then waiting for the sticky serum to settle before heading to bed. The Macros Recovery Concentrate Serum Soaked Wipes simplify that process. Just pull out a wipe and swipe it across your face. The lightweight, watery serum absorbs almost instantly. Beyond convenience, the wipes serve a dual purpose. They cleanse the skin while delivering overnight barrier support. By morning, the skin feels smoother, calmer, and noticeably clearer. The effects are surprisingly quick, with visible results from the first few uses. First-time users may also notice fewer breakouts and reduced irritation. The Macros Multi-Action Face Gel brings the same simplicity to the morning routine. Lightweight and fast-absorbing, it works as an all-in-one solution that hydrates the skin, helps control excess oil, and offers sun protection without feeling heavy. Its watery texture makes it particularly comfortable for daily use. Used together, the two products make a compelling case for simplified skincare. For anyone looking to cut down on effort while maintaining healthy skin, this duo offers a fuss-free solution. —Mohd Shehwaaz Khan



Macros Recovery Concentrate Serum Soaked Face Wipes Serum-soaked wipes Price: ₹599
Macros Active Concentrate Multi-Action Face Gel Face gel Price: ₹599

Available: amazon.in

CROSSWORD | FAST WALKER — 505



- Across**
- 1 Dorito or Frito
 - 5 Cigarettes' ends
 - 10 AIDS activist Arthur
 - 14 Streaming Stick maker
 - 15 Winfrey of "The Color Purple"
 - 16 Goal-oriented group?
 - 17 Devo hat
 - 19 Restaurant handout
 - 20 "Mom is going to kill us!"
 - 22 Driver's licenses and passports
 - 23 Subculture similar to goth
 - 24 Graf who married Andre Agassi
 - 26 Condition for which fidget spinners can be helpful
 - 29 Software problem
 - 32 Rock salt
 - 34 Con's opposite
 - 35 "Beauty and the Beast" princess
 - 37 Intel-gathering mission
 - 38 Paid time off for pet owners
 - 41 Tavern that Bart Simpson often prank-calls
 - 42 Lrk
 - 43 "Losing My Religion" band
 - 44 Rushed toward
- Down**
- 1 Rowing squad
 - 2 Improve, as skills
 - 3 Swedish retailer with an acronymic name
 - 4 Sounded like a happy cat
 - 5 Prioritizing oneself by not dating guys, in slang
 - 6 Prom hairstyle, perhaps
 - 7 Walked
 - 8 Brings under control
 - 9 Cover for a blade
 - 10 24/7 banking convenience
 - 11 Unconcerned challenge
 - 12 "Gimme that!"
- 13** Birds in a 1932 Australian "war"
- 18** Jewel
- 21** How things may be missed or paid for
- 25** Escape quickly
- 26** iPad download
- 27** Person prone to overreacting
- 28** "There's no way that just happened!"
- 30** Forearm bone
- 31** Twinkle
- 33** "Tact is the art of making a point without making an ..." (Newton)
- 35** Defeated
- 36** Italian volcano
- 39** Durable wood
- 40** "Oh, really?!"
- 44** Roofing support
- 46** Boat, e.g.
- 48** Painter of "The Naked Maja" and "The Clothed Maja"
- 50** Sing wordlessly
- 53** Close to
- 54** Purple bubble tea flavor
- 55** "Scram!"
- 56** ___ skirt
- 57** "I'm Yours" singer
- 58** Start of a choosing rhyme
- 60** Donkey

Solution to last week's puzzle in the bottom right corner of the page

HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR LIFESTYLE?(Adult Female)

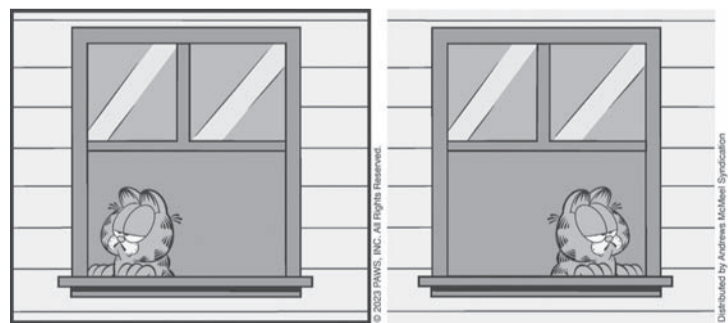
- 1: You are on holiday and your partner suggests hiring bicycles and going for a ride. How would you respond?**
- a) You'd say that you'd prefer to relax by the swimming pool
 - b) You'd ask him to hire a tandem so that you wouldn't have to pedal too hard
 - c) You'd eagerly agree
- 2: How often do you oversleep?**
- a) Most days
 - b) Only after a very late night
 - c) Never
- 3: You have a heavy workload and to get it done, you need to work through your lunch hour. Does this mean that you**
- a) Skip lunch, but eat extra at dinner to compensate
 - b) Have a sandwich as you work
 - c) Skip lunch completely
- 4: What do you normally eat for breakfast?**
- a) A huge, fried meal
 - b) You never have breakfast
 - c) Overnight oats and fruit
- 5: While you are looking after the young children of a friend, they want you to play a game with them. What would your suggestion be?**
- a) A skipping game that you played when you were young
 - b) Hide-and-seek, you counting to a hundred before leisurely seek them out
 - c) A board game
- 6: When settling down alone at home to watch a soppy, romantic movie, what nibbles would you have?**
- a) A big bar of chocolate or family-size pack of crisps
 - b) Fresh fruit
 - c) None at all
- 7: You've had no time to do the shopping, and feeling peckish, you look in the fridge to discover half a pizza that's been sitting there for a week. What do you do?**
- a) Reheat the pizza and eat it, avoiding any mouldy bits
 - b) Nip out and buy yourself a takeaway
 - c) Try to take your mind off of food
- 8: If a friend asked you to accompany her on her first workout at a gym, how would you pass the time while she exercises?**
- a) Reading a magazine and eating a snack
 - b) Taking a trial membership workout
 - c) Drinking a carrot juice in the bar and viewing all the hunky guys
- 9: Intending to catch the bus, you are late. Just as you reach the stop, the bus pulls away from the kerb. Do you**
- a) Break into a sprint and catch up with the bus
 - b) Try to run, but start panting after a few steps
 - c) Wait for the next bus
- 10: If someone were to tell you a side-splittingly-funny joke, would you?**
- a) Laugh out loud
 - b) Giggle uncontrollably
 - c) Smile and give a little laugh

HOW TO SCORE:

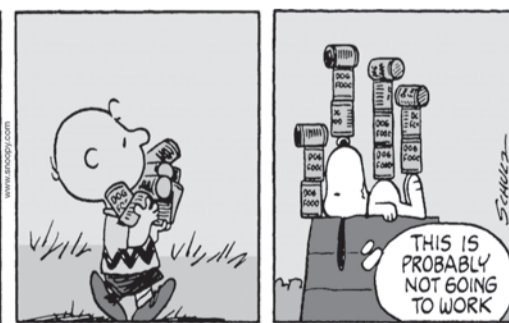
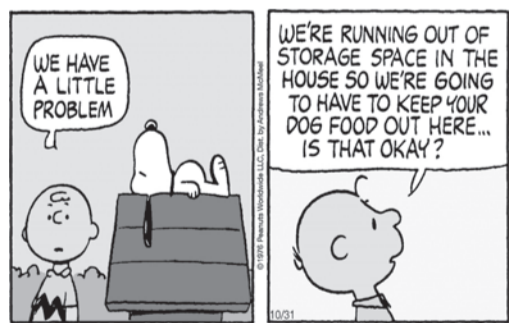
	a	b	c
1.	0	1	3
2.	1	2	3
3.	1	3	2
4.	1	2	3
5.	3	2	1
6.	0	1	3
7.	1	2	3
8.	1	3	2
9.	3	2	1
10.	3	2	1

What your score means:
Between 0-10: At present it would seem your lifestyle is anything but healthy. But as long as you are strong-willed it need not stay this way. Set yourself a target toward developing a healthier way of life and stick to it. By changing habits, you will notice improvements in yourself that will enable you to get more enjoyment out of everything that you do. **Between 11-20:** You are clearly trying to have a healthy lifestyle, but don't appear to be succeeding. Your good intentions, sadly, don't last for long. Walking instead of using transport is a boost towards keeping fit, but eating the wrong type of food can easily spoil the benefits. You need to examine your way of living and decide exactly where improvements can be made. **Between 21-30:** It is apparent that your present way of life is a healthy one. Unfortunately, healthy can also mean boring, so while it is important not to develop any bad habits, the occasional slip from routine could be more beneficial than harmful for you. Take a break and enjoy yourself occasionally, but just make sure that you don't overdo it.

GARFIELD by Jim Davis



PEANUTS by Charles M Schulz



DO JUST ONE THING BY DANNY SEO

Did you know that 33 million tons of cardboard were recycled in 2024, making it one of the most commonly recycled materials turned into new products? It's worth the effort to prepare cardboard properly for recycling. The American Forest & Paper Association recommends emptying boxes of any nonpaper materials (no need to remove tape or labels), flattening them to save space on the recycling truck and keeping them dry on collection day.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS by Arun Ramkumar



FUTUREPAST by Kishore Mohan



Shortcuts by Jeff Harris

KEEPING UP WITH THE SR-71 BLACKBIRD

This edition of Shortcuts is sponsored by Big Black Bird.

In the late 1950s, the United States secretly set out to build an aircraft that could fly extremely fast and high. The result was the sleek and innovative SR-71, nicknamed the "Blackbird". The SR-71 completed its first flight on December 22, 1964, and by 1976, the iconic spy plane was setting records for speed and altitude, many of which still stand today.

NEED FOR SPEED
 When flying at Mach 3, most of the SR-71's thrust is produced through the innovative design of its engine inlets. This design allowed the engine to act more like a ramjet, using the extreme air speed to provide combustion for the afterburners. Afterburners are devices placed at the back of engines where extra fuel is burned to dramatically increase thrust.

FAST FRIENDS
 Can you help this SR-71 reach the refueling jet?

FAST AND LOOSE
 The SR-71 had expansion points scattered along its body because the aircraft would grow in size as it heated up during flight. The SR-71 was coated with a special black paint designed to dissipate heat and absorb radar signals. The SR-71's iconic shape was patterned after the CIA's secret A-12 Oxcart jet.

WORD SEARCH
 Can you find the hidden words? Search carefully because some words are backward or diagonal.

QUESTION TIME
 by Lalitha Balakrishnan

1. The term "Technical Foul" is associated with which sport?
 (a) Basketball
 (b) Football
 (c) Baseball

2. What is the official currency of the United Kingdom?
 (a) Yen
 (b) Euro
 (c) Pound sterling

3. Which strategy involves a company intentionally launching a new product that competes with its own existing products?
 (a) Product Diversification
 (b) Market Saturation
 (c) Product Cannibalization

4. Where is Paro international airport?
 (a) Vietnam
 (b) Cambodia
 (c) Bhutan

5. Which part of the body is affected by gingivitis?
 (a) Gums
 (b) Nose
 (c) Eyes

6. Perry Mason is a fictional character created by
 (a) James Hadley Chase
 (b) Earl Stanley Gardner
 (c) Agatha Christie

7. A specialist in the study and practice of therapeutic bathing and medicinal springs is called
 (a) Paleontologist
 (b) Balneologist
 (c) Oceanologist

8. Which region did the Golden Toad inhabit before becoming extinct in 2019?
 (a) Costa Rica
 (b) Congo
 (c) Queensland

9. Which is the only country to have participated in all editions of FIFA World Cup so far?
 (a) Argentina
 (b) Brazil
 (c) Germany

10. Which country has the most beaches in the world?
 (a) Australia
 (b) Sri Lanka
 (c) India

For more information: <https://airandspace.si.edu> or www.veeremuseum.com/exhibit/sr-71-blackbird/ Download hundreds of your favorite past issues at: www.shortcutscomic.com Distributed by Andrews McMeel for UFS, Inc. © Jeff Harris 2025 7/21

SUDOKU | EVIL AND HARD

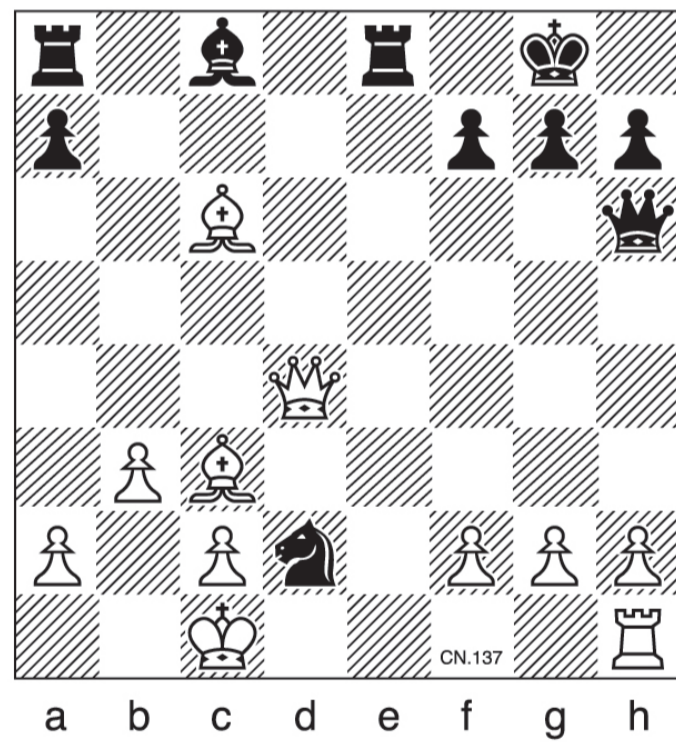
				4			1	
	1	5	2					
					4	6	3	
			8		3	2	7	
1								6
2	7	9		6				
8	6	5						
			4	9		1		
4			7					

	1	3			5			
2		7	6			4		
				7			2	
		8	4					7
	6	1				2	5	
5			6		8			
	5		1					
		6			2	5		8
			9			1	7	

Test your number crunching with our unique 2-in-1 puzzle

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3x3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any. Each w has a unique solution that can be reached logically without guessing

CHESS Leonard Barden



BARDEN CHESS
 Yochanan Afek v Kamran Shirazi, St Quentin 1999. White (to move) is a rook down and threatened with the devastating double check Nxb3+. The obvious choices are 1 Qxd2 and 1 Bxd2 but both would remove the mate threat against g7 and allow the answer Qxc6. It all looked excellent for Black until Afek made his move. It was so unexpected that Shirazi just stared at the board in shock for several minutes. The move made it obvious that White is winning, and indeed Black's resistance soon spluttered to a halt. What did Afek play?

Solution CN137: 1 Kb2! Ba6 2 Bxa8 Nc4+ 3 bxc4 Rxa8 4 c5 and White won, with two pawns up.

Chess Problems Distributed by Knight Features www.knightfeatures.com, info@knightfeatures.co.uk

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS

1. c, 2a, 3a, 4b, 5b, 6a, 7c, 8a, 9b, 10c
- Winner**
 Sanath Kumar T S - Kerala
 Rajeev Chourey - Telangana
 Gurrala Manmita - Odisha
 Abhijeet Bhatnagar - Karnataka
 S Freeda Selva Sheela - Tamil Nadu
- Answers to this week's questions will appear next week. Only entries with all correct answers sent before Wednesday noon will be considered for prizes.**
- Email your answers along with your name, phone number and complete address to sundayquiz@newindianexpress.com. For example, if the answer for Question No. 1 is A, it should be written as 1.A. Please mention QT and the issue date in MM/DD/YY format (for example, QT, April 25, 2021) in the subject line of the email. Only entries with these details will be considered for prizes.
- FIVE ALL-CORRECT ENTRIES WILL WIN THE BOOK, THE GOENKA LETTERS: AGONY AND ECSTASY IN THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

SUDOKU 1 TODAY'S SOLUTION

Evil Sudoku

6	8	7	3	9	4	2	5	1
3	1	4	5	2	6	8	7	9
9	5	2	8	1	7	4	6	3
5	4	6	9	8	1	3	2	7
1	3	8	2	7	5	9	4	6
2	7	9	4	6	3	1	8	5
8	6	5	1	3	2	7	9	4
7	2	3	6	4	9	5	1	8
4	9	1	7	5	8	6	3	2

Hard Sudoku

6	1	3	4	2	5	7	8	9
2	8	7	6	9	3	4	1	5
4	9	5	1	7	8	6	2	3
3	2	8	5	4	1	9	6	7
9	6	1	3	8	7	2	5	4
5	7	4	2	6	9	8	3	1
7	5	9	8	1	6	3	4	2
1	4	6	7	3	2	5	9	8
8	3	2	9	5	4	1	7	6

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

P	E	T	E	B	A	L	I	A	D	A	M		
A	H	O	V	E	S	E	X	A	M	V	E	R	A
N	O	T	T	O	S	E	L	F	E	I	S	O	
T	W	O	C	E	N	T	S	A	T	R	I	S	K
B	U	E	R	E	E	M	E	T	R	E	S		
A	R	E	A	S	I	L	I	U	M	P	A	L	
B	L	A	M	R	E	I	N	S	L	A	C	E	
A	S	H	A	N	T	E	O	A	T	M	S		
R	E	M	A	I	N	D	E	C	O	T	H	E	
I	T	S	B	A	D	F	A	K	E	N	A	M	
D	A	U	B	A	L	L	F	I	R	E	D	U	
E	L	R	E	T	O	O	T	T	W	I	N	E	
S	L	E	D	E	W	E	S	A	G	E			

Year: Parabhav
 Aani: Valar Pirai / Nij Jyeshtha: Shukla Paksha
 Tithi: Saptami till 15.21 hrs.
 Nakshatra (Star): P. Phalguni till 09.32 hrs.
 Moon in Simha till 15.42 hrs.
 Today Dakshinayan begins
 Rahukaalam: 04.30 pm to 06.00 pm
 Yamagantam: 12 noon to 01.30 pm
 Gulikakalam: 03.00 pm to 04.30 pm

BIRTHSTONE | GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

 Gemini is the third sign of astrology. It is an effective sun sign with Mercury as the ruling planet of the Gemini ascendant. Mercury is also the ruler of the gemstone pearl while pearl is affiliated with the planet Moon. The Moon in turn shares a cordial relation with the ruling planet of Gemini, Mercury. Hence, wearing a pearl gemstone as a birthstone is advised to an ascendant of Gemini as it can influence their life substantially. Gemini is advised to don the pearl as a birthstone so that they can secure the positive results being offered by Moon or pearl. If the pearl is adopted in the form of a birthstone ring, necklace or bracelet, it can bestow immense benefits to its users, including good health, wisdom, peace, intellect and wealth. Being the jewel of the sea, pearl also gives the user the message of fruitful transmutation.

YOUR FORTUNE THIS WEEK Amarakosha

What the planets say about your prospects for wealth, romance and professional success this week



ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 19)

Work: Your hard work will bring results. Obstacles may teach you to make faster decisions. Jobseekers, an offer may come but check the salary carefully.
Money: A windfall or money you thought was lost may finally come back to you.
Couples: You both balance 'me time' and 'our time.' A short trip may help you both feel closer.
Singles: Love comes through travel, online talks, or friends. Take your time and see who's right for you.

TAURUS (Apr 20-May 20)

Work: A new idea may help you resolve a difficult issue or move a project forward. You may receive a new project. Unexpected travel may happen as well.
Money: Income stream flows in higher than expected. You are disciplined in spending.
Couples: Relationship becomes serious with decisions regarding property or marriage.
Singles: You may meet a calm and successful person. A friend may want to move to the love zone.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Work: Your ability to work well with others will help you reach your goals. The boss may trust you and give you greater freedom to make decisions.
Money: Negotiations go your way. A competition may bring money but a vehicle repair may crop up.
Couples: Your partner may be a bit moody than usual and may say things that upset you.
Singles: Someone from a place you frequent may try to get close. Your crush falls for someone else.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Work: Higher-ups may give you a project connected to other countries which helps you learn. Jobseekers, a chance with international exposure appears.
Money: A side hustle or private work may pay well and help upskill. Keep it discreet or you'll lose it.
Couples: Your bond may seem strong but feel routine.
Singles: Your presence may attract a lot of attention but no one could catch your attention.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

Work: You perform very well in meetings and presentations. People may notice your work and your boss may offer you a new opportunity.
Money: Unexpected expenses for home, vehicle, or children may arise. Plan your budget carefully.
Couples: Instead of speaking out openly, you both keep your feelings inside and become upset easily.
Singles: You may meet many different people, some looking for something serious and others, casual.

VIRGO (Aug 23-Sept 22)

Work: An important and challenging project may come to you. It may look difficult at first, but if you succeed, this will strengthen your position.
Money: Huge essential expenses related to house or health may come. You need to stay economical.
Couples: You two may plan shared savings and work together to build a secure future.
Singles: You are focused on your goals and this makes you more attractive.

LIBRA (Sept 23-Oct 22)

Work: Your ideas may impress decision makers. A challenging project may come your way and success could bring recognition and rewards.
Money: You may find a way to earn money from your skills or by selling unused items.
Couples: You both focus on the future and plan shared savings to build financial security.
Singles: You connect with someone who catches your attention through work or social media.

SCORPIO (Oct 23-Nov 21)

Work: A sudden change may help you let go of old burdens and move in a new direction. It may push you out of the comfort zone and also lead to growth.
Money: Your income may come at different times. You may receive extra money through a prize.
Couples: Any disagreements can be resolved. You both may spend more time with family.
Singles: A friend may try to play cupid, but this person may not attract you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22-Dec 21)

Work: You may get the solution to pending tasks. Job interviews or important meetings will get the result you want.
Money: Your hard work could generate income even higher than expected.
Couples: You both may not agree on everything, but discussions help you understand each other.
Singles: Someone may show interest in you, but their attitude or personality may not feel right.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 19)

Work: Work may not progress as expected and your goals may face delays. A project you were excited about may stop or slow down.
Money: Your income may go up and down. Expense or a mistake may affect your budget.
Couples: You become emotional at times, but your partner will continue to care for and support you.
Singles: You may attract people but take your time.

AQUARIUS (Jan 20-Feb 18)

Work: You handle people, resources and difficult situations with confidence, making things move forward well. A new project may also come to you.
Money: Your spending and saving stays balanced. Negotiations may go in your favour.
Couples: Kindness and understanding helps the bond grow. You both may agree on a new goal.
Singles: You are happy with independence and want to enjoy the freedom to do things your way.

PISCES (Feb 19-Mar 20)

Work: You will achieve strong results and reach your goals. Higher ups may support and help prepare you for a bigger role.
Money: You have good judgment skill on financial matters. This helps a lot.
Couples: If you are cheating, the truth may come out, making you choose one or lose both.
Singles: Love may come through work or friendship. You may not notice the signs right away.

The Celestial Gaze

ARIES

Sun transits your 4th house of home, mother, property, and vehicles with Jupiter amplifying domestic happiness, emotional security, and property resolutions. Mars enters your 2nd house and supports finances but cautions spending or arguments. Mercury's shift aids family talks. This Cancer season highlights inner foundations and healing. Focus on nurturing roots. It is overall positive for home-related matters.
Vastu Suggestions: Keep the East well-lit with a red or orange diya. Place a copper item or plant in the Southeast for Mars energy. Avoid clutter in the Southwest.

TAURUS

Sun in your 3rd house activates communication, short travels, siblings, and courage. Mars enters your *lagana*, boosting energy, confidence, and material pursuits though stubbornness. Exalted Jupiter aspects your 7th, 9th, and 11th houses favorably for partnerships, luck, and gains. Scorpio Moon may deepen financial overthinking. Guard your speech. It is a grounded week for practical actions and networking.
Vastu Suggestions: Use earthy tones and heavy furniture in Southwest for grounding. Store valuables in North for wealth flow. Place silver or crystal items for Moon.

GEMINI

Sun enters your 2nd house, focusing on family wealth, speech, values, and resources. Mercury aids intellect but Scorpio risks financial overthinking. Venus adds charm to relations. Exalted Jupiter supports emotional security. Keep the speech truthful to strengthen financial karma and avoid deceit. Watch expenses. Maintain honest communication for positive outcomes. This is a good time for value-based decisions.
Vastu Suggestions: Keep North and North-East light and clutter-free. Use green or yellow accents. Place wind chimes or crystals in North for smooth energy.

CANCER

Sun enters your *lagana* in the 1st house, bringing vitality, health, and new emotional beginnings. Exalted Jupiter is auspicious for growth, wisdom, protection, and strength. Home matters flourish. Mars supports actions but watch for impulsiveness. Mercury enhances communication. Prioritize self-care and boundaries. This is a transformative Cancer season for self-renewal.
Vastu Suggestions: Use soft blues or whites. Place a water feature or conch in North-West. Keep Southwest stable for emotional security.

LEO

Sun transits your 12th house of expenses, rest, introspection, and spiritual matters. Ketu leads to detachment from ego. Mars energizes but cautions health or spending. Exalted Jupiter provides protection. Scorpio may intensify occult interests or overthinking. Balance isolation with subtle actions and Saturn pacification. This is a period for behind-the-scenes work, spiritual recharge, and releasing burdens.
Vastu Suggestions: Light a ghee or mustard oil lamp in East daily. Use gold or yellow accents. Keep South bright for vitality.

VIRGO

Sun in your 11th house activates gains, networks, long-term wishes, and elder siblings. Mercury supports desire fulfillment through intellect and collaborations. Exalted Jupiter boosts income and social harmony. Mars provides grounded effort. Scorpio Moon phases bring depth to finances. Avoid overthinking. Do Mercury remedies for business and collaborative success. Practical efforts yield results this week.
Vastu Suggestions: Keep North clean and organized; use pastel greens. Place books or crystals in North-East for Mercury-Jupiter flow.

LIBRA

Sun transits your 10th house of career, reputation, and authority. Jupiter brings professional opportunities and wisdom. Mars supports steady material progress. Emotional Cancer may affect home-career balance. Mid-week reveals hidden dynamics. Keep an ethical conduct and respect elders for sustained success. Maintain integrity in public dealings to strengthen Sun karma.
Vastu Suggestions: Use white or pastel shades in West. Place a pyramid or balanced decor in centre /North for harmony.

SCORPIO

Sun in your 9th house emphasizes luck, higher learning, travel, dharma, and philosophy. Mars supports assertive faith. Exalted Jupiter boosts wisdom and protection. There is focus on hidden matters, finances, or occult interests with Mercury aiding intellect. Scorpio may cause overthinking. Venture into an ethical exploration to transform karma.
Vastu Suggestions: Use deep reds in South; place black tourmaline or protective items in North. Keep the East open.

SAGITTARIUS

Sun in your 8th house brings transformation, shared resources, occult interests, and longevity. Saturn retrograde suggests karmic review and caution with joint finances. Exalted Jupiter offers protective cover. Scorpio deepens emotional probing. Manage overthinking. This is a time of releasing old debts through service. Practice patience and avoid risks.
Vastu Suggestions: Use yellow or gold in East; place an underground pyramid or some heavy items in Southwest.

CAPRICORN

Sun in your 7th house spotlights partnerships, marriage, and alliances. Balanced give-and-take is essential. Exalted Jupiter aids harmonious contracts. Mars supports material stability. Cancer's emotional undercurrents test bonds. Emphasize fairness and Moon-Venus remedies.
Vastu Suggestions: Stabilize Southwest with earth tones and heavy furniture. Use copper accents.

AQUARIUS

Sun in your 6th house focuses on work, health, service, and obstacles. Rahu intensifies ambition but may bring stress. Exalted Jupiter supports victory through wisdom. Mars aids discipline. Scorpio's depth heightens overthinking in routine. Get involved in service and Saturn pacification.
Vastu Suggestions: Keep North organized; use modern, airy decor. Place metal items in West.

PISCES

Sun in your 5th house energizes creativity, romance, children, intellect, and speculation. Exalted Jupiter aspects powerfully for joy and wisdom. Venus supports expression. Mars adds drive. Hidden matters need attention without overthinking. There is a strong potential for heart-centered growth.
Vastu Suggestions: Soft colors in Northeast; place water features or serene art. Use yellow for Jupiter.

The first-ever AI-generated weekly prediction

LAL KITAB DAILY PREDICTIONS

Cancer season is watery and emotional. Exalted Jupiter favours home remedies and family harmony. Declutter Southwest for stability and activate North-East for growth. **Common upayas:** Flowing water offering for malefics; animal feeding. Avoid feeding "negatives"—no red meat if Mars is afflicted. **Behavioural:** Respect parents and elders for Sun and Saturn. Keep speech truthful for Mercury. Do charity without expectation.

<p>SUNDAY, 21 JUNE</p> <p>Emotions and home matters activate. Sun highlights family and security. Moon in Virgo brings analytical energy and a shift to Libra for balance in relationships. Expect domestic tensions or clarity on property. Lal Kitab Focus: Strengthen Sun-Moon harmony. Avoid ego in family. Remedy: Offer water to rising Sun, feed wheat to birds.</p>	<p>MONDAY, 22 JUNE</p> <p>Partnerships and emotional balance are emphasized. Moon in Libra aids harmony but may bring indecisiveness. Jupiter's influence supports wise decisions. Lal Kitab Focus: Venus-Moon interplay for peace; watch over-spending on luxuries. Remedy: Donate white items, offer milk to Banyan tree or mother figure, maintain calm speech.</p>	<p>TUESDAY, 23 JUNE</p> <p>Energy intensifies with Mars influence. Assertive actions are possible in shared matters or transformations. Scorpio Moon deepens emotions—good for research but risk of arguments. Lal Kitab Focus: Pacify Mars to avoid property or anger issues. Remedy: Donate red lentils or sweets to boys or at Hanuman temple, feed dogs, control temper and respect siblings.</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY, 24 JUNE</p> <p>There is intense focus on hidden matters, finances, or occult interests. Mercury's communication benefits intellect but Scorpio may cause overthinking. Lal Kitab Focus: Mercury strengthens business. It helps avoid deceit. Remedy: Donate green vegetables or books, serve young girls, keep environment clean. Honest dealings prevent losses.</p>	<p>THURSDAY, 25 JUNE</p> <p>Shift to luck, higher learning, or travel themes. Jupiter's benevolence shines for wisdom and expansion in home and education matters. Lal Kitab Focus: Strengthen <i>Guru</i> for positive outcomes in children or dharma. Remedy: Apply saffron <i>tilak</i>, donate yellow items or bananas, serve cows, respect teachers and elders.</p>	<p>FRIDAY, 26 JUNE</p> <p>Optimism and exploration rise, but watch over-indulgence. Venus influence supports creative or relational joys against a Cancer backdrop. Lal Kitab Focus: Venus brings harmony; avoid excesses in pleasures. Remedy: Donate white items, care for spouse, keep silver. Ethical relationships yield gains.</p>	<p>SATURDAY, 27 JUNE</p> <p>Discipline and long-term matters come up with the Saturn influence. This is good for review, but delays are possible. Focus on patience and service. Lal Kitab Focus: Pacify Saturn for karma resolution. Remedy: Donate mustard oil, iron, or black sesame, feed crows, light mustard oil lamp in evening. Hard work and humility help.</p>
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Holiday Mathis
 holidaymathis@gmail.com



An Invitation to YOU
 Misunderstandings can be traced back to an overlooked truth: the other person is not you. We can never fully know the heart of another, but the first step in doing so is to drop assumptions.

AUGURIES
Meenakshi Chawla
 gmail: astrologyandus@gmail.com
 Twitter: @Shiva_Vadani



<p>ARIES</p> <p>March 21-April 19: Even with basic needs well covered, somehow other needs feel more essential to survival. For instance, relationships affect your appetite and can feel more important than food. And there are quests, entertainments and interests you're willing to pursue through discomfort. This week, you'll forge forward for thrills and experience.</p>	<p>TAURUS</p> <p>Apr 21-May 21: Maybe you're not in a particularly social mood, but almost everything you need to move forward involves making connections. The more you engage with people, the easier and more rewarding it becomes. And this week, the more people you meet and get to know, the better and more interesting your opportunities will be.</p>	<p>GEMINI</p> <p>May 22-June 21: Strong feelings can be difficult. They can disrupt plans or make situations messy. They can feel overwhelming or take a long time to process. But they also make life richer. Your emotional intensity is part of what makes you feel deeply connected to people. This week, your experiences will be lit with the fire of your passion.</p>	<p>CANCER</p> <p>June 22-July 23: The kind of praise you naturally give to others is "I always believed in you", "Of course you succeeded", "You're extraordinary." You are not surprised when your people hit their stride, and because you're so generous, it thrills you to see them succeed. You'll get that thrill this week, and you'll give it to others, too, as they watch your wins.</p>
<p>LEO</p> <p>July 24-Aug 23: People admire your endurance. You'd rather they cherish you in other ways. Tenderness would be nice. To be resilient, adaptable, capable and game - those things feel very normal to you. But you don't realize how rare it is to have all those qualities braided into one lovely and consistent package. This week, don't forget to celebrate yourself.</p>	<p>VIRGO</p> <p>Aug 24-Sept 23: You have been thinking about someone in a way that doesn't totally match reality. But that's part of the fun right now - the wondering and guessing. In a way, you're getting to know this person like a scientist studying something fascinating: through hypothesis. You imagine qualities and then test to see whether they are really there.</p>	<p>LIBRA</p> <p>Sept 24-Oct 23: Negativity bias is just a part of being human. So when you have a lot of good going on and all you can see is the "fly in the ointment," just know that it's normal to weigh negativity with greater significance and then willfully refuse the habit. Gratitude must be cultivated, and when you do this, you're part of the human evolution.</p>	<p>SCORPIO</p> <p>Oct 24-Nov 22: Everything you say, choose, give and initiate will influence other events and people, though often in ways you don't immediately see. The emotional spirit behind your actions is important, not just the action itself. Caring, generous and loving actions will inspire warmth, connection and goodwill beyond the original moment.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS</p> <p>Nov 23-Dec 22: The one who plants the tree won't get the shade. You've enjoyed being shaded, and you're excited to pay it forward. Along the same lines, there are negative things you've endured for a while, too. You can be the one who turns it around, and this week, you will. The first step is recognizing the pattern.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN</p> <p>Dec-23 Jan 20: You do not need to reveal everything about yourself immediately. Trust should build gradually. It should be earned. Let people get to know you piece by piece instead of giving instant full access. Anyone who is insensitive with smaller disclosures or softer outer layers has not earned access to your deeper self.</p>	<p>AQUARIUS</p> <p>Jan 21-Feb 19: It is easy to honor what is sacred to you. What's more difficult is honoring what's sacred to someone else, but not to you. And yet, your empathy, emotional intelligence and maturity allow you to recognize that respect does not require shared belief, only shared humanity.</p>	<p>PISCES</p> <p>Feb 20-Mar 20: The universe gives you a blank space to fill in with cool handwriting, and off you go. Don't worry, this pencil comes with an eraser, so you don't have to get it right the first time. Keep that experimental attitude, which means you don't get frustrated when something doesn't go as expected; you merely try another way.</p>

Purple is Having a Moment

From lattes to desserts and cocktails, this popular edible yam has finally arrived on the Indian plate and refuses to be ignored



Ube, a purple coloured edible yam

By RUPALI DEAN

Ube, a purple eye popping yam, has been a staple in Filipino desserts for decades. It is the new Instagram darling, sweetening high street menus across the globe. Its flavour? Think coconut meets vanilla with a mellow, nutty twist. A cult favourite in Southeast Asia, ube first conquered American cafes, before landing in India.

This vivid purple heart of Filipino kitchens isn't just an ingredient, it's a story passed down for generations. Michelle Taste, Chef at the Sofitel in Brisbane who's been weaving this earthy yam into her recipes for years, describes it as 'the heirloom of the Philippines'. The texture is quite like the taro and its sweetness is similar to sweet potato.

"Today, ube is going global, finding its way into tiramisu, pancakes, and of course, our feeds. It's a craze, much like matcha was," Michelle says, crediting its rise to Instagram's love for its hypnotic, amethyst hue. Traditionally stirred into ube halaya, a jam-like treat favourite

(Above) Ube dessert; (below) ube ice cream; cake topped with ube cream; ube latte



across Filipino households, ube's versatility has unleashed it onto the world stage.

Visual appeal aside (it does 'pop' on camera), ube feels both exotic and oddly familiar, a velvet cushion in flavour form. While ube and matcha may share the spotlight in today's food world, they couldn't be more different. Matcha is the brooding artist, earthy, bitter, and vegetal, best appreciated in small quantities, ube

is the charismatic headliner: naturally sweet, nutty, and silky, wrapped in a vibrant purple that practically shouts, 'Eat me!'

Chef Harish Rao from Hosa, says cooked ube has a creamy, luxurious texture that works wonders in desserts. The Filipino staple has long starred in halaya, cakes, and ice creams. But Rao's take, a lavariya inspired creation where ube is folded into the dough and paired with coconut and jaggery, is a standout example of its versatility. "Honestly, in the battle of the trendy ingredients, my money's on purple every time," smiles Rao.

The quiet magic of ube is its chameleon-like ability to melt into coconut rich creations. "I've whisked it into a silken coconut custard that's, frankly, borderline hypnotic. It leans beautifully into Southeast Asian classics too, imagine a soft *kanom krok* batter tinted purple or *pandan* steamed buns cradling a velvety ube core," chips in Chef Kaustubh Haldirpur, Fireback.

Celebrity Chef Kunal Kapur appreciates ube, when its natural flavour takes centre stage. "It's perfect for frozen custards, mousses, fermented breakfast buns, or even contemporary drinks." For Kapur, though, the ube trend stirs curiosity about India's indigenous *garadu*—the purple fleshed yam that sits at street food stalls rather than in patisseries. While *garadu* is starchier and savoury, often deep fried and spiced, its similarity to ube lies in a broader truth he's eager to explore: the hidden treasures of India's tubers, roots, and naturally colourful staples. Think *kokum*, *jamun*, *ragi*, turmeric, and saffron, ingredients that, given half the chance, could reshape the modern café menu.

The rise of ingredients like ube reflects a growing consumer preference for natural colours and flavours. Perhaps it's time for India's heritage ingredients to step up to the plate as well.



"It has a creamy, luxurious texture that works wonders in desserts. The Filipino staple has long starred in halaya, cakes, and ice creams." Chef Harish Rao, Hosa



"Ube is perfect for frozen custards, mousses, fermented breakfast buns, or even contemporary drinks." Kunal Kapur, restaurateur & celebrity chef



"Today, ube is going global, finding its way into tiramisu, pancakes, and of course, our feeds. It's a craze, much like matcha was." Chef Michelle Taste, Sofitel, Brisbane



(From above) Sanctuary Amaidyana in Auroville; Heiwa Gong; Japan inspired Heiwa Room



Shape of Quietude

By VEIDEHI GITE

On the fringes of Auroville, where cashew groves dissolve into red earth and filtered light, Sanctuary Amaidyana stands less as a hotel and more as a study in architectural restraint. The story begins with Nalin Patel, an Ashramite raised within the philosophical orbit of Sri Aurobindo. Born in Kenya, educated in the Ashram's integral system, Patel's ambition was clear: to build a guest house that could extend the quietude of the Matrimandir (located at the centre of Auroville) into a living space.

"I didn't want huts," he had insisted at the outset. "No clichés. Big rooms. Fifty square metres at least. Quiet. Personal." He purchased an acre and approached architect Mona Pingel, an Auroville-based practitioner. The original plan proposed three clusters; Pingel reduced it as density could compromise silence. What emerged instead were six large rooms arranged as low-slung cottages, each with private front and rear gardens. Rooflines, not façades, became the governing geometry.

Pingel's architecture begins at the top. The Mangalore tile roof, sourced from Kerala's double-grooved terracotta cooperatives, was not aesthetic nostalgia but climatic logic. Cyclone-resistant, deeply sloped for monsoon drainage, and layered with bison board insulation. The proportions of the roof determined the room. Precast concrete beams were cast on site and lifted into place, left exposed rather than concealed behind false ceilings. "Modern architecture doesn't hide structure," says Pingel. "If it carries load, it should be seen."

Much of the furniture is reclaimed Kalimedu wood sourced from demolished Pondicherry homes. For every tree used, teak was replanted on site. The grounds preserve existing cashew trees and are reinforced with Ashoka, Frangipani, and indigenous species.

The second chapter of Amaidyana began when Patel sold the property to Karunasesh, who retained Pingel to expand it. The result: 18 additional rooms and the creation of the Japan inspired Heiwa (peace) Room. It was originally imagined as a shared pavilion for groups before being refined into a more private architectural experience with an attached plunge pool.

The surrounding water channels in Amaidyana, originally conceived as natural swimming ponds, function as ant barriers, a technique developed in Auroville to reduce chemical pest control.

Cuisine follows CGH Earth's conscious philosophy but remains regionally anchored.

What distinguishes Sanctuary Amaidyana is not its amenities but its coherence. The original six rooms by Temple Tree have not been overwritten; they have been absorbed. Patel described the property as a "baby" adopted by its next custodian. It chooses structure over story. Roof before façade, and silence before programming. The result is not a resort, but an inhabitable pause.



QUICK TAKE



KLAP EVOLVED

Celebrating its 5th anniversary, Delhi KLAP is introducing a new food and cocktail menu, inspired by the evolving character of Khan Market. The cocktail menu focuses on flavour-led serves with strong individual character. Signature additions include *The Handshake*, *Seen at Khan*, and *The Bookmark*, while the food new food menu has new additions the KLAP Bhel, crisp brown rice alongside robatayaki sticks, the ceviche brings together citrus and sharp heat, while the KLAP *kulcha* and 24-hour slow-cooked *dal makhani* lean into the kind of comfort built for long tables and late evenings. When: June 20 onwards



REDMI UPGRADED

Xiaomi's launches its much-awaited Redmi Turbo 5 smartphone. The compact body smartphone features a 7,540mAh battery and is powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 8500-Ultra chipset. It sports a 6.59-inch flat AMOLED display with a refresh rate of 120Hz, 3,500 nits peak brightness, and 1.5K resolution. For photography, the phone gets a 50MP Sony IMX882 camera along with an 8MP ultrawide unit and a 20MP sensor for selfies. Starting at ₹37,999, its available on Amazon.

Where Viking Waters Meet Modern Stories

Copenhagen offers a different way to discover the city—through stories and new friendships

By NAINAA R RAJPAAL



Over a thousand years ago, the waters of Copenhagen were once a Viking playground. But today, their longships have been replaced by cozy solar-powered craft takes visitors to 17th-century waterways holding a cup of hot chocolate instead of axes and sun compasses.

Locals ferry tourists into Denmark's past on social sailing tours, where tourists and locals together cruise along UNESCO castles, repurposed shipyards, and 19th-century naval barracks. The idea was born when two locals, Casper and Joel, realised tourists find locals a bit reserved and difficult to befriend. *Hey Captain's* is one such social sailing tour. The ride begins at Ofelia Plads,

the city's waterfront square. But instead of the usual hard benches and crackling loudspeakers of the big cruises, you sink into cushions and watch life float by. Tours are capped at 12 guests and almost feel like a living-room get-together.

The captain greets you by name and begins asking you questions like an old friend. People start introducing themselves, hesitantly at first, but as the boat glides on, the atmosphere becomes warm. First, you pass Amalienborg Palace, the official winter residence of Denmark's royal family. You might get a glimpse of the Royal Guard marching in their bearskin hats, a ritual that has carried on since 1794. A little further along looms the Black Diamond, a shimmering extension to the Royal Danish Library that gets its name from the polished



(Left) Social sailing tours in Copenhagen's waterways; (right) Nyhavn, the iconic 17th-century waterfront

granite that reflects in the canal waters.

No script dictates the sailing route; captains tailor it to the group's tastes, mixing history with humour. As he shares stories, you find yourself spilling your own anecdotes to strangers on the boat.

Between grand tales of kings and sailors, the captain slips in local secrets: such as which bakery makes the fluffiest *kanelsnurrer* (a twisted cinnamon

buns adored by Danes), which corner bar has the liveliest jazz on Tuesday nights, and which neighbourhood brewery pours the freshest pint.

By the time your boat loops back to Ofelia Plads, you've seen the city from angles that most visitors never glimpse. You step off the boat not only richer in history, but with a reminder that happiness is shared moments and new friendships, however brief they are.

Adding Life to Years With Yoga

As the world observes International Yoga Day today, let's remember yoga's holistic approach to physical, mental and emotional wellbeing for healthy aging and lifelong vitality

By HIMALAYAN SIDDHAA AKSHAR

Across the world, life expectancy has increased significantly over the past few decades. Advances in healthcare, nutrition and technology have enabled people to live longer than before. While this is a remarkable achievement, it also raises an important question: Are we merely adding years to life, or are we adding life to those years?

Today, many people spend much of their lives coping with stress, fatigue, poor posture, reduced mobility and lifestyle-related health challenges. A longer lifespan does not automatically translate into a better quality of life. The real goal should be to remain physically active, energetic, independent and mentally alert as we age. This is where yoga offers a valuable solution. Far more than a form of exercise, yoga is a holistic discipline that nurtures physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Healthy aging is not about resisting or preventing the natural process of growing older. Rather, it is

about preserving strength, flexibility, mobility, mental clarity and confidence through the years. Yoga provides practical and sustainable tools that support these qualities, enabling individuals to age with greater resilience and grace.

Physical fitness alone is not the measure of a healthy life. Mental and emotional wellbeing are equally important. This is why breath awareness and mindfulness occupy a central place in yoga. Through *pranayama*, the yogic science of breath regulation, the body receives oxygen more efficiently, while the mind becomes calmer and more balanced.

Meditation further enhances overall wellbeing by helping individuals manage stress, cultivate concentration and strengthen emotional resilience. A peaceful and balanced mind is better equipped to make healthy choices and maintain a positive outlook on life.

There is wisdom in the saying that prevention is better than cure. Yoga embodies this principle. Rather than waiting for health problems to arise, it encourages proactive habits that

support long-term wellbeing.

Even small daily practices can yield profound benefits over time. A few minutes of stretching, mindful movement and conscious breathing each day can gradually improve flexibility, strength, balance and mental clarity. Through consistent practice, yoga becomes not merely a means of exercise, but a pathway to healthy aging and a more fulfilling life.

How Yoga Supports Healthy Living

Unlike many fitness routines that focus primarily on physical conditioning, yoga strengthens the body, improves breathing, calms the mind and cultivates self-awareness.

Regular yoga practice may help

- Strengthen muscles and tendons
- Improve flexibility, mobility and stamina
- Enhance balance and coordination
- Support healthy posture and body alignment
- Improve breathing efficiency
- Reduce stress and tension
- Promote better sleep
- Develop concentration, focus and attention
- Support emotional wellbeing

Yoga Postures for Healthy Aging

These yoga poses can help maintain strength, flexibility, balance and vitality

Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

This foundational pose improves body awareness, balance and posture. It teaches proper alignment and helps individuals stand with greater confidence and stability

Vrikshasana (Tree Pose)

It enhances balance, strengthens the legs and improves focus. Regular practice can improve coordination

and help maintain stability, especially in older years

Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)

This pose stretches the chest, shoulders and spine. It helps counter the effects of prolonged sitting and promotes spinal flexibility

Trikonasana (Triangle Pose)

It increases flexibility in the hips, spine and legs while enhancing balance and overall body awareness

Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose)

It strengthens the back, hips and legs. It also opens the chest and supports good posture

Ardha Chandrasana (Half Moon Pose)

This posture develops balance, coordination and strength. It improves concentration and enhances overall body stability

Shavasana (Corpse Pose)

Though simple in appearance, this is a powerful posture that promotes deep rest, reduces stress, and supports recovery and rejuvenation

Himalayan Siddhaa Akshar is a yoga master, spiritual guru, author, columnist, and founder of Akshar Yoga Kendra

More than just a form of exercise, yoga is a holistic discipline that nurtures physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Unlike fitness routines that focus only on physical conditioning, yoga strengthens the body, improves breathing, calms the mind and cultivates self-awareness



9
THE SUNDAY
MAGAZINE
BELIEVE

SACRED SPACE | Aihole Temples, Karnataka



Situated on the banks of the Malaprabha River in Karnataka's Bagalkot district, Aihole is renowned as the 'Cradle of Indian temple architecture'. Flourishing under the Early Chalukya dynasty between the 6th and 8th centuries CE, it served as an architectural laboratory where diverse temple forms were developed and refined, influencing temple construction across the Deccan and Southern India.

More than 120 temples and shrines are scattered across the ancient settlement, reflecting centuries of Hindu and Jain devotion. Dedicated to deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, Durga and Surya, these temples illustrate the rich religious life of the period. Among the most celebrated monuments is the Durga Temple, dating back to the 7th-8th centuries CE, noted for its distinctive apsidal design and surrounding pillared corridor.

Other significant structures include the Lad Khan Temple, one of Aihole's earliest structural temples, and the Meguti Jain Temple, which stands atop a hill overlooking the settlement. Together, these monuments reveal how sacred architecture evolved as both an act of devotion and a medium for artistic and cultural expression.

EPICS FOR CHILDREN | GAURAV YADAV

An Impossible Puzzle

In Greek mythology, Daedalus is presented as the most skillful man of his time. He was an architect, sculptor and stone worker. He was a favourite of King Minos. For Minos, he designed the labyrinth, a structure full of complicated and confusing windings that no one could come out of. The labyrinth was used to keep the Minotaur—a monster resembling a bull from its head to its shoulders, the remainder of its body being like a man. King Minos imprisoned Daedalus so that the secret of the labyrinth remains a secret. Daedalus escaped the prison by making himself wings out of bird feathers held together with wax, and found refuge in Sicily at the court of King Coccalus.

King Minos was furious and obsessed with capturing his rogue architect. He knew that finding a man who could alter his appearance would be impossible by muscle alone. So, he designed a brilliant psychological trap. He knew Daedalus' fatal flaw—he could never resist an impossible puzzle. Minos travelled from kingdom to kingdom, presenting a unique challenge and offering a massive reward to anyone who could solve it. He carried a spiral triton seashell (a conch) and a linen thread. The challenge was to pass the thread completely through the winding, microscopic spirals of the shell from the opening at the bottom all the way through the tiny hole at the very tip.

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nearly weightless strand of silk thread around the ant's body. He smeared a tiny drop of sweet honey right around the microscopic hole at the tip of the shell. He placed the ant into the main opening at the base of the shell. Smelling the honey from deep within the dark, winding labyrinth, the ant naturally marched forward. It navigated every twist and turn perfectly until it emerged from the top, pulling the silk thread behind it. Daedalus then tied Minos' heavier linen thread to the silk thread and pulled it all the way through. King Coccalus proudly returned the perfectly threaded shell to King Minos, claiming his prize. Minos took one look at the shell and declared, 'Only Daedalus could have thought of this.' He thus traced his genius architect using an impossible puzzle.

YouTube: @Mahabalak.English

NIRJALA EKADASHI 2026



The Waterless Fast

Nirjala Ekadashi is regarded as the most sacred and austere of all Ekadashi observances in the Hindu calendar. This year, it falls on June 25, with devotees breaking the fast on June 26. Observed on the eleventh day (Ekadashi) of the bright fortnight (Shukla Paksha) in the month of Jyeshtha, it is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is believed to bestow immense spiritual merit upon those who observe it with devotion.

The term *nirjala* means 'without water', and the fast is unique because devotees abstain from both food and water for a full day and night. According to a popular legend from the *Padma Purana*, Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers, found it difficult to observe all the Ekadashi fasts throughout the year. Sage Vyasa advised him to undertake the *Nirjala Ekadashi* fast, assuring him that its observance would confer the spiritual merit of all the other Ekadashis combined. Hence, it is also known as *Bhimseni Ekadashi* or *Pandava Ekadashi*.

Devotees spend the day in prayer, chanting Vishnu's name and reciting sacred hymns such as the *Vishnu Sahasranama*. Acts of charity, especially the donation of water, food and clothing are considered highly meritorious.

AMMASPEAK Mata Amritanandamayi



Love is the Weapon to End War

Children, today the world is like a hornbill thirsting for the clear rainwater of love and peace. Clashes, terrorist attacks and wars are taking place every day in one place or another. Even now, countless lives are being sacrificed.

In order to stop this senseless bloodshed, we must first understand its causes. To foil terrorist attacks, security measures have been put into place in airports and other places. Stringent safety checks have become mandatory.

This is all very good. But they can never be permanent solutions. There is another explosive device even more lethal than a bomb. It can never be detected by any machine. It is the hatred, hostility, and enmity in human minds.

Amma remembers a story. A village head was celebrating his hundredth birthday. A journalist asked him, "In your hundred years, what achievement are you proudest of?"

He said, "Though I have lived a hundred years, I don't have even a single enemy!" "How wonderful!" exclaimed the journalist. "Everyone should follow your example. Tell us, how was this possible?"

The village head replied, "Oh! I never let any of my enemies stay alive!" This is how many in the world rid themselves of enemies. But there is another way to destroy the enemy: by transforming a foe into a friend, by opening up our hearts and expressing love towards the enemy. There will definitely be a change

within the heart of the enemy, too. Without such patience and love, it will be difficult to bring about peace and harmony. Hatred, rivalry and conflict are the nature of the world. Some might argue that it is not possible to change this. This is not true. The basic nature of humankind is love and goodness. Therefore, if we try, we can replace these emotions with love and compassion.

There is an explosive device even more lethal than a bomb. It can never be detected by any machine. It is the hatred, hostility, and enmity in human minds. If we try, we can replace these emotions with love and compassion.

We must be ready to love with our hearts and serve with our hands. When we are ready to open our own hearts to understand others and share their sorrows, our own weaknesses will fall away, one by one. Gradually, we and society will improve and grow.

Imagine that a dear friend whom you have not seen for a long time is going to visit you. You will be jumping for joy. You will clean and decorate the house, cook a sumptuous meal, and wait enthusiastically. We ought to be able to welcome every moment of life with this attitude. Let us spend every moment serving others joyfully and enthusiastically, and thus make every moment as beneficial as possible.

When the goodness within awakens, society will awaken. Peace and contentment will prevail. We will be able to see the whole world as a flower and everyone in the world as different petals of that flower, undivided by the boundaries of nation and language. We will behold beauty everywhere, and see unity in diversity. The whole world will become one family.

The writer is a world-renowned spiritual leader and humanitarian

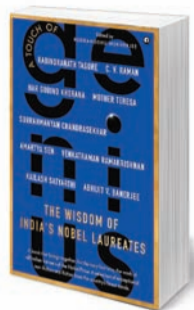
MASTER MIND



"Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." ~ IMMANUEL KANT

In the Company of Beautiful Minds

The collection traces the ideas, curiosities, and convictions that connect India-linked Nobel laureates across a century of intellectual life



A Touch of Genius: The Wisdom of India's Nobel Laureates
Edited by: Rudrangshu Mukherjee
Publisher: Aleph Book
Pages: 756
Price: ₹1,499

By ARADHIKA SHARMA

What distinguishes genius—the domain it inhabits or the manner in which it thinks? *A Touch of Genius: The Wisdom of India's Nobel Laureates*, edited by Rudrangshu Mukherjee, approaches this question obliquely by assembling a constellation of Nobel laureates connected to India and tracing the habits of mind that underpin exceptional thought. Spanning more than a century—from Rabinranath Tagore in 1913 to Abhijit Banerjee in 2019—the anthology is organised into ten sections, including literature, science, economics, religion and philosophy, politics, and inequality and injustice. These categories remain fluid: through essays, lectures, and reflections, many of the laureates move beyond their primary disciplines, demonstrating a mode of thinking that is curious, integrative, and unconfined.

The intellectual architecture of the volume is established in its introduction, where Isaiah Berlin's distinction between the hedgehog and the fox serves as a conceptual thread. Genius, in this formulation, resists confinement within a single organising principle; it draws connections across fields rather than reinforcing boundaries. This insight lends coherence to a diverse collection and foregrounds a deeper unity: that the intellectual concerns of these figures are "moored in their profound and enduring humanity."

This expansiveness is evident in CV Raman's essay *The Story of the Diamond*. Known for his groundbreaking

work in the 1930s, he writes with a sensibility that exceeds disciplinary limits. Diamonds emerge not merely as objects of analysis but as catalysts for wonder. His observations move from physics to speculation, and from there to ethics. As he puts it, "The essence of the scientific spirit is to look behind and beyond and realise what a wonderful world it is that we live in." The remark captures both the curiosity that animates discovery and the sense of wonder that sustains it. A similar crossing of boundaries appears in Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar's lecture, *Shakespeare, Newton and Beethoven, or Patterns of Creativity*, where he reflects on the affinities between artistic and scientific creation, suggesting that the pursuit of beauty, truth, and perfection shapes both.

Tagore's presence gives the anthology a distinct depth. In *My Reminiscences*, he recalls childhood through fragments of memory and sensation, pushing back against the rigidity of formal schooling. His remark—"What I learnt there [in school] I have no idea... it is for psychologists to debate"—is both wry and revealing, questioning the value of institutional learning. From here, his reflections open into a meditation on modern life. Remembering a childhood shaped by a lack of abundance, he notes that "what little we did get we enjoyed to the utmost," contrasting it with a present where excess dulls appreciation. In his writing, the personal turns naturally philosophical, culminating in a broader ethical vision captured in his assertion (from the Isha Upanishad) that "he who sees all beings as himself..."

AI GENERATED



knows truth." This sense of unity, grounded in empathy, points to an understanding of knowledge as an expansion of perception, finding a simple and direct echo in Mother Teresa's words: "Love begins at home, and destruction and hatred begin at home also."

The anthology's humanist core is most evident in the section on inequality and injustice. Amartya Sen's

observation, in *More Than 100 Million Women are Missing*, that "These numbers tell us, quietly, a terrible story of inequality and neglect leading to the excess mortality of women" transforms data into ethical urgency. Kailash Satyarthi adds a complementary voice, foregrounding the internal dimensions of oppression—fear, vulnerability, and mistrust among the marginalised. Together, these reflections suggest that

meaningful change must address both structural conditions and lived experience.

In the economic essay, *Inside the Machine: Toward a New Development Economics*, Abhijit Banerjee critiques the discipline's emphasis on macro-level frameworks, arguing that it overlooks the messy realities of implementation. As he suggests, economists remain "in machine mode," searching for the right button to push rather than examining where and why systems fail.

The book examines what makes these laureates "Indian." Many—including Har Gobind Khorana, Chandrasekhar, Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, and Banerjee—did their most influential work outside India. Rather than reducing identity to geography, the anthology offers a layered understanding shaped by intellectual formation and engagement. Laureates such as Tagore, Raman, and Sen remain anchored in Indian contexts even as their ideas acquire global resonance, underscoring the transnational character of intellectual life.

It also turns to the question of India's relatively limited representation among Nobel laureates, seeking explanation in educational practice—particularly the persistence of rote learning at the expense of critical inquiry. Education, in this framing, risks becoming transactional rather than transformative, oriented toward outcomes rather than the cultivation of independent thought.

The final section, comprising Nobel lectures and speeches, brings together reflections on intellectual discovery and the processes that shape it, while returning to larger questions of beauty, unity, science, and humanity. In the closing line of his lecture, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar observes that "the simple is the seal of the true and beauty is the splendour of truth," distilling a sensibility that runs through many of these writings. These concluding pieces do not seek closure; instead, they open outward, extending the conversation and inviting continued engagement.

A Touch of Genius creates a dialogue among extraordinary minds while preserving the distinctiveness of each, arriving at a larger insight: that genius resides in a way of thinking—restless, expansive, and deeply human.

READ

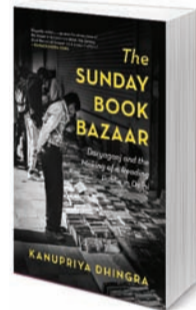
The narrative examines what makes these laureates "Indian." Rather than reducing identity to geography, the anthology offers a layered understanding shaped by intellectual formation and engagement

BOOK TASTINGS



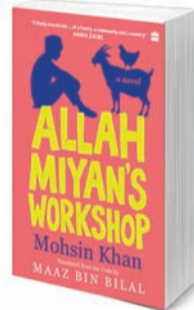
The Ocean Would Paint Me Blue
By: Zoulfia Katouh
Publisher: Bloomsbury
Pages: 352
Price: ₹499

It is a deeply moving story of loss, identity, resilience, and the healing power of art, following a girl named Jihad as she navigates life in an elite school.



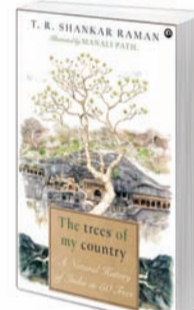
The Sunday Book Bazaar
By: Kanupriya Dhingra
Publisher: Speaking Tiger
Pages: 336
Price: ₹599

It traces the journey of Daryaganj book market—from centuries old book cultures to its rise as a second-hand book world of its own.



Allah Miyan's Workshop
By: Mohsin Khan; Translation: Maaz Bin Bilal
Publisher: HarperCollins
Pages: 280
Price: ₹499

Set in a village in Awadh, it tells the story of 14-year-old Gibran, whose carefree childhood is shattered when his father is arrested on suspicion of terrorism.



The Trees of My Country
By: TR Shankar Raman; Illustrations: Manali Patil
Publisher: Aleph Book
Pages: 304
Price: ₹1,499

It is a celebration of the trees of India—from the mundane to the magnificent—through evocative word-portraits and beautiful botanical art.

ATTENTION PUBLISHERS: PLEASE SEND YOUR BOOKS FOR REVIEW TO THE SUNDAY STANDARD, Express Building (Third Floor), 9-10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002. THE NEW SUNDAY EXPRESS, Express Gardens, 29, 2nd Main Road, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai 600058

A Tale of Two Countries

Blending memoir, fact, and fiction, the writing explores how shared ideas define ties between India and Turkey



Soul Climate
By: Inez Baranay
Publisher: Speaking Tiger
Pages: 270
Price: ₹499

Mahatma Gandhi, whom she would go on to spend time with.

The fictional aspect of the book concerns three cousins and close friends—Zoya,

Aisha, and Nuran—staying at Dr Ansari's house in Delhi. Their coming-of-age story is set against the backdrop of the freedom struggle. As they meet Halide and attend her lectures, their ideas and opinions begin to take shape. This, in turn, impacts the kind of choices they make in their life. As India navigates the complexities of independ-

ence, the stories of these three young Indian Muslim women show us how the political reality plays out at a personal level.

Baranay gives us a perspective of the country through Halide's eyes, and then gives her own thoughts on the same. The two combined lead to interesting reflections. Halide writes

Baranay gives us a perspective of the country through Turkish freedom fighter Halide Edib Adivar's eyes, and then gives her own thoughts on the same

about the terms she encounters: communalism, nationalism and socialism. This gives the author room to dwell on all three and their relevance today, and she goes on to extrapolate on how the meaning of being a nationalist has changed.

Halide was perceptive enough to realise even back then that there is a Hindu India and a Muslim India. She accepts this duality without probing the part that years of colonial rule played in engendering it. She does feel, though, that this division works against the unity the country is striving for.

The idea of patriotism and what it means is discussed. Halide considered herself patriotic and was a freedom fighter herself. However, as her ideas for her country and the direction it should take clashed with the ruling dispensation, she was forced to go into exile. It is made

Halide Edib Adivar



By SHEILA KUMAR

If, like this reviewer, you are not familiar with the work of the late Turkish writer, activist, and Member of Parliament Halide Edib Adivar, *Soul Climate* by Inez Baranay will make you seek Halide's books out. At a time when the ties between India and Türkiye have frayed, Baranay has explored the connection between the two through Halide's visit to India.

The story is an inventive braiding of memoir, fact, and fiction. Breaking the fourth wall, there are chapters where the author tells the reader directly where her imagination has come into play. The narrative unfolds at a gentle pace, is filled with socio-political nuggets, and is more driven by ideas than plot.

The factual part of the book deals with a trip that Halide Edib made to India in 1935, fulfilling a promise made to an Indian friend, Dr Mukhtar Ansari, whom she had met in Türkiye. Halide, an intellectual and freedom fighter, visited India when the country was fighting for independence. She gave lectures, travelled, and met important figures, including

Life is What You Make It

By REYA MEHROTRA

Books are seldom alternatives to therapy. But *Dancing Snail's It's Okay Not to Get Along with Everyone* is no less than therapy in print. It feels like a warm embrace, relatable embodiments of the battles of the mind and the self. Words feel familiar, as if she is one with the reader, and understands what they go through. She talks about being considerate rather than upfront, maintaining healthy boundaries and a safe space from others, feeling seen, and her emotional needs. And by weaving intimate experiences from her own life, the South Korean illustrator and author offers the comfort that a good self-help book should.

There's a reason Haneul Shin chose to call herself *Dancing Snail*—slow and lethargic to others, yet dancing at her own pace. She is like many of us—introverted but willing to participate at her own convenience. She channels Virginia Woolf when she writes, "We need rooms of our own to focus on ourselves and preserve our identity and independence. There is a word for this in German: *spielraum*... Just as invading someone's physical space causes unease, forcing your thoughts onto someone else is a form of intrusion into their mental space. Even with the best of intentions... Whether it is helpful or handy, if it is unsolicited, it's always better to hold it back." She advises practising restraint while showering others with care.

Pleasing, raw illustrations adorn each chapter, breaking down concepts into picture stories. Then there are plain advisories. The author doesn't forget to mention 'little tips' after almost every chapter. Therapy has played a significant role in her mental wellbeing, for she talks about healing and evolving, and fixing things in her life. And that is why perhaps she acts like a therapist in



It's Okay Not to Get Along with Everyone
By: Dancing Snail
Publisher: HarperCollins
Pages: 256
Price: ₹699

disguise in her works—her illustrations are the notes from her past therapy sessions. For balancing healthy boundaries in relationships, she says, "...rather than trying to fit into a fixed role—whether as an *inssa* (insider) or *assa* (outsider)—or labelling yourself one way or another, maybe it's okay to just drift freely, finding your own rhythm in the sea of relationships around you."

There's a constant push and pull with loneliness that the author plays with. She is protective of her own space, yet is willing to be a part of the crowd; in other words, she is alone but is not willing to be lonely. "Usually, I've enjoyed the quiet thrill of solitude in a crowd, and I've felt the ache of relative loneliness too...but being completely alone wasn't quite as romantic or freeing as I had imagined." She says getting used to loneliness is a matter of survival. "So if you find it hard to be alone or being alone doesn't feel whole or strong, please don't rush to label yourself as dependent or weak."

The narrative is deeply personal yet universal. It is coming of age in a way that she emerges out of her conflicts with learned lessons that she shares with her readers. "What I've come to realise is that the presence or absence of a person doesn't define my happiness," she writes. After all, at the end of the day, we can only be as happy as we've decided we're willing to be.



Sole Searching

No longer confined to the gym or the basketball court, luxury sneakers have emerged as the footwear of choice for a generation that values comfort and versatility over status

By NIKHIL P MERCHANT

Brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Valentino, and Balenciaga have transformed sneakers into coveted status symbols, creating signature silhouettes that command prices running into lakhs. This year alone, Louis Vuitton doubled down on the category with the LV Sneakerina, a ballet-inspired sneaker that blurs the line between performance footwear and high fashion, while its Spring-Summer 2026 LV Trainer continues to retail in luxury-handbag territory, with prices touching 1.59 lakh in India. Gucci, meanwhile, has positioned its Re-Web sneaker as a contempo-

gym or weekend errands; they have become everyday essentials that move seamlessly from meetings and airport lounges to dinners and social gatherings. At Jio World Plaza in Mumbai, luxury sneaker culture now sits comfortably alongside some of fashion's most established names. Shoppers can move from Balenciaga's oversized fashion-forward silhouettes to the leather craftsmanship of Bally and Tod's or Valentino's luxury footwear offerings without leaving the building. The message is clear: sneakers are no longer an adjunct to luxury fashion; they are increasingly one of its defining categories.

Even specialist retailers have observed the evolution. The growth of sneaker-focused destinations such as Superkicks reflects a maturing consumer who is increasingly aware of limited editions, collaborations and collectible footwear.



(From top down) ECCO M Golf Core Boa; Gucci; Tods 54C Leather Lace-Up

Yet not every brand is chasing hype. According to Sumeet Lohia, Country Manager-India, ECCO, today's consumers are becoming "far more intentional with their purchases" and are seeking products that combine "design, quality, functionality and longevity." He adds that ECCO's approach to luxury is focused on craftsmanship, innovation and elevated comfort rather than momentary trends. That thinking is evident in the brand's ₹25,999 ECCO M Golf Core BOA WP, a premium leather sneaker that stays away from logo-driven appeal.

Whether it is a collector chasing a limited-edition release, a frequent traveller seeking all-day comfort, or a luxury shopper investing in a statement piece, the modern sneaker has evolved far beyond its athletic origins. In today's luxury landscape, it may well be the ultimate power shoe.

rary house signature, combining heritage detailing with a cleaner, more versatile silhouette aimed at a new generation of luxury consumers.

They say shoes make the person. Today, that shoe is increasingly likely to be a sneaker. Not too long ago, luxury footwear meant polished Oxfords, towering heels or logo-laden loafers. Today, however, affluent consumers are pairing everything from tailored suits and linen separates to occasion wear with sneakers that can cost as much as a luxury handbag.

The global sneakers market is expected to grow from nearly \$95 billion in 2025 to almost \$144 billion by 2031, fuelled by consumers who increasingly view sneakers as both functional footwear and lifestyle statements. The rise of athleisure, hybrid work cultures and wellness-driven lifestyles has further blurred the line between sportswear and luxury fashion. Sneakers are no longer reserved for the

(Left) Louis Vuitton



PICK OF THE WEEK



Crystal Clear

A new home décor boutique in Delhi is where you find internationally sourced glass and crystal objects

For collectors and connoisseurs alike, The Right Address offers a curated selection of the world's finest names in glass, crystal, and decorative arts at its flagship in The Chanakya, Delhi. The boutique is less a store and more a cabinet of curiosities. From the delicate Murano glass creations of Salviati—one of Italy's oldest glassmakers—to crystal masterpieces, sculptural objects, and limited-edition collectibles, every piece is selected for its artistry, rarity, and enduring appeal.

Founder and interior designer Neha Kataria describes the collection as a carefully curated assemblage of *objet d'art*. "These are pieces manufactured with time, effort, and detailing in unique materials and textures," she says. Here, the exuberance of Jay Strongwater's hand-enamelled animal figurines, embellished with semi-precious stones, sits alongside the refined brilliance of custom crystal creations by Italian artisan Mario Cioni. Elsewhere, a striking interpretation of an iceberg by French studio



Mineral Design combines granite and transparent glass etched with intentional fractures, while French glass sculptor Lise Gonthier's thick glass slabs trap smoky grey swirls within their depths with remarkable precision.

The pieces invite the homeowner's interpretation as they take a new shape with a new setting. "You can never get bored with these pieces as with a simple change of direction, location, or lighting, they are new again," says Kataria. The boutique also extends its vision into fragrance through French architect Muriel Ughetto, whose diffusers and candles are conceived as enduring decorative objects.

—Samiya Chopra

Seeing Red



This June, Montblanc has introduced its second tribute to opera legend Maria Callas—La Divina, a new ruby-coloured Special Edition writing instrument. This design celebrates Callas's passion for luxury, particularly her opulent ruby jewellery collection. Born in 1923, the New York-born Greek soprano achieved global stardom, debuting internationally in 1947. Famous for reviving the *bel canto* tradition, her signature role was Bellini's Norma, which she performed at her 1956 Metropolitan Opera debut. The collection mirrors her slender, graceful silhouette. Its platinum-coated cone features a laurel leaf pattern inspired by her Norma costume, alongside her embossed signature. The handcrafted Au 585 gold nib is engraved with her iconic kohl-outlined cat eyes and nickname. A petal-shaped synthetic ruby on the clip honours both her jewellery and the rose named after her in 1965. Completing the set is a ruby leather notebook. The collection is available online and in stores.

In the Nick of Time

A last-minute Father's Day gift edit that looks like you planned it months ago

By MANISH MISHRA

Today's evolved dad is more like a college bud with a shoulder to cry on when the chips are down. You know he's got your back, no matter what. And Father's Day is the one time you could truly make him feel special. Here are some of our curated picks which are likely to make his day.



Linen Shacket by Vercelli [^]
A softly structured linen shacket that balances refined tailoring with effortless ease. Crafted for versatile, everyday wear, it combines the lightweight comfort of linen with functional utility details, creating a timeless layering piece that transitions across seasons and occasions. Price: ₹19,995



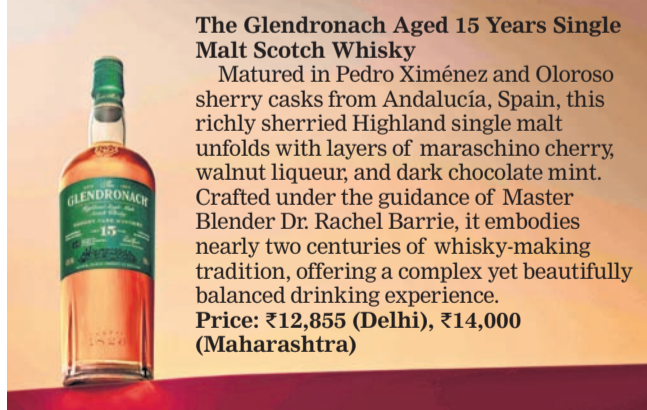
<< Casio timepiece
Crafted with a blend of timeless design and everyday functionality, the Casio MTP-SN8YD-2B2 is a sophisticated timepiece that complements his personal style. The striking blue dial, accented with refined detailing and paired with a sleek stainless-steel bracelet, lends a sense of understated elegance. Price: ₹3,695



The Outdoorsman II by Dolce & Gabbana x Ray-Ban [^]
The Outdoorsman II captures the essence of timeless design with understated lines and a contemporary touch. The prominent brow bar gives the frame a graphic edge, while the lightweight metal construction plays with negative space to elevate the overall silhouette. Price: On Request



Christian Louboutin [^]
<< Chambeliss
Here is the iconic Chambeliss, a contemporary interpretation of the classic Derby shoe. Crafted in black patent leather with a slender almond toe, it is distinguished by its signature metal pin detail, subtly inspired by men's jewellery. Price: On request



The Glendronach Aged 15 Years Single Malt Scotch Whisky
Matured in Pedro Ximénez and Oloroso sherry casks from Andalucía, Spain, this richly shiered Highland single malt unfolds with layers of maraschino cherry, walnut liqueur, and dark chocolate mint. Crafted under the guidance of Master Blender Dr. Rachel Barrie, it embodies nearly two centuries of whisky-making tradition, offering a complex yet beautifully balanced drinking experience. Price: ₹12,855 (Delhi), ₹14,000 (Maharashtra)

Philips Shaver i9000 Prestige Ultra
Designed to deliver an exceptionally close shave with enhanced skin comfort, it adapts seamlessly to facial contours while reducing friction for a smoother experience. Its AI-driven SkinIQ Pro technology senses shaving pressure, movement, and beard density in real time. Price: ₹29,999



L'Homme Idéal Cologne Forte ^v
The first almond scent for men by Guerlain, L'Homme Idéal reveals a new limited edition: L'Homme Idéal Cologne Forte, a burning-cool almond that unveils an unprecedented fragrance expression of the collection's iconic signature ingredient. Price: (100 ml) ₹14,450



Royal Enfield Classic 500 1:3 Scale Model [^]
Some motorcycles are remembered long after they leave the road, and the Royal Enfield Classic 500 is one of them. This handcrafted 1:3 scale model pays tribute to that legacy, recreating the iconic Classic 500 with extraordinary attention to detail through 964 individual parts and an impressive 8.5 kg build. Price: ₹88,000

Milly Alcock speaks with Sally James about her latest film, *Supergirl*, and how she is dealing with the expectations that come with huge projects

Landing roles in franchises with huge fan followings seems to be Milly Alcock's thing now. After *House of the Dragon*, where she plays the young Rhaenyra, the 26-year-old Australian actress is back in the DC world, playing the eponymous character in *Supergirl*. In this conversation, she speaks about navigating the weight of expectations that come with huge projects, the challenges of working with CGI characters, and why the *Supergirl* in the film is unlike any superhero we have known.

How would you say your version of *Supergirl* is different from what audiences may have seen before?

Well, when we meet Kara Zor-El, she's kind of a mess. She's nothing like the superhero people might expect, and she is nothing like her cousin, Superman. She's traumatised by what she has lived through and by everything she has lost. So, when we first meet her, she is struggling to move on. It's a different take on the superhero genre. She drinks to forget, she parties not to have to deal with her trauma.

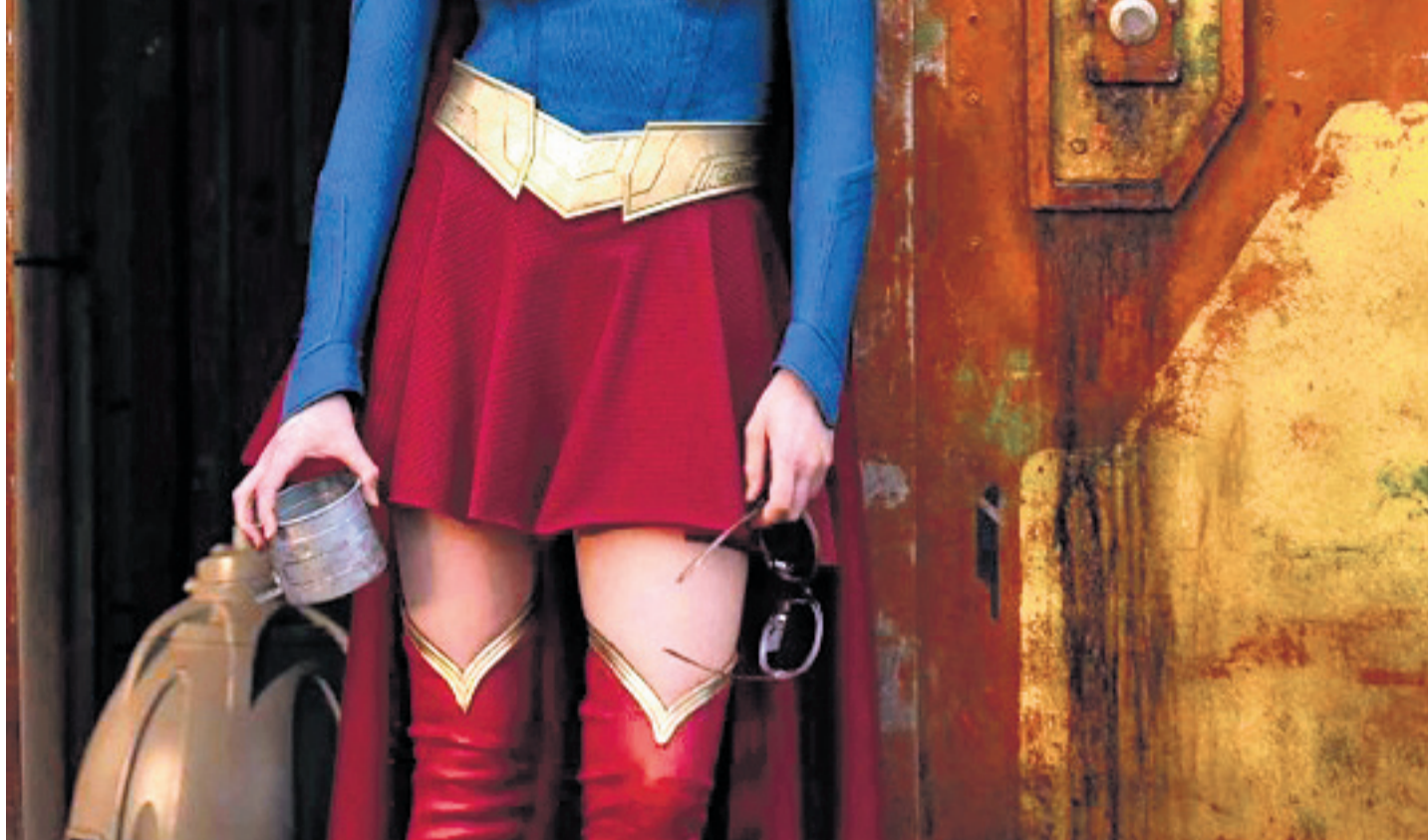
Krypto the Superdog is the key to Kara becoming the hero she is destined to be.

Krypto gives her the strength she has been lacking. When he is in peril, it forces her to save herself because she knows that only then can she save her dog.

Krypto won everyone's hearts in the recent *Superman* film. How was it working with a CGI superstar?

For some scenes, we had a dog there—a Romanian street dog. He was lovely, but he wasn't the easiest scene partner. The biggest challenge came when we didn't have the dog, and you had

'I'm Better at Acting Than Washing Dishes'



to mime and really use your imagination. You can feel a bit silly pretending to get licked by a dog that isn't actually there, but you get used to it (laughs). It's a new skill.

Eve Ridley plays the alien Ruthye. How was your

experience working with her?

I really bonded with Eve. I immediately felt protective of her because I know what it feels like to suddenly step into a huge franchise and feel the weight of expectation. And being only 15, it was tough for her. But she is just amazing. She made it so easy.

Ruthye is such a crucial part of Kara's journey.

Did joining a huge franchise in *House of the Dragon* at a young age help you prepare for *Supergirl*?

I think so. I learned so much from *House of the Dragon*. I

gained so much confidence from that experience. And the experience of stepping into something with that level of fandom has really helped me to perform well in *Supergirl*.

How was it working with Jason Momoa?

Amazing, I was so excited to work with Jason, and he was just incredible. He brought so much energy with him. We had a great time.

Is there one scene in the film that stands out for you?

I think the bus scene. That scene took five days to shoot, and there were so many people involved, so many moving parts, and so much going on in such a confined space. It was also really hot in there. But it's a great scene. I can't wait for everyone to watch it.

How much of the action and stunts did you get to do yourself?

As much as I could and was allowed to do. Mickey Facchinello is my stunt double—I call her the real *Supergirl*, because she can do anything a *Supergirl* can do. She's just incredible. So I did as much as was realistically possible. There were some things I was not sure about trying. That's when Mickey stepped in. But it wasn't just about me not getting injured. This is dangerous stuff, and a lot of the time it's about making sure no one else gets injured. Sometimes you have to leave it to the professionals.

Is it true that less than ten years ago, you had a job washing dishes to make ends meet between acting jobs?

That's true. It was at a restaurant in Sydney, where I grew up. And I was terrible at it (laughs). I think I'm better at this job than I was washing dishes!

Are you ready for the level of fame this role is likely to bring to you once *Supergirl* is released?

It's something I have thought about from the very beginning. At first, it was kind of overwhelming, but while shooting for the film, it really didn't feel like anything because the set is such a protected and intimate experience between the cast and crew. Now, the closer it gets to the film coming out, there's a wave of feeling overwhelmed again. But that's all part of the experience of sharing the film. I'm mostly just excited that everyone is getting to meet Kara.

ASIA FEATURES

Returning to Herself

Tribeny Rai speaks about her Nepali-language drama, *Shape of Momo*, and the urgent need for female filmmakers from Northeast India

By PUJA TALWAR

In filmmaker Tribeny Rai's Nepali-language debut drama, *Shape of Momo*, the dumpling becomes a reminder of how the idea of food functions in a patriarchal society. Set amid Sikkim's lush hills and rocky terrain, the film follows Bishnu, a woman in her 30s who returns home from Delhi only to confront the familiar chorus of advice about marriage, work, and settling down. Her inability to make perfectly shaped momos reminds her of her inadequacy in a society that demands perfection from women. Her relationship with her stoic mother and her married, pregnant sister Juno deepens the film's exploration of compromise, regret, and female agency. The film also drew the support of prominent filmmakers Rana Daggubati, Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti, and Payal Kapadia, who joined the project as executive producers.

For Rai, the story is deeply personal. She sees traces of both Bishnu and Juno in herself.



"Mostly I see a lot of Bishnu in me," she says. "But when you have to navigate society and its ways, I do act like Juno once in a while."

The 35-year-old SRFTI alumna says the film emerged from her own attempts to understand identity, belonging, and the expectations imposed on women. What began as a desire to tell stories from her region gradually turned into a process of self-examination. "In the film school, I felt

it was my responsibility to tell our story, because otherwise, who else will?"

Rai was initially developing a film about a Nepali woman sub-inspector, a strong-headed protagonist shaped by the challenges she faces in her surroundings. However, Rai's own experience of returning home from a city and negotiating social expectations felt more urgent. "I had come back from the city and thought myself to be smart for my world, while also trying to understand why things were not working the way I wanted them to," she recalls.

"That is when I thought maybe I need

to make a film about this experience." Over time, the project evolved beyond autobiography. Working with co-writer Kislay helped her gain distance from the material, allowing the film to be critical not only of society but also of its protagonist.

The desire to complicate familiar narratives also informs Rai's approach to representing Northeast India on screen. "There is a tendency to use our landscape as this beautiful escape inhabited by simpletons," she says. "Mountain folks are seen as exotic creatures everywhere. I have longed to give dignity to our people, where we want to be seen as complex as people living in Delhi or Bombay."

Rai is equally hopeful about the future of Nepali-language cinema in India. While Nepal has a well-established film industry, filmmakers from Sikkim, North Bengal, and Shillong are increasingly working to build an ecosystem of their own. "People are used to watching a certain kind of Nepali film," she says. "So I hope they see that we are trying to create something new. We need an ecosystem where all kinds of films can coexist." By locating a familiar story of gender, family and belonging within a distinctly Sikkimese context, Rai's debut expands the geography of Indian independent cinema while insisting on the universality of concerns that it portrays.

Tribeny Rai; (above) A scene from the film

BINGE BOX



THE BENDERS RETURN

The second season follows Aang and his companions as they journey deep into the Earth Kingdom to seek an earthbending master and convince the Earth King to join the fight against Fire Lord Ozai values. Watch *Avatar: The Last Airbender Season 2* on Netflix

TRENDING

Voicemails For Isabelle Netflix

CAST: Zoey Deutch
PLOT: Jill copes with the tragic loss of her sister by continuing to leave her voicemails. Complications arise when the phone number is re-assigned to a real estate agent.

Drishyam 3 Amazon Prime

CAST: Mohanlal
PLOT: It follows a psychologically exhausted Georgekutty as his family's dark past threatens his elder daughter marriage prospects.

Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar JioHotstar

CAST: Sanchita Basu
PLOT: The second season follows former lovers Shanvika and Kuldeep as they reunite as fierce rivals locked in a dangerous battle involving power and politics.

Husbands In Action Netflix

CAST: Gong Myung
PLOT: This Korean caper follows an ex-husband and a current husband forced into an unlikely partnership when a family kidnapping turns their lives upside down.

Your Fault: London Amazon Prime

CAST: Matthew Broome
PLOT: This romantic drama follows Noah and Nick as love, distance and unresolved feelings threaten to pull them apart once again.

OTT REVIEW

Missing the Punchlines



MAA BEHEN

Director: Suresh Triveni
Platform: Netflix
Genre: Comedy, Crime Thriller
Language: Hindi
Rating: ★★☆☆☆

Suresh Triveni's latest film, *Maa Behen*, aspires to be both a crime thriller and a comedy, and in the process of balancing the two, ends up being neither. With a promising cast, the film does hit the familiar feminist ideological spots that it seems to aim for, but gets muddled up in trying to be more than that—a gripping comic thriller that its trailer initially promised. Starring Madhuri Dixit Nene, Triptii Dimri, and Dharna Durga, the plot follows a mother and her estranged daughters who come together to frantically cover up the death of a neighbour, played by Ravi Kishan, at their house.

With a rather loose plot, the film runs on an uneven pace with multiple arcs that don't even contribute to the message or plot. The crime and the comedy go around in circles, and the result is a narrative that is not just absurd, but simply overcomplicated and difficult to connect with.

Even with such shortcomings, the film is not short of substance. For a mainstream Bollywood drama, it is significant that *Maa Behen* explores female sexuality and how single women are viewed in society. Madhuri Dixit Nene's Rekha is a widow who, unlike the stereotypical image of a widowed mother usually portrayed in cinema, is infamous for being promiscuous. Along with being perceived as "characterless", she is seen as a *daayan* or witch who hunts men. Her presence evokes horror in the colony—the fear of a single woman with agency; the dangers attached to a woman whose sexuality is not controlled by a man. The neighbourhood believes her to be contaminating the "moral purity" of the area. Although she is judged, scrutinised, and ostracised by the neighbours, Rekha exists on her terms with the transgressive symbol of the sleeveless blouse. With this portrayal, the film attempts to deconstruct how single women are often perceived in media and society.

While the script demanded exaggeration in acting, Triptii Dimri still delivers a natural performance that fits the character. Content creator Dharna Durga also emerges as a refreshing new face in her debut. Madhuri Dixit Nene, however, doesn't fit the grammar of the film and appears to be forcing not just the accent, but the entire character of the mother.

Finally, instead of being the complicated blend of comedy with a backdrop of crime that aims to deliver a feminist message, *Maa Behen* would've done justice to its core feminist idea by sticking to this one layer. The film, in this case, would have been better.

—Samiya Chopra

