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February 2024

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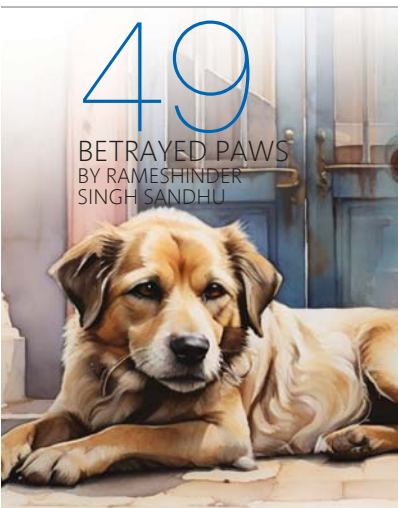
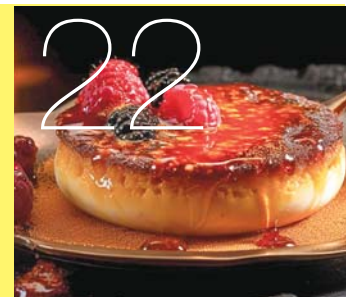
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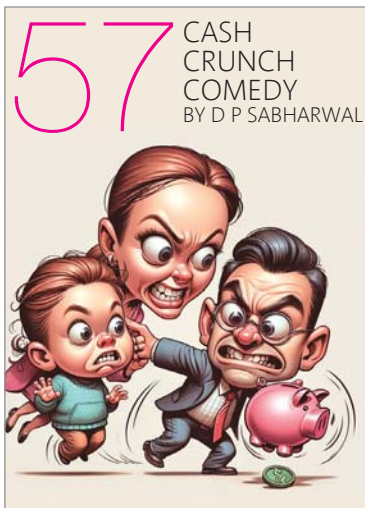
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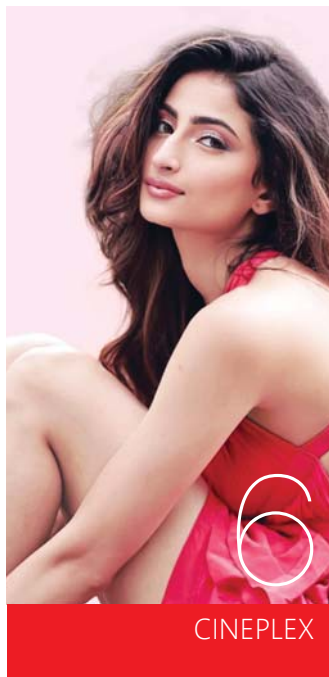
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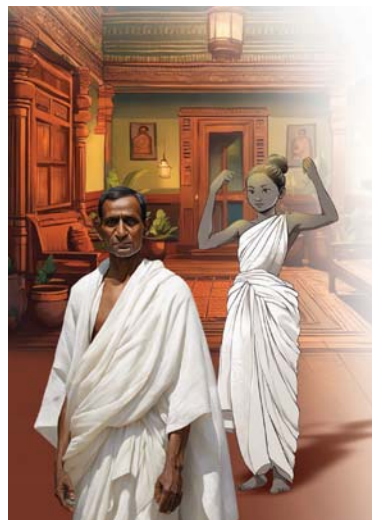


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The electorate of India had never imagined the euphoria over the installation of the Ram Lalla statue at the newly built Ram temple at Ayodhya. There is a joke going around in social media circles, should we consign PM Modi to the next elections or should we still hold the elections? At the moment it looks like a foregone conclusion that the BJP with PM Modi leading should seriously be considered the victorious party in the 2024 general election. The *Ram Mandir* comes not only as bait for the next elections, for the large populace of India but as an extreme religion economics which has been prevalent for over 2000 years now. The Hindus never had them on the plains in the North. Either it was *Vaishno Devi* up in the hills, *Amarnathji Yatra* which was an extreme up in the Himalayas and the cold, also seasonal, or acclaimed temples in the South, which collected all the religious donations during the year, for the remaining open throughout the year (*Ramanathaswamy Temple* in Rameshwaram, *Tirupati Balaji Temple* in Andhra Pradesh, *Kashi Vishwanath Temple* in Varanasi, being some of the largest). At Ayodhya, the young and the old, and even the disabled can simply walk for a darshan, unlike the ones in the hills. The Ayodhya *Ram Mandir* surely will get a large booty of these collections, and it will somehow dent the collections at the other Hindu temples. Participants in religious tourism remain the same, and they go to a number of temples within a period of time. With Ayodhya being added, that donation economics will get split up. At the current estimates, Ayodhya is to witness a 5-crore influx of pilgrims, which may be much above the Vatican of 2-crore pilgrims, and 3-crore for Tirupati. *Ram Mandir* makes a serious establishment for the RSS and the Trust which runs it for times to come (some say centuries) and thereby, controlling a lot of money from the Hindus. The temples in the north Indian plains did not survive due to attacks by the moguls and were plundered of their wealth many, many times. We have all heard about the stories of the *Somnath Mandir*. With the things that have changed now, the *Ram Mandir* has a better chance of not

being plundered like in the old ages. It is commendable that Prime Minister Modi has been able to gather huge amounts of support at the Ram Lalla installation, something which could not have been bought with a big media campaign or simply canvassing. And this euphoria keeps going on. For time in memorial, where politicians are hardly commended, to have established something to do with sentiment, this is one monument which generations will relic, that it was built for them by the whims and strategy of a politician.

This is one event which has united all the Hindus and left the other communities dumbfounded to be up against arms. Resultantly, the Rahul Gandhi's *yatra* from the east to the west has received little or no coverage, also the I.N.D.I alliance seems to be breaking up at a faster pace, just on the eve of the general elections in 2024. Also, the euphoria and criticism on who has been invited for the 22nd January installation, has stalled as quickly as it had begun.

The *Ram Mandir* and the *Ram Janmabhoomi* construction story may not end here, since Modi may look to facilitate the Muslims also by pitching in to build their mosque, which is some distance away as per the *Ram Janmabhoomi* settlement by the Supreme Court. Should that happen, the rest of the 16% to 21% minority of

Muslims may be in place for Modi and the BJP in the next round of politiareeing. With multiple legal changes that have challenged the modern Muslim society, especially for women, PM Modi has enacted laws that clearly appease them, but at the same time also good for their development.

In the days to come it is to be seen how the other political parties will pitch against the BJP for not forming the government in the new general elections. News of the breaking up of the opposition alliance is now coming in each day. Some of the political bigwigs are trying to save their crown in the ongoing rhetoric with the Hindus marching to Ayodhya in numbers which have never been seen before.



Bollywood celebrities attending the Ram Mandir inauguration at Ayodhya.

CINEPLEX



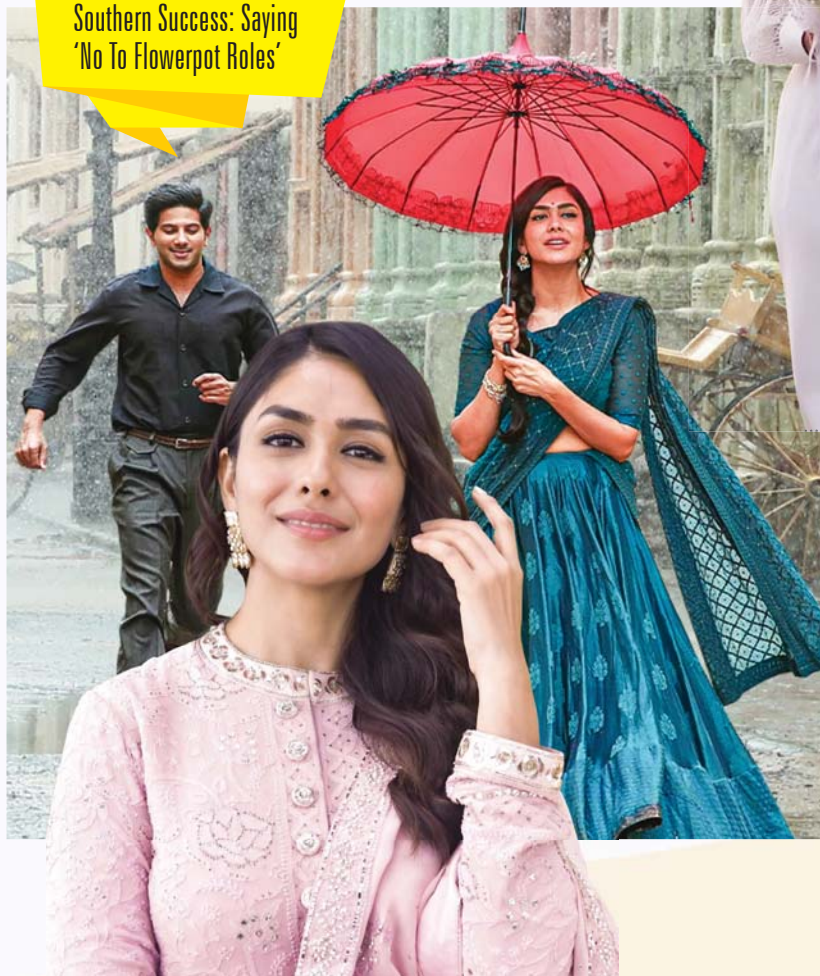
Aamir Khan's daughter, Ira Khan, tied the knot with fitness coach Nupur Shikhare in a registered marriage ceremony on 3 January in Mumbai. Their wedding went viral as Nupur showed up to the ceremony in a casual vest and shorts, after jogging almost 8 km to reach the wedding venue. Later, the couple and their family flew to Udaipur for their celebrations where Aamir Khan escorted Ira down the aisle for a Christian wedding ceremony.



Ira Khan And Nupur Shikhare Tie Knot In An Unconventional Way



Mrunal Thakur's Southern Success: Saying 'No To Flowerpot Roles'



The talented actress, Mrunal Thakur has enamoured the entire South cinema with her roles in *Sita Ramam* and *Hi Nanna*. Her characters in the film, aided by her performance, have been in contrast with the common 'flowerpot' roles. But those roles are hard to come by, as she says, "For a long time, I didn't sign any film. It was important for me to believe in a character and a story."

FROM BOLLYWOOD...

Ananya Panday recently shared a dazzling picture with Orhan Awatramami, aka Orry, from a recent party. Her caption, “Orry Not Sorry” quickly became a subject of intense speculation as many claimed that it was a dig at Palak Tiwari. Netizens pointed to a spat between Orry and Palak, and his refusal to accept her apology. Reddit users alleged that it was part of campaign to sideline Palak due to her background.

Ananya Panday's Cryptic 'Orry Not Sorry' Sparks Social Media Frenzy



Medha Shankar's Following Sees A 238 Per Cent Surge On Instagram

medhashankr

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Medha Shankr

Actor

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The new national crush, actress Medha Shankar, rose to fame after her performance in *12th Fail*, a successful film starring Vikrant Massey as lead. Since the premiere, the beautiful actress has seen a significant rise in Instagram followers, by a whopping 238 per cent. She went from 3.5 lakh followers prior to the movie's release, to 1.5 million. Social media users are spellbound by the newfound actress.



Malaika Arora Rocks Fusion Fit With Jacket Swagger

M's Bollywood's original fashion queen, Malaika Arora is known for her perfect style and daring choices. She has once again stolen the show with a fusion finesse that sets a new standard in style. The actress effortlessly combines traditional sophistication with Western grace, making everyone fall in love with her fashionable outfit. The beautiful design had Zardozi, mirror, thread and sequin embroidery.

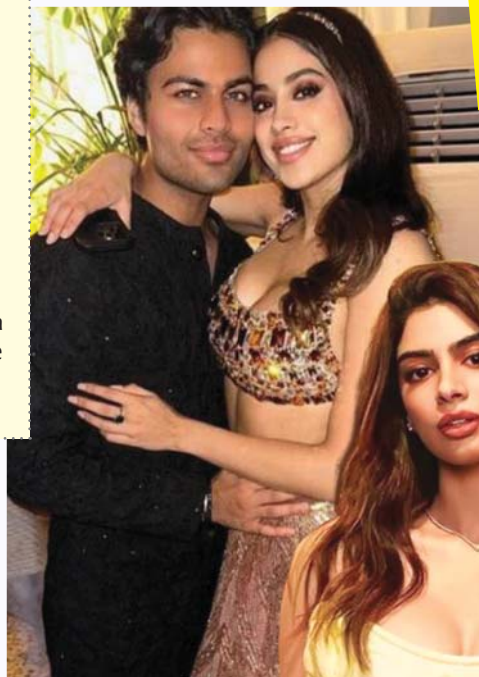


Shahid Kapoor's Dance Sparks Controversy With Unexpected Footwear Twist



The charismatic Bollywood star, Shahid Kapoor, has recently found himself amid social media uproar. The controversy erupted after the release of the song *Laal Peeli Akhiyaan* from his upcoming film, where he is seen dancing with Kriti Sanon. The eagle-eyed netizens noticed Shahid's choice of heeled shoes, while Kriti opted for flats. This sparked a debate among fans, with some calling him insecure about his height.

For Koffee With Karan's season 8, Janhvi Kapoor was invited as guest alongside her sister, Khushi. After months of being linked to Shikhar Paharia, a professional Polo player. On the show, she more or less confirmed the dating rumours as she said, "Have you heard that song, *Nadaan Parindey Ghar Aaja?* Shikhar used to sing that to me a lot." She also mentioned how he has been there for her and her family from the start.



Koffee With Karan 8: Did Janhvi Kapoor Confirm Dating Shikhar Pahariya?

Deepika Padukone And Ranveer Singh Groove With Paparazzi At The Airport



At the Mumbai airport, Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh met with an unexpected surprise. As the Bollywood couple were leaving the airport, a paparazzi dazzled them with a dance to *Sher Khul gaye*, a song from the former's upcoming movie, *Fighter*. Along with cheering for him, Deepika and Ranveer also grooved with him to the beats of the song, clapping when the pap finished the routine.

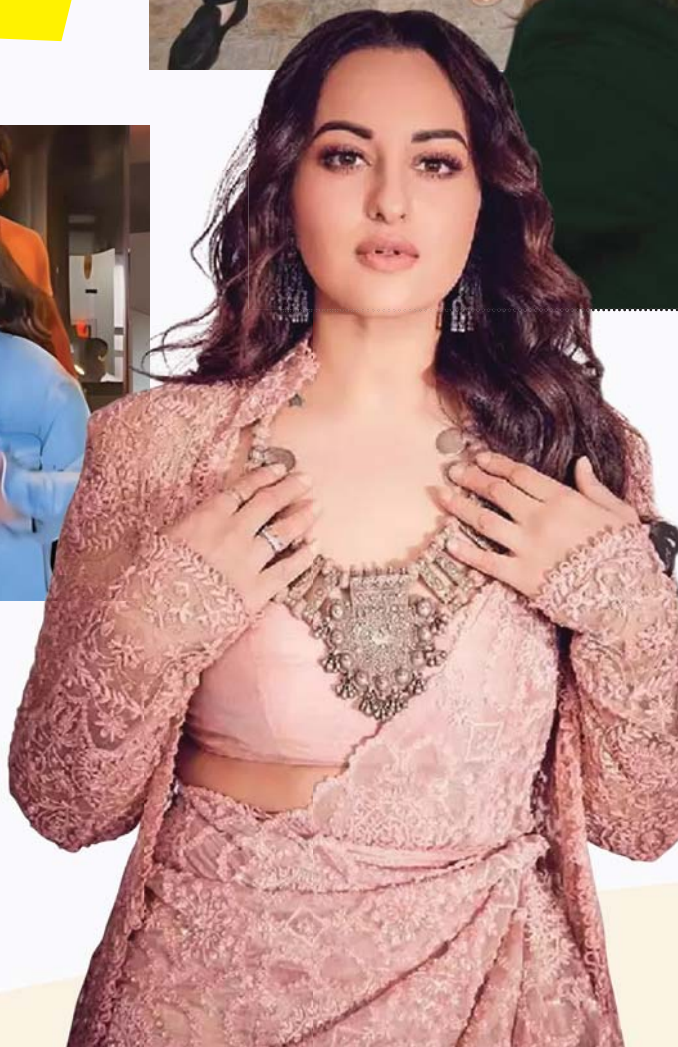


In a rare sighting, actress Kangana Ranaut was seen holding hands with a mystery foreign man as she exited a salon in Mumbai. In the photo released by paparazzi, both of them can be seen smiling. Sparking speculations about Kangana's relationship status, fans wondered the identity of the mystery beau. Many were admiring how good they look together.



Kangana Ranaut Smiles As She Holds Hands With A Mystery Man In Mumbai

Sonakshi Sinha Enjoys Romantic Dinner Date With Rumoured Boyfriend



Actress Sonakshi Sinha has never openly discussed her relationship with Zaheer Iqbal, but their photos and affectionate comments on each other's posts serve as evidence of their dating status. Fans adore the couple and they are often seen together. Recently, the couple was seen enjoying a romantic dinner date in Mumbai. Later, the cheerful actress was seen rushing to the car while holding some colourful balloons.





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The mellifluous voice behind hits like 'Ishq Bulaava', Sanam Puri, recently tied the knot with his longtime companion, singer-model Zuchobeni Tungoe. Their nuptials, cloaked in a white wedding ceremony, echoed the sweet notes of love in Nagaland. It was an intimate ceremony attended by family and friends. The singer was in a suave black tux and the bride looked breathtaking in a floor length gown.

Sanam Puri Weds His Longtime Bae In A Magical Nagaland Ceremony



Shradhha Kapoor Urges Fans To Explore Lakshadweep Amidst Maldives Boycott



Amidst the India-Maldives tensions, several Bollywood A-listers came out to support India and India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. A controversy erupted when Maldives minister sent a tweet mocking PM Modi's recent visit to Lakshadweep. Shradhha Kapoor, along with other celebrities like Akshay Kumar, Salman Khan, etc urged their fans to explore Indian islands, positing Lakshadweep as an alternative destination to Maldives.



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“The expression one wears on one’s face is far more important than the clothes one wears on one’s back.”

-Dale Carnegie

Why did Mona Lisa become one of the most famous paintings of all time? That’s a question that has left an incredible amount of people scratching their heads. And one possible answer is this: because of her unique smile.

Did you know that the most important thing in your makeup bag is your smile? Studies have found that your smile has a bearing on your perceived attractiveness. The muscles we use to smile also lift the face, making a person appear younger.

Smiling isn’t a learned behaviour. We are actually born smiling. Smile is one of the most basic, biologically uniform expressions in all humans. A gesture we all understand across the world is a smile. When neither of you speaks a common language, a smile and a laugh go a long way in getting along. Smiling is not just a universal means of communication, but a frequent one. It really is easier to smile as well, as it takes fewer muscles to smile than frown—43 to frown and only 17 to smile.

Charles Darwin, who in addition to theorising on evolution in *On The Origin of Species*, also developed the Facial Feedback Response Theory, that suggests that the act of smiling actually makes us feel better, rather than merely being a result of feeling good. Smile is the key that fits the lock of everybody’s heart. A smile is the light in your window that tells others that there is a caring, sharing person inside. Smiling brightens the day for most of us. What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity.

We all know the famous quote from Louis Armstrong, “When you’re smiling, the whole world smiles

Laugh Line

The untapped power of a smile.

By Santosh Pattanaik

with you.” The power of a smile should never be underestimated. It is capable of unseating a powerful opponent, easing the fears of a crying child, and even winning the heart of a passerby. It brings rest to the weary, uplifts the discouraged, gives hope to the sad, and is a perfect antidote for troubled times. To someone who has seen a dozen people frown, scowl or turn their faces away, your smile is like the sun breaking through the clouds. Your smile is often the first messenger of your goodwill.

Smiling is definitely more than just a contraction of muscles in your face. In fact, Mother Teresa’s words that “We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do,” reaches probably even further than imagined.

The Fading Smile

Ever had someone told you to cheer up and smile? It’s probably not the most welcomed advice, especially when you’re feeling sick, tired or just plain down in the dumps. But there’s actually good reason to turn that frown upside down, as corny as it sounds. Science has shown that the mere act of smiling can lift your mood, lower stress, boost your immune system and possibly even prolong your life. With such a potentially powerful tool at your disposal, it only makes sense to protect and maintain your smile.

Whether you call it a grin, smirk, beam or smile, there’s no denying the feel-good power of this happy facial expression. We are born with the ability to smile, yet as we age, we smile less often. Research shows that children smile an average of 400 times a day, compared to the average happy adult who smiles 40-50 times a day and the typical adult who smiles only 20 times a day.

Researcher LaFrance concluded that, overall, women smile a lot more than men. This comes not just from the fact that they might be happier, but also, that socially, it is more acceptable for women to smile, she says. And it doesn’t stop there: “In general, women are more accurate than men in detecting what is really

going on with someone by looking at their face and listening to their voice. Women are more likely to tell the difference between a felt and a fake smile.”

A smile, someone once said, costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive without making poorer those who give. It takes but

THE POWER OF A SMILE SHOULD NEVER BE UNDERESTIMATED. IT IS CAPABLE OF UNSEATING A POWERFUL OPPONENT, EASING THE FEARS OF A CRYING CHILD, AND EVEN WINNING THE HEART OF A PASSERBY. IT BRINGS REST TO THE WEARY, UPLIFTS THE DISCOURAGED, GIVES HOPE TO THE SAD, AND IS A PERFECT ANTIDOTE FOR TROUBLED TIMES.

a moment, and the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. Smile is the only treasure that enriches both the giver and the receiver. The more you share, the more it is valued. It creates happiness at home, fosters goodwill in business, and is the countersign of friendship.

Smiling stimulates our brain’s reward mechanisms in a way that even chocolate, a well-regarded pleasure-inducer, cannot match. In a study conducted in the UK, British researchers found that one smile can provide the same level of brain stimulation as up to 2,000 chocolate bars; they also found that smiling can be as stimulating as receiving up to 16,000 Pounds Sterling in cash.

Life can throw us a few curve balls now and again, and being able to smile our way through them can be a useful tool in our toolbox. A smile is one of the most basic and fundamental nurturing methods. A simple smile can make all the difference and is something that even very young babies respond to. There aren’t too many valuable assets today that don’t have a price tag attached to them. Smile is





one area that does not need your budgeting attention. So, don't be frugal with your smiles, use them to your heart's content.

The Best Medicine

Laughter (which begins with a smile) is also said to help boost your body's immune system. There's a reason why laughter therapy exists! Even if you're feeling blue, crack a smile and reap the numerous benefits of smiling. Anytime you are having a hard day, a down day, force yourself to smile, even for a few seconds. It will make a difference.

Smiling is contagious. Have you ever wondered why being around children who smile frequently makes you smile more often? Other people's smiles actually suppress the control we usually have over our facial muscles, compelling us to smile. It's very difficult to frown when looking at someone who smiles. Smiling is evolutionarily contagious and we have a subconscious innate drive to smile when we see one. This occurs even among strangers even when we have no intention to connect or affiliate with the other person.

When we smile, even if it's fake, our brain releases serotonin—a neurotransmitter that helps stabilise your mood, producing feelings of happiness and well-being, and acts as a natural anti-depressant. Our brain pumps these natural 'drugs', getting us high on happiness.

Smiling not only helps to prevent us from looking tired, worn down, and overwhelmed, but it can actually help decrease stress. Believe it or not, smiling can reduce stress even if you don't feel like smiling or even if you fake it with a smile that isn't genuine. Smiling releases endorphins that are focused on pain relief and stress relief, which in turn, cause a reduction of cortisol (your stress hormones). Reducing stress may lower blood pressure, improve digestion, and regulate blood sugar.

Similarly, smiling while experiencing pain lessens the effect of the pain. A study found that people who smiled while getting a needle reported up to 40 per cent less pain than people who didn't. The study named Grin and Bear It, showed that if a person smiles and then undergoes a stressful activity, they have a lower heart rate and their recovery from the stress is

WHEN WE SMILE, EVEN IF IT'S FAKE, OUR BRAIN RELEASES SEROTONIN—A NEUROTRANSMITTER THAT HELPS STABILISE YOUR MOOD, PRODUCING FEELINGS OF HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING, AND ACTS AS A NATURAL ANTI-DEPRESSANT.

quicker. These results achieved the maximum success when it was a genuine smile. Smilers are perceived as more confident and sociable. We are naturally drawn to people who smile. While more severe or negative facial expressions like frowns, scowls, and grimaces effectively push people away, smiling is seen as more attractive—and people may even assume you have more positive personality traits. It is no surprise that people who smile more enjoy quality social relationships and friendships.

A smile can benefit our professional life too. It is crucial when it comes to first impressions. Smiling when you first meet someone will indicate to the other person that you are genuinely a positive person. A smile is seen as friendly and trustworthy; interviewers are likely to find candidates far more appealing if they go for a job interview with a smile on their face. When we smile, we not only appear more likeable and courteous, but we're actually perceived to be more competent.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to smile is that it may lengthen your overall lifespan. The wider your smile and the more laughter lines you have, the longer you are likely to live. Scientists measured the smiles of baseball players and then compared these with their lifespan. The study concluded that smiling could add five to eight years to your life. It's such a simple thing to do and has such huge gains. So, get those wide grins going and crinkle up those eyes for a longer lifetime of fun and happiness.

Your smile is a gift. Go ahead and give yourself a gift right now. The more you do it, the more it becomes a natural habit. Smiling is not only wonderful for your own well-being, but so many others' welfares too. Due to its remarkable ripple effect, we have the power to spread joy and change the world. Keep smiling, because life is a beautiful thing and there's so much to smile about.

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The Art Of Expressing *Love*

Unveiling the power of love languages.

By Athira Raj

In the modern world, when words like situationship, benching, love bombing, etc. have taken over the dating scene, love has become a complicated concept to navigate. But at the same time, this complex overthinking and categorisation of love has helped us understand that the art of expressing love requires insight into the diverse ways we communicate our affection. In this exploration, we need to dive into the rich landscape of expressing love in various forms.



Sayani shares how her father, a single parent, used to pack her lunches for school with a lot of care. Despite his tight schedule, he ensured that he made her lunch in the morning. As a kid, she would stand right by him as he cut up the crusts from her sandwich. It was the fondest memory she has had of her father. So, growing up, whenever someone cooked for her, she knew that it was because they loved her enough to take the time to think of her and feed her.

Knowing our love language is important for one simple reason—going beyond just saying ‘I love you’ to show someone we care for them in the way they want. In the third month of her relationship with her boyfriend, Rhea started to question whether he really loved her. Ayaan would say that he loved her in every way possible. But she felt otherwise, as he seemed too busy for her at times. He would cancel plans with her if his friends needed

his attention. Doubts loomed in her head for long.

One day, he came over to meet her after almost a week. She was mad at him for not meeting her sooner. She accused him of not loving her. Despite his loud declarations of love, she wasn’t convinced. Finally, she blurted out, “How could you love me if you don’t even want to spend more time with me?” That’s when the reality hit Ayaan. She wasn’t convinced of his love because he had not been showing it the way she wanted. For her, spending more time together was an indication of love. Words would fail, but being present would do the magic.

There are certain ways of expressing love that speak to us the most. Gary Chapman, the person who first came up with the concept of love languages, divided expressions of love into five categories: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of

**GARY CHAPMAN
DIVIDED EXPRESSIONS
OF LOVE INTO FIVE
CATEGORIES: WORDS
OF AFFIRMATION,
QUALITY TIME,
RECEIVING GIFTS,
ACTS OF SERVICE,
AND PHYSICAL
TOUCH. IT SERVED
AS A ROADMAP TO
UNDERSTANDING
DIFFERENT WAYS
IN WHICH LOVE IS
COMMUNICATED.**

service, and physical touch. It served as a roadmap to understanding different ways in which love is communicated. Everyone has a different way of communicating love, and similarly, everyone has a different way they prefer to receive love.

A marriage therapist explains, “Discovering you and your partner’s primary love language and speaking that language regularly may create a better understanding of each other’s needs and support each other’s growth.” In other words, learning our partner’s love language can help us grow closer to them. It helps in building a more meaningful and healthy connection. When our partner or friend or family member complains about not feeling loved, despite our best efforts to show it, then it is probably because of a disconnect in the way we express our love and their love language.

For Sayani, cooking is an act of service that reassures her of love. It is reminiscent of her father’s memory and his unconditional love for her. So, when someone makes the effort to make a meal for her, it resonates deeply. It shows her that that person values her and wants to care for her.



Chapman described acts of services as “doing something for your spouse that you know they would like for you to do.” Cooking for someone, picking them up from the airport, folding their laundry, making them warm tea when they’re sick, etc all are acts that define our devotion to them. These meaningful actions have a profound impact on a relationship.

Ayaan’s eureka moment in his relationship was understanding the importance of quality time for his girlfriend. This love language is all about giving someone your undivided attention. It is not just being in each other’s company and doing something, but actively being present and talking to each other. Taking time out of our busy schedule to sit and share some time with someone goes on to show how much that person means to us. This is true not just for romantic relationships, but platonic and familial ones too. When we avoid distractions from phones, TV, work, etc, we get to truly connect with the other person and foster intimacy.

But it’s not just time and action that counts. Words can be an elixir in

relationships too and they have the power to uplift, transform and fortify emotional bonds. Verbal expressions of love are encouraging to us and it makes us feel appreciated. When our partner says “I love you” to us or compliments us, it puts us on top of the world.

Often in relationships, men don’t get enough verbal appreciation from their partner. Suresh, who has been married for eight years now, had trouble feeling loved by his family. He didn’t realise how much words of affirmation meant to him until he was in the pits of depression. During a marriage counselling session, his therapist finally found a way to make

FOR SOME, RECEIVING GIFTS IS A LOVE LANGUAGE, WHILE FOR OTHERS, IT IS PHYSICAL TOUCH. THE ACT OF GIFT-GIVING IS MAINLY ABOUT THE SENTIMENT BEHIND THE GIFT. IT IS ABOUT THOUGHTFUL AND CAREFUL CHOOSING OF AN ITEM THAT MIGHT MEAN SOMETHING TO THE OTHER PERSON.

him feel more appreciated. “Even though my wife loved me, she would never say it to me. She would cook my favourite meal, and accompany me to all my favourite events; she really went out of her way sometimes. But I felt that she was only doing it out of obligation. When she started saying ‘I love you’ more often, or expressing her love for me in words, it started working.”

For some, receiving gifts is a love language, while for others, it is physical touch. The act of gift-giving is mainly about the sentiment behind the gift. It is not just about material benefits. It is about thoughtful and careful choosing of an item that might mean something to the other person, showing how much we know them.

Physical connection is a primal force of intimacy, conveying emotions without the need for words. People with touch as their love language really value physical proximity like kissing, holding hands, cuddling, sex, etc. It can be incredibly affirming, making us feel safe and trusted. Being held can be very transformative and even reduce our stress levels.

The concept of love language has taken the internet by storm. It has become impossible to swipe through our phones without every third person telling us about their love language. “My love language is listening to old Hindi songs together”, “Ice cream is my love language”, “Napping together is a love language”, and so on. It is a never-ending list.

Love is multifaceted, so it can’t be confined to categories. So most of the time, in relationships, a combination of different love languages works. It is understood after exploring various expressions together through shared experiences. We need to respect the way each of us embraces love and the unique ways in which we show and receive love. So, let’s talk to our partner, friend, parent, or anyone we love, and figure out their love language so we can express our appreciation, the right way.





I AM A MOTHER TO A 2-YEAR-OLD SON and we are not happy with the traditional schooling system. My husband and I feel less and less confident about sending our kid to a school. I don't want my boy to feel pressurised all the time. What can we do?

It is understandable that you feel under confident about the traditional and mainstream school methods in our country. Many students feel holed up and pressured with the heavy syllabus and rote learning. But not to worry, there are many alternative schooling systems that you can consider. They focus mainly on developing your child's inner self and acquire rational thinking, reasoning, occupational skills rather than just dumping theory on them. Montessori and Steiner are some examples. There are plenty of schools across India that offer such education. You should research and google about such alternative schools and pay them a visit if necessary. Ask them all the queries you have and then make a decision.

MY 6-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER started school recently. Her teachers are saying that she isn't facing any issues in school and doesn't cry either. But the only problem is that she doesn't open up about her school much. I try to ask how her day at school was and she just replies in one-word answers. How can I get her to talk about school to me?

When kids are starting school, they can feel a little anxious about being in a new environment. It is important to build trust with your child. Start by asking open-ended questions that will not lead to a one-word answer. For example, "What's the best thing that happened in school today?" instead of "How was school?" You can also pitch

in some of your school experiences and prompt her to share her experience. You can talk about some special friend you had and then ask her if she has found anyone like that. Ask follow up questions. It will take a little gentle prodding for her to open up at first but eventually she will.

MY 13-YEAR-OLD SON HAS BEEN complaining of chest pains whenever he plays football. What could be the reason behind this? Could it be a serious heart issue? My sister has a weak heart too, so I am worried.

It is natural to worry when your child complains about chest pain, especially if a family member has a heart condition. Heart problems can cause chest pain but it is very rare that this pain is related to the heart as chest pains are common in youngsters. Most of the time it is not serious. Some of the causes of the pain could be from a pulled muscle or sports-related injury, pain due to asthma or infections like pneumonia or pleurisy. If the chest pain is caused by something serious, then it is usually accompanied by other signs, like fainting episodes. If your sister is the only family member to be born with a heart problem then your son is not at an increased risk of having such a problem. Get a checkup done by your doctor to ascertain the cause. In the meanwhile, your son should refrain from sports.

MY 8-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER wants to join the swimming club in her school. I want her to do more extra-curricular activities but I am worried whether swimming is a good and safe skill to teach at such a young age. What are the chances of her developing infections due to the pool water?

Learning how to swim at a young age is actually a valuable skill that will help her develop water safety skills and confidence in water. It will be a safe activity too. But there are some points you need to clarify before admitting her to the swimming club. Visit the school and check with them about the quality and hygiene of the pool. Ensure that the pool is cleaned regularly. Check the qualifications of the instructors. To avoid ear infections, consider investing in good ear plugs designed for swimming.

Your daughter should also avoid swimming if she has open wounds. Make sure your daughter takes a proper shower after swimming to rinse off any chemicals or contaminants from the pool. As long as you and the school maintain proper hygiene guidelines, then your daughter should definitely learn this important skill.

MY 9-YEAR-OLD CHILD IS A PICKY eater. What can I do to change that?

Dealing with a picky eater can be challenging but there are a few strategies you can try to encourage a more varied and balanced diet for your child. Do not push your child too much as picky eating is very common in children and it improves with time. Be patient with your child and continue offering different food without pressure. You should lead by example as children mimic their parents' eating habits. Show enthusiasm to try new food. Make mealtimes a pleasant and stress-free experience. Avoid pressuring or bribing your child to eat so they develop a positive association with food. If you offer a variety of food and in small portions, they will be more inclined towards trying it out. Involve your child in meal planning and preparation so they feel more interested in trying new foods. Stick to a routine for meals and snacks, and present the foods in fun, appealing ways.

It is important that you still respect your child's preferences while encouraging variety. As long as your child gets a small variety of food throughout the week, don't obsess over their day-to-day diets.



Eggs

In Delightful Desserts

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Chocolate Mousse



CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

INGREDIENTS

200g dark chocolate
3 large eggs, separated
¼ cup sugar
1 cup heavy cream

METHOD

Place a heatproof bowl over a pot of simmering water. Place the dark chocolate in the bowl and let it melt, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and let it cool slightly. In a separate bowl, beat the egg yolks with sugar until pale and fluffy. Add the melted chocolate and mix well. In another bowl, whip the heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Gently fold the whipped cream into the chocolate mixture. In a clean, dry bowl, whip the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold them into the chocolate mixture. Its texture would be silky smooth.

Refrigerate the mousse for a few hours before serving.

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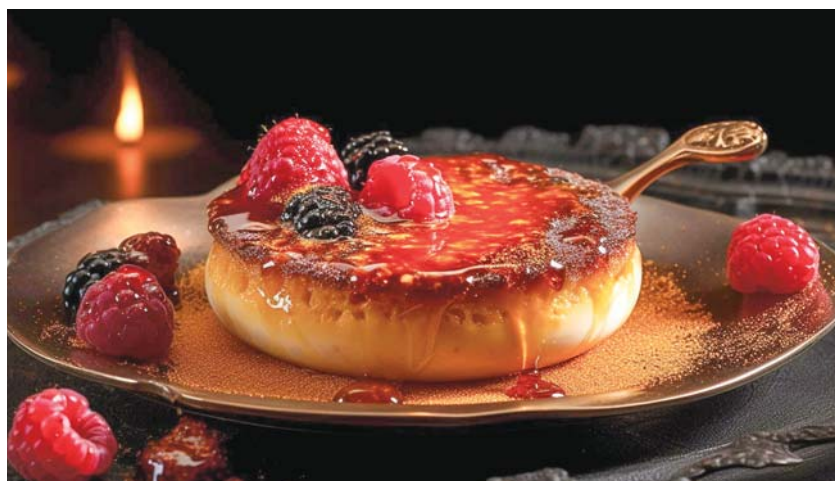
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Have you had an egg today?

SUNDAY HO YA MONDAY,
ROZ KHAO ANDE.





Crème Brûlée

CRÈME BRÛLÉE

INGREDIENTS

2 cups heavy cream
1 vanilla bean, split and seeds scraped
5 large egg yolks
½ cup sugar, plus extra for caramelizing

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 325°F (160°C).

In a saucepan, heat the cream and vanilla seeds until it begins to simmer. Remove from heat.

In a bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and sugar until well

combined. Slowly pour the warm cream into the egg mixture, whisking constantly. Strain the mixture to remove any solids. Pour into ramekins.

Place the ramekins in a baking dish filled with hot water. Bake until set but slightly jiggly in the centre. Chill the custards, then sprinkle a thin layer of sugar on top and caramelize with a torch before serving.

TIRAMISU

INGREDIENTS

6 large egg yolks
¾ cup sugar
1 cup mascarpone cheese
Ladyfingers
1 cup strong brewed coffee, cooled
Cocoa powder for dusting

METHOD

In a bowl, beat the egg yolks and sugar until thick and pale. Add the mascarpone and mix until smooth. Dip the ladyfingers into the brewed coffee and layer them in a dish.

Spread a portion of the mascarpone mixture over the ladyfingers. Repeat the layers and finish with a layer of the mascarpone mixture. Dust the top with cocoa powder. Refrigerate for a few hours before serving.

Tiramisu



**THE SECRET
BEHIND
THE STRONGEST OF
CAPTAINS.**



**NATIONAL
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**SUNDAY HO YA MONDAY
ROZ KHAÓ ANDE.**



Soufflé

SOUFFLÉ

INGREDIENTS

Butter and sugar for greasing
ramekins

3 tbsp butter

3 tbsp all-purpose flour

1 cup milk

4 large egg yolks

5 large egg whites

Pinch of cream of tartar

Sugar

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Grease the ramekins with butter and sugar. In a saucepan, make a roux by melting butter, adding flour, and gradually whisking in milk until smooth.

Beat egg yolks and add them to the roux. In a separate bowl, whip egg whites with cream of

tartar until stiff peaks form. Gently fold the egg whites into the yolk mixture. Fill the ramekins and bake immediately until risen and golden.

LEMON BARS

INGREDIENTS

1 cup all-purpose flour

½ cup unsalted butter, softened

¼ cup powdered sugar, plus extra
for dusting

2 large eggs

1 cup granulated sugar

2 tbsp all-purpose flour

½ tsp baking powder

2 tbsp fresh lemon juice

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease and flour a baking pan. In a bowl, mix the flour,

softened butter, and powdered sugar. Press into the prepared pan and bake until lightly golden.

In another bowl, beat the eggs. Add granulated sugar, flour, baking powder, and lemon juice. Mix well. Pour the lemon mixture over the baked crust. Bake until set. Dust with powdered sugar when cooled. This tangy dessert is best for picnics and brunch dates.

Lemon Bars



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Flan/Caramel Custard

FLAN/CARAMEL CUSTARD

INGREDIENTS

1 cup sugar
4 large eggs
2 cups milk
1 tsp vanilla extract

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). In a saucepan, melt sugar until it turns golden brown. Pour the caramel into a mold.

Pavlova



In a bowl, whisk eggs. Heat milk and gradually add it to the eggs while whisking. Add vanilla to the egg mixture. Strain the mixture into the caramel-coated mould. Bake in a water bath until the custard is set. Chill before serving.

PAVLOVA

INGREDIENTS

4 large egg whites
1 cup granulated sugar
1 tsp white vinegar
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 tbsp cornstarch
Whipped cream and fresh fruit for topping

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 300°F (150°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a clean, dry bowl, beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Gradually add sugar, vinegar, vanilla, and cornstarch. Spoon the meringue onto the prepared baking sheet, forming a nest.

Bake until crisp on the outside and marshmallow-like on the inside. Cool completely before topping with whipped cream and fresh fruit.

**STRENGTH AUR
TOUGHNESS KA
ASLI CAPTAIN**



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**SUNDAY HO YA MONDAY
ROZ KHAO ANDE.**



Bread Pudding

BREAD PUDDING

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups bread cubes
2 cups milk
¾ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
½ cup raisins (optional)

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a baking dish.

Place the bread cubes in the dish. In a bowl, mix milk, sugar, eggs, and vanilla. Pour over the bread. Add raisins if desired. Bake until the custard is set and the top is golden brown.

EGG TARTS

INGREDIENTS

1 sheet puff pastry
2 large eggs
1/3 cup granulated sugar
½ cup milk
½ tsp vanilla extract

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Grease tart moulds. Cut puff pastry into circles and place

Egg Tarts



them in the molds. In a bowl, whisk eggs, sugar, milk, and vanilla. Pour the mixture into the pastry. Bake until the filling is set and the pastry is golden brown.



Chocolate Lava Cake

CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKE

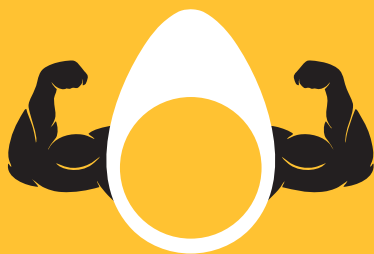
INGREDIENTS

½ cup unsalted butter
1 cup powdered sugar
2 large eggs
2 large egg yolks
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
4 oz dark chocolate, chopped

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Grease and flour ramekins. Melt butter and chocolate. Beat in sugar, eggs, yolks, and flour. Divide the batter into ramekins.

Bake until the edges are set but the center is soft. Serve immediately.



STRONG WORLD
NEEDS
STRONG FOOD

SUNDAY HO YA MONDAY, ROZ KHAO ANDE.



(Non-Government Public Charitable Trust)



Macarons

MACARONS

INGREDIENTS

1 ¾ cups powdered sugar
1 cup almond flour
3 large egg whites
¼ cup granulated sugar
Filling of your choice (e.g., ganache, buttercream)

METHOD

Preheat your oven to 300°F (150°C) and line baking sheets with parchment paper. Sift together the powdered sugar and almond flour to ensure a smooth macaron shell.

In a clean, dry bowl, beat the egg whites until foamy. Gradually add granulated sugar, continuing to beat until stiff peaks form. Gently fold the sifted dry ingredients into the egg whites until just combined. Be careful not to overmix.

Transfer the batter to a piping bag and pipe small circles onto the prepared baking sheets. Let the piped macarons sit at room temperature for about 20-30 minutes to form a skin.

Eggnog Cheesecake



Bake for 15-20 minutes or until the macarons have developed “feet” and are set. Cool completely. Pair similar-sized macaron shells and fill with your favorite filling, such as ganache or buttercream.

EGGNOG CHEESECAKE

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
½ cup melted butter
4 packages (8 oz each) cream cheese, softened
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup eggnog
4 large eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract

METHOD

Preheat your oven to 325°F (163°C). Grease a 9-inch springform pan. Mix graham cracker crumbs with melted butter and press into the bottom of the pan to form the crust. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Add sugar and mix until well combined.

Incorporate eggnog, eggs, and vanilla extract into the cream cheese mixture. Mix until smooth.

Pour the batter over the crust and smooth the top with a spatula. Bake for about 55-60 minutes or until the centre is set. Allow the cheesecake to cool before refrigerating. Chill for several hours or overnight before serving.

We



STRENGTH KA ASLI CAPTAIN

SUNDAY HO YA MONDAY ROZ KHAO ANDE.



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Edible Masterpieces

The art of sculpted fruits and veggies.

By Renuka Krishnaraja

Food carving is an art form in which ordinary fruits and veggies get transformed into fascinating animal and bird figures, ornate flowers, iconic human images, interesting geometric patterns, aesthetic motifs, imaginary depictions, and many more creative elements. Honestly, these exquisite edible wonders have to be seen to be believed. Kudos to the artistic chefs! Seems like things come alive in their skillful hands. It's like a feast for the eyes as well as the palate.

The sculpted pieces are meticulously aligned to create a culinary showpiece that's appetising as well as eye-catching. Such an array of food art naturally turns out to be the focal point of any grand wedding, corporate event, party or reception. The sheer beauty brings joy to the foodies, art lovers and even onlookers, who pause for a while to take a subtle glance and admire its

dexterity. Each hand-carved piece is an edible work of art, quite often too good to be eaten. And behind every single one, there lies hours of precision and probably years of perseverance from an artist's stance.

Evidently, food carving is an intricate, expressive form of art. As we've seen in general, the good old watermelon happens to be an all-time favorite among fruit carvers for obvious reasons. Being large in size, it provides more room to work on. Also, the bright, contrasting layers of green, white and red pop out gorgeously with carving that ensures an exemplary outcome. Pumpkin, squash, melon and pineapple are

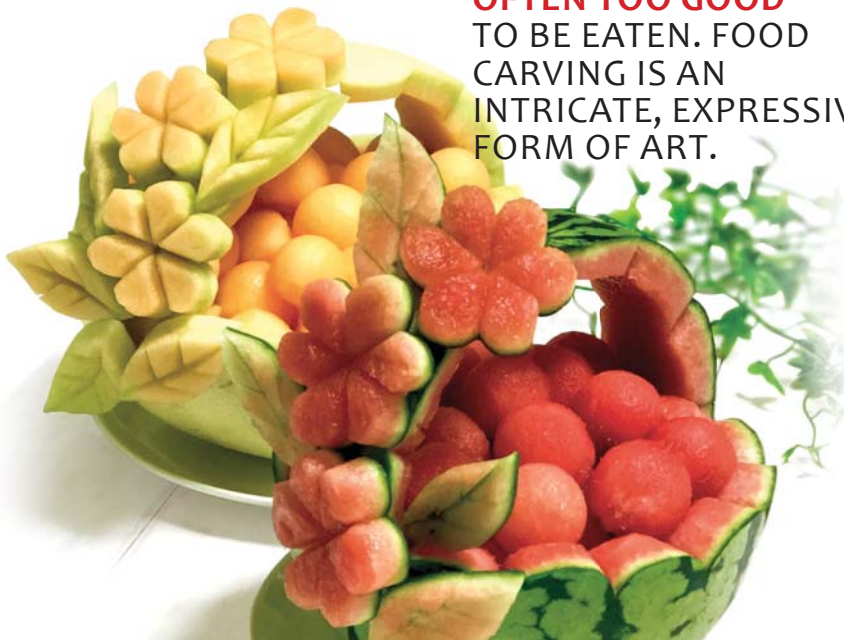


some of the other preferred sizable fruits. Among the smaller ones, tomato, cucumber, radish, turnip, onion, carrot, beetroot, strawberry, banana and avocado are commonly used.

Not just these, any vegetable or fruit that is firm and fresh can be chiseled into exquisite artwork. Besides a certain flair for the craft and loads of patience and practice, what's needed by the fruit artist is the toolkit that includes sharp stainless-steel knives and handheld blades specific for the purpose. Depending upon the end product, carving can be confined merely to the skin of the fruit, or can delve deeper into its core where the object picks up a vivid, three-dimensional character.

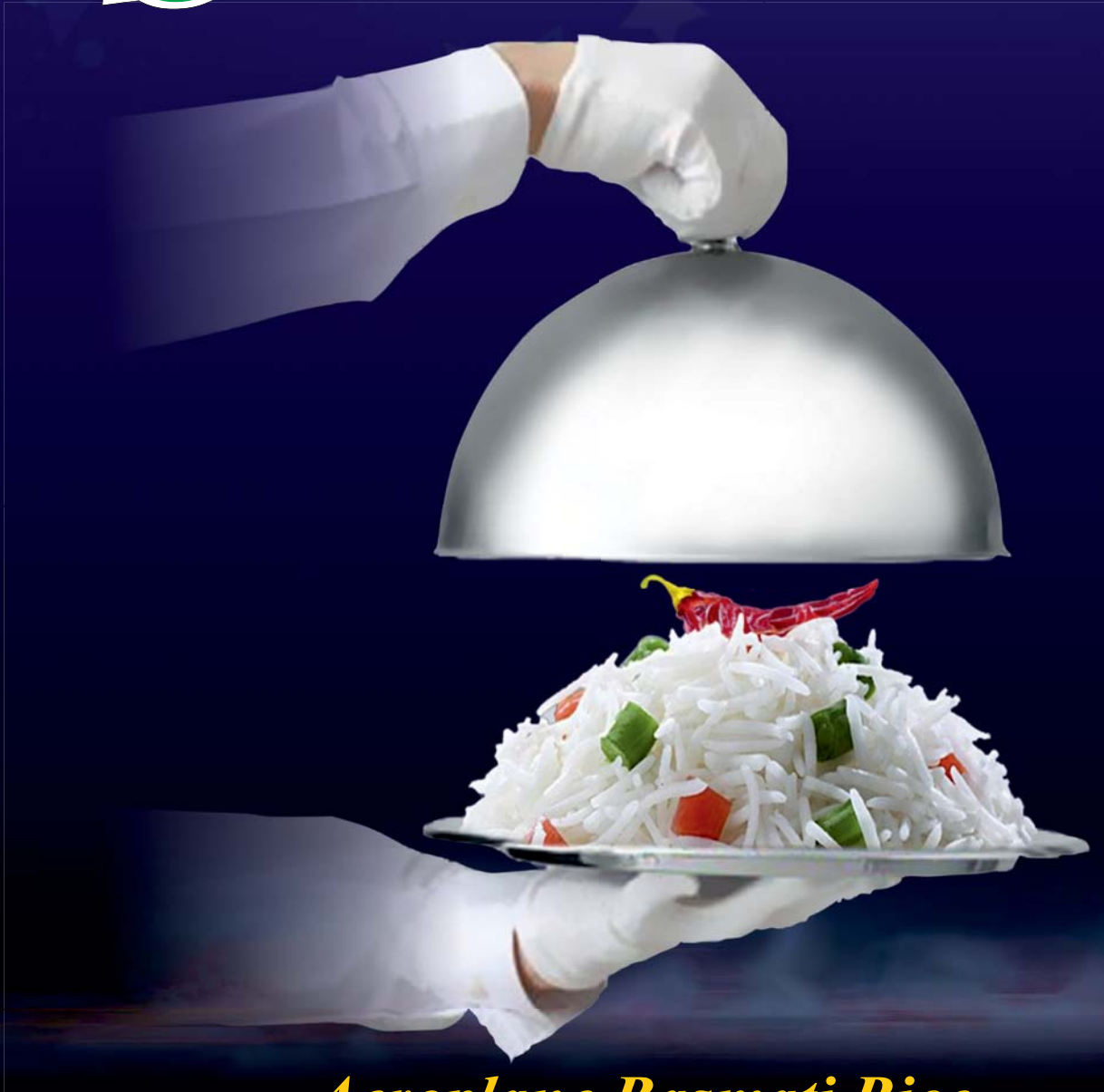
Contemporary food art exhibits are in vogue globally, but in some nations, it is part of an age-old tradition. In Japan, China and Thailand, decorative food carving and garnishing have been conventionally performed since centuries. The well-trained, proficient chefs from these regions are some of the world's best in this realm. They duly uphold their time-honoured legacy with great pride. What apparently began long ago as a humble attempt to make the food platter look more appealing has evolved into an enormously elegant craft in recent times. It has become an essential aspect of a chef's curriculum. With their imagination and handiwork, the artistic chefs have been consistently striving to raise the bar.

**EACH HAND-CARVED
PIECE IS AN EDIBLE
WORK OF ART, QUITE
OFTEN TOO GOOD
TO BE EATEN. FOOD
CARVING IS AN
INTRICATE, EXPRESSIVE
FORM OF ART.**





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The Royal Realm

The kings and queens amongst us.
By DP Sabharwal

After being king for 31 years, Emperor Akihito abdicated what is claimed to be more than 2100 years old Chrysanthemum Throne and his son, Naruhito, became the new emperor on 1 May 2019 from world's oldest royal family. Akihito has been the first Japanese emperor in more than 200 years to abdicate his throne as the last time it happened was in 1817. As per Japanese law, the emperors rule for life. However, a few years ago Akihito had given a hint about abdication citing his advancing age and the toll that his tough daily schedule was taking on his health.

Taking a cue from the Emperor, the Japanese Parliament passed a one-time exception, allowing Akihito to retire. This unique, once-in-a-life time event became more interesting and note-worthy for another reason.

New Emperor Naruhito's wife was not permitted to attend the ceremony as per an Imperial Household Law. The same law also forbids the female children born into the family to ascend the throne. This in no doubt, highlights the diminished status of women in the monarchy. However, there is no denying women's power in the present-day scenario. Call it a quirk of fate, the ascension ceremony was indeed watched by a female: Satsuki Katayama, the sole woman minister in the Japanese cabinet, a privilege denied to Emperor's wife!

The actions and deeds (as well as the misdeeds) of kings and queens always make a fabulous story. There is an interesting dialogue by Lewis Carroll in his famous book, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, depicting what exactly they are (and how powerful), "Alice said 'Let us pretend we are kings and queens.' Her sister, who liked to be exact and precise, argued that they could not, because there were only two of them, to which Alice replied, 'Well, you can be one of them then, and I'll be the rest.'"

The Future Monarchs

Kings and queens, however, do not exist in stories alone. Even today, they are amidst us in every part of the globe. Out of 206 nation states in the world, there are 45 monarchies (where a single person holds supreme authority in ruling that country), that includes the Vatican City State, whose head is the Pope. It is interesting to note that out of these monarchies there are 18 that are ruled by Queens, while in quite a few monarchies the designation varies like Emperor (Japan), Emir (Qatar), President (United Arab Emirates) and Sultan (Brunei).

British Monarchy, though not very old, is equally interesting. Queen Elizabeth II ascended the throne in



Emperor Naruhito



Emperor Akihito



King Charles III



King Edward VIII
(from *The Crown*)



Prince Philip
Queen Elizabeth II



KINGS AND QUEENS, HOWEVER, DO NOT EXIST IN STORIES ALONE. EVEN TODAY, THEY ARE AMIDST US IN EVERY PART OF THE GLOBE. OUT OF 206 NATION STATES IN THE WORLD, THERE ARE 45 MONARCHIES (WHERE A SINGLE PERSON HOLDS SUPREME AUTHORITY IN RULING THAT COUNTRY), THAT INCLUDES THE VATICAN CITY STATE, WHOSE HEAD IS THE POPE.

1952 and held the record for being the oldest and longest-reigning monarch, until she died in 2022. Prince Charles III was 74 years old when he changed over from being heir apparent to be the king. Till amended in 2011, succession laws were in favour of male children since sons, even if younger, would get the throne before daughters. Another law dated from the Act of Settlement 1701, that was changed recently, was that 'future monarchs' would no longer be prohibited from marrying a Roman Catholic or a commoner. It was because of such a rule that King Edward VIII had to abdicate the throne in 1932, after ruling for less than a year when he decided to marry Simpson, an American divorcee. Come to think of it, living was not so easy even for kings!

Pomp and show notwithstanding, the life of Royals seems to go through the rigamarole of common people in many ways. Diana, Princess of Wales got married to Prince Charles, the claimant to the British

AFTER THE HAND-SHAKE, PRINCE PHILIP, HUSBAND OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II EXPLAINED, "MY WIFE IS A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY. SHE IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN I."

throne. Her 15-years old marriage ended in divorce, involving well-publicised extra-marital affairs by both the parties. Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II gave a glimpse of his daily life during a visit to an Australian University where he was introduced to a couple identified as 'Mr & Dr Robinson'. After the hand-shake, the husband explained, "My wife is a doctor of philosophy. She is much more important than I," to which Prince Philip sympathetically replied, "Ah, yes. We have that trouble in our family too."

I never got any chance to come

within hand-shaking distance or rub the proverbial shoulders with any king or queen, but was involved in matters of a king and a queen! It happened a long time back during my Air Force days, when we were welcoming a newly married couple. As was customary, to make the new bride feel a part of the squadron crowd, she was made the centre of attraction and was involved in many games and interactions. After an hour or so when she was feeling comfortable, one of the ladies asked her one last a seemingly simple question. When asked what her first sentence to her husband on their first night was, instead of being coy or shy, her response was confident and straight forward, "Keep me like a queen... if you wish to live like a king." Over the years, I lost track of the couple and don't know whether they really lived like a queen and king, but her simple sentence had a lot of substance and I never fail to tell the same to all newly-weds that I come across.

We



APPU, OUR SON

My most unforgettable memory as a bride was on the day of our wedding. My husband had a five-year-old son when I married him. Everyone called him Appu. But his son was very shy and didn't like talking to me initially. I was worried he wouldn't like me.

On our wedding day, Appu wasn't speaking much at first. But I heard him whisper to his grandmother that the bride looked

beautiful. After the wedding, my husband and I, along with Appu, were escorted to his house in a car. But since we were early and the auspicious time to enter my new home was still an hour away, we decided to wait by a beautiful riverside. Just then, Appu jumped out of the car and said, we should take pictures. He made us stand near the bank while he took our pictures. The pictures came out lovely and as a thank you, I reached out my palm for a high-five. To my delight, he gave me a high-five. When we entered the car again, he started talking about his home and how I would like it there. I was finally making progress with him. I was so happy.

-Madhavi Rao

THE CAKE

When we were planning our wedding, I remember my fiancé making a joke about smearing the cake on my face when we cut our wedding cake. I furiously told him

not to do that, and he agreed. But as the wedding approached, I was sceptical. I asked him again and again. He used to chuckle and say okay. That made me doubt him more. But he did come through with his promise.

After a fun wedding, we finally entered our room and I went to freshen up. It took me an hour to change into my night dress and remove my makeup and let my hair down.

Then as I opened the bathroom door, an entire cake was squished into my face. I heard peels of laughter that sounded menacingly like my husband. "You kept saying don't smear the cake so much in the past week that I just had to do it. I thought this would be the perfect time." When I finally managed to look at him, he was on the floor, laughing. Something about it made me start laughing too. Soon, we were both on the floor laughing!

-Jeena Mathew



MY MOTHER IS EXTREMELY suspicious of my father. Being the eldest daughter of almost 30, she considers me her confidante and tells me everything. But now, she is trying to employ me to snoop around in my father's phone for evidence of his adultery. I feel I would be disrespecting my father if I do this. How do I make my mother understand that I do not want to be in the middle of this?

It is valid that you do not want to be in the middle of a conflict between your parents. You are a grown woman with your own problems and life, and no matter how old you are, possible adultery by your father can be triggering. It is understandable that you do not want to be a part of this.

But, considering your mother looks at you as her confidante and probably needs some support during a very hard time, you can talk to her. Tell her that you are there to support her through whatever happens, but also make it clear that you can't snoop around your father's phone since you do not want to violate that boundary. As a daughter, you need to respect both your parents. Whatever problems arise between them, it is their responsibility to sort it out. You can help them towards that direction and urge them to be honest with each other. But other than that, you should not be more involved as it might affect you badly.

MY FRIEND IS GOING THROUGH A major crisis in her life. For a few weeks, she had not been talking and meeting me properly. It had started to build some resentment in me towards her because we did not know what was going on in each other's lives. Now, she texted me that she was going through a crisis and that's why she wasn't talking. I felt horrible because I could have been

there for her and helped her but she just kept me in the dark and handled it on her own. Why are we friends if we don't even share our problems with each other?

Your friend might not be the kind who likes to bother others with her problems and probably ends up isolating herself whenever she is going through a rough patch. It may not be because of any lack of love for you but just how they function. It could be deep rooted in the kind of environment they were raised in, etc. Before blaming her, try to understand why she is acting distant. You could also discuss this with her. Ask if she feels like she cannot trust you or if there is any way you can improve to make her open up to you. You can ask her how she would like you to support her whenever she goes through such phases.

Your resentment is coming from a place of worry and the first way to avoid that is to trust that your friend is capable of handling any issue. But you need to clearly let her know that she should approach you for help without any hesitation. It is common for friends to doubt the friendship at times, but reflecting on it helps you find ways to improve it.

MY FRIEND'S FATHER PASSED away recently. He has been going through a hard time trying to cope with the loss. All of his family and friends and extended relatives have been bombarding them with messages and support, but I feel he wants to get away from all this. How do I help my friend get through this difficult time?

The best way you can be there for your friend going through a major loss is to let them deal with the loss on their own terms. Being surrounded by so many grieving family and friends

will be overwhelming for them anyway and all you can do is be there for them physically and emotionally whenever they need. Ask them to reach out for any sort of help or support. You should be a shoulder to cry on for now. They might not want to talk about it right away so give them time. During moments like this, they will be focused on being there for their family so you should check up on them and take care of them. It will take a lot of time, but they will eventually come to accept what has happened. You can also refer them to a counsellor or a therapist or a grief support group when they feel more open to receiving help.

MY FATHER HAS BEEN HAVING trouble trying to occupy his time post his retirement. He has been so used to working that he is unable to sit idle now. He keeps trying to find some new business venture or hobby to pursue. Recently, he started helping my mother out in the kitchen and both of them have been working on recipes together. They make amazing food and so, I suggested that they open a small bakery in our hometown to keep them busy. But my father feels a little ashamed about shifting to a bakery after working in the army for almost forty years. What do I do to show him that there's no shame in doing what you love?

You can help him open up to the idea of doing what he loves by making him watch movies with you and sending him articles on related topics. For example, any movies where the male protagonist likes to cook or is a chef will be a good way to show him that he can also do it. He needs to understand that times have changed; men no longer need to be stoic and stuck to traditional gender roles. If he doesn't listen to words, try showing him through other mediums. You can also watch *Masterchef* shows together where a number of chefs are men. In fact, remind him about how many men in the army are fond of cooking and there is no shame in expanding this love into a business venture. With the support of his family, he will surely open up to the idea of doing something he enjoys.

Springs Of Grandeur

Fountains around the world that stole my heart.

By Rameshinder Singh Sandhu



Merlion fountain, the national symbol of Singapore.

Water is precious but I always feel it is fountains which celebrate water, with all their joy and zeal. Having lived in Europe for three years, based in one of its most charming pockets of Switzerland for higher studies, I came across many historic fountains, especially in its old towns. Like many locals and visitors, I often stood or sat near them, and glanced around freely and deeply. Within minutes, I felt a blanket of tranquility all over me, followed by a flow of many epiphanies.

When I returned from a trip to Paris, where I had solely focused unfortunately on the Eiffel Tower, a professor of mine kept asking why I missed exploring the many centuries' old fountains. "Paris has several hundreds of fountains and mostly the world's very beautiful," when he told me this, I was fraught with regrets. But luckily during my visit to Geneva, I didn't miss its landmark fountain



The landmark fountain, Jet d'Eau in Geneva.

—Jet d'Eau, which rather became my companion during every visit to the Swiss–French city.

Located right on Lake Geneva, it's the highest pump of water I have ever seen, and it flies in the air up to 140 metres (460 feet), which can be seen from anywhere in the city. During my walks in the city, it had become a ritual to catch it from different streets, often making me feel as if it followed me.

During my first ever foreign trip, to Singapore, way back in the summer of 2006, it was Merlion fountain—the national symbol of Singapore—which excited us all. After all, it had the body of a fish and face of the lion, with water spouting from its mouth. We went on taking many pictures, and it remained an arduous task to bid it adieu, as it made us feel so welcomed in Singapore.

Interestingly, there are also many fountains that were built to welcome someone special. One such fountain can be found right as you step into the lobby of the State Legislature of Alberta in Edmonton, which was installed in 1959 to mark the visit of Queen Elizabeth II. Bathed in Beau–Arts, I waited around it for my guide to arrive to take the legislature tour. As I was lost in its charm, my guide was quick to comment, "Even the Queen who was here in 1959 got beguiled by it."

The same year, when the same queen visited Chicago, her tour commenced with a fountain, not only for its grandeur but also for its back story. Fortunately, I skirted the same fountain, three summers back, oblivious to the fact that it would remind me of my home country's Raksha Bandhan. Known as the Clarence Buckingham Memorial Fountain, it was donated to the city in 1927 by Kate Buckingham in the memory of her late brother, Clarence, who also admired fountains like her. As per many Chicago historians, she used most of her money on it, and had hired the best sculptors and designers of the world, giving the world a unique example of love between a brother and a sister. And standing in front of it, I couldn't hold back from filling the Chicago air with the story of Raksha Bandhan! **We**



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A KINSHIP MYSTERY

Enigmatic tale of two brothers. By Dr Veena Adige

"Are you twins?"
To which they replied
automatically, "No, we
are not. We are
brothers."

The Headmistress, Madam Rao, stared at the two birth certificates and muttered, "I can't believe this."

The certificates belonged to Nakul and Nachiket Kini, two new students of third standard who had joined just a month back. Their father had taken up a new job and they had shifted to Bangalore from Delhi.

Since they were in the same standard, the inevitable question was "Are you twins?" To which they replied automatically, "No, we are not. We are brothers."

Nakul was a sports lover and outgoing while Nachiket was an introvert. Appearance-wise they were healthy and tall for their eight years age. They had a faint resemblance to each other but that was all.

Madam Rao spoke to the class teacher and she too was puzzled. Nakul was January born while Nachiket's birthday was in May of the same year. How was it possible? Hence, they searched and got the birth certificates.

"Nakul Kini, son of Ramesh Kini and Shanta Kini. Nachiket, son of R Kini and S Kini."

Were they products of IVF, born five months apart? But their birth weight was normal. So what was the secret? The puzzle? The mystery? The teacher and the Principal did not want to pry but they were definitely curious.

When they looked for their transfer certificates from Delhi, they saw that the boys had gone to different schools, though the home address was the same and so were the names of the parents. "This is getting more and more



mysterious," they said.

They befriended the boys and spoke to them. But the boys were normal and answered all questions sincerely. They were brothers in every sense of the word.

The days passed and there was nothing unusual in their behaviour.

On the Parents Day, the Headmistress could not control herself. She asked the Kinis to stay put after all other parents had left.

"I know this is a very personal question, but I am really curious about Nachiket and Nakul. They have birthdays just five months apart. How is it possible?"

The Kinis looked at each other. They had expected this question. As long as the boys were in different schools in Delhi, it posed no difficulty. But in Bangalore, when they were in the same

class in the same school, the mystery had erupted.

"It is no mystery, Madam," said Mr Kini, "One of the boys is adopted. His father, my brother, died before he was born. We all lived together and brought up the boys as brothers."

"Oh," said Madam Rao, "Who is the adopted one? And where is his mother?"

"We have been sworn into secrecy not to reveal who is the adopted one," said Shanta. "Even the boys do not know it. At eight years, they have not asked the question on having their birthdays in the same year."

"And the mother?"

"She is my sister," said Shanta, "We all lived together as one family. Then, she fell in love with a very suitable person and married him. But he did not want a ready-made son; that was the only hitch. We held a family discussion, sent the boys to their

On the Parents Day, the Headmistress could not control herself.

"I know this is a very personal question, but I am really curious about Nachiket and Nakul. They have birthdays just five months apart. How is it possible?"

grandparents while she got married and left the country. She was definitely very sad but knew that her son would have the same love and affection as ours. So, she made us promise never to reveal the secret, even to the children. She also decided she would never contact any of us so that the secret would be safe."

Mr Kini continued, "The kids were three years old and already admitted to different schools so we let it continue till we came

here. We told them that she had gone away and after a few months they got over it. After all, we treat them equally so they are happy."

"This is getting curiousest and curiousest," said the Headmistress.

"Have you thought of the future? If they decide to undergo a DNA test to find out the truth?"

"It will not matter; they have the same genes. We two brothers married two sisters. So ideally, the genes will be the same," said Mr Kini with a smile.

"I am still curious to know who is the real one and who is the adopted one?" she continued.

"No, that will never be revealed. Only we and my parents know, and we are all sworn to secrecy."

So, the mystery still remained a mystery. Only the story was unique and enigmatic, and would never come out.

We



HUMAN DOMINO

I was already exhausted from my job. On the way back, the Metro was also late. After five minutes of waiting, the Metro finally came. After a lot of pushing and pulling, I was able to get on the coach.

On top of the crowded mess, where none of us had any space to even breathe, the driver was running the Metro very erratically. We were swinging forward and backward constantly. But then came the next

station, and the Metro came to a screeching halt. This time, none of us were able to hold on and like dominoes, fell on top of each other. When the Metro door opened, the onlookers saw a pile of human beings struggling to get up. It wasn't even my stop, but I decided to get off and take a cab instead of enduring this mess.

— Shreya Prasad

THE MISSING LADDER

My neighbourhood friends used to get together after school and play football. Towards the end the day, we used to sit on the terrace of one of our houses. Using a ladder, we used to climb up on the higher platform on the terrace, from where the view was undeniably beautiful.

One such night, on the last day of our summer vacation, we decided to spend a little more time on the terrace. We climbed up the ladder

with snacks and drinks. Then when it was time to go home, we turned around and to our shock, the ladder was missing! We had no way to go back down! We were stuck. Back then, we didn't have mobile phones either. We had to wait till someone discovered us. Night started falling quickly and we panicked.

Finally, after an hour or two, we noticed some commotion downstairs. Our family had started to worry about our absence and had come out to look for us. We started screaming, hoping to catch their attention. Then we started throwing the snack wrappers and empty bottles down. Finally, someone noticed and they came to rescue us. We still don't know who kept the ladder away or whether it fell on its own, but the funny thing is we didn't notice and ended up having the most memorable night of our lives.

— Ira Ranjan

Personal Problems

Q & A



I AM A 34-YEAR-OLD WOMAN AND have been married to my husband for 7 years. There is one quality of his that has been irking me ever since we got married. He has a habit of impulsively lying. He used to lie as a joke or a prank, but sometimes it got into serious matters. One time, I was waiting for an important letter from a company I had applied to and when I asked him if the postman had delivered it, he said 'no'. Then I found the letter in the pile. When I asked him about it, he said he was just joking. I do not understand this behaviour sometimes. I have put up with it for so long but now I fear my 5-year-old might learn to lie from him. What do I do about this?

Lying as a form of joke or a prank are only funny up to a point. If it is seriously affecting your marriage and the trust in your husband, then it is time that you put a stop to it. Your husband's constantly lying will not only negatively affect your relationship but also you might not be able to tell when he's being truthful. Moreover, your lack of trust in him will also make you doubt his loyalty at one point. So, it is better if you talk to him and ask him to stop lying constantly. Share your concerns and the impact his lying has on you. Clearly communicate how his lies make you feel, especially when it involves serious matters. Let him know that you understand his intention is not to hurt you but that it has taken an emotional toll on you. Make it clear that while you love his sense of humour and appreciate his love for jokes and pranks, this might also potentially teach your kid the wrong habit. Your common priority should be parenting your child the right way. If your child inculcates the habit of lying at such a young age, then it can be concerning and harder to rectify in the future.

Try and find out the cause for his

habit of lying. Ask him why he engages in such behaviour. Understanding the underlying reason is crucial to finding a solution. He will not stop lying immediately since it has become a habit for him. It will take time and so, you need to have patience. It is important that you discuss this issue with empathy and try to understand each other's point of view. If your husband is open to changing, then it will bring a positive change in your life. If the lying persists, then you need to set a very clear boundary about not lying. You can consider seeking professional help to address this issue.

I AM A 29-YEAR-OLD WOMAN AND gave birth to a beautiful baby boy about two years ago. My husband and I had an arranged marriage. I have been extremely unhappy in this marriage. He was sweet when we met before the wedding, but just a month into our union, I started realising that he is not a good man. He is aggressive and has a lot of issues. He started blaming me for him not having a social life anymore and not being physically fit anymore. It did not make any sense as I never stopped him from hanging out with his friends or going to parties. I did not even pressure him into spending time with me because I never liked his company. He also says that I am bad at sex and can't handle him. I feel constantly put down. But when my son was born, he did a complete 180. He became more caring. But I fear that this is only for his son and when he grows up, he is going to start treating me badly again. What should I do?

It can be very challenging and disappointing to find yourself in a marriage like this that takes a heavy emotional toll on you. It is important that you prioritise your and your son's well-being. Your husband's behaviour is clearly affecting you mentally and even though your husband seems more caring after the birth of your son, it is completely valid for you to be sceptical of your husband's intentions. His nice manners may not last forever. So you need to be careful. If you feel safe and comfortable, you should consider talking to your husband about your concerns and suggest seeking the

assistance of a couple's counsellor. But do so only if you think he will listen and not lash out.

It is important that you make it clear to your husband that you won't tolerate any disrespectful or aggressive behaviour. Tell him that a healthy relationship is based on mutual respect. Ask him to take into account the impact it will have on your son. See if his change in manner is genuine or just a fake.

Surround yourself with friends and family who will support you and will take your side. Having people to talk to and lean on can be very beneficial and it will also give you the courage to take action whenever necessary. If you ever feel unsafe around your husband, immediately reach out to a friend or family. It will be a good idea to consult a lawyer and seek some legal advice to understand your rights and options. Also, keep a record of any incidents that make you uncomfortable or raise concerns. This will be useful in case you feel the need to take any legal action of any sort. You should think about whether you believe that your relationship with your husband will improve. If the issues persist and you can't seem to shake the feeling of distress, then you may need to consider serious options like separation.

Remember to focus on yourself, build hobbies and attend events that bring you joy, seek therapy for yourself to help with these emotions. In the end, your decision is yours.

●

I AM A 37-YEAR-OLD WOMAN AND have three children, one of them was born this year. I am very used to taking care of newborns and my husband is very supportive in taking care of the children. But recently, I have become very conscious of my body. I have a saggy stomach and stretch marks. I feel very under-confident in clothes I used to look good in. I don't know how to get that confidence back. I barely have time to work out and I am tired most of the time.

It is completely normal for women to feel self-conscious about their bodies after giving birth. It is important to understand that your body goes through a lot of change

due to childbirth. Saggy skin and stretchmarks are very normal. So it is crucial that you prioritise self-care and learn to love yourself during this period. You need to start being kinder to yourself. Your body has gone through three pregnancies and the changes you see in your body are a result of you bringing new life into the world. It is a natural thing to happen and it does not diminish your beauty or worth.

You don't have to try and fit into old clothes, find clothes that are more comfortable. Comfortable clothes can also be stylish, it depends on how you make it work. You should also focus on celebrating your small achievements throughout the day, even if you take a few minutes out just for yourself. Try to outsource some of the housework so you can get some free time for yourself. You can meditate, do yoga and exercise during this time. But your focus should be on improving your mental well-being as physical activity releases endorphins. Your body will become fit eventually but do not hyper fixate on it as it will negatively impact you. Eat properly and get your nutrition.

Consider speaking to a friend, family member or a professional about your concerns. They can help you work through your body image issues and build confidence. Regaining confidence is a process and it's okay to take small steps. Embrace the changes in your body and work towards a more positive mindset over time.

●

I AM A 48-YEAR-OLD WOMAN AND MY husband is turning 50 this year. Our kids left home a year ago for their own careers, so now it is just us in this big house. My husband goes to work, leaving me alone in the house. It gets lonely even when I try to immerse myself in housework. I don't know how to deal with this. I spend some time with the neighbours and the house help but only for a few hours. I miss the time when our house used to be busy with kids and my husband.

When you devote a major chunk of your life to taking care of your family, it is natural that an empty nest can bring feelings of loneliness

and a sense of loss. But on the bright side, this is the time you can use to focus on yourself. The options and possibilities are endless, especially when there is a lot of free time. You can reconnect with your hobbies that you may have set aside for family, or you can actively learn new hobbies. You can also consider getting involved in some volunteer work or community activities. These are great ways to find a sense of purpose in life again. You can also create a new routine for yourself by inculcating exercise into your life. Even just going for a walk will do loads for your mental well-being.

This is a great time for you and your husband to reconnect. Plan day outs, activities or travels together. Imagine how great it will be to go exploring new places with your hubby and without the burden of taking care of children. Talk to your children and ask them to stay connected with you regularly. This is a phase of significant transition for you, it's normal to have a lot of mixed emotions during this time. But you can turn this into a fulfilling and enjoyable chapter in your life.



The Grand Privilege

Welcoming the joy of being a granny.

By Rama Kashyap



When you hold a new born in your arms, you can't help but marvel at universe's creation, and when the baby is your own grandchild, it's a feeling that can hardly be expressed in words. You are in a sea of emotions—amazement, elation, gratitude, all rolled in one. The moment you see the baby, there is a gush of love like no other. It's an instant deep connection.

There were tears in my eyes when I was returning home after spending a week with the new born, my first grandchild. During the flight from Delhi to Chandigarh, my little angel's picture kept flashing across my mind. I had a sinking feeling of leaving a piece of my heart behind. I was reminded of my mother in a similar state, when she had come to visit during my delivery more than three decades ago. She got so attached to the baby in a few days that she left crying. I can't help but also talk about the beautiful bond that my sons, especially the younger one, shared with my mother-in-law. Ever since he opened his eyes, his grandparents were around to shower him with their boundless love. Unfortunately, my mother-in-law passed away two years after his birth, but the kind of understanding and rapport the *dadi* and the kiddo enjoyed had to be seen to be believed. I would leave him at home with his *dadi* when I went for my duty. Due to her health issues, my mother-in-law could not carry the baby but he never troubled his *dadi*. Once he started walking, he

would pick up the milk bottle from the kitchen shelf and walk with her to the bed. She would remove his pants and he went on his own to the bathroom to pee before lying down with her. He would sleep holding her arm. My eyes well up as I recall this routine.

'*Mool se byaz pyara*,' I must have heard this adage umpteen times that interest is dearer than the principal in the context of the love grandparents have for their grandchildren. But I could never fathom its true meaning

GRANDKIDS ARE UNIVERSE'S WAY OF COMPENSATING YOU FOR GROWING OLD AND FACING ITS CHALLENGES. WHEN YOU BEGIN TO FEEL LISTLESS, GRANDKIDS FILL YOUR LIFE WITH JOYFUL ENERGY.

until I became a granny myself. It is only now that I fully understand what a blessing it is to have grandkids—an absolute bliss to see them achieve milestones and grow.

However, I don't think the arrival of grandkids diminishes the love for your own children, but the little ones are really special, and simply adorable. In fact, nothing seems more precious to the grandparents than the tiny fellows trot around the house. Grandkids are universe's way of compensating you for growing old

and facing its challenges. When you begin to feel listless, grandkids fill your life with joyful energy, providing you with the most enriching experience. Free from the stress of parenthood, you relive your kids' childhood. Now that you have all the time, you can soak in every moment.

I feel the arrival of my *nanshipari* has filled a space in my heart that I never knew was empty. She has brought a new wave of excitement—a magic in my mundane life. There is spring in my steps and a song in my heart. I find myself singing nursery rhymes, enjoying cartoons, doing things which have long been of no interest to me. The sight of birdies, butterflies, dogs and cats have become joyful as I see spark in her eyes. In fact, I am surprised at the depth of my feelings and emotions. Her tentative baby steps are most endearing, and incoherent talk most pleasing to my ears. Her innocent smiles and giggles delight my heart.

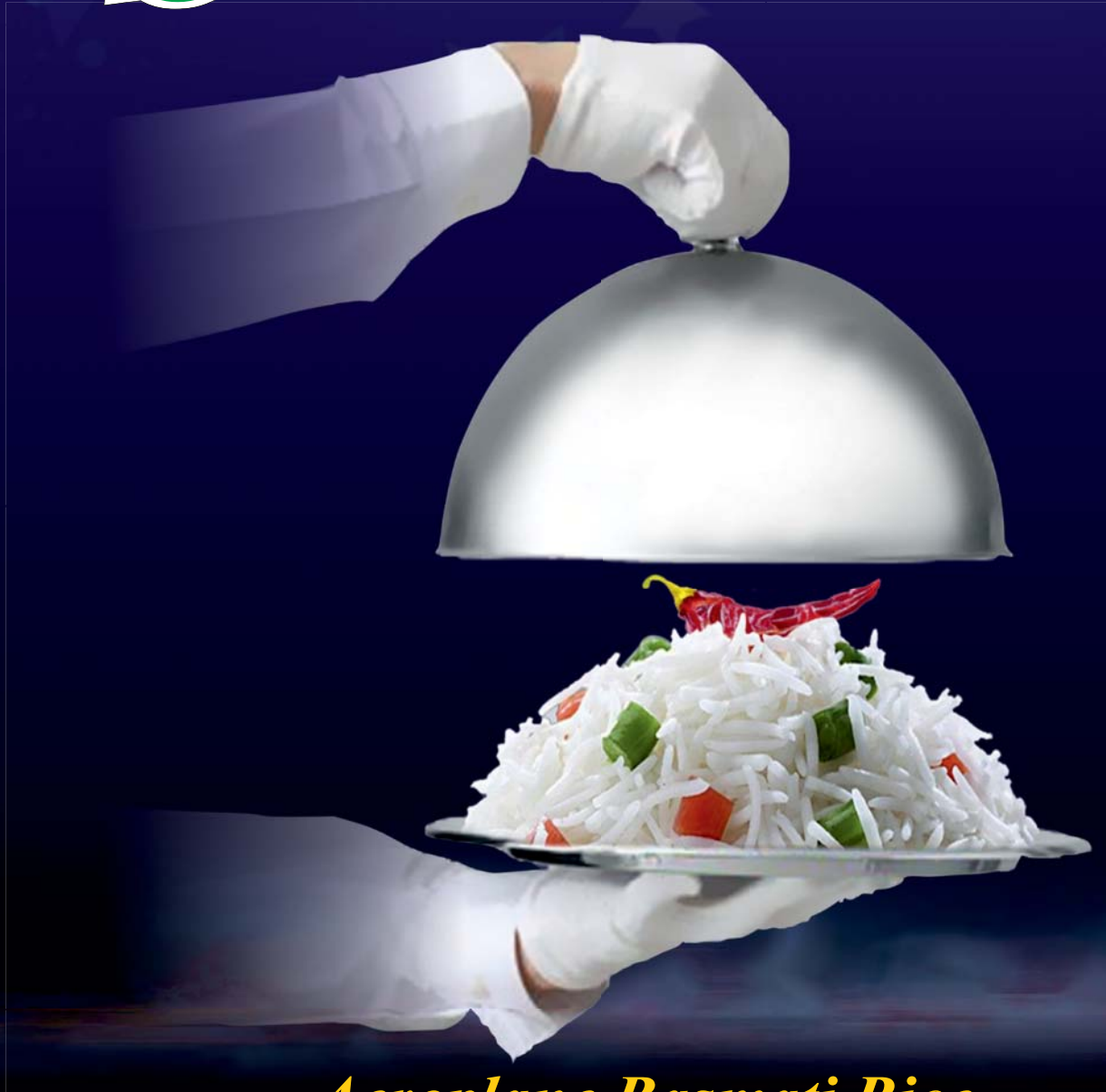
The fun-filled moments that I spend with my little bundle of joy are precious. Her kisses and cuddles are priceless. When she is around, time just flies. Even when she is not with me, she is in my heart. Watching the daily feed of her photographs and videos gives me joy. I look forward eagerly to her video calls.

She is the sweetest gift, wrapped in a small cute package, for which I am eternally grateful. I say with pride that being a granny doesn't make me old but only blessed. I feel privileged to join the granny club.

We



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The Privacy Paradox

Should you spy on your teen? By Santosh Pattanaik



If there's one thing that teenagers will fight for in their lives, it is privacy—the freedom to do as they wish, without “nosy” parents or siblings prying into their activities.

The desire for more privacy is a natural part of growing up, and is not a matter of concern. During this stage, a teenager goes through anxieties, uncertainties, and

emotional turmoil for varied reasons, and they begin to individuate, that is, develop their own unique sense of identity. Individuation is a developmental process that takes place when children want to have a life of their own, and adolescence is really about preparing them for that. As part of this normal developmental process, they begin to want more

space and privacy from their parents and caregivers.

Teens not only strive to be independent during adolescence, they also endure physical changes that make privacy during this age imperative. A daughter who always felt comfortable changing clothes in front of her mother, may no longer want to disrobe in front of her.

She may also lock her bedroom or bathroom door to ensure that her privacy is not breached.

During this transitional period, your child is exploring new ideas, emotions and social interests. It's natural for your child to keep ideas and information to themselves as they do this. Some space from parents and their family, as they take charge of their own narrative for the first time and look outwards to fit into society at large, is expected.

As teens grow up, they seek more responsibility and independence. They want to be trusted to do more than they did when they were younger. They also want to be thought of as mature. They want you to respect their opinions and desires. Giving teens space and privacy lets them feel trusted, as well as capable, independent, and self-assured. Allowing them appropriate levels of privacy shows them that you trust their judgment, intentions, decision-making, and ability to follow your rules.

Giving your child time and privacy to think and explore is an important part of supporting their growing independence. That's because part of growing up is learning to handle new ideas, emotions and interests with independence and responsibility. When adults deny them developmentally appropriate privacy, teens may react by shutting out their caregivers completely. They may also find other ways to get their privacy.

According your child privacy is an act of both love and trust which promotes their healthy development. Trusting your teen means you trust them to make good decisions, behave appropriately, and decide what information they need or want to share with you and others. Trust goes both ways. Your child needs to trust that you respect their right to have privacy and a say in decisions about their life. When you and your child have mutual trust, you'll have better communication. Teens' development can be positively influenced by a trusting relationship with parents as it encourages



GIVING TEENS SPACE AND PRIVACY LETS THEM FEEL TRUSTED, AS WELL AS CAPABLE, INDEPENDENT, AND SELF-ASSURED. ALLOWING THEM APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF PRIVACY SHOWS THEM THAT YOU TRUST THEIR JUDGMENT, INTENTIONS, DECISION-MAKING, AND ABILITY TO FOLLOW YOUR RULES.

a growth mindset and builds confidence in their own abilities and sense of responsibility. So, when you spy on your otherwise responsible child, the message you're sending is, "I don't trust you, even when you haven't done anything wrong."

The job of parents is to shepherd their baby from infancy through childhood, teen years, and beyond. What parents don't always recognise is that in order to launch their teens into adulthood, they need to let them practise and develop the skills needed to live on their own. Learning to use privacy appropriately is a big

part of this process of becoming independent, responsible, and ready to leave the nest.

The foundation for teen privacy has to be built way before adolescence. Building trust starts when your child is a baby and you begin building a strong parent-child bond that also honors the child as an individual. As your child ages, if you've cultivated an open dialogue and trust-based bond, you'll be able to grant them more and more freedom, and the privacy that goes along with burgeoning independence.

The Balance

Giving teens privacy is not the same as giving them free rein. In fact, too much unsupervised time and space could result in problems down the road. Find a way to balance their need for privacy and your need to ensure their safety and security. One way to determine where those boundaries exist is to ask yourself what you really need to know and what you do not need to know. For instance, you need to know where your teen is going, who they are going to be with, what they will be doing, and when they will be home. But you do not need to know what they discussed with their friends or who has a crush on whom.



Of course, some teens are willing to share this information, but if your teen is not forthcoming about such personal details, don't be too alarmed and don't demand it. The key is knowing what you absolutely have to know as a parent and the things you can allow your teen to keep private.

To determine how much privacy and freedom your teen is ready for, consider how responsible they are with their obligations. Do they get to school on time, do their homework, respect their curfew, and do their chores without reminders? If your teen completes these tasks without a lot of nagging from you, you can

PRIVACY RISK IN ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS IS ONE OF THE MAIN CONCERNS THAT HAS INCREASED IN THE LAST FEW YEARS. TEENAGERS ARE NOT OFTEN AWARE OF THE PRIVACY RISKS OF DISCLOSING INFORMATION IN ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS.

Limited Use of Smartphones For Teens

Your teen may resist rules around technology use, especially for their smartphones, but some limits are important:

- Setting guidelines around the type of content they can post publicly on social media or making sure they only "friend" people they actually know.
- Limiting data and texting through your service provider. Research suggests this may prevent sexting more effectively than random phone checks.
- Creating periodic check-ins with your child to examine their

installed apps and software.

- Teaching them to recognise suspicious emails or phishing scams.
- Restricting bedroom phone use, especially at bedtime. Making bedrooms device-free can benefit your teen's sleep as well as their safety.
- Encouraging them to avoid using public WiFi networks for banking or making purchases.

Remember, teens who are given both limits and the freedom to make their own decisions tend to be self-driven and self-disciplined.

probably loosen the reins a little bit. Overall, there should be a direct link between the responsibility, positive behaviour and honesty that kids show, and the amount of privacy they are allowed to have.

During teenage, one is exposed to a whole new world of opportunities and pitfalls. So, every decision that a teenager makes has an impact on their future, and as a mentor and guide, you have to make sure your teenager is going on the right path. Conscious parenting is not about being perfect, it's about being aware. Aware of what your kids need from you to reach their full potential.

Letting our teens become the decision-makers doesn't mean that we become permissive, indulgent, or disengaged parents. Research has shown that "authoritative" parenting is good for teens' health and well-being. Authoritative parents set and consistently enforce clear limits; they are warm and engaged in their kids' lives. Authoritative parenting helps kids develop self-control—making them less likely to have problems with drugs, alcohol, or teen pregnancy. Teenagers with authoritative parents do better in school, have greater self-confidence, and have more friends.

Traditionally, the authoritative parenting style has been identified as the most effective and helpful to a child; research suggests that parents should flexibly deploy parenting techniques based on their personal goals and the unique behaviours of each child. The authoritative parenting style is sometimes referred to as "democratic". It involves a child-centric approach in which parents hold high expectations for their children backed by support and guidance. If you are keen about what your teen is doing in their life, rather than invading in their private life, you can try being their friend, and eventually, if they are comfortable, they will start sharing their life's bit with you.

Get to know your child's friends and give them a space in your home. This helps you keep in touch with your child's friendships and

relationships without always having to ask. Communicating with the parents of your child's friends can also help you keep track of your child and their friends.

Privacy Or Protection?

A major area of concern for parents is keeping their children safe with the ever-changing technology. Today's teens are digital natives, fresh-minted citizens of a humming online world. They've grown up – are still growing up – with texting, sexting, MSN, Facebook, Instagram, Vine, Snapchat. You love your child and want to keep them safe; your awareness of internet predators, cyber-bullying, and other online dangers can make you wonder how it's possible to both give them privacy and ensure their safety.

Today, there are the much more complicated concerns about internet use: cyber-bullying, the amount of time kids spend on the internet, the appropriateness of the sites they are accessing. Privacy Risk in Online Social Networks is one of the main concerns that has increased in the last few years. Teenagers are not often aware of the privacy risks of disclosing information in online social networks. They do not consider the audience that will have access to disclosed information or the risk if the information continues to spread and reaches an unexpected audience.

Communication with your teen around online safety is the best starting point in protecting them. The conversation about online safety needs to be ongoing, as the digital landscape is ever-changing. Parents have to keep up and be well-educated about risks, trends, digital spaces available to their child and content that they could access.

Privacy allows teen to build trust and independence, fostering healthy relationships with their parents and peers. However, it's essential for parents to strike a balance between respecting their teenagers' need for privacy and ensuring their safety by maintaining open communication and guidance.



PHONECALL

My husband is a big tease and he loves to get on my nerves. He enjoys it when I get a little mad at him and he has to win my affection. One day, we had planned a shopping trip and he was supposed to come home early. But it was getting late, so I called him. He picked it up and sounded very busy. I asked him angrily at what time he was returning. He froze and asked me what was wrong. I told him that he should have informed me when he will return home. He calmed me down and said that it would take him a few more hours. I was upset. He told me many sweet things to change my mood. Then, the doorbell rang. I asked him to hold and went to open the door. And there he was! Grinning and standing at the door with the phone to his ear. He was on his way home when I called him. He was so silly and I ended up smiling because of it.

-Payal Garg

THE HIKE

I was not a great fitness freak. My husband knew this so he would use any tactic to make me exercise. He would always tell me that it would be a short run or a short walk and then eventually, that short walk would turn into hours of walking. During our family vacation in Europe, my husband woke me up early in the morning for a small hike. He told me that we would have a chance to see one of the best views of our lives. He reassured me many times that it would be a short hike. But halfway through the hike, we were nowhere close to the destination and an hour had gone. I was tired. My husband wanted to keep going. So, I finally told him

that he will have to carry me now. I thought this would dissuade him and we would go back finally. But he picked me up and gave me a piggyback ride for thirty minutes. When my anger subsided, I realised this wasn't reasonable. I got down and we walked to the top of the hill. From there, we saw a beautiful view of the city. He always knew how to live life and I was glad he pushed me to experience it with him.

-Shikha Ray

THE BOAT ADVENTURE

My husband and I had been married for three years. He boasted a lot about his physical capabilities knowing full well that I knew some of them false. He would say that he can climb to the tenth floor when I suggest taking the lift instead. Then of course, I would find him panting and sitting on the sixth floor.

Then, on a vacation, our hotel manager suggested kayaking across the lake. I was apprehensive as none of us were very capable of kayaking that far. Our arms would give up. But my husband got much too excited and enthusiastically signed us up for it. The next morning, we got on the boat and started kayaking. But by the time we were in the middle of the lake, my husband heaved a big sigh and looked at me. We stopped for a minute. He was clearly very tired. But insisted we keep on going. We tried for another five minutes. But then I gave up again.

After trying again, he finally gave up and said, "Okay, you're right, we can't make it." Thankfully, the hotel sent a boat to pick us up. The funny thing is, the next day, he signed us up for a trek.

-Tanya Mehta



Tackling food wastage as a family.

By Santosh Pattanaik

Many of us are lucky enough to have food every day without having to think about where our next meal is coming from. But there are many people who do have such worries. While millions of vulnerable people around the globe go without adequate food to meet their basic needs, approximately one-third of all food produced for human consumption, i.e. 1.3 billion tons of food, is lost

or wasted every year globally—an amount equal to the weight of 217 million elephants! Just one-quarter of the food we currently waste could be enough to feed all undernourished people in the world.

The world grows more food than is needed to feed everyone, so people really shouldn't be going hungry. But not all the food produced makes it to people's plates, or their mouths. There are

many steps between the farm and the giant trash heaps called landfills where garbage is taken, and food can be lost or wasted at any of those steps. Wastage occurs at many stages of a food's life, including production, processing, retailing, and consuming.

The UN Environment Programmes' Food Waste Index revealed that 17 per cent of the food available to consumers—in shops,

households, and restaurants—goes directly into the bin. Around 60 per cent of that waste occurs in our homes. All of this puts pressure on our environment, supply chains and food security that are all already under strain from international conflict, changing weather patterns and increasing populations across the globe.

When food is wasted, so are the resources—like land, water, energy, and labour—used to produce, store, and distribute it. Producing food requires a lot of water. To make one burger, we need almost 3000 litres of water. This means that when you throw away one burger, you waste as much water as if you would shower for one and a half hours!

Wasting food is also really bad for the planet. Farming creates between 10 per cent and 30 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions—the pollution that's making the climate crisis worse. So, when food gets thrown out, pollution is created for nothing.

Food waste is the single-largest component of landfills each year, which results in the production of methane, a greenhouse gas that's even more potent than carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The food we waste is responsible for 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, way more than all the emissions we generate from flying and producing plastic!

With the increasing incidence of extreme weather events due to climate change and dwindling natural resources, the challenge of feeding a population of 9.8 billion by 2050 has never been greater. To achieve global food security, we urgently need to increase the efficiency of our food system, and preventing food wastage is the key.

Realistically, it is difficult to imagine a world with zero food waste. But there are innovative steps—from the personal to the political—which can dramatically reduce it, resulting in personal savings and positive environmental

impacts. Individually, we can do our part to reduce food loss and waste by paying more attention to how we treat the food we eat.

We can do better, and we must. Although systematic food waste reduction involves government regulation, incentives, policies, and manufacturing, consumers have leverage too. Efforts are underway globally to reduce food waste by 2030, but the work doesn't stop there. We can all do our part to fight food waste in our own lives. Families can take steps to help children understand the importance of reducing food waste as well as make a meaningful difference. It's a worthy cause for taking individual action to be more responsible stewards to our community and the health of our planet.

REDUCING FOOD WASTE IS ONE AREA WHERE WE CAN EQUIP OUR KIDS TO FEEL MORE EMPOWERED. IT'S IMPORTANT TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT FOOD WASTE IN TERMS THEY'LL UNDERSTAND. TO EXPLAIN THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM, ANALOGIES CAN BE USEFUL.

What Can We Do

Academic evidence establishes that families with children tend to waste more food than families without children, and more children in the family often translate to the more significant quantum of food waste. Perishable food items, such as fruits, vegetables, cereal-based product, and dairy products are the primary items wasted in households with children.

Food over-purchase to some extent results from children applying pressure on their parents to impulse buy supermarket-promoted products, fussy eating behaviours, and frequently changing preferences. Children's selective eating behaviours and preferences also cause food over-preparation and over-provisioning by parents.

Teach kids waste awareness:

Reducing food waste is one area where we can equip our kids to feel more empowered. It's important to talk to them about food waste in terms they'll understand. To explain the scope of the problem, analogies can be useful. For example, ask kids to imagine a football stadium filled with food waste every day for an entire year. Let them know, if food waste was a country, it would be the third biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China. Teach them, "Take what you want, but eat what you take." In the long run, if your children learn to value food at a young age, they are more likely

to grow up to have good eating and food waste habits. Use a simple chart to track the food each person wastes over a week or a couple of weeks. Be sure to include your kids in the project. This helps your kids realise how much they don't eat at meals. And it makes each of us less willing to waste when we knew we had to write it down.



Conduct a home waste audit:

If you can help kids actually see the waste you produce, it can make a big difference. Visual aid of food piling up in buckets is hugely impactful for families.

An important step after a waste audit is to brainstorm with kids about why it happened and what could be done to prevent it in the future. Maybe, you bought too much, or maybe you didn't know how to cook that kind of food very well, but as we talk about what went wrong and what we could do differently, we build our kids' food literacy or ability to use food effectively and efficiently.

Serve appropriate portions:

Overloading supper plates may cause excess waste. Kids have eyes bigger than their stomachs; one week they love milk, the next they don't; they can be picky and squeamish; and they get full quickly. Give kids enough time to eat and they will likely eat more.

Trade out your large serving utensils for small utensils. Instead of big salad tongs, use small, kid-sized tongs, use a tablespoon, instead of a large serving spoon. Basically, make it harder for you and them to put a really big portion on their plate.

Don't let your children snack mindlessly when you're approaching dinner time. Not only are they less likely to make healthy snack choices during this time of day, they may also fill up their little tummies too much to eat a normal portion during dinner, increasing the chances of wasted food and less nourished kids.

Pack lunches strategically:

Use an icepack to avoid spoiled food. Help your kids avoid the 'lunchbox dump' at school by strategically packing their lunches. Involve kids in lunch-packing. If they have a hand in making their lunch, chances are they will be more likely to eat it. Coach your kids to bring home what they don't eat.

This will allow you to see what and how much they're eating, and reuse, within reason, parts of their lunch that weren't eaten.

Plan for the week and make

grocery lists: Only buy what you need. Planning ahead not only reduces waste, it also allows busy families to make fewer grocery trips, saving time and fuel.

Save and use leftovers: Have a leftover spinach salad from lunch? Sauté it and add it over pasta for dinner. Leftover steamed carrots from dinner? Mash over toast with cinnamon for a tasty breakfast. Find ways to utilise parts of food typically tossed out, like roasting veggie skins or using the tops of carrots in a salad or vegetable broth. Get creative!

Freeze what you won't use: Save fruits for smoothies, and veggies for

EMPTYING THE SCRAP PALE INTO THE PILE, TURNING THE COMPOST PILE, AND ADDING COMPOST TO GARDEN ARE ALL GREAT ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS TO LEARN ABOUT DECOMPOSITION AND THE FULL LIFE CYCLE OF A FOOD. COMPOSTING CAN BE FUN FOR KIDS!



broth. Arranging the fridge efficiently makes a huge difference, as does a 'first-in, first-out' rotation that keeps older items at the front to make sure they get eaten in time. It's also important to realise that many expiration dates aren't about food safety at all but are simply producers' suggestions for peak quality—the 'sniff test' is usually all you need.

Donate leftover food: If you have leftovers from your party, donate them to a local shelter, food bank or programme instead of throwing it out. Each meal that gets tossed out is a lost opportunity for a child in-need to have a meal.

Start compost: Composting can be really a fun for kids! Emptying the scrap pale into the pile, turning the compost pile, and adding compost to your garden are all great activities for kids to learn about decomposition and the full life cycle of a food. But while composting is clearly preferable to the landfill, it's important to emphasise that the real goal is not to have so much food left to compost. Contact community leaders about starting a community garden and compost. Get involved with local environmental groups to brainstorm about how to tackle food waste in your community.

For us, feeding hungry kids will always be the first priority, but creating the world we envision—a world where no child goes to bed hungry—is far from a simple task. It requires all of us working together to remove the conditions that give rise to childhood hunger and perpetuate it. That means changing the culture—changing how we think about food and interact with it.

Whether it's in big or small ways, becoming more mindful of how we treat our food—food that could change everything for someone who really needs it—is a habit we can cultivate in ourselves and share with others, one that leads to better sustainability in the long-term. That means less waste, less hunger, and a more honest commitment to the kind of world we want to create. **We**

Betrayed Paws

Furry friends and fickle humans.

By Rameshinder Singh Sandhu



Some months ago, when our playful pug named Elle birthed four pups, a family known to us in Butala, fervently followed up over many phone calls to take one of them.

“It’s a desperate request from my children,” the head of the family, who is in his early thirties, often said. We had agreed with their very first call but they surely didn’t want us to forget. Eight weeks after the day of birth, we asked them to pick up their new family member, as by now pups were good enough to survive without the mother.

The children, aged 5 and 6, drenched in excitement, had arrived with their father. They had chosen a black female, who was completely oblivious of her long car journey to the village and her new world that awaited. Like the other puppies, we didn’t put a price on her. An odd feeling enveloped us as she was placed in their car. This feeling grew as the car left—thanks to the bond we had weaved, but I reassured myself that the children would keep

her entertained. The same night, we pondered deeply about her. Just a few days later, I enquired about the little being—the report was splendid. They also chose an interesting name: ‘Sweety’.

After nearly four weeks, I was at Butala, where I met Sweety while she was out for a walk. “She plays more than we all had expected and is always ready to go out,” I was told. The following day, I was invited for dinner on the same street, where Sweety lived. As I was entering this street, my eyes clapped on an adult dog, sitting sadly. Minutes after I reached my host’s home, I saw the same dog sitting near us, not bothering us at all. I was quick to comment, “I also saw him at the street’s entrance.” And, they suddenly flashed his story before me, shocking me immensely.

“He’s Rocky; he was made homeless by the very same family you gifted the pug. They always wanted to own an expensive dog and Rocky being an ordinary dog, they showed him the door, the very same

day Sweety landed. He may bite her is the reason they have been rolling out to everyone and ever since, it is the neighbours who have been feeding Rocky. He had even saved their home from theft once but it didn’t matter to them,” my hosts, a young couple, shared. Next morning, during my walk in the village, many villagers sadly repeated the same tale and none forgot to compare human beings with dogs, ending with the subject of loyalty. “A dog will continue to be loyal but there’s no guarantee when it comes to human beings,” said one of them. In fact, it has become a classic tale in the village.

However, as exceptions are always there, the very same day, my dinner host phoned me to give me the news brimming with cheer: “We have decided to adopt Rocky.” Later, I also visited Sweety’s home where over a cup of tea, I requested them not to repeat this cruel mistake ever again. “If dogs can be loyal, why can’t we?” was the pith of our discussion.

We



Asian Culinary Adventure

A taste of diverse delights. By Roma Ghosh

NASI BIRYANI FROM BRUNEI

INGREDIENTS

1 cup long-grained rice
3 tbsp ghee or oil
1 large onion finely chopped
1 inch ginger chopped
4-5 cloves garlic chopped
1 inch cinnamon stick
2-3 cloves
2 tomatoes chopped
1 tsp turmeric powder
Salt

½ tsp red chilli powder - optional
1 cup whipped yoghurt

For Garnishing

200 gm of mixed nuts which could include almonds, cashews, black raisins, pistachios
3-4 tbsp cilantro chopped
1 cup fried onions

METHOD

Soak the rice in water for 15-20 minutes. Drain and keep aside. Heat the oil, add the whole spices, and let it splutter. Add the

onion, ginger, garlic and fry till the onions are translucent. Mix in the tomatoes.

Cook for a minute. Add one and a half cups of water and bring to a simmer. Add the rice. Stir fry for 2-3 minutes, adding turmeric, salt and chilli powder. Mix well.

Add the yoghurt. Stir gently. Lower the heat and cook on low heat, covering with a lid till the water is absorbed and the rice is tender but not overcooked.

Serve garnished with nuts, cilantro and fried onions.

Nasi Biryani
From Brunei



KAYA TOAST BREAKFAST FROM SINGAPORE

INGREDIENTS

For The Spread

2 pieces pandan leaves cut into one-inch pieces
200 ml coconut milk
150 gm jaggery powder Pinch of salt
2 beaten eggs

To Serve

Bread slices
Coffee to go with it
2 poached or fried eggs
1 tsp of soya sauce for drizzling

METHOD

Boil the coconut milk together with the pandan leaves and jaggery powder in a pan. Allow to simmer for 4-5 minutes on a very low flame, stirring from time to time. Once the mixture is cooked well with the pandan leaves, put off the heat and remove the pandan leaves. While the mixture is still (but the flame is off) mix in the beaten eggs. The mixture will thicken as the egg ices into the hot coconut mixture. Once the sauce thickens, allow it to cool and your spread is ready.



Lemongrass
Flavoured Minced
Mutton

To Serve: Toast bread, and spread the prepared spread. Cover with another toast. Serve with poach or half-fried eggs drizzled with a few drops of soya sauce and enjoy with a hot cup of coffee for breakfast.

LEMONGRASS FLAVOURED MINCED MUTTON

INGREDIENTS

3-4 tsp chopped lemongrass
400 gm minced chicken or mutton
3 tsp garlic paste
1 tsp ginger paste
Salt
1 tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp coriander powder

1 tsp cinnamon powder
1 chopped onion
2 tsp fish sauce
2 tsp soya sauce
2-3 tsp cornstarch
3-4 tbsp white oil

Optional

100 gms button mushrooms - chopped
100 gms spring onions chopped
2 tsp oil
1 tsp red chillies paste
1 tsp garlic chopped

METHOD

Heat the oil. Fry the onions till translucent. Mix in the paste and stir fry. Add the minced mutton or chicken keema. Fry in medium heat, stirring occasionally till all the water in the mutton is absorbed.

Lower the heat and add the spices. Continue to stir and cook on low flame, stirring from time to time. You could add 3-4 tablespoons of water, cover with a lid and cook on low heat till the mince is cooked. Mix in the fish sauce, stir again and cook for 2 minutes more. Now add the soya sauce and mix. Check for the salt. Add salt only if required because the sauces are salty. Mix water in the cornflour and prepare a slurry. Mix into the cooked mutton. Stir and cook on low flame for only a minute or so. Serve with Vietnamese bread.



Kaya Toast
Breakfast From
Singapore

ASIAN-STYLE CHICKEN LEGS IN RED SAUCE AND HONEY

INGREDIENTS

4-5 chicken legs
3 tbsp sesame oil
2 tbsp honey
2 tsp soya sauce
Chopped fresh garlic
1 large onion chopped

For The Marinade

3-4 tsp Thai red curry paste
Salt
1 tbsp sesame oil
3 tsp lemon juice

METHOD

Make light insertions in each chicken leg. Mix all the ingredients for the marinade, marinate the chicken legs with this paste and keep aside for 20 minutes.

Heat oil in a non-stick pan and fry the onions and garlic until translucent. Mix in the marinated chicken legs over medium heat turning over once or twice till



Asian-Style Chicken Legs
In Red Sauce And Honey

chicken legs are cooked and tender.

Drizzle honey and soya sauce, and continue to cook on medium heat till the chicken is tender and the sauce coats the chicken legs. Serve as a starter.

rooms cut into circles or pieces

Salt and pepper to taste
2 tsp or less of red chilli paste
2 beaten eggs
2 tbsp flour
2-3 tsp chopped garlic
Oil for oiling the pan

For The Dipping Sauce

2 tbsp soya sauce
1 tsp fish sauce
1 tsp vinegar
Chopped green chillies
1 tsp white roasted sesame seeds
optional

METHOD

Slice the potatoes into very thin strips. Cut the spring onions and leeks into 2-inch pieces. Cut zucchini into thicker match sticks.

In a large bowl mix in all the veggies, the pastes, garlic and mix well. Mix in the eggs and blend in the flour. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add a few tbsp of water to adjust the consistency of the batter. Blend well. Heat a non-stick pan. Brush with oil. Ladle a portion into the frying pan and cook over low heat, covering with a lid. Cook till one side looks cooked. Flip over to cook the second side. Serve hot and cut into wedges with a dipping sauce.

For The Dipping Sauce:

Mix all ingredients.

KOREAN PANCAKES

INGREDIENTS

4 cups of very thinly sliced or grated vegetables which will include sweet potatoes, zucchini, leeks, spring onion, baby corn and mush-

Korean
Pancakes



THAI PRAWN CAKES

INGREDIENTS

500 gm shrimp shelled and deveined

2 tsp galangal- Thai ginger

2 tsp garlic paste

2 tsp red chilli paste

Salt

1 chopped onions

3 tbsp cornstarch

1 beaten egg

2 cups Panko bread crumbs

Oil for deep frying

METHOD

Start with grinding only half the quantity of the shrimp. Leave the other half quantity of shrimp whole. Take a large mixing bowl and mix the prawns ground to a paste, the whole prawns, all the

pastes, salt, chopped onions, egg and cornflour, and mix well to obtain a thick mixture.

The mixture will be neither wet nor very dry. Divide into portions, and shape into round cakes. Coat each cake with panko crumbs. Heat oil for deep frying and fry a few at a time till crispy and golden brown on both sides. Serve as a snack.

Thai Prawn Cakes



GORKHA NEPALESE MATAR CHUTNEY

INGREDIENTS

150 gm white *matar* (pea) soaked overnight

3 boiled potatoes cut into medium pieces

2 onions sliced

3 tbsp mustard oil

2 pinches of turmeric powder

2 tsp garlic paste

1 tsp ginger paste

3 tsp black sesame seeds roasted and ground coarsely

2-3 tsp lime juice

Salt

For Garnishing

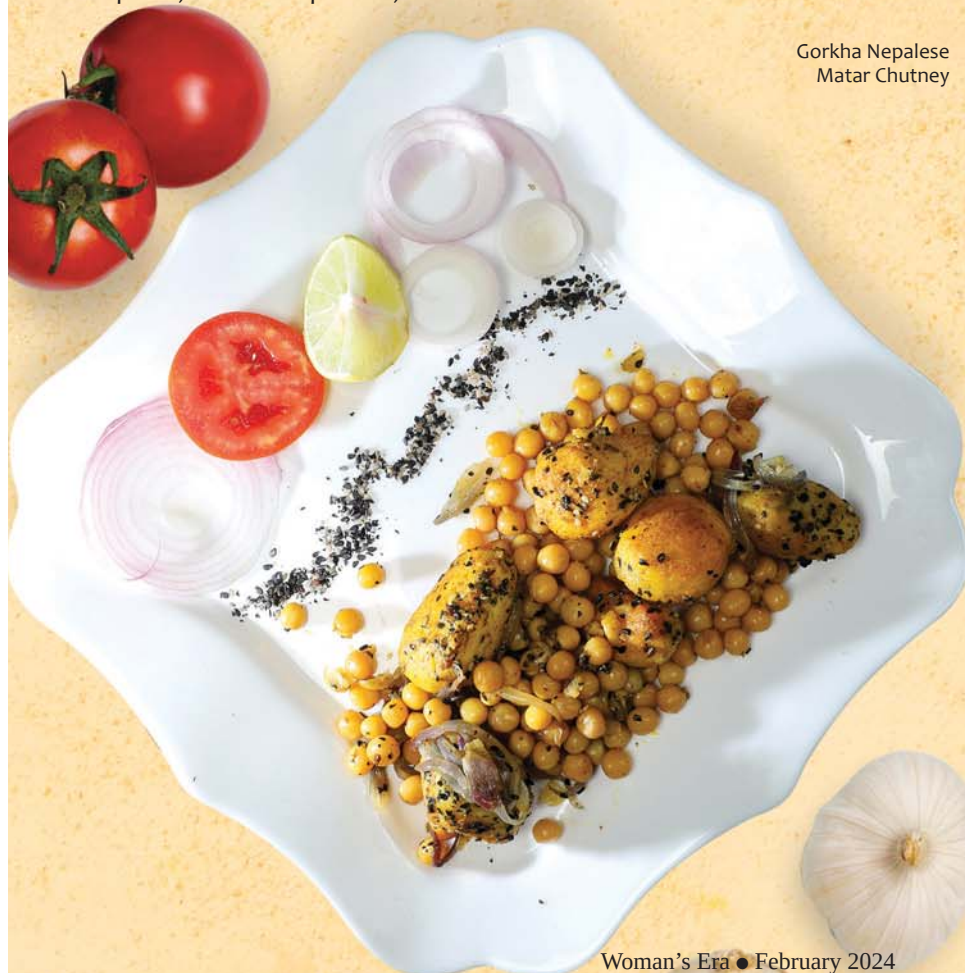
Strips of onion

Chopped green chillies

METHOD

Pressure cook the soaked *matar*. Add salt while boiling the *matar*. Drain and keep aside. Heat the mustard oil, add the 2 ounces of turmeric powder, add the onions and fry till translucent. Mix in the potatoes, add salt and fry for 2 minutes. Mix in the cooked *matar*, ginger, garlic and lime juice. Stir gently. Add the ground sesame seeds and serve garnished with sliced onions and green chillies.

Gorkha Nepalese
Matar Chutney



SOM TUM PON LA MAI - THAI SPICY MIXED FRUIT SALAD

INGREDIENTS

1 raw green guava medium-sized
200 gm pineapple pieces
100 gm red grapes
200 gm cucumber with peels
1 cup sweet papaya pieces

For The Pounding

60 gm dried shrimp
3 tsp palm sugar
2 tsp fish sauce
3 dried red chilies
2 tsp lemon juice
3-4 cloves garlic
½ inch piece galangal -
Thai ginger

METHOD

Pound all the ingredients in a pestle. Place the fruits after you have cut them into pieces as per your choice. Mix in the pounded paste and blend well. You can garnish it with dried shrimp.

Som Tum Pon La Mai - Thai Spicy
Mixed Fruit Salad



Serve at once. If you want to make it vegetarian, avoid the prawns. Instead use spring onions for pounding.

CAP CAY - MIXED VEGETABLES INDONESIAN STYLE

INGREDIENTS

1 small head of broccoli

1 red carrot
100 gm button mushrooms
1 medium-sized yellow zucchini
100 gm baby corn
3 tbsp sesame oil
1 onion chopped or sliced
2 tsp chopped garlic
2 tsp ginger chopped or julienne
3 tsp sesame oil
2 tsp soya sauce
2 tsp fish sauce - optional
3 tsp cornflour - optional
Salt

You can add vegetables like cauliflower and beans

METHOD

Separate the broccoli into florets. Keep mushrooms whole but prick each mushroom lightly.

Cut zucchini into fairly thick strips and spice them to cook easily.

Heat oil, add the onions, garlic, ginger, and fry till onions are translucent. Mix in the remaining vegetables and fry until tender but not overcooked. Add the zucchini last since it takes less time to cook.

Mix in the sauces. Stir. Mix cornflour with 2-3 tbsp water to form a paste. Add to vegetables and cook for a further 2-3 minutes.

Adding the cornflour is also optional. We like it without the thickening effect of cornflour. Without the cornflour, the vegetables remain and taste crunchy.

Cap Cay - Mixed
Vegetables
Indonesian Style



BRUNEI BLACK RICE SWEET PORRIDGE - BUBUR KETAN HITAM

INGREDIENTS

1 litre milk
4-5 tbsp Palm sugar or brown sugar
150 gm black rice
½ tsp cardamom powder
80 gms raisins
Nuts for garnishing

METHOD

Soak the black rice overnight. Then cook in 3 times the water till cooked. Bring the milk to a boil in a thick-bottomed pan. Once it begins to boil, add the rice, mix gently and cook on medium heat for 3-4 minutes. Now reduce the heat and allow it to simmer. Stir from time to time till the rice is soft and cooked. Mix in the sugar. Stir till the sugar melts. Mix in the cardamom powder. Cook till the milk is reduced to one-third its quantity. Serve garnished with nuts.

Brunei Black Rice
Sweet Porridge
- Bubur Ketan Hitam



Asian Shrimp Toast



ASIAN SHRIMP TOAST

INGREDIENTS

For The Shrimp Paste

350 gm shelled, de-veined shrimp
Salt
2 tsp white pepper powder
1 tsp sugar
1 tbsp chopped fresh garlic
1 tsp chopped ginger

1 egg white
2-3 tsp cornflour

For The Toast

2 tbsp sesame seeds
Oil for deep frying
3 slices of bread cut into triangles

METHOD

Make the paste by putting the shrimp and the remaining ingredients together in a food processor and grind to a fine paste. Your spread for the toast is ready.

Using leftover bread is recommended so that there is less moisture and they remain firm while frying. Leave the bread as it is or cut smaller squares. We have cut each slice into 2 triangles. Spread the prepared prawn mixture on each bread slice and cover with a coat of sesame seeds. The other alternative is to top with sesame seeds and cover with another slice of bread to make a sandwich.

If you are not making a sandwich, deep fry the toast in hot oil with the sesame side down. Turn over. Fry until crispy and golden brown. Serve hot and crispy.



Pathishapta From Bangladesh

PATHISHAPTA FROM BANGLADESH

We have added a twist to the popular pathishapta. The taste remains the same, only it looks more colourful.

INGREDIENTS

For The White Pancake

1 cup rice flour
¼ cup flour
4-5 cups milk
3-4 tsp of powdered sugar
2 pinches cinnamon - optional
For colour: 1-2 drops of yellow food colour

For The Filling

2 cups desiccated coconut
1 cup milk
2 tbsp milk powder
1 tbsp ghee
½ tsp cardamom powder
Oil for brushing the tava

METHOD

Prepare the filling by heating the ghee in a pan. Add the coconut and fry for a few seconds. Lower the heat, add the sugar and cook the coconut and sugar. Allow the sugar to melt. Mix in the milk and milk powder, stir and cook till the mixture thickens. Allow to cool.

In the meantime, make the

batter for the pancake. Sift together the flour, rice flour, cinnamon, and sugar powder. Now add the milk slowly and form a smooth paste. The quantity of milk may vary. The batter should be runny. Divide the batter into two portions. In one portion mix the colour. Heat a non-stick tava, brush with oil and make the pancakes. You can make plain white pancakes by spreading a ladle full of the batter. Allow to cool on low heat and the carefully turn over to cook the other side. Place a portion of the prepared filling and fold from both sides. Serve at room temperature or cold as a sweet dish.

To prepare the coloured pathishapta, you can first place half a ladle of the yellow colour in the centre and spread it slightly to form a small circle and then use another half ladle of the white mixture to spread around the small circle to complete the circle. Cook on both sides. Take care while turning over the pancake.

ASIAN NOODLE SALAD

INGREDIENTS

2 cups red cabbage- shredded
Bell peppers cut into strips
1 capsicum de-seeded and cut into strips
1 cup cooked noodles
100 gm spring onions

For The Dressing

1 cup peanut butter
2 tsp honey
2 tbsp coconut milk

METHOD

Prepare the dressing by mixing all the ingredients. Mix the salad and serve with the peanut butter dressing.

We

Asian Noodle Salad



Demonetisation is a thing of the past. Economists, analysts, journalists, opportunists, and many others spoke millions of words about it. An equal number of words, if not more, were written and printed, to which cartoonists, too, contributed. While all this was going on, I sorely missed RK Laxman. Nonetheless, I am happy that the 'Common Man' he had created and depicted in his cartoons, retained his voice and was vocal throughout the period that literally brought the nation on its toes. There was never ever any dearth of humour and pun from the 'Common Man'.

Amidst reports of people throwing or burning 500- and 1000-rupee notes, someone tweeted, "I am thinking of burning two bags of paper. It will create enormous impression on my neighbours." Soon another post appeared, "Wow, the gardener put to fire the waste in our garden and there were inquiries: 'How much did you dispose?'"

A satirical post read: "Where from will you get better days! Today an honest man can roam around freely in a market with his wife without having to buy anything." Another one read, "It is like Ram Rajya. Even from an open locker, no one is willing to loot 500/1000 rupee notes." Yet another one was equally apt: "Have you observed one thing: we can actually live with less money and lesser spending."

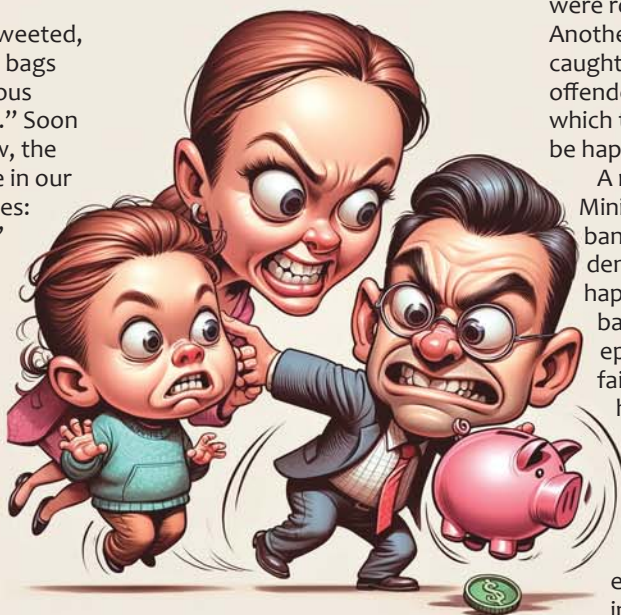
Wisdom of common man was clearly visible as someone put on WhatsApp, "There are more than 50 lakh astrologers in India. Not a single one predicted banning of high currency notes." Commenting on the prevailing hue-and-cry, another one wrote, "During passage of hard constipated stool, when whole body puts an effort to push it forward, it is only the asshole that complains of pain."

Incidents of threatening, extortion and ransom too, assumed humorous tones. A person received a call and was shocked to hear: "Wait,

Cash Crunch Comedy

Humour during demonetisation.

By DP Sabharwal



A HUMOROUS REPORT MENTIONED THAT MANY CHILDREN WERE AGITATED BECAUSE THEIR MONEY PIGGY-BANKS WERE ROBBED BY THEIR PARENTS!

I am depositing ten lakhs in your account and informing Income Tax people!" In another case when the kidnapper said: "We have abducted your son," and the reply was, "I am a poor man, I can't give you anything." To which the kidnapper replied, "Don't worry, we are sending you

twenty lakhs. You have to get them exchanged."

Demonetisation turned many common men into poets. Complaining of pain, one said: "Agar kuch log beimaan nahin hote, to aaj itne log pareshan nahin hote (if few people were not dishonest, so many would not have suffered)." Another frustrated one said, "Badlava de mere note aye Ghalib, yaa who jagah bata jahan katar na ho (please help me in getting my currency exchanged or tell me the place where there are no long queues!)"

A humorous report mentioned that many children were agitated because their money piggy-banks were robbed by their parents! Another one mentioned that when caught jumping the red light, the offender offered 1000 rupee note, to which the policeman said, "No, I will be happy with just Rs 100."

A message was sent to Prime Minister Modi: "You have banned 500 and 1000 rupee denominations. We are all very happy. Request you to kindly ban TV serials with 500-1000 episodes and save us. Yours faithfully: TV serial sufferer husbands and sons."

In another case, two friends met after many years. When asked how your children are and where they are, the friend replied, "The eldest son is in SBI, his wife in ICICI; second son in HDFC, his wife in Canara bank and the youngest daughter, not married, in Axis bank." No sooner had the friend exclaimed, "Wow! I am so happy; all are well settled in bank jobs," the instant rejoinder was, "No, they are all standing in queues there!"

If Khushwant Singh were alive, I am sure he would have come out with a joke-book on demonetisation. I am equally sure that his pick for the best joke would have been: "For your five hundred or thousand rupee notes, you can stand in the queue for the whole day, and rant and crib. Those who have lost their millions, can't they create ruckus inside the Parliament house?"

We



THATRI TAMBURATI

A bold lady who brought lecherous men to justice.

By Padmaja Menon

In fact, she began to enjoy it even and the old man, who was her husband, was very happy.

I sobbed as I felt the old man's hands on me. He was hungry and lusty. Even at 68, he smothered me with unholy kisses and straddled me and when done, panted beside me on the bed. He smiled a satiated smile, ate a *vetilla* (paan) and stretched languorously.

I, all of fifteen years old did not look anywhere specifically.

I could feel his lascivious eyes on me and was not willing for another round but he began groping soon. He said, "I will teach you this sex business. Don't worry you will soon begin to enjoy it." As the days passed, she did learn many things about the age-old sexual act and began to excel in satisfying him. In fact, she began to enjoy it even and the old man, who was her husband, was very happy. In the throes of passion one day, he whispered in her ears: "You can become a great prostitute!"

And there in was sown a seed...

But first a general commentary on the times and the rigours imposed by the caste system in Malabar. Between the 1200–1900 timeframe, the Namboothiris held sway in Kerala on top of

the caste hierarchy. They were wealthy landowners and had many rights over people of the other lower castes, including the Nairs.

With the firm intent to hold title to the lands in their possessions and ensure that they are not diluted, the caste practising a patriarchal system (rest of Malabar was typically matrilineal) decided that only the eldest son of a family should marry.

This meant that the younger brothers could not have wives, but to offset it they were allowed to have formal *Sambandhams* with *Illath* Nair women or anyone they fancied. Caste and *Aityam* (untouchability) were not followed here.

But that left one group of people isolated, the Namboothiri women (Also the eldest Namboothiri could marry more than one Namboothiri woman, and they did so, until a ripe age). So, some of these *Antherjanams* (people inside the house – this was a mix of Hindi and Malayalam), as Namboothiri women are called, married, but some had very unsatisfactory lives or in some cases did not marry at all.

Antherjanams were usually sequestered in their homes and always went



around fully shrouded and escorted. Should an *Antherjanam* be suspected of adultery, the punishment was severe, for after a trial, they were excommunicated and cast out into the roads.

To make matters worse Arabs and other merchants would hover and hang outside the *Vandi pera* or gate and pounce upon these hapless women to keep, sell, use and abuse.

I was one of those *Antharjanams*. Sequestered inside the house.

In this wasteland, near Arangotkara, opposite the Kartiyayani temple stood once upon a time, the famous Kalpakassery Illam, where I grew up. I was born at an inauspicious hour; my Namboothiri father had stated then that I would grow up to be the curse of the family. But was I? A curse or beginning of something new?

One day, my oversexed husband brought home a wench and made me watch while he did and made her do a lot of things to him. I was forced to watch and I felt helpless but we *Antherjanams* were not a free lot to do what we wanted...

This was soon to become a habit. The unjustness of the whole affair and what was happening to us wretched *Antherjanams* made me furious. But our hands were tied and we existed knowing that we had no way out. Most of us were fair in complexion and beautiful to look at but we were used as sex objects and discarded. So, I hatched a plan...

The night was dark and the balmy Kerala night humid yet windy. Inside bedroom I lay all bathed

and fragrant. A *tamboolam* with honey and lemon and *vetilla* (betel leaf) was kept on the bedside *ara* or niche. The room was beckoningly dark...

He entered the room and tried to light the lantern to see me. But I held his hand already sweating with lust and moved it towards my breast. He did not need the light anymore... When the act was over, I gently lit the lantern and, in that light, he saw my face. The beautiful face of his young wife. He recoiled in shock and horror. "You?" He stuttered... "You here...you, a prostitute?"

I said softly, "Your idea, right?" He recoiled as though struck by lightning.

This is the story of a docile, timid *Antherjanam* Thatri who belonged to a renowned Namboothiri family. She was the one who rebelled, who acted, who asked questions, who dared to ask 'Why'.

But how did society treat her?

As usual, they shunned her, ostracised her,

boycotted her, even beat her... but she had many aces up her sleeve and when she laid them out one by one the obscurantist community went berserk...

Even today the mention of Thatri sets the nerves jangling in Kerala, for it has all the elements needed—sordidness, inequality, religion, caste, illicit sex, guilt, drama, emotion, anger, helplessness... the list goes on. Nevertheless, I have managed to put together a plausible account of what happened after extensive searches and will outline it for those who have not had a chance to read the books on this heroine. Yes, she was a heroine who dared to raise her voice against the horrible rules of some sects of Kerala.

A bit of background of the *Antherjanams* will help here.

According to Google baba, the entire Namboothiri life was patterned to ensure the virginity of the *Antherjanam*. In those times, the morning ritual bath, chanting of hymns

and working in the kitchen were the only activities of the *Antherjanam*.

Their travel was limited to the temples or to the house of their immediate relatives, but that too had to be accompanied by a maidservant.

Thus, Namboothiri Brahmin women of Kerala were surrounded by an entire screen carried by maid servants. They also carry with them an umbrella (like a parasol but sturdier). They also covered their face if they came across men. A Nair woman should precede her and watch her movements.

This was totally opposite to the Namboothiri men, who were allowed to take many wives or consorts. The *Antherjanams* could not look at a man or talk to them, closeted as they were inside the house. But bodily needs being what they were, some did have liaisons mostly with the *karyastan* or estate manager and if found out, both were made outcasts or *Brashtu* from society.

The evil consequence of the practice that only the

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eldest son marries from the same community, directly affected the *Antherjanam*. As the marriage of widows was forbidden, there were many young widows who were then preyed upon by the lusty old Namboothiris! The widows were objects of contempt in the community.

It was finally in 1905 that the shackles were broken by one woman. Call her brave, cunning, callous, whatever, but she was the first to rebel.

This is the story of that beautiful Namboothiri *Antherjanam* who decided to use her body to lash out at society. She was Thatri. The *Antherjanam* known as Kuriyedathu Thatri who

dared to rebel by selling her body, was caught and thrown in the dog house or put in the outhouse, a barred room guarded by other ladies somewhat like Sita in Ashoka Vatika.

Thatri was imprisoned in a special outhouse (*Achanpura* or *pacholapura*) built for seclusion and imprisonment during the trial.

This trial was called a *Smartha vicharana*. The Cochin King as required sanctioned it. It was chaired by the Namboothiris themselves! The public would watch too. In fact, Thatri's case elicited a lot of interest as it was a first.

This sensational *Smartha vicharane* involved Savithry (Thatri), the wife of Chemmanthatta Kuriyedathu Raman Namboothiri, and daughter of Kalpakasseri Ashtamoorthi Namboothiri of Mukundapuram Taluk. The Mother's name is not even mentioned here which gives us an idea of the importance of the women.

The *Smarthan*, who administered Vedic laws

was none other than the famed Jathavedan Namboothiri of the Perumannan gramam. They did not know what they were letting themselves in for. As the trial commenced and Thatri was condemned of prostitution, the lady stood her ground and accepted her fault.

The *Smarthan* (prosecutor) and three Namboothiri scholars questioned Thatri, who accepted all the charges but stated that the rule of law has to be administered equally. If she had to be pronounced guilty, so should be the people who slept with her!

The whole assembled crowd, of inquisitive, baying for blood people, sat up. Eh, what was this? Many squirmed and objected but the king was fair. He agreed to her claim. An uproar followed but she was adamant.

One by one the names came out. They were people of supposedly high moral standing, and with that basis Thatri revealed the names of well-known scholars, musicians, Kathakali artists and many other prominent people of that time, not only of the Cochin state but also the entire Malabar belt, who had shared the bed with her. She also presented strong evidence to substantiate her charges including visual and written evidence (letters written by lovers, prominent marks on genital areas, etc.).

The pillars of the caste system started trembling. The king was in trouble and the public uproar severe. Thatri would have been implicated if the

Namboothiris had their way but the king agreed to administer equal justice.

However, based on the king's ruling, the *Smarthan* questioned the involved men as well and convicted the guilty. It was thus a landmark case.

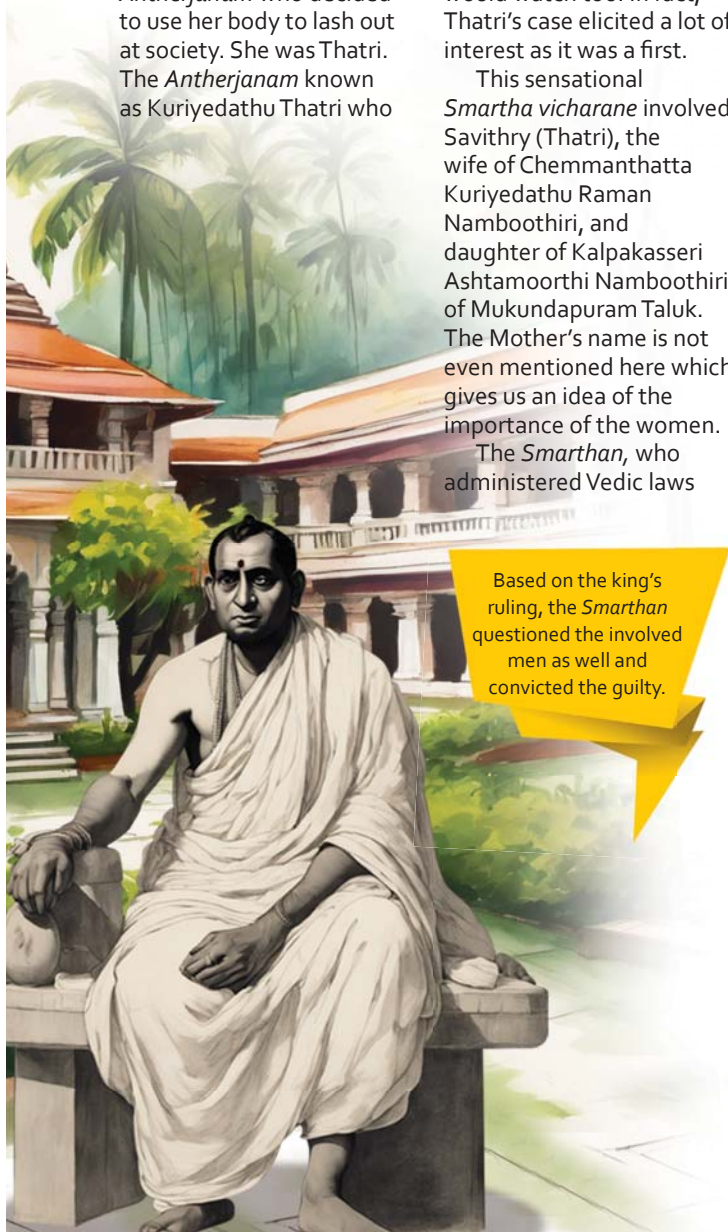
As the names started coming out, the number of nervous men increased. Many ran away, escaped to other nations even; many others conducted *poojas* so that Thatri would forget their names and features (for she had to provide proof of physical characteristics of the men too). It is said that the lady was finally made to stop at the 64th. Salacious gossip to the effect that the 65th was probably going to be the king himself went around like wildfire!

The verdict was pronounced on the night of 13 July 1905, indicting all the accused and of course, Thatri. They included 30 Namboothiris, 10 Iyers (Pattars or Tamil Brahmanans), 13 Ambalavaasis and 11 Nairs. Thatri was sent to Chalakudy and settled as an intern in a riverside home, under tight security.

The 64 men left their homes humiliated, some living on bare subsistence allowance and some, begging. Another two (*Ambalavaasis*) had died and hence not proceeded against. This makes us wonder on the unfair and often horrendous effects of the caste system in Kerala.

It makes us, at least I, happy at the way she acted under duress. I feel it was the downtrodden treatment of women that made her who she was... Thatri.

Based on the king's ruling, the *Smarthan* questioned the involved men as well and convicted the guilty.



Your Body



Q A

I AM A 35 YEAR OLD WORKING WOMAN and suffering from nutritional disorder. I am anxious about my health and what this disorder means, and the doctors are not giving me any proper explanation. So, I want to know about nutritional disorders.

There are five essential types of nutritional disorders. Quantitative dietary deficiency, not enough food results in undernutrition or when more severe, frank starvation. Qualitative dietary deficiency, wrong food results in malnutrition. The term malnutrition should be restricted to those nutritional disorders, eg. rickets and scurvy, which are due to lack of protein or other essential nutrients. Effects of natural toxins in foods, some foods contain small amounts of toxic substances which can lead to disease if a person or community has to rely too heavily on a single foodstuff, eg. lathyrism. Even in countries where the overall food supply is adequate, cases of malnutrition may occur because of unequal distribution of income or because of ignorance or social disorganisation. The old, the solitary and the children are most often affected.

I AM A 50 YEAR OLD WORKING WOMAN, because of an accidental injury two weeks before, I am suffering from redness, itching and stiffness over the accidental injury on my right forearm. I have consulted a doctor for this problem, after examination he told me that I am suffering from cellulitis and advised treatment. I want your opinion about this problem.

Cellulitis is the term given to a spreading inflammatory exudates along subcutaneous and facial planes. Streptococcus pyogenes, the commonest cause of severe cellulitis, may enter the tissues through an accidental wound, trivial in nature such

as a graze or scratch or possible as the result of operation. If the general resistance of the patient is undermined by such conditions as diabetes, cellulitis is likely to spread rapidly and lead to septicemia. Redness and itching or stiffness commence at the site of inoculation, to be followed by tenderness and swelling. The skin becomes shiny in appearance. Local gangrene may occur. The appearance of fine creases or wrinkles in the skin heralds the resolution of the condition. Treatment consists of rest, elevation of the part and above all the use of the appropriate antibiotic. Diabetes, if present, should be treated.

I AM A 35 YEAR OLD WORKING WOMAN. When cleaning my right ear with a matchstick I feel pain and slight

blood coming out. I have consulted an ENT doctor, after examination he told me that there is a traumatic rupture of tympanic membrane and advised treatment. What is your opinion?

Causes of traumatic rupture of tympanic membrane are by foreign bodies or unskilled instrumentation, blows, slap, blast, rapid descent in non pressurised aircraft may cause rupture of the tympanic membrane by sudden air compression, forceful inflation of the eustachian tube, fractured base of the skull. Treatment consists of systemic antibiotics to prevent infection, blood clot should not be disturbed for about ten days or more, never syringe or put any ear drop. No local treatment should be carried out except cleaning with sterile swabs. Ask the patient to abstain from getting water into the ear during bathing and not to swim or dive.

M Y MOTHER IS ABOUT 65 YEARS old and suffering from paralysis: the doctor advised her for passive joint movements. I want to know about passive joint movements in detail.

The chief use of passive movements is to preserve full mobility when the patient is unable to move the joint actively, that is, when the muscles are paralysed or severed. They are important in poliomyelitis and after nerve injuries—especially to preserve mobility in the hand. Certain movements that are not under the control of the patient may also be used passively for treatment purposes—notably distraction, which is commonly employed, for instance, in the treatment of prolapsed cervical disc and of certain other painful conditions of the spinal column.

- Dr Sanjay Teotia

Readers are invited to send in any health and medical queries they would like to be answered. Woman's Era will provide answers to your questions and offer solutions to your problems. Individual replies cannot be sent. Address your letters (neatly written on white paper) to:

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these tan brown
textured loafers.



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with these sleek
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Chahat Dua

Diva with grace and gravitas who is painting successful marketing stories.

CHAHAT IS A BEACON OF INSPIRATION WHO HAS CREATED A LASTING IMPACT ON THE FASHION LANDSCAPE, AND SHE IS READY TO UNLEASH THE POWER OF WOMEN.



Chahat Dua,
Fashion And Digital Marketer

Chahat Dua is a trailblazing fashion and digital marketer with a passion for empowering women entrepreneurs. Born with an innate flair for fashion and a keen understanding of the digital landscape, Chahat has seamlessly merged her skills to champion homegrown brands owned by women.

As a visionary woman, she started her career in 2018 after graduating. She is currently heading the marketing at contemporary leisure wear and resort wear labels, as well working as a freelancer.

Now, she has risen up in the industry by creating a network of small and big brands, bloggers, celebrity stylists, etc. Her compelling strategies are a commitment to authenticity and individuality as she strives to amplify the voices of women entrepreneurs. Learning from her own experiences, she believes that women do not have it easy as they embark on their professional life, having to manage personal life as well as societal expectations.

What started out as a challenging step into the fashion industry, she has carved a name for herself with her dedicated work. Her journey in the realm of digital marketing is not merely a career but a mission to redefine industry norms and envision a future where women supporting women is not just a slogan but a guiding principle for her.

Chahat is a beacon of inspiration who has created a lasting impact on the fashion landscape, and is preparing to be a successful business entrepreneur. She is ready to unleash the power of aspiring business women.

Deepiti Kapoor

An Inspiring Journey

The power of faith and determination.

Deepiti Kapoor, also known as Mommy With A Twist, lives by the mantra “Whatever People Might Say,” embracing life without regrets.

At just 21, during her final year of post-graduation, Deepiti got married and had her first child at 22. The dreams of a blissful “Happily Ever After” were challenged in the first year when they faced domestic issues and separated from in-laws. Despite the turmoil, her husband’s unwavering support strengthened their bond.

Their journey took a harsh turn when her husband’s business

suffered significant losses. Amidst severe financial crises and the revelation of an unexpected twin pregnancy, they decided to restart the business and move to China. With three young children in tow, they embarked on a new adventure.

China presented unique challenges, including language barriers and limited resources. Deepiti often questioned, “Why Me?” She juggled home responsibilities and supported her husband in their

DEEPTI KAPOOR, MOMMY WITH A TWIST, STANDS AS A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF DETERMINATION AND FAITH IN OVERCOMING HER LIFE’S CHALLENGES.

home-based office, even learning business Chinese. Working tirelessly, she managed 18-hour days, a testament to her youthful resilience.

As their fortunes improved, they returned to India after eight years in China for their son’s better education. Alongside their children’s academic success, Deepiti underwent a personal transformation, shedding 40 kilograms due to newfound confidence and her surroundings.

Deepiti recognised the need to explore her interests, leading her to start her social media handle, @mommywithatwist. Despite initial



Deepiti Kapoor, Mommy With A Twist

challenges, she found fulfillment in this hobby while managing their homegrown business.

Now, as her son is already working in Bangalore and her daughters prepare to leave for a hostel, Deepiti faces the phase of becoming an empty nester. Curious about her personal growth, she aspires to inspire other women through her journey, emphasising perseverance, unity, self-belief, and trust in a higher plan. Deepiti Kapoor, Mommy With A Twist, stands as a testament to the power of determination and faith in overcoming life’s challenges.



The Unsung She-roes

Stories of empowering women from my travels.

By Saranya Iyer

I just finished reading the beautiful book *Tathastu*— the lovely short stories by Usha Rangarajan that are more like reminders, the motivating sentiments that one has forgotten and should be mindful of. First of all, I found it hard to believe that it is the debut work of the

author and this book is an extension to her blog. One of the reasons being that the words, the articulation, and the anecdotes linking to the messages she has for the readers. The second reason is the clarity of her thought process. All these stories drenched with fascinating vignettes

of life are quite catchy, not too long and worth reading aloud to your friends and family.

I cannot tear apart one story and say it is my favourite as I loved all of them. Some stories are rich in sentiments, some have resplendent settings, and some fit in as positive



affirmations that will set you up or propel you to move forward with confidence. The characters in the stories are quite relatable. It is like you know these people and in some or the other way, have come in close contact with them in your real life.

One of the stories that I connected well with, thanks to my travels that holds ground for this text-to-life connection, is 'Have or Have-not'. It is the story of a tea-picker, Selvi, who doesn't mind torrents or merciless sun, keeps her chin up and works like there would be no tomorrow. Unfazed by the biting cold, she, with her hair coiffed into a bun, stands in the tea-picking record check line with a smile on her face. Her cheerful countenance and ceaseless energy are not only unmistakable but even sprout inspiration for others. For the outsiders, her life is laid with thorns but she thinks otherwise. She reminds us that have and have-not is a state of mind. There are always more perspectives on a situation—for Selvi, this is life and her life is good, if not better with monthly catch-ups on movies, friendly repartee and banter with her work friends, and waking up to face each day with a smile. What rang out pronounced in Selvi's words was gratitude for the haves and the least consideration for the have-nots. The cliché goes, "*The British's answer to everything is a cup of tea,*" but for my deflating spirits, it was the tea-picker.

This brings me to my own personal experiences with strangers that I met randomly in two of my travels. The owner lady of Maggi Point in Mussoorie during the visit to George Everest's house is comparable to Selvi in the book. With kindness overload, she was happy sprinkling 2-minute charm on the tourists' plates. We had our tummy filled with delicious noodles and we were all set for our next stop at Cloud's end. But by universe's decree, we were kept on hold in her shop for 30-odd minutes or so. Our chauffeur was out of sight and my husband went after him. With zero network, it was quite a task to trace

him. That gave me and my daughter to stop at this point and dig deeper into the local's lives. Her pleasant smile was very welcoming and that nudged me to ask about her life, her journey and whether the business is flourishing. She had zero qualms about her life and was happy in her own world. Yes, monsoons were difficult to fetch stuff from far-off cities, to stock up things for her shop, and those stubborn hill-side blood-thirsty leeches gave her a hard time. But these were part and parcel of her life. Her entire life's worth of happiness was tucked in these 2-minute noodles. She was happy to serve pasta to my daughter while

**LIFE IS LIKE THIS;
YOU HAVE TO WORK
NO MATTER WHAT
CHALLENGES YOU
ENCOUNTER. YOU
CAN CHOOSE TO CRIB
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SHE BRINGS LUNCH
FROM HOME AND
SOMETIMES, SHE GETS
TO EAT FROM THE
HOTEL'S KITCHEN.**



my husband was busy digging up the whereabouts of the cab driver. In the meantime, I caught up on a glassful of chai and invaluable life lessons for being happy and content at the spot you are placed.

On my recent trip, I interacted with a sweeper lady on our hotel property. She was sweeping the lawns and the stone staircases, keeping the place and alleys in order. Her commute time was an hour from her house and it was not very conducive in the evening to walk all the way to her house, given the unpaved roads, poor streetlights on a few roads and no streetlights on others. In spite of all these, she pulled off a smiling face and was working with an inaudible happy hum that attracted me to speak to her. She said in Hindi, "*Kya kare, kaam toh karna hi hai*" –which hit the nail on the wall, calling spade a spade, in so many words. Life is like this; you have to work no matter what challenges you encounter. You can choose to crib or orient your path by focusing on the small joys. She brings lunch from home and sometimes, she gets to eat from the hotel's kitchen which she finds something to be cheered about.

It is easier to leave and walk out when times are tough but even difficult to be rooted, work and bloom amidst them. These unsung she-ros' lives drive us humans to be mindful of the joys that come in varying degrees and show indomitable spirit in our work.



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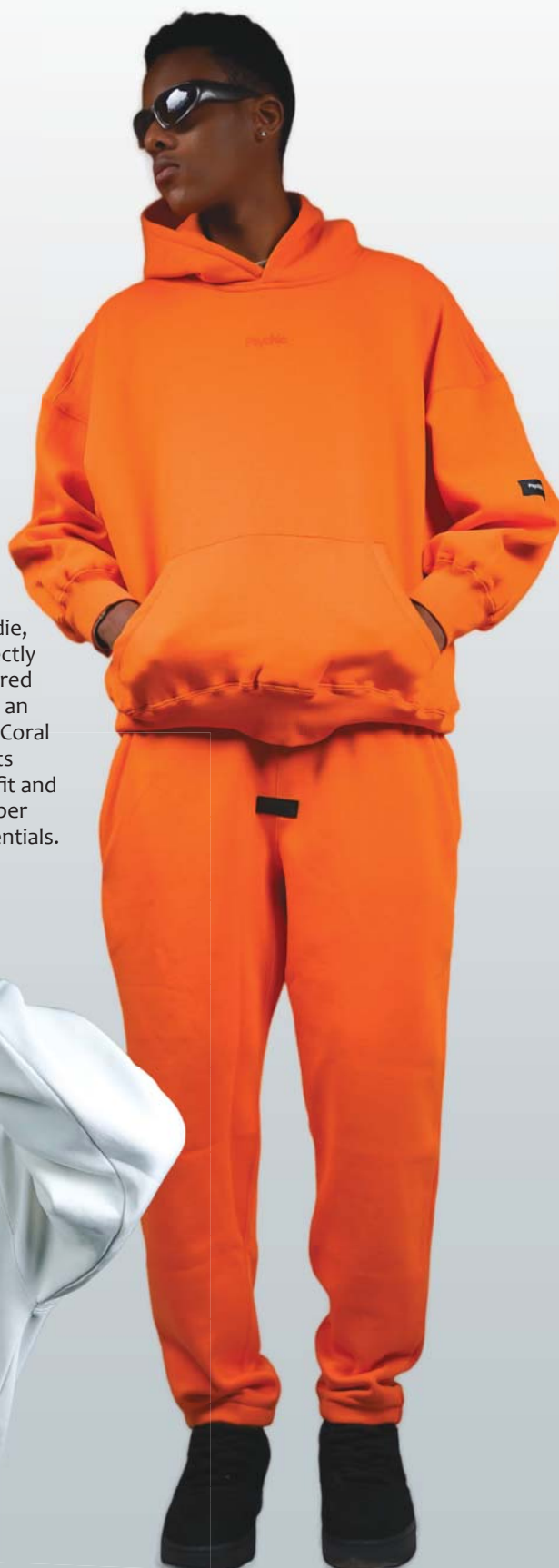
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Mocha psychic hoodie with a soft, round silhouette, side pockets, and Psychic logo detail.



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29th KIFF 2023 Inauguration

29th Kolkata International Film Festival 2023: A Wrap Up

Celebrating the indomitable spirit of cinema.

By Sudipto Mullick

Even on a mid-festival Sunday, the foyer of Nandan I, the flagship venue of the Nandan Complex—the central hub of the Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF), which will be completing its third decade next year, was shrouded in semi-darkness, unequivocally transmitting the presiding mien that governed this year's proceedings. The aftermath of the pandemic had pushed the 29th edition to be held between 5 to 12 December 2023, in place of its usual 10-17 November schedule, and probably due to the same



Anjan Dutt receiving his award from Aditi Rao Hydari.

reason, the international celebrity quotient was a bit thin. Despite that, KIFF had been able to host the maverick Russian filmmaker, Pavel Lungin, as the Chairperson of the International Competition segment, and was additionally celebrated with a retrospective of seven of his own films (*Taxi Blues*, *The Island*, etc.). During the closing, Lungin, clearly enthused with the onsite vibes stated that, "I am in love with the Calcutta crowd," without failing to mention the city's "beautiful food". A notable presence this year, Angela Molina—best known as the actor of Buñuel's debut film, *Obscure Objects of Desire*, a jury member of the International Competition, also echoed a similar sentiment.

Biggest Yell

The Kolkata audience perhaps yelled out its biggest closing-ceremony cheer, as if it had reserved its energy so far for such an occasion, when homeboy Anjan Dutt, went onstage to receive the Special Jury Award in the International Competition section, for his film, *Chalchitra Ekhon*. A former journalist turned singer, song-writer, actor, and director, Dutt's film is a tribute to his mentor, Mrinal Sen. Dutt

had debuted in cinema through Sen's 1981 film, *Chalchitra* (The Kaleidoscope), for which he even won the best newcomer actor award at the Venice Film Festival. A visibly overwhelmed Dutt exclaimed, "Thank you, Kolkata! Thank you, Mrinal da! This is my city. This is Mrinal da's city. I wanted the film to start its journey from here."

Another loud 'cultural-cheer' rang through the Rabindra Sadan auditorium (situated within the Nandan Complex), the venue of the concluding event, as well as purpose-arranged film-shows during the festival as is customary, when Anjan Bose, the producer of *Mon Patongo* went on stage, flanked by the director-duo, in a dhoti-Punjabi, orthodox Bengali attire, to accept the Best Film nod in the Bengali Panorama section. The film, about entrenched Hindu-Muslim lovers who forsook society to become pavement-dwellers, to continue being together, is directed by Rajdeep Paul and Sarmistha Maiti, both Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (the premier state film school ranked second to FTII) alumni. Their debut feature, *Kalkokkho*, had garnered the 69th best Bengali Film National Award. It was also produced by Bose, the proprietor of the iconic 1906-established Aurora Film Corporation, India's oldest functioning cinema production and distribution company. In his acceptance speech, Bose had mentioned, "I am the third generation of my family in films. We had supported Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Ritwik Ghatak when they started out. Now we're back producing films after 45 years."

The Hiralal Sen Memorial Best Director award in Indian language films was won by Shonnet Anthony Barretto for *Avni Ki Kismat*. It's about a tiger scapegoated as a man-eater by unscrupulous neighbourhood dwellers, who's awaiting an orchestrated shoot-to-kill order.

The cherry award—the Golden Tiger trophy for Best Film in International Competition: Innovation in Moving Images,



Children Of Nobody bagging Best Film.

THE KOLKATA AUDIENCE YELLED OUT ITS BIGGEST CLOSING-CEREMONY CHEER, WHEN HOMEBODY ANJAN DUTT, WENT ONSTAGE TO RECEIVE THE SPECIAL JURY AWARD FOR HIS FILM, CHALCHITRA EKHON.

went to an Israeli film, *Children Of Nobody*, which is about at-risk youth inmates banding together to save their shelter from corrupt and evil property developers. The film won INR 51 lakhs in cash, touted to be the biggest purse in Indian film festival circuit. As per KIFF custom, post the award announcements, the film was exhibited at 8pm at Nandan I. Nandan II, it's annexe, simultaneously screened, as habitual, the Best Film winner in the Competition On Indian Language Films. It was *Gorai Phakhri* (Wild Swans), a Bodo-language film directed by Rajni Basumatary and produced by Jani Viswanath (also the producer of Meena Longjam's *Andro Dreams*, which premiered at this IFFI). Funnily though, this year, the festival widened to include 23 venues, 13 of them had just one showtime a day. In all, there were 219



Manoj Bajpayee and Sudhir Mishra at acting-directing Masterclass.

films—including 72 feature films and 50 short films and documentaries, across 39 countries.

One of the most prestigious Awards at KIFF, which sadly has no prize money attached to it yet, is the Asian Select (NETPAC award). This year it went to *Broken Dream Stories From The Myanmar Coup*, directed by Ninefold Mosaic, which is a pseudonym for a coterie of nine Myanmar filmmakers who have risked everything to protest against the military junta.

Venezuela film-director, Carlos Daniel Malave, was felicitated with Golden Tiger Best Director trophy for his film *One Way*, about a self-confined, anxiety-stricken, single-mother. It made him richer by INR 21 lakhs. *Joseph's Son*, by another SRFTI alumni, Haobam Paban Kumar, the Manipuri director who is quietly etching a fine name for himself, was



Anurag Kashyap during 'Kennedy' PC.



Aparna Sen greeting Laurence Kardish at SRML

the Jury Film winner in Competition On Indian Language Films. *Challenge* by Ramen and Sibanu Borah, the Best Indian Documentary Film, and *Last Rehearsal*, the Best Indian Short Film, by Kamil Saif, rounded up the awards list. Probably the youngest awardee of the night, Saif, a fourth-semester film direction and screenplay student at SRFTI, while receiving his award from legendary actor, Dhritiman Chatterjee, and iconic theatre-impersonator, Chapal Bhaduri, remarked that, it "was his first festival-selection and first win."

Closing And Opening

The closing rituals also saw filmmaker Sudhir Mishra and actress Aditi Rao Hydari among others, illuminate the stage. Mishra recalled his association with Badal Sarkar, the progenitor of third-form (non-proscenium theatre) in West Bengal, Satyajit Ray, and his experiences at Baranagar in the northern fringes of WB.

Earlier, during the opening ceremony, which unlike IFFI, does not challenge one's patience, national stars led by Salman Khan and accompanied by Anil Kapoor,

WE COULD ADDUCE BAJPAYEE'S GENUINE PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM FOR ACTING. "ONCE I DECIDE TO TAKE UP A CHARACTER, I COMPLETELY EMERGE MYSELF IN IT. I THINK OF IT FOR 24 HOURS. YOU CAN SAY, I'M A BIT OF A MENTAL IN THIS REGARD," SAID BAJPAYEE TO THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE.

Shatrughan Sinha, Sonakshi Sinha, Mahesh Bhatt, and Sourav Ganguly (who recently replaced SRK as West Bengal's brand ambassador), among others, were seen centring around West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee. As usual, a bunch of Tollywood A-listers, including the venerated Madhabi Mukherjee, the 'Satyajit Ray's actress', were also present at the event held at Netaji Indoor Stadium.

Homages And Packages

Films by Senegalese pioneer film-maker, Ousmane Sembene (*Black Girl*, *Mandabi*, *Xala*, *Guelwaar*, etc.); Spanish giant, Carlos Saura (*Oh Carmela* and *Flamenco*); and A Minor by recently stabbed-to-death,

Dariusz Mehrjui was also screened as Homages. *The Swallow* by Mano Khalil was included in a package of Kurdish films. While Spain was the Focus Country (including Victor Erice's *Close Your Eyes*), Australia was the Special Focus Country (including *Driving Miss Daisy* by Bruce Beresford, *Picnic At Hanging Rock* by Peter Weir, and *The Survival Of Kindness* by Rolf de Heer).

First Timers

Easily, the highlight satellite-feature of this year was a masterclass on acting and direction by Manoj Bajpayee and Sudhir Mishra, simultaneously. Though the host managed to muck it up big time, we could adduce Bajpayee's genuine passion and enthusiasm for acting. "Once I decide to take up a character, I completely emerge myself in it. I think of it for 24 hours. You can say, I'm a bit of a mental in this regard," said Bajpayee to thunderous applause. During the session, the eminent actor who has come here as a guest for the very first time declared KIFF as "one of the two strongly emergent film festivals of the country. The other being the International Kerala film festival." Incidentally national award-winning actor, screen-writer and film-director, Saurabh Shukla also held an acting masterclass. The Satyajit Ray Memorial Lecture by American filmmaker-curator-author, Laurence Kardish was a standard affair.

Anurag Kashyap, also visited KIFF for the first time with his Rahul Bhat-Sunny Leone starrer, *Kennedy*. While introducing the film to a packed audience, he had said, "I'd come to Calcutta a lot many times for the food. This is the first time I came to present my movie and I could not be any happier." Earlier in a Press conference, he opined positively about OTT stating, "nobody used to see my films in the cinemas. They would always download it; now I am only getting to monetise it (laughs)." As regards to the movie, even the cheers-squad were found wanting in energy when it ended.

Seeing Things

If a cineaste could see only one film in this edition, it had to be *Perfect Days* by Wim Wenders. It's a slice-of-life film about a toilet cleaner who likes to listen to rock music on his way to work, who also likes books and taking pictures of trees.

The next best could be this year's Cannes Jury Prize winner, *Fallen Leaves* by Aki Kaurismäki, or *The Zone Of Interest* by Jonathan Glazer (Cannes Grand Prix, FIPRESCI winner). This year's Palme D'or winner, *Anatomy Of A Fall* felt flat of its citation. *Monster* by Hirokazu Koreeda was so-so, well, better than *About Dry Grasses* by Nuri Bilge Ceylan. Even Ken Loach's *The Old Oak*, Palme D'or-nominee and winner of Audience Award at Cannes verged on tepid. *The Palace* (Roman Polanski) and *MMXX* (Cristi Puiu) was disappointing. Moro by Brillante Mendoza, the first Filipino to win the best director award at Cannes, and *The Monk And The Gun* by Pawo Choyning Dorji, the maker of *Yak In The Classroom* were compelling.

Slightly-less enthralling were *A Brighter Tomorrow* by Nanni Moretti; *Last Summer* (winner of Cannes' Albar Special Jury award) by Catherine Breillat; *The Beast* by Bertrand Bonello; *Green Border* (winner of Venice FF Special Jury Prize) by Agnieszka Holland; and *Ingeborg Bachmann Journey Into The Desert* by Margarethe von Trotta.

For a serious movie-buff, *How To Have Sex* was all hype. KIFF hosted yet another 'short-film', *Essential Truths Of The Lake* by Lav Diaz, clocking only 3.35 hours!

Among others, *Promised Land* (Dir: Nikolaj Arcel), *Me Captain* (Dir: Matteo Garrone), *Kidnapped* (Dir: Marco Bellocchio), *Inside the Yellow Cocoon Shell* (Dir: Pham Thien An; Cannes' Camera D'or) and *Gondola* (Dir: Veit Helmet) can be sat through.

Overall, the festival managed to celebrate cinema from a diverse background. With a strong tradition in filmmaking, Kolkata also commemorated the home-grown artists.

We

CAMPUS RUMPUS

THE PROFESSOR

Our class had a bunch of students who were troublemakers and would come up with pranks to pull, even on the professors. And yes, I was part of that group. On the first day of our new semester, we were expecting a new sociology professor. But the new professor was late. Ten minutes into the class, the students were going ballistic.

Then, a young man entered. He looked just about our age and had a confused expression on his face. Since this was a combined class, there were many students from other departments joining us.

My friend, Parth, immediately grabbed the new guy and started asking him his whereabouts. The young man was amused. Then when I asked why he signed up for such a boring class, he responded, "I am not sure, I was assigned to teach this boring class."

All of us went quiet on discovering that he was actually our professor! My friend slowly removed his hands from his shoulders. "I promise I will try not to bore you," he said, then patted us on our shoulders and laughed.

We joined in and all of us were just laughing about the hilarious mistake for a good two minutes. And when we resumed with our class, the new professor did end up keeping his promise.

-Gul Mathur

A SECOND CHANCE

In school, I had a bad experience because I used to get bullied a lot over my dark skin.

Everyone used to tease me and call me names just because I didn't look a certain way. I started thinking that I was ugly and I would use all the fairness creams

to try and change my skin. But it never worked and for the longest time, I ended up feeling that I was unlovable because I wasn't conventionally beautiful.

Then, it all changed the moment I came to college. I joined an all girl's college in Delhi and at first, I was scared of history repeating itself. I went in expecting the same bullying and name-calling. It had etched into my brain that there's nothing special about me.

But just a few days in, I realised that no one cared if I was dark or light. A girl even complimented me once, saying that I was very beautiful. The first years soon realised that every single one of us joins college with their own insecurities, but then on campus, nobody cares about that as long as you are a good person. Everyone was focused on work.

I am so grateful for going there because it completely changed the way I viewed myself.

-Priyansha Singh

FLOOD COMPANIONS

During the monsoon once, our campus imminently flooded. Most of the students in my class had attended the lecture that day. Our classroom was on the first floor and due to a morning double lecture, we didn't get to go outside for two hours.

When the class finally ended and we made our way downstairs, we were shocked to see the entire ground floor flooded heavily. There was no way we could have walked through it.

We were stranded and some of us started to panic. Apparently, the river near our campus had overflowed. Stuck for hours, we decided to make things a little interesting to pass time.

We divided ourselves into teams and started playing dumb charades. We even had our teacher judge the teams and declare one as a winner. It was a glorious day despite the unfortunate environment.

-Navya George

Empowering Hearts

My daughter reads romance novels. By Anuradha Dev

If you're a reader, who not only loves to read books but also loves to talk to other readers about books, then I'm sure you must have felt these unfavourable bias most non-romance readers have towards romance novels. The most common ones are that they are not true literature, are too predictable, use too many tropes and cliches. They also think that only young, fanciful girls read it and that it makes people impractical. While some of them might be accurate, I've read romance novels my whole life and there's no other more practical person I know of than myself. There are many reasons for a daughter to read them as well.

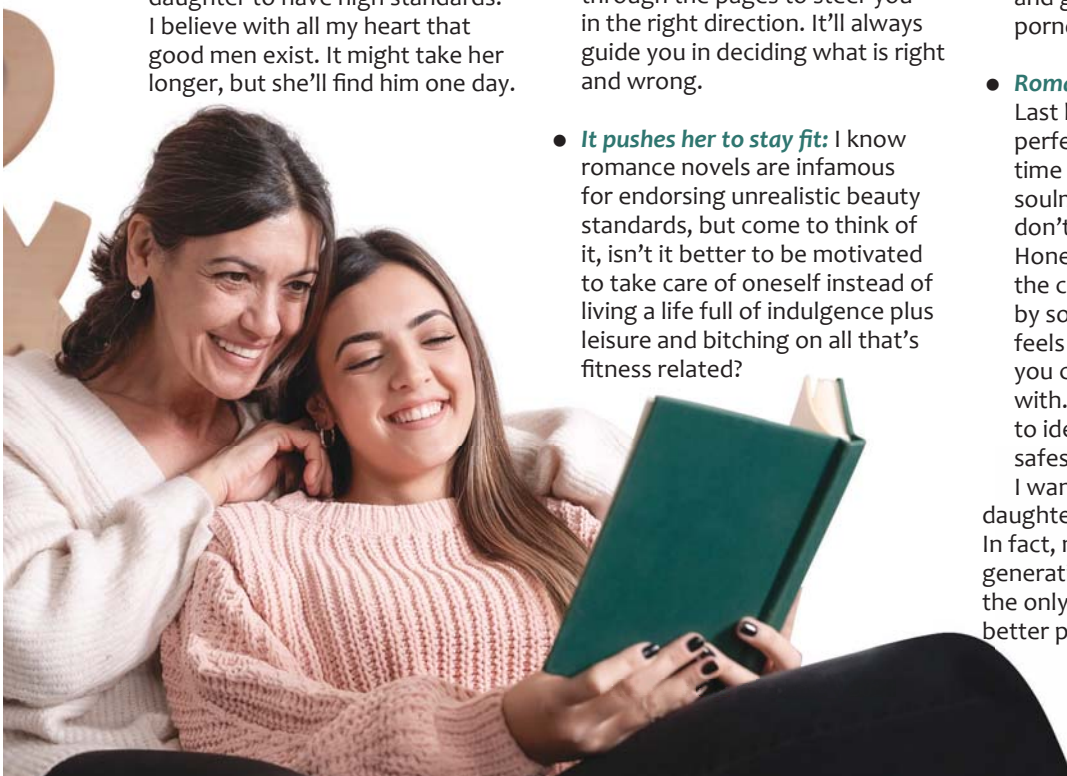
- **She'll have high standards:** All the best men reside in the pages of these romance books. I want my daughter to have high standards. I believe with all my heart that good men exist. It might take her longer, but she'll find him one day.

THE MAJOR ATTRACTION TO READING THESE BOOKS WERE THE SEX SCENES. I FELT EVERYTHING THAT THE PROTAGONISTS OF THE BOOKS FELT, AND IT MADE ME REALISE HOW PLEASURABLE AND CONSENT-DRIVEN SEX SHOULD BE.

- **She'll have the right values:** I believe I have a robust set of values and respect for hard work because I read many of these books during my teenage years. They may be predictable, but their predictability seeps into you through the pages to steer you in the right direction. It'll always guide you in deciding what is right and wrong.
- **It pushes her to stay fit:** I know romance novels are infamous for endorsing unrealistic beauty standards, but come to think of it, isn't it better to be motivated to take care of oneself instead of living a life full of indulgence plus leisure and bitching on all that's fitness related?

- **They are emotional:** Reading romance novels has made me feel emotions for others and developed me into an empath. I wish my daughter would grow up to be a sensitive person who considers the feelings of others before saying anything.
- **Sex education:** Like it or not, they're a better source of sex education than pornography. Yes, I said it. When I was a teenager, the major attraction to reading these books were the sex scenes. I almost felt everything that the protagonists of the books felt, and it made me realise how pleasurable and consent-driven sex should be. Kids will always find ways to quench their curiosity. At least romance novels do not endorse misogyny or incest and glorify sexual violence as pornography does.
- **Romance books will be her friends:** Last but not least, they are the perfect companions to spend time with while you wait for that soulmate. I know many of us don't believe in a single soulmate. Honestly, I'm on the shelf about the concept too, but what I mean by soulmate is the person who feels like a green flag—someone you can imagine spending your life with. Until then, she'll be trained to identify the red flags in the safest way possible.

I want my kids, especially my daughter, to read romance novels. In fact, my suggestion for the next generation is to read them—that's the only way to make the world a better place.





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Sacred Threads Of Love

Evergreen love stories of ancient India. By S Radha Prathi



Celebrating Valentine's Day is about celebrating love. For some reason, most people believe that expression of romantic love is a Western concept. A casual glance at our own backyard can reveal exhilarating love stories reverberating through our epics, *Puranas* and history. A reflection on these love stories of classical couples will make us realise that the bottom line of this wonderful romantic feeling has been truth, courage and loyalty since times immemorial.

Well, this compilation of compelling stories of unconditional eternal love from ancient India. It is all about as much about fluttering hearts, anxious moments and tears and smiles as it is about conviction, truth and courage. After all, true love is about transcending from the physical to the mental and eventually, the spiritual!



Painting of Dayamanthi by Raja Ravi Varma.

Damayanthi

Ever since, Narada had told Nala, the king of Nishadha kingdom, about the damsel Damayanthi in passing, the ruler could not stop thinking about her. Even as he was wondering about how to take the matter forward, he came across a golden swan who could speak the human tongue. When he caught the bird, it surprised him by offering to be his messenger of love. Then, the swan flew into Damayanthi's garden, and chanted Nala's name till it captured the attention of the princess of Vidharbha. A conversation ensued, followed by several more over several days till the regal lass fell in love with Nala. The fact that she was able to choose Nala during the Swayamvara where Indra, Vayu and Agni had also presented themselves as Nala's clones, not only speaks

of her intelligence but also how deeply she knew and cared for the man she had never seen prior to the Swayamvara. A reading of the Nala Charitam will reveal how the happily married couple had to undergo a number of unbelievable trials and tribulations. Nala consciously abandoned his wife because he could not bear to see her suffer. However, his better half surmounted greater troubles and eventually used her intelligence and influence, and manipulated her wedding with her beloved Nala all over again with the help of her father. The power of their love for each other surpassed every obstacle that came their way!

Parvathi

Parvathi, the daughter of the Royal Himavan was none but the reincarnation of Shiva's wife Sati, who had immolated herself because she could not bear her husband's insult. Of course, the young princess or her family had no clue about the past. As is warranted in the *Puranas*, Narada visited the family and predicted the marriage of Parvathi with Shiva who had, by then taken,



Shiva and Parvathi

up an ascetic way of life. Almost immediately, Parvathi decided to woo him through her rigorous penance and prayer.

Time flit past. Shiva noticed the unswerving perseverance of Parvathi. He decided to test the love and devotion of Parvathi. He appeared in front of her as the personification of uncouthness and indecency. Then he put Shiva in bad light to dissuade Parvathi from considering him as her spouse. She had internalised what she had first heard about the man in her life. No amount of brainwash, to the contrary effect, could make her stray from her chosen path. Shiva was convinced that she loved him. The courtship period was a rigorous one, riddled with uncertainties and hardship but true love triumphed in the end.

WELL, THIS COMPILATION OF COMPELLING STORIES OF UNCONDITIONAL ETERNAL LOVE FROM ANCIENT INDIA. IT IS ALL ABOUT AS MUCH ABOUT FLUTTERING HEARTS, ANXIOUS MOMENTS AND TEARS AND SMILES AS IT IS ABOUT CONVICTION, TRUTH AND COURAGE.

Rukmini

Rukmini was the exquisitely beautiful daughter of king Bhishmaka, the king of Vidharbha. She imbibed just about every bit of information about the Yadava king, Krishna, during her formative years. Somewhere along the line, she happened to fall in love with him, without ever meeting him in person. When it was time for her to wed, her brother Rukma wished her to marry the powerful sovereign, Shishupala. Rukmini could not accept the decision, nor could she express her love for Krishna, the sworn enemy of Shishupala. She gave the



Savitri persuading Yama to restore her husband's life.

matter an earnest thought. Then, she garnered courage to write to her beloved. Krishna was also drawn by the pristine nature of her love. An elopement was arranged which culminated in the union of the two divine souls.

Savitri

Savitri, the princess of Madra, was beautiful, learned and wise. When she came of marriageable age, her father, King Ashwapathi, gave his precious daughter the freedom to choose her husband. She was attracted to the exiled prince of Shalva named Satyavan. It was around this time, the celestial sage Narada manifested himself in front of the father-daughter duo and divulged that the noble soul of the groom-to-be was destined to depart from the planet in a year's time. Savitri who was all ears during the talk insisted on the marriage even when her father shuddered at the idea of marrying his daughter off with the certainty of widowhood looming ahead of her. Her vacant heart had been occupied by Mr Right and she could not bear the thought of substituting him with another option. The fact that she released Satyavan from the clutches of Death by engaging Yama in an erudite and logical conversation is another story. Though upholders of fatalistic school of thought will put it down to destiny, they cannot eliminate the element of love which ruled the decision.

We



LIPS, TIPS, AND TRICKS

Mastering the art of oral sex.

By Purnima Atul Goyal

Friends, you will be surprised to know that oral sex was discovered in India. We know oral sex to be even older than the writings of *Mahabharata*. India is considered the leader of the world, i.e. Vishwa Guru, in the matter of sex education. Every year lakhs of Europeans come to Khajuraho, India to learn the secrets of a happy sex life, but unfortunately, we Indians still look at sex from the wrong perspective.

Mahabharata begins with the meeting of Satyawati and sage Parashar. Satyawati was the daughter of a very ordinary, poor fish merchant. To meet the household expenses, Satyawati used to work as a boatwoman on the banks of the river Ganga. Satyawati was called the most beautiful woman of that time. Satyawati's prominent breasts were compared to the Kumbh Sthala (protrusion of the forehead) of an elephant and her moulded buttocks were compared to the nectar pot. Describing her beauty, Bhartrhari writes, "Moon-like face, eyes that make even a lotus feel ashamed, physical radiance that can even dull the shine of gold, hair that conquers the constellation of bees, beauty of her buttocks insulted Gajraj's buttocks, huge breasts, lovely voice and softness of skin, all these were the natural ornaments of Satyawati."

Parashar, the famous knowledgeable sage of that era, was the crush of all unmarried women. He was the most prestigious and wealthy person in the city. Satyawati displayed three feminine characters—slyly furrowing her eyebrows, sarcasm with half an eye; talking sweetly, smiling shyly; walking slowly, and then, stopping—with all these gestures, Rajarshi Parashar was lured into her love trap.

Just as Satyawati's father used to torment the fish, keeping them alive for a good price, after catching them in his net, Satyawati started tormenting Parashar after ensnaring him in her allurements. The ambition of this beautiful woman was bigger than the stature of her boobs and buttocks. She was the most beautiful of even the nymphs. Satyawati used sage Parashar as a stepping stone to reach the Chakravarti Emperor of India, Shantanu.

Satyavati's father used small fish as bait to catch big fish. Satyawati used Parashar's wealth as bait to gate Shantanu's opulence. To keep Rishi Parashar trapped in the hypnotic thorn of her body, she happily agreed to have oral sex with him. Satyawati put the first condition to Rishi Parashar in exchange for

physical satisfaction that he would not see her naked and the second condition was that he would not break Satyawati's virginity. Those were the terms for oral sex.

It is described in the stories that due to their greed for oral sex, Parashar kept her in his palace and transformed her physical stench into a beautiful aroma through a scientific process. After her body smelled like deer musk, her attractiveness increased even more.

After succeeding in her plan, Satyawati was married to Shantanu, the great ruler of India, and the great War (*Mahabharata*) was fought between his grandsons.

From this story, we come to know that the people of ancient India knew the best methods of oral sex by which they could make their sexual partner as faithful as their pet dog. Secondly, despite having an oral sex relationship with Rishi Parashar, she was acceptable to Shantanu, that is, oral-sex relationship was given relaxation in the civilised society of that time, considering it different from normal sexual relations.

Friends, it was discussed that since when did we Indians know about oral sex and what was its social acceptability? Today our question is—What are the characteristics of oral sex that have been given the highest place among all sexual activities? Apart from the Khajuraho sculptures, sculptures and murals related to oral sex have been prominently carved in Ajanta-Ellora and many other temples. 75 per cent of the Khajuraho sculptures depict oral sex.

The Definition

In the broad sense, if reproduction is not possible through sex, then it is called oral sex, but we can easily understand that the incident of oral sex during the *Mahabharata* period which I have mentioned was completely different.

The concept of sex without possibility of reproduction is a product of the materialistic, satanic mind of Europe. In European countries, many games have

EVERY YEAR LAKHS OF EUROPEANS COME TO KHAJURAHO, INDIA TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF A HAPPY SEX LIFE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, WE INDIANS STILL LOOK AT SEX FROM THE WRONG PERSPECTIVE. 75 PER CENT OF THE KHAJURAHO SCULPTURES DEPICT ORAL SEX.



been developed to have physical relations with a pregnant woman or a prostitute. They call all unnatural acts of satisfying the genitalia as oral sex which is completely wrong and misleading.

If we define oral sex as love without using sex organs, then this definition will be very narrow because then it will be called deep emotional love, which cannot be sex.

The correct and excellent definition of oral sex is that in this, the sex organ of any one partner is stimulated or satisfied by the other sex partner without using his sex organ. That means sex in which only

one partner's sex organ is used is called oral sex. Oral sex can be done with one's own hands, by a person of the opposite sex, or by a person of the same sex. Thus, we see that according to this definition, not every homosexual relationship is an oral sex relationship, but masturbation is oral sex.

Friends, this is the oral sex with which Satyavati attracted Rishi Parashar; this is the game I am going to teach you today. It is most important for the college-going boys and girls today to know this.

We often hear girls complaining that their boyfriend broke up their relationship when she refused to give them sex. Girls who keep their

IF WE DEFINE ORAL SEX AS LOVE WITHOUT USING SEX ORGANS, THEN THIS DEFINITION WILL BE VERY NARROW BECAUSE THEN IT WILL BE CALLED DEEP EMOTIONAL LOVE, WHICH CANNOT BE SEX. THE CORRECT DEFINITION IS THAT IN THIS, THE SEX ORGAN OF ANY ONE PARTNER IS STIMULATED BY THE PARTNER WITHOUT USING HIS SEX ORGAN.

pink, and juice-drenched like those in porn films. In the same way, the penis is also not smooth and shiny like an eggplant emoji on WhatsApp. Genitals are not beautiful like your sex partner. Since during the oral game, your eyes will be focused on the private parts of your sexual partner, you should be prepared for their ugliness.

Dirt: Everyone has some kind of smell. During natural sex, this smell boosts our sexual arousal but as I have already told you, oral sex is unnatural, it has been invented by man for his entertainment, hence, the taste and smell felt during this are unpleasant.

Before oral sex, we must freshen up by taking a shower or at least clean the genitals thoroughly with soap and water. If you are in a hurry, you can use a wet towel or odourless tissue paper to clean them. Avoid perfumes or deodorants as they can irritate your partner's genitals or spoil the taste of your mouth. Friends, the taste of any human's genitals is not delicious like cookies or cream, rather it is unpleasant. Generally, during oral sex, you can make the game delicious by applying pineapple, papaya, nutmeg, cinnamon, or celery-flavoured cream or gel on your lover's genitals. You can use flavoured condoms also during oral sex.

Safety: Indeed, we cannot get pregnant through oral sex even if we want to, but the risk of STI (sexually transmitted infection) in oral sex is higher than in normal sex. STIs are spread through genital contact with skin or sores. STIs can occur through contact with vaginal, penile, or anal discharge. There is a risk of spreading STIs to the foetus due to oral sex during pregnancy.

Diseases caused by STIs are:

- Gonorrhea
- Chlamydia
- Herpes simplex virus (HSV-1 and 2)
- Heat or Syphilis
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Before knowing anything about oral sex, first of all, know that it is more stimulating and pleasurable than penile-vaginal penetrative sex. It is very important to know some basic things before oral sex:

It's unattractive: During oral sex, you have to stimulate your sexual partner's erogenous zones by your mouth or hand. Friends, if you are getting acquainted with this game for the first time, then know that the vulva is not always beautiful,

bodies hidden like treasure, want to preserve their virginity; they do not find people who will hang around them, wagging their tails for them like a pet, licking their soles, or helping them cheat in the exams. Oral sex is like a solution, a bridge between this. This not only keeps your virginity intact but also keeps your boyfriend interested.



control over their emotions. Arousing these insolent men is like waking up a dragon in deep sleep. These men tempt you to take off your clothes, show your breasts, or be forced to be naked but you have to be patient. You should wear such clothes so that your sexual partner cannot put his hands inside your clothes against your will. During oral sex, you should not give your sexual partner the freedom to

If you are a sex addict, then you must know how important it is to get tested regularly for STIs. You should also have the option of regular STI testing in your medical insurance plan. It is very important to visit a dentist, urologist and gynaecologist for regular checkups. This checkup is also very important for oral cancer and HIV.

These symptoms should be taken very seriously after oral sex:

- Sore throat
- Open wounds and warts in or around the mouth, throat
- Swollen lymph nodes

Friends, animals do not know oral sex; oral sex is one of the greatest inventions of man. Oral sex has an invaluable contribution to population control and protecting social rules. During oral sex, all our senses are active, hence, it is very important to know how to control it.

If you are ready to show off your abilities to your sexual partner then let's learn some act to create fun and excitement. I am going to tell you the exact methods by which Satyavati first made Rishi Parashar and then, the Maharaja of Hastinapur crazy.

Tools And Techniques

Since you have to protect your virginity, it is important to use your hands, heart, ears, eyes, tongue, mouth, and nose together, and in the best way. While stripping your partner, keep kissing and caressing him until he stands like an Eiffel Tower.

In most cases, this is very easy but some men can make you cry. It is not so easy to excite men who have

THE RISK OF STI (SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION) IN ORAL SEX IS HIGHER THAN IN NORMAL SEX. STIS ARE SPREAD THROUGH GENITAL CONTACT WITH SKIN OR SORES. STIS CAN OCCUR THROUGH CONTACT WITH VAGINAL, PENILE, OR ANAL DISCHARGE.



open the zip of your pants; however, you should give him the freedom to touch you above the clothes.

Friends, if you want to be called the greatest queen of oral sex after Queen Satyavati, then you need to learn every detail and procedure of it.

Use Of Tongue And Mouth

Commonly, it is also called a blow job. Remove the skin from the tip of the penis and touch it with the tip of your tongue. Keep trying to make him angry by moving your tongue around the part that looks like the head of the penis from below and also by touching it with your fingers.

Give gentle strokes to the wrinkles in the skin where the shaft connects to the head (frenulum). Starting at the head, continue sucking the entire shaft, taking it as deep as possible.

Use Of Hands

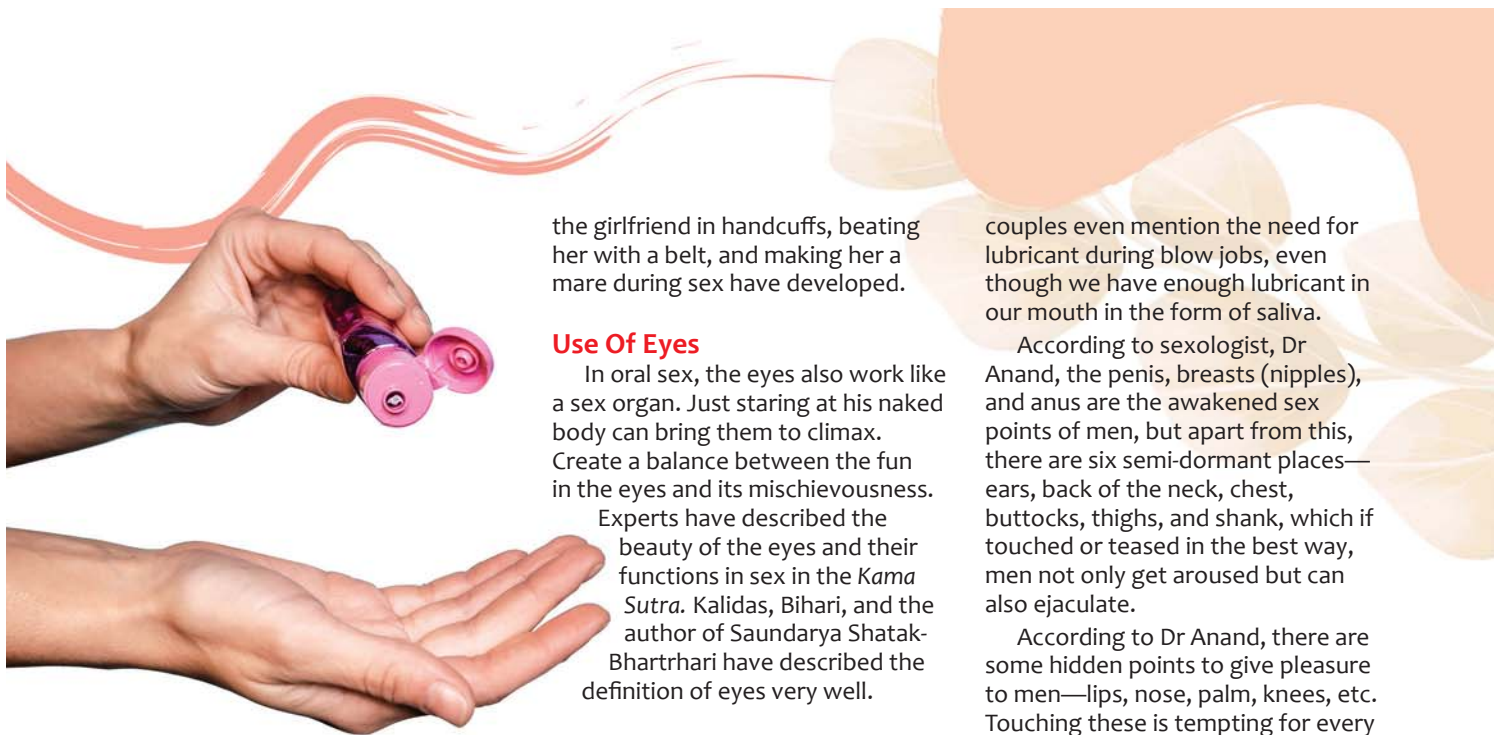
The palms of both your hands should keep caressing your partner's thighs, waist, and buttocks. If you want your mouth and tongue to get rest, and even you do not want to use your vagina, then using hands and palms is the best option. The gist of this activity is that you should masturbate your sexual partner with your hands.

Use Of Breath

Experts say that the touch of a woman's warm and moist breath on a man's eyes, eyelids, lips, face, and genitals have a magical effect. If you do not have a problem of bad breath, then you should use this. If you have bad breath, then use mint-flavored mouth freshener, gargle with it, and thereafter, do it.

Sobs

Remember that your moans will double the pleasure of your sexual partner while giving a happy expression on your face and a prickling sensation. The sex life of many women is good only because they scream a lot during sex. The human mind is more dangerous than the devil, it enjoys watching its sexual partner writhing in pain. We sympathise with the one we love, but



the girlfriend in handcuffs, beating her with a belt, and making her a mare during sex have developed.

Use Of Eyes

In oral sex, the eyes also work like a sex organ. Just staring at his naked body can bring them to climax. Create a balance between the fun in the eyes and its mischievousness.

Experts have described the beauty of the eyes and their functions in sex in the *Kama Sutra*. Kalidas, Bihari, and the author of *Saundarya Shatak-Bhartrhari* have described the definition of eyes very well.

Use Of Lubricant

Lubricant is most needed in oral sex. Some people improve the taste of their mouth by using jam, jelly, or milk cream instead of lube. Our sex organs generate lubricant during natural sex to facilitate friction. We will have to arrange lubricant ourselves during oral sex. Some

couples even mention the need for lubricant during blow jobs, even though we have enough lubricant in our mouth in the form of saliva.

According to sexologist, Dr Anand, the penis, breasts (nipples), and anus are the awakened sex points of men, but apart from this, there are six semi-dormant places—ears, back of the neck, chest, buttocks, thighs, and shank, which if touched or teased in the best way, men not only get aroused but can also ejaculate.

According to Dr Anand, there are some hidden points to give pleasure to men—lips, nose, palm, knees, etc. Touching these is tempting for every man. Sex worker Roma, says that making a man feel pleasure is much easier than making a woman feel pleasure. Their average climax time is also almost half that of women. She explains that it is not as difficult for a woman to have sex with more than one man in a single night as it is for a man to try again after climax.

as soon as we realise that suffering is pleasurable, we are tempted to inflict more pain on that person. The man's excitement, grip, and arrogance increase due to the sobbing of the woman. The intensity of your sobs should increase with time. In European countries, games like tying

Some special asanas for oral sex

Psychologist Dr Kajal shares a very interesting study. According to her, if girls have physical relations with their boyfriends, their relationship does not last long. If girls have only oral sex with their boyfriends, then 90 per cent of such cases last for a long time and even result in marriage. Further, she provides interesting information. According to her, some girls provide oral pleasure to their boyfriends only till before arousal and after that, they are experts in refusing them.

The interest of the boyfriend in these girls is fivefold. Boyfriends follow these girls like pet dogs; they can even give up their lives for them.

Some special asanas for oral sex have been described in the *Kama Sutra*:

Open wide: Ask your partner to stand, leaning against a wall or cupboard. Ask them to spread their legs and then, sit near their

legs in *ustrasana* and tie your hair at the back. In this asana, touch your partner with your hands like the sacred bell of a temple, your friend will not be able to forget you even if he wants to.

In this asana, your partner's hands and legs are completely free, he can force you to give pressure by holding your ponytail like the reins of a horse. He can see your beauty peeking out from your sleeves. His hands can enter your clothes. Due to the above reasons this asana is a bit unsafe.

Sit and shuck: In simple words, it can also be called chair asana. In this posture, the woman can behave like a dominant.

You can feel more free and safe by tying your sexual partner's hands to a chair.

This asana is best to keep the man within limits. In this posture, your sexual partner can neither peep into your clothes nor insert his hands against your will.

Laid-back love: This is like *sukhasana*. This will provide the most comfort and satisfaction to your sexual partner even though it involves low levels of stimulation. The biggest fear in this asana is our weakness. Most of the girls experience that while having oral sex in this posture, they are unable to stop themselves and soon, the matter reaches the point of taking off clothes and having physical relations.

Friends, after knowing everything about oral sex, now we are in a position where we should execute it immediately, but wait for a minute. Like every act of sex, mutual understanding is very important in this too. Sex is also an important activity in a human's daily life. You must recognise your sexual partner's willingness, reluctance, and comfort level for each procedure. The tone of your asking should be entertaining and stress-free.

We

Teenache



Q & A

I AM A 17-YEAR-OLD GIRL AND I overheard a girl call me ugly in the washroom once. I have a dark complexion and I'm a little plump. My mother always gave me a hard time about my weight and tried putting me on a diet also. I already feel so insecure about myself and can't get myself to talk to boys. I have two close friends and we get called nerds at times in school. But usually, none of it used to faze me as I told myself that once I go to college, I would wear stylish clothes and be more confident. But now, her comments really hurt me and I don't know if anyone will ever be interested in dating me.

You are beautiful regardless of your complexion or weight. It does not count what others say about you, it is just because of the societal standards of beauty. Your mother might be giving you a hard time about your weight because she knows that some people make fun of plump girls. Her interest is to care for you but it's misplaced. You need to start practising some affirmative phrases and tell yourself that you are not defined by your looks. If you are kind and loving, people will see and appreciate that. What the girl said in the washroom reflects her own lack of respect for people. Moreover, do not worry about finding someone to date right now. The right person will find you beautiful even with your dark complexion and weight, and they will like you for your personality. You and your friends should stick by each other, as long as you support each other, you do not need anyone else's validation.

I'M A 19-YEAR-OLD GIRL AND RECENTLY discovered masturbation. I was very shut off to sex in school and my friends didn't talk openly about it. But now in college, it's a different

story. Everyone talks so frankly about sex and orgasms. Then when I was watching a Netflix show with a friend, I saw a scene about masturbation and became curious. When I tried it, I was surprised by how satisfied I felt. I can't stop doing it now. I think there's something wrong with me. I get turned on and immediately think about masturbating. I'm afraid I'll be judged if someone finds out.

There shouldn't be any shame or guilt if you're masturbating. It's normal and a valid form of sexually satisfying yourself. In fact, it's part of having a healthy sex life, even if you're not sexually active with others. You should feel free to do it as much or as little as you wish. Society has misconstrued it as something evil because of how regressive it is in general towards



sex. But attitudes are changing and people are more openly talking about sex. Even if people don't talk about it, chances are they also indulge in some form of self-satisfaction. This is your personal matter and you do not need to talk about this to anyone if you don't feel comfortable. There's very little possibility of people finding out if you're doing it in private.

IN MY SCHOOL, MY CLASS TEACHER made me switch seats and now I sit with a boy who is constantly teasing and pranking me. I am a 15-year-old girl and I am very studious. But this boy keeps distracting me. Sometimes, he hides my stationery and acts like he doesn't know where it went. Other times, he pushes me or talks to me during class and the teacher ends up scolding us. My friends are also teasing me saying that he likes me. I don't like his behaviour. What should I do?

If you do not like your desk mate's behaviour and if you're getting distracted, then first try talking to him. Tell him you need to focus on your studies and so should he. Try becoming his friend, maybe he will be more open to what you say. If he still doesn't listen and continues his behaviour, then talk to your class teacher about changing your desk mate. Tell her that you are worried that your grades will drop if you continue sitting with him. Talk to your parents about what you are facing in class and they might also put in a word with your teacher.

This column is especially for teenagers. Adolescence can, we know, be a trying and confusing time. There are so many questions which seem to evade solutions. A wrong decision, or an indiscreet move, can spell disaster and ruin a life. Share your problem, worry or doubt with us and **WE** will help you find a way out — to a happier, healthier and more successful adult life.

Send your problems to:
Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110 055, Womansera.com

The Wonder Machine

Trials and tribulations of using the washing machine.

By Rama Kashyap



“It washes, it rinses, it even dries your clothes... You are ready for the show!” In mid 80s, the commercial of an Indian brand that introduced washing machine in the country caught my fancy. The company has long been closed down but the jingle still rings my mind. No beating, no rubbing and no rinsing to be done by hand, just load the clothes into the washing drum and the clothes come out clean and bright in a jiffy.

Amazing! A pile of laundry could be handled without any manual labour! I could barely understand how a machine could do all the actions required in washing till the time I actually saw a live demonstration of its working. Back then, washing machine was an unfamiliar concept in India. A couple of multinational companies that started their business in India had to try hard to create a market for their product in the country. I can't ever forget the demo organised by a well-known brand of washing machines in the Gym Hall of the college during the preparatory holidays for the potential customers, us, the faculty members. In wonderment, I saw all the operations of washing, rinsing and drying being carried out by the machine. Needless to say, I was machine stuck. Impressed with the 'wonder machine', I bought a fully

AMAZING! A PILE OF LAUNDRY COULD BE HANDLED WITHOUT ANY MANUAL LABOUR!

I COULD BARELY UNDERSTAND HOW A MACHINE COULD DO ALL THE ACTIONS REQUIRED IN WASHING.

automatic washing machine. I was jubilant as I thought that the machine would liberate me from the jhik-jhik with the *kamwalli bai* and her shoddy washing. But, little did I realise that I would be at the receiving end. Ever since I brought home a stylish, trendy washing machine, it had been a Pandora's Box for me. Every day, there would be a new problem and a challenge to deal with. Whites no longer remained white, they started turning pale. Every now and then a coloured garment would bleed, turning all the other light clothes in the same hue. It was, indeed, most frustrating to discover the pile of laundry tainted in the shade of blue one day, and red, the other. My two little brats made their clothes so dirty that the stains won't go away. I might have been able to say good-bye to the maid but could not bid adieu to my washing woes. I was

under constant stress to get the desired results. I realised the magic shown in the commercials didn't work in the real world.

My most embarrassing moment was when my school going ten-year-old son complained, "Mummy, how come the uniform of other boys' is white, a little bluish, but mine is yellowish?" It was too much of an insult for me to bear. I decided to sort out the mess. Determined to bring the whiteness back in the whites, I started washing white and coloured garments separately. I began to use bleach and Robin to give a slight bluish tinge to the whites. I can't help mentioning the super quality detergent that I started using. I learnt the art of washing clothes in a machine in a hard way through trials and tribulations but it was worth the effort.

Ever since I have acquired the knack of washing clothes in a machine, piles of laundry don't bother me. I load the clothes in the washing machine at my own convenience, and the rest is taken care of by the machine. I feel liberated—free from the drudgery of washing clothes and also from the tantrums of my maid. Needless to say, I love the 'wonder machine' and am enjoying the freedom it has given me.

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THE Asian Affair

A journey through culinary treasures of Asia.

By Roma Ghosh

KOREAN TTEOKBOKKI - RICE CYLINDERS IN KOREAN SPICY SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

For The Rice Cakes

1 ½ cups rice flour
Salt
2 tsp oil
300 ml water

For The Sauce

3 tsp Gochujang Korean sauce
2 tsp sesame oil
1 cup cabbage chopped
1 large onion chopped
½ cup spring onions
1 tsp soya sauce
1 tsp sugar
Sesame seeds - optional

METHOD

Prepare the rice cylinders by heating 300 ml of water. Add salt to taste and slowly mix in the rice flour, stirring all the time till the water is absorbed and the mixture is grainy. Turn off the heat. Cover with a lid and allow it to cool in its warmth. Allow to cool and when just warm and when you can knead with your fingers, knead into a dough. Brush oil over the dough. Divide into 5-6 portions. Shape each portion into a circle and then roll each circle on a flat surface.

Korean
Tteokbokki - Rice
Cylinders In Korean
Spicy Sauce





Sri Lankan
Mushroom Curry In
Coconut Milk

Use oil on your palms to give the dough a shape. This makes it easier. With the help of both your palms roll into long thin cylinders of half-inch circumference. Now cut into 2-inch long cylinders. Or make small balls and roll each ball into a small cylinder. Steam these.

Start preparing the ingredients for the sauce. Heat the oil, stir fry the onions and cabbage for 2 minutes adding soya sauce. Keep aside. Make the sauce by heating 2 cups of water in a pan. Add the Gochujang sauce (in case you do not have the sauce, you can substitute it with Schezwan chutney which is spicy. But this will not give the authentic taste).

Blend the sauce into the water. And also add in the stir-fried cabbage and onions. Bring to a simmer.

Add the soya sauce and sugar. Add the rice cylinders and simmer for 2-3 minutes to thicken the gravy. Sprinkle sesame seeds and serve hot.

SRI LANKAN MUSHROOM CURRY IN COCONUT MILK

INGREDIENTS

200 gms button mushrooms
Salt
1 medium-sized onion finely chopped
1 inch cinnamon stick
2 tsp ginger garlic paste
3-4 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp red chilli powder
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp cumin powder
Curry leaves
300 ml coconut milk

For The Tempering

2 tsp ghee
1 tsp mustard seeds
Few curry leaves
1 tsp red chilli powder

METHOD

Wash the mushrooms well. Keep whole but prick each mushroom with the tip of a knife. Keep aside.

Heat oil in a pan. Add onions and fry till translucent. Add the cinnamon and the mushrooms and stir fry the mushrooms till light golden brown.

Lower the heat. Mix in the ginger garlic paste and the spice powders. Stir gently to blend. Mix in 4-5 tbsp of water and bring to a simmer.

Add the coconut milk and curry leaves and cook on low heat for 3-4 minutes or till the gravy has reached the thickness you want.

Heat ghee for the tempering. Add the mustard seeds and curry leaves and allow to crackle. Put off the heat and then add the chilli powder.

We just want the chilli powder to give the colour. Pour this tempering over the curry and serve with rice, pickle and papadam.

SPICY BHUTANESE JANGBULI

INGREDIENTS

200 gms hand-pulled flat noodles
3 tbsp white oil
150 gms scallions chopped
100 gms fresh garlic
Salt
3 tsp red chilli powder or less as per
paste
2 tsp pepper powder

METHOD

You can make the flat noodles at home or purchase hand-pulled noodles.

Bring 500 ml of water to a boil, and add salt. Add the homemade noodles. Bring to a simmer and cook noodles until cooked but not extra soft. Drain from the water and wash under the tap water to remove excess starch. Keep aside in the strainer.

Heat oil in a pan and add the scallions. Stir fry for 1 minute. Mix in the fresh garlic and the red chilli powder. Mix gently, adding 2-3 tsp of oil. Lower the heat and add the cooked noodles. Toss all the

Spicy Bhutanese
Jangbuli

ingredients so that they mix into the noodles. Mix in the pepper powder. Toss again. Serve hot. This recipe is spicy, you can adjust the spices as per you want.

BHUTANESE KEWA DATSHI

INGREDIENTS

400 gms big-sized potatoes

1 medium-sized onion - optional
2 tbsp mustard oil
1 bay leaf
2 dried red chillies
Half tsp turmeric powder
2-3 tsp chopped garlic
200 ml milk
200 gms grated cheese or cheese
slices
Coriander for garnishing

METHOD

Peel the potatoes and cut them into medium-sized pieces. Wash and keep aside. Heat oil, add the dry spices and allow to splutter. Add the onions and fry till translucent (if you want the dish to be strictly vegetarian you can avoid the onions and garlic). Mix in the garlic and the potatoes. Stir fry in medium heat for 2-3 minutes. Mix in the spice powders. Blend gently. Add the milk and allow the potatoes to simmer in the milk till tender but not overcooked. Lower the heat, and mix in the cheese. Stir gently. Put off the heat and allow the cheese to melt. Garnish with coriander and serve with rice or paratha.

Bhutanese Kewa
Datshi



SRI LANKAN BATTER FRIED MUSHROOMS

INGREDIENTS

200 gms button mushrooms or oyster mushrooms
1 medium-sized capsicum - deseeded and cut into small pieces
A few curry leaves finely chopped
3 cloves garlic chopped
1 medium-sized onion finely chopped
Salt
2 tsp red chilli paste
2 green chilli chopped
½ tsp pepper powder
4-5 tablespoons rice flour
2 tsp cornflour
Oil for deep frying

METHOD

Mix all the ingredients in a large bowl. Add 6-7 tsp or more of lukewarm water. Blend with your fingers till the batter is fluffy.



Sri Lankan Batter
Fried Mushrooms

Heat oil for deep frying. Drop small portions of the mixture and fry small pakoras a few at a time. Fry till golden brown on both sides and crispy.

Serve with salad and green chutney or chilli sauce.

You can adjust the chillies in this recipe as per your taste.

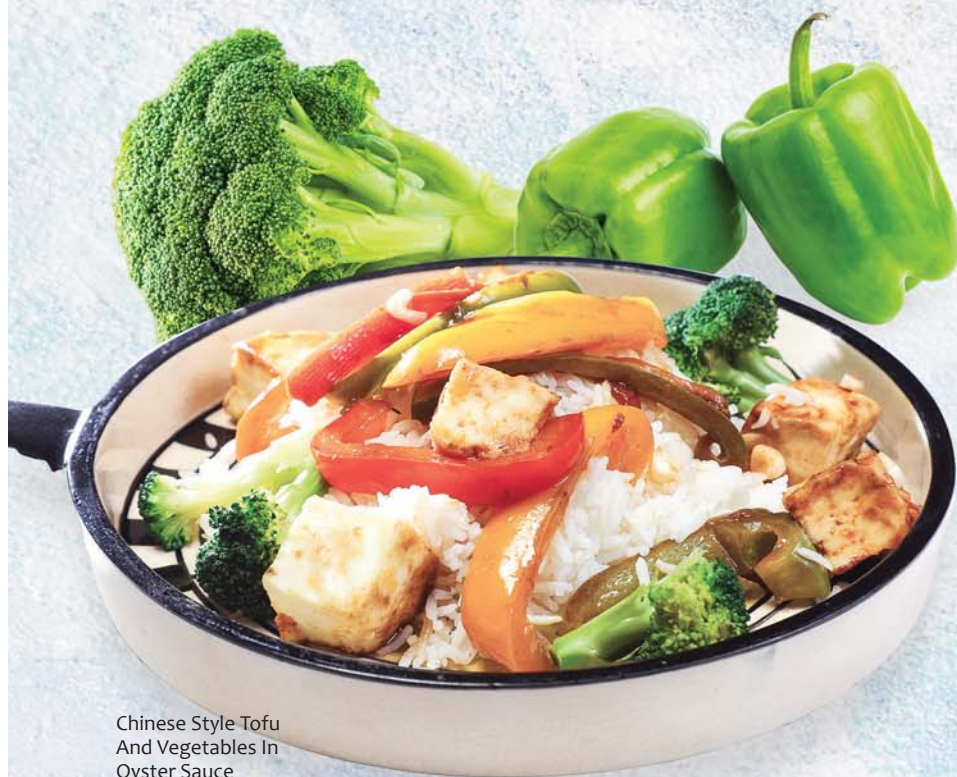
CHINESE STYLE TOFU AND VEGETABLES IN OYSTER SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

200 gms tofu cut into cubes
4 tsp olive oil
100 gms carrots cut into strips
100 gms beans - threaded and cut into one-inch pieces
150 gms mixed colour bell peppers cut into medium pieces- seeds removed
2-3 cloves chopped garlic
2 tsp oyster sauce
1-2 tsp honey as per taste
1-2 tsps chilli sauce
1 tbsp tomato sauce

METHOD

Heat the pan. Fry the tofu pieces. Remove and keep aside. In the same pan, add the garlic, and stir fry for one minute. Mix in the beans and carrots and stir fry till crunchy and tender but not overcooked. Now, mix in the bell peppers and fry for a minute. Mix in the other sauce, and stir to blend. Mix in the tofu pieces and serve with steamed rice or noodles.



Chinese Style Tofu
And Vegetables In
Oyster Sauce

MALAYSIAN IKAN BAWAL KICAP FRIED POMFRET IN SOYA SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

For The Fish

2-3 medium-sized silver pomfret
fish - kept full but cleaned

For The Marination

4-5 tbsp curd
3 tbsp grated coconut
Salt
2 tsp ginger garlic paste
1 tsp or more chilli paste
3 tsp sesame oil
Oil for pan frying or deep frying

For The Stir Fry

3 tsp sesame oil
3-4 spring onions chopped
2 tomatoes chopped
3-4 cloves garlic chopped
1 tsp soya sauce

METHOD

Make insertions into each fish. Sprinkle salt and keep aside for 10 minutes. In the meantime, mix the

Malaysian Ikan Bawal Kicap Fried Pomfret In Soya Sauce

ingredients for the marinade and use this to marinate the fish pieces. Keep aside.

The fish in this recipe is usually lightly coated with cornflour and fried in oil. But you can pan-fry the fish without adding cornflour. Turning the fish once or twice very gently, taking care not to break the fish. The other option is to marinate the fish and bake it in an oven, again without coating it in cornstarch/ cornflour.

The fish is ready. Now prepare the topping or stir fry. Heat the

oil and add the chopped spring onions, chopped garlic, chopped tomatoes and stir fry. Spread over the cooked fish top with soya sauce and serve at once.



KOREAN-STYLE STEAMED POTATO AND BUTTONS IN HOT GARLIC SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

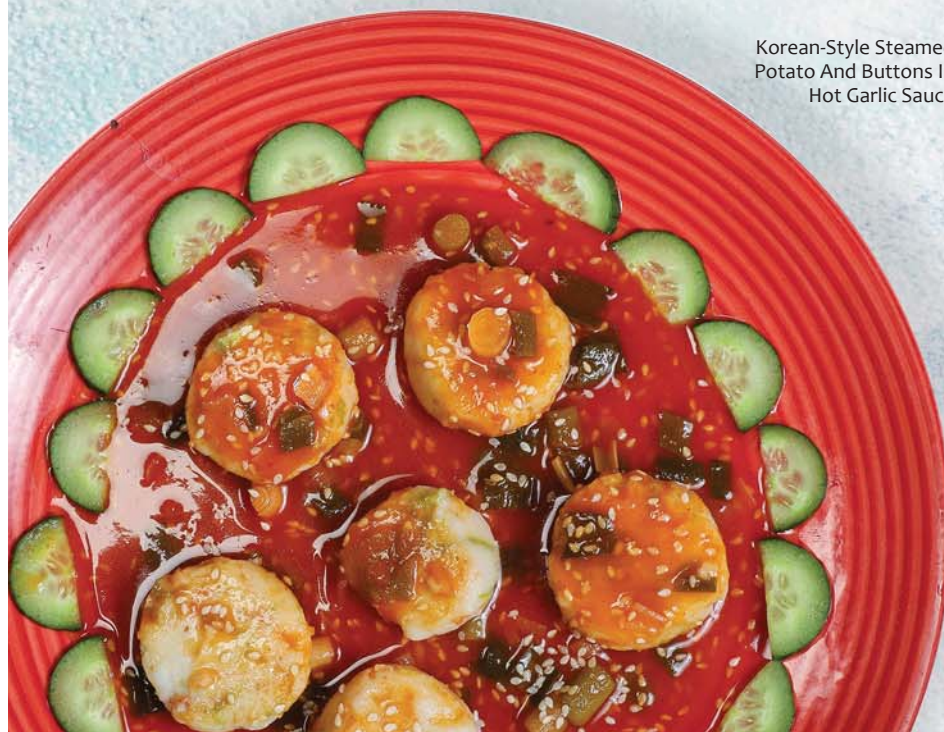
For The Potato Garlic Buttons

2 cups mashed potatoes
Salt
4-5 tbsp cornflour
½ cup carrots shredded
½ cup capsicum shredded

For The Sauce Mixture

2 tsp olive oil
4-5 cloves garlic chopped
2 tsp chilli sauce
3 tbsp tomato ketchup
1 tsp soya sauce
2 tsp roasted sesame seeds
2 tsp coriander leaves- optional

Korean-Style Steamed Potato And Buttons In Hot Garlic Sauce



METHOD

To prepare the buttons, mix the mashed potatoes, shredded carrots and capsicum, salt, corn flour in a mixing bowl. Add water a little at a time and knead into a very smooth dough. With no lumps, the dough should be extremely pliable. By adding the veggies the potato buttons look more colourful. We have added this twist to the potato buttons.

Divide the dough into small portions. Work gently with each portion and shape each portion into a round button. Now steam these buttons in a steamer for 10 minutes. Remove and leave aside.

Prepare the sauce by heating oil, adding the garlic, and the sauces with half a cup of water. Bring to a simmer. Mix in the potato buttons. Stir gently. Top with sesame and serve as a snack.

BHUTANESE JAJU - SPINACH SOUP WITH MILK

INGREDIENTS

2 tomatoes chopped

Bhutanese Jaju -
Spinach Soup With
Milk

2 tsp white oil
3 cloves garlic chopped
2 cups spinach chopped - you could
use a smaller quantity if you want
2 cups vegetable stock
2 cups milk
Salt, pepper to taste

METHOD

Heat the oil, add the garlic and fry for 30 seconds. Mix in the tomatoes and fry for 2-3 minutes. Mix in the stock and allow to simmer. Season with salt and

pepper. Lower the heat. Mix in the lukewarm milk. Allow to simmer for 2 minutes. Add the chopped spinach. Cover with a lid for 2 minutes. Put off the heat and serve.

SRI LANKAN COCONUT SAMBAL WITH HOT RICE

INGREDIENTS

For The Sambal

200 g of freshly grated coconut
5-6 dried red chilli
1 medium-sized onion chopped
finely
2 tsp lime juice
½ tsp sugar
Salt to taste

METHOD

Use a pestle. Place the red chillies and salt, and pound to a coarse paste. Add the onions and pound again. Add the sugar and pound once more. Remove to a bowl and add lime juice. Serve with hot ghee bhaat.

Sri Lankan
Coconut Sambal
With Hot Rice



Sri Lankan Bean Mallum

SRI LANKAN BEAN MALLUM

INGREDIENTS

500 gms French beans
3 tbsp rapeseed oil
4 cloves garlic chopped
2 green chillies chopped
2 tsp lime juice
Salt
1 ½ cups grated coconut

METHOD

Heat oil. Add the garlic and green chilli. Fry for a minute.

Add the beans which have been threaded and cut into very tiny pieces. Add salt and cook the vegetables over low to medium heat, covering with a lid so that the beans are tender and crunchy. Once crunchy and tender, mix in the lime juice. Add the coconut and stir fry for 2 minutes. Serve with paratha or rice.

HONG KONG-STYLE FISH BALLS IN CURRY

Hong Kong-Style Fish Balls In Curry



INGREDIENTS

For The Prawn Balls

250 shrimps which are without tails or heads and de-veined
150 gms boneless fish
2 tsp chopped green garlic
1 tsp chopped coriander
2 Egg whites
Salt
3 tsp cornflour

For The Curry

4 tsp sesame oil
1 medium-sized onion chopped
Few curry leaves
3-4 cloves garlic chopped
2 cups chicken stock
2 tsp fish sauce
2 tsp cornflour for thickening the gravy

For The Spice Paste

2 tsp curry powder
1 tsp chilli powder
1 tsp soya sauce

METHOD

To make the fish balls, blend the prawns, boneless fish, and garlic into a fine paste in a mixer. Use a few tsp of stock to facilitate the grinding. Remove to a mixing bowl. Add chopped green garlic and coriander. Add salt and cornflour to bind the fish mixture. Use water on your fingers to shape the fish balls from the mixture. Prepare the round fish balls and place them in a steamer. Steam for 12-15 minutes.

For the gravy, heat oil, add onions, garlic and fry till translucent. In a separate bowl, mix all the ingredients for spice paste and add to the onions. Fry for a minute. Now, lower the heat and mix in the stock and fish sauce. Bring to a simmer. Your gravy is ready. Now add the steamed prawn balls.

But if you want the gravy to be thicker, mix cornflour with a little water, add to the gravy and stir to thicken.



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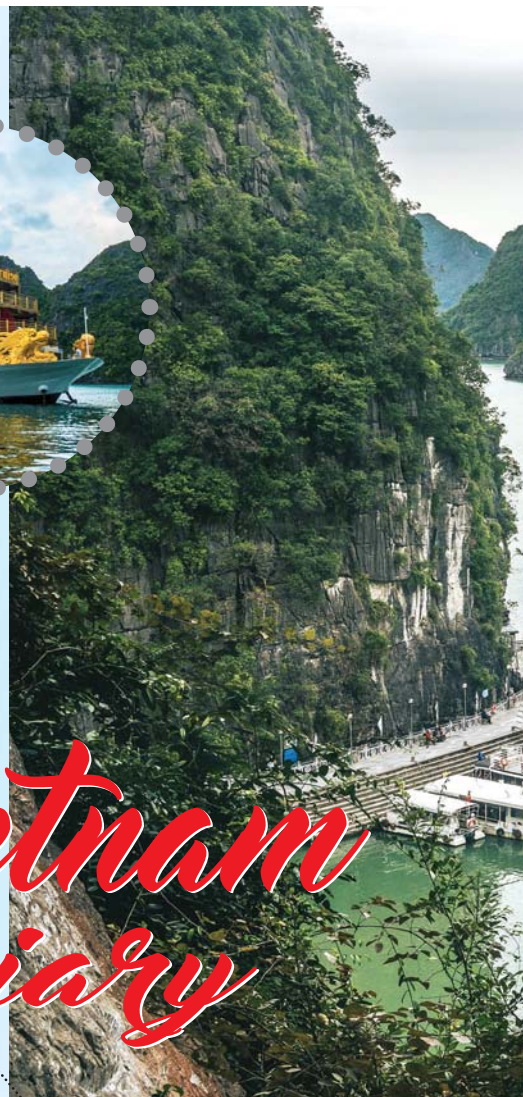


Vietnam

My Vietnam Diary

Spectacular islands and the capital city.

By Amrinder Kaur Bajaj



North

You are going to Vietnam in July?" asked a friend incredulously.

"It's off season and the tickets are cheaper."

"There is a reason why it is off season. It is the season of typhoons and storms, of rain and ruination of your trip."

I had told the same to the one in charge of our doctor group. As I was a single senior citizen, I did not fancy travelling solo, especially out of India. Anything could happen in

a foreign country, so I went along with their foolish plan, as did the rest. The weather forecast in Vietnam during the seven days of our stay was heavy rain and thunder for three days, storm for two days and overcast sky for two days. Not a single day of sunshine. To cap it all, there was a typhoon in Ha Long Bay for three consecutive days before our departure and cruises on the bay had to be cancelled, for, as I was filled with misgivings, it was to be our first stop after landing in the capital, Hanoi.



Beautiful islands of Ha Long Bay.

After the chaos and queues at the Delhi airport, Hanoi airport looked empty and abandoned. In fact, our plane (Vietnamese Airlines) was the only one that landed there in the early hours of the morning. We went through the formalities quickly and were soon out in the sunshine! Thankfully, no rain to douse our enthusiasm.

However, a four and a half hours bus ride to Ha Long Bay, which was 164 km south east of Hanoi, seemed daunting after a night cramped up in a plane seat but eventually, did not turn out to be that bad. Our first rest stop was at a huge beautiful place where, after a delicious breakfast at a restaurant, we watched the war-handicapped people embroider beautiful wall hangings, make sceneries, bowls with shells on lacquer that were being sold at a rather steep price. We browsed

THERE WAS A TYPHOON IN HA LONG BAY FOR THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS BEFORE OUR DEPARTURE AND CRUISES ON THE BAY HAD TO BE CANCELLED, FOR, AS I WAS FILLED WITH MISGIVINGS, IT WAS TO BE OUR FIRST STOP AFTER LANDING IN THE CAPITAL, HANOI.

through the shops, bought the cheap caps and fridge magnets; I also bought a smart Kipling bag and we set off on our journey.

As Vietnam was famous for South Sea pearls, our next stop was

at a place where they were being cultured. On various tables were piled heaps of oysters in small tubs filled with sea water. In fascination, we watched petite Vietnamese ladies insert little pellets of mother of pearl into the oysters, along with a thin strip of 'membrane' that helped make a pearl. A grain of sand is the irritant in natural pearls but one has to break open thousands of them to get a single pearl the natural way. It takes from one to three years for the oyster to weave its nacre around the foreign body to make a lustrous pearl.

At the final table, oysters were being split open to reveal pearls of various sizes and colours – white, pale pink, grey, gold, depending upon the colour of the inner lining of the shell. The golden ones were the most expensive. Though their beauty was beyond compare, it saddened me to think that yet another living



Cruise ships at Ha Long Bay.

being sacrificed its life for human avarice. After that, while those with their pockets full of dollars bought some of the necklaces, ear rings, rings from the vast showroom, I could only gaze wistfully at their matchless beauty. I did like and could afford a beautiful bracelet of mother of pearl but it was two sizes big for me.

Ha Long Bay

However, what I had paid for and could enjoy to my heart's content was the beauty of Ha Long Bay, one of the seven natural wonders of the world. It was declared a UNESCO Heritage Site in 1994. Ha Long Bay, called Vinh Ha Long in Vietnamese, means "Where the Dragon descends to the Sea".

According to a legend, a dragon stomped the Earth with such force that mountains crumbled into valleys that filled with water, with only the peaks of mountains arising out its depths, while another legend asserts that a mighty dragon tore up the earth with its tail creating depths flooded with water, into which it finally jumped. Either way, Tarasque, a dragon-like marine creature is said

WE SAW TALL WHITE LIMESTONE ISLANDS CAPPED WITH GREEN RAINFORESTS THAT ROSE STRAIGHT UPWARDS FROM THE EMERALD WATERS OF THE BAY. THERE WERE 1969 OF SUCH ISLANDS IN THE BAY AND IT TOOK OUR EARTH FIVE HUNDRED MILLION YEARS TO CREATE THIS BIT OF PARADISE.

to inhabit the bay. Quite like the monster of Loch Ness in Scotland, people come to look for the dragon but never find it.

We were taken by a ferry to our cruise ship, the luxurious Golden Dragon. The weather gods were kind to us for the sun shined bright, the breeze was crisp and our cruise ship was beautiful, both inside and out. We settled down to a Vietnamese lunch, chiefly of shrimps, papaya chicken salad, sweet yogurt, bread,

rice, chicken curry, and flower face crabs. We savoured the delicious meal along with the ambience, for our ship had set sail and through the large glass windows, we beheld tall white limestone islands capped with green rainforests that rose straight upwards from the emerald waters of the Bay that was spread over 1500 square kilometres. There were 1969 of such islands in the Bay and it took our Earth five hundred million years to create this bit of paradise.

Our room on the ship was comfortable; it had a balcony from which we got a stunning view of the green waters with towering islands that glided past as we cruised along but, we had no time to stand and stare. The ship had docked in midwaters and we could barely bathe and change from our travel clothes to fresh ones before we donned life jackets to board a ferry that would take us to Sung Sot Cave, also called Surprise Cave.

Sung Sot Cave

Situated in Bo Hòn Island, Sung Sot Cave was discovered by the French in 1901. They were either surprised to find the cave itself or,

surprised to see such a big cave after such a narrow entrance. It measures 10,000 square metres, 200 metres long and about 80 metres wide at its broadest point making it the largest of all the Ha Long caves. As the cave was situated 25 metres above sea level, we had to climb up 170 steep stone steps to reach its entrance.

It was divided into two parts; the first, called the 'waiting room' was as large as a theatre hall with stalactites of various sizes, shapes and colours hanging from the high ceiling. It also had a 'window' hewn in the limestone, through which a shaft of natural light illuminated the cave giving it an ethereal glow, though, artificial lights, wooden steps and railings aided the tourists in going down and up the rugged floor of the cave.

In order to reach the second chamber, the 'Serene Castle', one has to walk through a narrow passage. The chamber itself was large with a very high ceiling and interesting rock formations in which one could identify shapes of various animals. A rock formation shaped like a horse with a sword, is linked to the legend of Thanh Giong who protected locals from aggressors, demons and evil spirits. After he completed his work, he went to heaven, leaving behind a stone horse and sword to protect them. The weather was sultry and I was utterly exhausted, dehydrated and drenched in sweat by the time we finally exited the cave. Needless to say, I was as happy to get out of the cave as I was to go in.

On the way back we stopped at a tiny beach, a block full of Westerners in swimwear on the sand and in the water. Without a second thought, I took off my shoes, sank my weary feet in the cool sand, letting the waves wash away my fatigue.

After a power nap and a refreshing cup of tea, we were good to go again. Though we had to pay 20\$ extra for a ride in the speed boat amidst these fantastic islands it would be a shame not to do so after having come so far. We chose the King Kong 2 route, for this was where the movie was shot. To call



The magnificent structures inside Sung Sot Cave.

IN ORDER TO REACH THE SECOND CHAMBER, THE 'SERENE CASTLE', ONE HAS TO WALK THROUGH A NARROW PASSAGE. THE CHAMBER ITSELF WAS LARGE WITH A VERY HIGH CEILING AND INTERESTING ROCK FORMATIONS IN WHICH ONE COULD IDENTIFY SHAPES OF VARIOUS ANIMALS.

the ride exhilarating would be an understatement. It was no less than a roller coaster. The captain, perhaps drunk with the beauty of the place, drove erratically, tilting the boat right and left, cleaving through the waters at breakneck speed, weaving through the numerous 'high rise' islands. Our squeals only served to egg him on. At times he did stop to show us the island where King Kong lived in front of which we posed with ape-like gestures.

Next, we stopped at the island where the US pilot in the film stayed, with a kneeling stone woman on the side. Further down the bay, we saw a narrow space between two tall islands called 'Gateway to Heaven' while a hole high up in another rock formations was a 'Well in Heaven'. An intriguing rock was shaped like a horse or camel drinking water. Though we were back on the cruise

ship after an hour, the thrill of the adventure took a long time to subside.

In the evening, there was a cooking class on the deck for those interested. Afterwards, in the deepening dark, we reclined on deck, chairs arrayed around the railing, watching the silhouettes of passing islands, the twinkling lights of sister ships reflected in the Bay as they competed with the stars in the sky. For a while, I experienced bliss on this bit of heaven on Earth but, the rumbling of my stomach brought me down to the dining room to satisfy my mortal needs of hunger. I gorged on sea food that I relish which included clam, shrimps, squid amongst other things to suit every palate. It was indeed a day packed with adventure, filled with new experiences that would soon turn to memories that, I would cherish for as long as I lived.

I slept the sleep of the dead and could barely open my eyes for the early morning Tai Chi session on board but why lose out on this experience for a few minutes of extra sleep. Once on the deck in the fresh air with benevolent blues skies (thankfully still no rain), the emerald sea, the green-capped tall white islands standing vigil all around, a sister ship or two keeping us company, we learnt Tai Chi from a master. Tia Chi is to the Vietnamese what yoga is to us.

Next on the agenda was a ride in a bamboo boat. Those who wished could also go kayaking. My roommate and I miscalculated the time (we had not changed our



A front view of the Presidential Palace.

watches to Vietnamese time) and were left behind as were some others like us. Though deeply disappointed we were filled with spiteful glee when it began to rain for those on the excursion were drenched. We got mixed reviews when they returned. The kayakers were exhilarated, rain or no rain, while the others came back looking as miserable as wet rats and reassured us that we had not missed much. Meanwhile, we had put our time to good use – buying corals, pearls, stoles from the stalls set up on our cruise ship.

Hanoi

All too soon we were in a bus on a three and a half hours journey back to Hanoi. Though we had landed at Hanoi airport, we had been whisked away directly to Ha Long Bay. Now, enroute, we stopped at the bamboo fibre factory which, I thought would be filled with bamboo artefacts like the Assam stall at the Trade Fair in Delhi.

Instead, I was pleasantly surprised to learn about super-absorbent quality of fabrics made of bamboo fibre and ended up buying socks, towels, T-shirts of this wonderful material.

We would be seeing the capital city properly and did we see it? Not in the boring way through a bus window but in quaint rickshaws



Hòa Lò prison, also known as the 'Hanoi Hilton'.

where the driver took a backseat, literally. The passengers sat in front – two in one rickshaw while the rickshaw puller pedalled it from behind, us looking forwards through the space between our heads. It was a lovely way to tour the heart of the city around a lake. There were street hawkers with their ware displayed on motor bikes that went from one tourist spot to stop another to lure us into buying cheap bags, purse and hats that, to our surprise stood the test of time.

They were even willing to take Indian rupees and we splurged! The highlight of the evening was a puppet show – on water! On this

swam puppets in the form of ducks, cattle, fisherfolk and boats to the sound of Vietnamese music. There was even a wedding procession but the description was in their language which we were unable to understand.

Later, as many of our co-travellers were vegetarians, we had dinner at an Indian restaurant before retiring for the night.

The morning was spent at Eon super market which was like any mall anywhere in the world and I was not tempted to buy much.

A visit to 'Hanoi Hilton' was way more interesting. This was the name given to Hỏa Lò prison by the American POW. There were horrific

scenes of torture meted out to the Vietnamese by the French, who had made the prison in 1901 to house political prisoners.

Atrocities such as beatings, broken bones, teeth and eardrums, dislocated limbs, starvation, food contaminated with faeces and murder were everyday occurrences. How could humans be so inhuman towards each other? It was beyond comprehension for a doctor whose job was to save lives.

A quick round of places of interest in Hanoi like the Mausoleum, the President's office and the Parliament completed the Hanoi leg of our Vietnamese visit.



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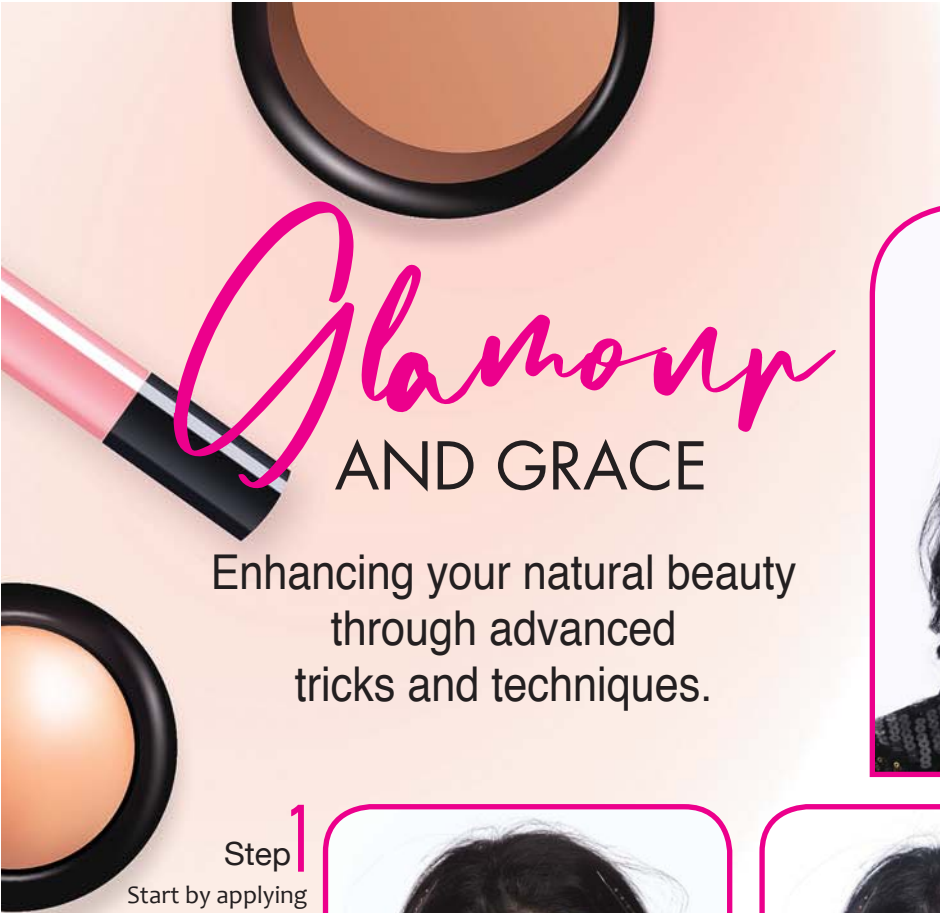
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Glamour

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Start by applying
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then layering
eyeshadows
to create a
captivating eye
makeup look.



Step 2

Define your
eyebrows with an
eyebrow pencil or
powder to frame
your eyes.



Step 3

Conceal any imperfections
using a colour corrector
that matches your specific
skin concerns.



Step 4

Apply foundation
evenly over your face
for a flawless and even
complexion.



Step 5

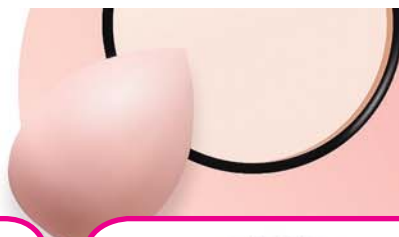
Sculpt your face with
contouring and accentuate
your features with a touch
of highlighter.





Step 6

Add a natural flush to your cheeks by applying blush to the apples.



Step 7

Ensure the blush blends seamlessly with the rest of your makeup for a cohesive look



Step 8 Set your makeup in place by dusting on a translucent loose powder for long-lasting wear.



Step 9 Finish your makeup by selecting a lipstick shade that complements your overall style.



Credit Line:
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Make-up Artist: Aayushi



HUSBANDS' PROBLEMS

And the amorous ways to solve them. By Arathi Sivaprasad

What's the problem?" asked Pritha. Mahima looked as though she was searching for the answers to all the problems of the

universe in the iced tea in front of her.

"Did you have a fight with Abhi?" Mahi looked up at this question. The look on her face showed that Pritha

"Did you have a fight with Abhi?" Mahi looked up at this question. The look on her face showed that Pritha had hit a sore spot.

had hit a sore spot.

Pritha asked again, "Did he come home late again?"

"Why do you say so?" asked Mahi. "Well, you always have just one complaint. 'He comes home late.' Sometimes, I feel you have no world beyond your husband."

"What's so wrong about it?" replied Mahi with a question.

"Nothing," said Pritha, "Except that you don't do anything about it. You should do as I say, Mahi. Use your bed as a battle ground. Don't give him what he needs until he gives you what you want."

Pritha had been suggesting this for a long time now. But Mahi was never comfortable with the thought. Abhi had promised to take her to a movie last night. *Jawan*. Everyone was talking about it.

She had asked to be taken to the movie and he had agreed. He had asked her to be ready by six in the evening. And Mahi had to wait a long, long time for Abhi to return. It was nearly 9 when he returned.

He was all contrite and apologised for the delay but Mahi could not forgive him. She really wanted to watch the movie badly. Late



dinners or missed shopping trips were fine, but a missed movie for a movie buff was a little too much.

Abhi had been working at a special project for the last two months and had been late quite a few times. But he had promised to be on time and Shahrukh Khan was a favourite. That night, when he reached out to Mahima, she had pushed his hand away angrily.

She had heard an indrawn breath of hurt, but she was angry at that moment. What Pritha was suggesting was a cold-blooded refusal.

Even now Mahi felt bad when she remembered Abhi unvoiced dismay at being rejected.

"But that doesn't feel right, Pritha," said Mahi. "Using sex as a weapon is not right. Abhi is not my enemy. He is the most important person in my life," finished Mahi.

"Then, he will always be late home. Suffer," said Pritha.

Mahi felt confused. Yes, she had thought of not talking to Abhi today as well to show her anger and was hoping that he would beg her for forgiveness. A little bit of tender loving care was a must to forget a missed movie. But pretending to have a headache to refuse sex seemed too much to her.

Abhi and Mahi were married for just three months. The first month was a virtual honeymoon. Abhi was between projects and had all the time in the world for his young wife. Then came the special project.

Mahi had to suffer through many a lonely evening. But to give Abhi

credit, the days he came early, all his attention and time were for his young wife. Abhi's assurances regarding the end of the special project did little to console Mahi.

Being from a small town she felt lost in the big city. Pritha was the only friend she had from her home town. She still had to get used to the big city and hadn't joined a job as they had decided to give themselves some time to understand each other better.

Two busy people would not help their budding relationship much. An arranged marriage had its own limitations and both being busy was not something they wanted to do to stop their relationship from flourishing.

Pritha had been in Bangalore for more than two years now and definitely had more exposure than Mahi. So, Mahi should listen to her. Mahi returned home more confused than before.

Watching television was Mahi's only pastime. After finishing her chores, Mahi idly surfed the channels looking for something interesting. Just then her phone rang. It was a video call from her Akka (elder sister in Telugu but actually her cousin) and that excited Mahi. Talking to someone from home felt such a relief in her confused state.

"Akka, you are glowing!" said Mahi. "You look even prettier than when you were a new mother and Peddamma (mother's elder sister) fed you all that ghee, greens and medicinal herbs."

Chaitra turned a little red in the face and smiled. She

looked a little embarrassed and doubtful about something.

"Akka, what is it? Is there something you want to tell me?"

Mahi and Chaitra were very close to each other. They had lived next door to each other all their young lives, as their fathers were brothers.

The girls had grown up together literally like sisters. Chaitra was just a couple of years older to Mahi. Mahi felt that her cousin had called her just to tell her something. There was that eagerness mingled with hesitation written all over her pretty face.

Two busy people would not help their relationship much. An arranged marriage had its own limitations and both being busy was not something they wanted to do to stop their relationship from flourishing. Pritha had been in Bangalore for more than two years now and Pritha definitely had more exposure than Mahi. So, Mahi should listen to her.

Just then Chaitra said that she could hear her child cry and asked Mahi to wait till she attended to him.

"But did she say that just to escape from speaking to me?" thought Mahi.

Chaitra came back to the call with her chubby little one in her arms. Mahi took a couple of minutes to coo over the baby before she went quiet and looked

enquiringly at Chaitra. Chaitra held her baby close as though drawing courage from him and started.

"You know Mahima, I was at Amma's place for nearly five months before I came back to Hyderabad. Yeah, it was just after your wedding that I came back. Pradeep used to visit me but because of the house being full on account of your marriage preparations, we rarely had any private time. I too never missed those private moments being a new mother and also involved in your saree selections, jewellery and wedding discussions."

Chaitra's face turned a little red when she said the words 'private time' and Mahi could guess what she left unsaid.

Chaitra continued, "Pradeep was very happy when I returned to Hyderabad. He was excited to have little Siddu and me back at home. It must have been bad for him to live alone for five months as his parents live in the village. But soon his mood changed."

"He would remain quiet and morose. And I never noticed it in my total involvement with Siddu. It took me three months to realise what an idiot I had been."

Chaitra took a deep breath and continued before Mahi could ask her what happened.

"In the beginning all was fine. Pradeep was very patient and accommodating as I had to get used to the routine of managing all the home work myself. Yeah, I have a maid to help me but the baby's bath, preparing

All that talk from Amma and the other aunts about how difficult it is to look after a small baby all alone had gotten to my head. I thought I was doing more than I should and neglected Pradeep completely. It was just two weeks ago that I realised my mistake.

special food and taking care of him took all my time and energy. Pradeep shared the task of looking after the baby when he returned home but then I had the job of preparing dinner and other small things around the house. On top of all this, I also threw little tantrums when Siddu had one of his vaccinations and was unwell or had a cold. Poor Pradeep bore all this quietly. But whenever he reached out for me at night, I would push him away with

a, 'Please Pradeep, I am tired'."

Chaitra looked at Mahi quietly with a serious face and said, "Mahi, I had forgotten to be a wife and was being only a mother. All that talk from Amma and the other aunts about how difficult it is to look after a small baby all alone had gotten to my head. I thought I was doing more than I should and neglected Pradeep completely. It was just two weeks ago that I realised my mistake. I asked Pradeep to get me my medicines and the formula for the baby when he was leaving for work and added that he better remember my needs. His reply shocked me. He said, 'Yeah,

you are the only one with needs.' And that bitter reply made me reflect."

Mahi just gave a nod to show she was listening avidly and Chaitra continued.

"I just could not get that bitter tone out of my head. I then remembered that Pradeep had reached out to me at night at least fifteen to twenty times these three months and I had just rejected him all the times. The reaching out too had slowly come down in frequency. Maybe, being a man, he had found it difficult to express his needs vocally. Or maybe, his mother and aunts had told him to be patient with me as I was a new mother with a lot of responsibilities. But I felt really sad that day for my behaviour. I should have realised my mistake a long time ago. I didn't know what to do.

That evening when Abhirang rang the doorbell, it was a pretty dressed Mahi who answered the door with a sweet smile on her face.

Then after a lot of thinking, I decided to reach for Pradeep myself instead of waiting for him to reach out to me again. I realised I had to do that to show that I was sorry. That evening, I finished all my chores by six and got out of my PJs which were my regular clothes for the previous three months and wore a *churidar* and *kurta*. I thought of wearing a chiffon *saree* but lost my nerve at the last moment," Chaitra said with a deep red blush.

Mahi started grinning and said, "Wow, Akka, then you would have looked like a Yash Chopra's movie heroine!"

Chaitra hugged her baby closer and said, "Do you want me to continue



or close the call?"

Mahi had to literally shout her denial and beg her cousin to continue.

"So, there I stood in the doorway in a pretty pink dress with light makeup on my face when Pradeep arrived home. He looked shocked. When he came back to the living room after freshening up, he softly complimented me on my looks. Well, I had decided to be the one to take the first step and so I asked, 'Siddu is asleep, Pradeep. Do you want to have dinner or ...' and went and sat on his lap gently and put my arm around his neck. I kissed him gently on his lips and Pradeep looked bombed but recovered quickly. And I stop my story now," ended Chaitra.

Mahi said, "Akka, what a lovely story. That's the

Then they spoke for a few more minutes with Mahi teasing her cousin and Chaitra accepting it good naturedly. But at the end of the call Mahi had the answer to her dilemma. He couldn't help that he had been assigned a special project so soon after marriage.

secret behind your glowing looks. I am so happy for you."

Chaitra smiled and said, "Yes, Mahi, I am happy for myself. I am lucky I realised my mistake quickly. But the reason I called you was to give you some advice. I have noticed that Abhiram is also like Pradeep. The

taciturn type of men. Such men don't talk much.

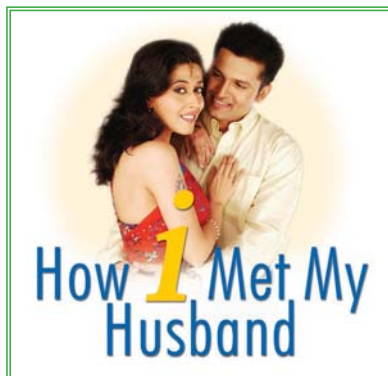
They do not know how to express their feelings and needs. That has to change, I agree, but we also need to understand them. Most importantly, we need to see the situation from their perspective as well.

"I was so much into myself, my work, my troubles and my role as a mother that I forgot to see the situation from Pradeep's perspective. I just wanted to tell you that. You are my younger sister and newly married. A new marriage has its own problems. I wanted to tell you not to create more problems by just looking at all situations from only your perspective. I learnt a lot this week and felt I had to share my life lesson with you."

Mahi felt overwhelmed at Chaitra's words. Both had tears in their eyes which they tried to hide.

Then they spoke for a few more minutes with Mahi teasing her cousin and Chaitra accepting it good naturedly. But at the end of the call, Mahi had the answer to her dilemma. She knew that continuing the fight with Abhi was not right. He couldn't help that he had been assigned a special project so soon after marriage. He must be good at his job and that was the reason he had got that assignment. And using the bed as a battle ground was definitely wrong. That was now clear to her.

That evening when Abhirang the doorbell, it was a pretty dressed Mahi who answered the door with a sweet smile on her face. **We**



LAUGHING TOGETHER

I have been bound to wheelchair since I was 14 years old. At first, it used to be a sensitive topic but now my family even jokes about it. Most people always looked at me with pity.

The reason I knew I had met my husband was when I realised he was different from them and did not look at me as though there was something wrong with me. I met him for the first time at an open mic event where I was performing one of my poems. As I performed my poem on 'rolling'

through life literally, only one person laughed at my jokes. Rest everyone just sat there with their sympathetic smiles, giving him a judgemental look for laughing. "Don't worry folks, you are supposed to laugh at the jokes," I joked again. And this time, everyone laughed. Just by existing, he had given me the confidence to tell people to not pity me. We ended up talking after the event and stayed in touch. My family adored him. He is one of the kindest people we had come across.

-Geetanjali Chawla

OUT OF MY LEAGUE

I had broken up with a man I was in a relationship with for over six years. I had started to realise how controlling he was.

Post the breakup, I had gained a lot of weight and lost a lot of confidence. I thought that no man would ever want me. Swiping through dating apps, I felt pathetic. Then I came across Varun's profile. He was very good-looking and was a bibliophile.

I swiped right on him even though I thought he was way out of my league. But to my surprise, we matched! At first, I thought it was by accident but then as we talked, it felt like he was genuinely interested in me. We talked for days, bonding over books and favourite authors. When he finally asked me out on a bookshop date, I was extremely nervous, so much so that I almost cancelled.

The date went even better than the conversations we had. He even asked to meet me again! I was over the moon.

My insecurities did not vanish easily, they constantly tried to trigger my fight or flight response. But he understood where I came from and was patient with me. Eventually, we were at a place where we could be completely honest to each other without fearing rejection. When he asked me to marry him, I said 'yes' this time with no hesitation or fear.

-Sravani Kumar

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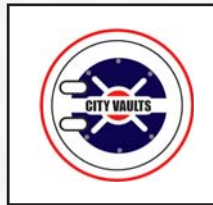
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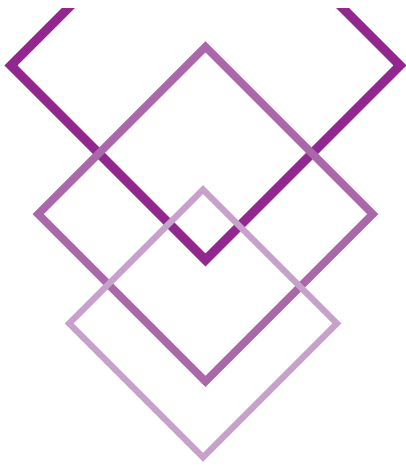
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DAZZLING IN DRAG

“We’re all born naked
and the rest is drag”
-RuPaul

A celebration of art,
fashion and identity.

By Athira Raj

Grandiose makeup and dress, a stage and a fabulous performer—drag is where fashion meets personality, gender meets performance, and liberation meets self-expression. Everybody is a king or a queen here, and everybody is welcome to be a part of the show.

During a charismatic night at a queer-friendly nightclub, I witnessed a drag performance for the first time. The energy was enthralling as the drag queen walked confidently across the floor, heels clacking, and swooped right into a dance as we applauded. With long red nails, shimmery black dress, high heels and a pink wig—there was flair in the way she carried herself.



I was captivated by the graceful and swift dance movements, the sassy remarks and expressions, and the impeccable Avant Garde style.

It was a night of frenzy as seeing the drag queen in the spotlight, bending gender and having fun, everyone around her automatically felt more comfortable and more authentic. After the show, I managed to go talk to her. She was flamboyant and so friendly. I asked her why she loved to do drag, and her response was, "I get to dress up and dance, what's not to love?"

So, What Is Drag?

Drag is a captivating performance art that transcends boundaries, challenging societal norms, and celebrating the kaleidoscope of human expressions. The dazzling performances weave together theatre, fashion and self-discovery. A drag queen dresses up in elaborate costumes and makeup to emphasise hyper femininity. Typically, drag queens are men who adopt a glamorous feminine persona.

Meant mainly for entertainment, drag is also a very political statement. In our society, men dressing up as women are scorned upon. Their sexuality and gender are questioned. But refusing to hide their feminine side and expressing themselves in such awe-striking way that it demands attention, is a call for queer expression and liberation. Queerness is not just about your sexuality and gender, it is about breaking the rules of society, feeling comfortable in your skin, and accepting who you are.

Watching that drag queen perform was a moment I will never forget. It reminded me of how strictly we are monitored for the way we dress, the way we walk, the way we behave. If I, as a woman, decided to cut my hair short and dress manly, all the aunts and uncles would berate me for not dressing feminine enough. They will say that I won't find a suitable boy to marry. Some will even go as far as asking me if I'm a lesbian.

EXPRESSING THEMSELVES IN SUCH AWE-STRIKING WAY THAT IT DEMANDS ATTENTION, IS A CALL FOR QUEER EXPRESSION AND LIBERATION. QUEERNESS IS NOT JUST ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY AND GENDER, IT IS ABOUT BREAKING THE RULES OF SOCIETY, FEELING COMFORTABLE IN YOUR SKIN, AND ACCEPTING WHO YOU ARE.





But in that nightclub, surrounded by people who identified as both straight and LGBTQ+, drag was a celebration and all of us felt that we could just be ourselves. Such a scintillating performance was surely one that would make you realise that in art, boundaries are always supposed to be pushed.

Always Been Here

For some, drag may come off as “too much”. It raises questions understandably, as not many are versed in the history and significance of drag. Contrary to popular belief, drag is not a new thing that the LGBTQ+ community came up with to radicalise everyone on the planet. Drag, or cross-dressing in general, has existed since ancient times. In Shakespearean era, women were not allowed to act in plays. So, men used to dress up as women and play the female roles. Cross-dressing men were a usual sight during the enactment of Shakespeare’s plays on stage. In India, royal courts had cross-dressing performers and there were some instances of Rajas and Ranis who would cross-dress. Cross-dressing has been present in various cultural contexts across our country, until it was stigmatised by the arrival of the British settlers.

But as modern pop culture grew, drag became more mainstream.



SINCE THE FIRST DRAG PERFORMANCE I WITNESSED, I HAVE SEEN PLENTY MORE. IN NIGHTCLUBS, AT ART EVENTS, ON TV, AT PRIDE PARADES. IT CHANGED THE WAY I VIEWED GENDER AND INCULCATED A NEW KIND OF EXPERIMENTAL WORLDVIEW IN ME.

It is just now that it has become a full-blown artistic expression of its own. *RuPaul’s Drag Race* played a significant part in making the general audience attune to drag and even appreciate it for its artistic value. In Western media, drag has become synonymous with the fashion world. Drag performers have appeared on

magazine covers and started their own makeup lines as well.

It also dispelled many myths surrounding drag queens and kings. Some believed that people who performed drag were always gay men or trans women. But honestly, the gender and sexuality of the person has nothing to do with their drag persona. There are straight men whose alternate persona is that of drag. It is simply to perform femininity.

Drag is particularly new to modern India’s cultural and entertainment arena, but it is visibly gaining more attention than before.

It is yet to break into mainstream Indian media, although the hopes are high. Our morally vigilant society will always be wary of drag and drag queens. But the underground art scene is opening up to drag performers, and it is bigger and grander than ever. Many well-known drag artists are flourishing in different cities of India.

The Dazzling Spectacle

Since the first drag performance I witnessed, I have seen plenty more. In nightclubs, at art events, on TV, at pride parades. It changed the way I viewed gender and inculcated a new kind of experimental worldview in me. Drag performers are not doing harm to you or your children, they are simply here to perform, like any other artist. They are fierce and want to play with femininity, masculinity and androgyny.

Discourse around drag will always be a conflicted one, but the joy in knowing that it is a possibility, in itself is a transformative thing. When some male celebrities wear skirts, it is seen as changing the game of fashion.

Drag is no different. If anything, it is even more fabulous and striking. The fashion world has been greatly influenced by drag, and vice versa. Anybody who is into fashion, art, and politics, will find it hard to look away from drag.

We

NEWS PICTURES

Germany Beats Poland And Lifts The United Cup

Despite a poor group stage run, Germany beat Poland to win the United Cup. Olympic champion Alexander Zverev had a remarkable comeback to win his singles tie and formed an impressive pair with Laura Siegemund to win the deciding mixed doubles tie over Hubert Hurkacz and Iga Swiatek, sealing their unlikely victory.



Unlikely Victory

Ice Hockey Championship



USA Claims World Junior Ice Hockey Championship

Defeating the host country, Sweden, Team USA earned the gold medal at the 2024 IIHF World Junior Championship, after a stellar undefeated performance in the tournament. Isaac Howard scored twice in the second period. Team USA had lost to Sweden in the under-18 worlds in 2022 and this win came as a revenge.

Kenyans Triumph At Sao Silvestre Race

The 98th Saint Silvestre Road Race, a long-distance running event, was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil on New Year's Eve. It is the oldest street road race in Brazil, and many participants disguise in colourful costumes for the same. Kenya's Timothy Kiplagat and Catherine Reline won the race, taking Kenya's total tally to 35 wins in the history of the race.



Colourful Road Race



Oppenheimer Reigns Golden Globe Awards With Five Wins

It was a glamorous affair at the 81st Golden Globe Awards, as stars graced the red carpet. Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* won five awards, including the best motion picture drama. *Poor Things* was named the best motion picture, musical or comedy, while *Succession* won the best drama series.

Award Season Begins



Shakira's Giant Statue



Shakira Honoured With A Statue In Her Hometown

Pop star Shakira's 21-foot statue was unveiled in the Colombian coastal city of Barranquilla, her hometown. The statue, made by Colombian artist Yino Marquez, captures "Hips Don't Lie" singer's trademark belly dance move. The mayor said that it would serve as a role model for young girls and teens. Shakira shared that she was honoured by the recognition.

Record-Setting New Year's Dive In Netherlands

The Dutch tradition includes starting the New Year fresh with a dive into the freezing North Sea water. About 10,000 people ran into the North Sea from Scheveningen beach in Netherlands. This year, there was a record-setting 65,000 participants across 163 dives.

NY Dutch Tradition



First Stop To Oscars



2024 Award Season Kicks Off With Palm Springs Film Festival

Many Hollywood A-listers attended the 35th annual gala of Palm Springs International Film Festival, including Meryl Streep, Leonardo DiCaprio, Emma Stone, Robert Downey Jr., Margot Robbie, etc. The festival honoured *Killers Of The Flower Moon* with the Vanguard award, Greta Gerwig with the Director of the Year, and Carey Mulligan as the International Star Award for *Maestro*.

Danish Queen Margrethe II Announced Surprise Abdication

After 52 years on the throne, the queen of Denmark announced her surprising abdication news on live TV during her new year speech. On January 14, she handed over the reigns to her son, who is now King Frederik of Denmark. The 83-year-old Queen Margrethe is the Europe's longest-reigning living monarch, and will continue to hold the title Her Majesty.



New Danish King



Royal Appearance



Crown Princess Leonor Attends The Pascua Militar Ceremony

The Pascua Militar Ceremony marks the beginning of a new military year and takes place annually in the Throne Room of the Royal Palace in Madrid, Spain. This year's ceremony was commemorated by the debut appearance of the crown Princess Leonor at the ceremony. The Princess, who turned 18 last year, is in her first of three years of military training in Zaragoza.



AS YOU SAY

BIGGEST POLITICAL JOOMLA

After the three victories in the Hindi heartland, the BJP seems to have set the tone for next year's electoral battle. It signals that Modi, unarguably, is the most popular leader today. Despite the political space being overcrowded, still the BJP-led NDA has the best chance to ultimately triumph at the hustings. Violent acts indulged by the Opposition on every issue to insult and embarrass the chair in both houses only ended in disruption of the smooth conduct of the proceedings too often. To bring discipline to the unruly members of the Opposition, the action taken by the parliament to suspend almost 146 MPs is fully justified. Ostensibly, the Congress crying hoarse that in the absence of Opposition, the government would bulldoze important legislation without any debate shows its frustrations. All in all, Modi's leadership, behaviour and determination have increased the faith of the Indian electorate in him to steer the nation to make it stronger globally.

—R Srinivasan

GRANDPARENTS

The story, *A Birthday Surprise*, by Bhanu Chandran, December 2023, truly describes the yearning of the grandparents for their grandchildren who live abroad. The grandmother pines for their company. The

grandfather has a practical approach towards life but inwardly is too attached to his grandchildren. The grandfather is overjoyed to get a surprise visit from her granddaughter on his birthday along with the self-baked brownies. The perfect bond they share with their grandchildren is admirable. It is a fact that grandparents love the company of their grandparents, like to narrate their stories, make them learn human values, turn out to be their best caretakers and above all their mental health gets boosted also. In a nutshell, the grandparents and grandchildren share an unmatched affinity.

—Harinder Kaur

HOUSE HUSBANDS

Referring to the article, *Househusbands*, December 2023, by Bushra Khan, owing to modernisation, more and more women joining work with long working hours, the husbands have to assist their wives in the household chores but a majority of people fail to accept this concept. When both partners are earning the kitchen work should also be shared by them but due to societal pressure many husbands do not help their wives since they will be branded as cowards and hen-pecked husbands. Earlier working women used to be overburdened with their jobs and household responsibilities. The modern women need a respite after coming back from office. It is high time that people, in general, changed their prevailing patriarchal attitude and accepted that men should also help women in the kitchen work. Parents should involve their sons also in kitchen work at the tender age so that it no longer remains a taboo for them by changing their old mindset.

—Harinder Kaur

INDIA LOST; THE GAMERS WON

Apropos the editorial, *India Lost But The Gamers Won*, in WE-Dec' 23 threw light on the disappointing World Cup loss against the Aussies after the dream run of winning all ten matches in the group stage. Though Indian fans were sadly let down by lacklustre batting and bowling, one cannot take away the credit from Australia who played outstandingly with a game plan. In short, Australia had the wherewithal to scale the summit by exerting pressure on India by not giving anything away while exposing the fragility of Indian batting and bowling. Though, betting running to crores has lured and ruined the career of many young players in the past, its continuance by giving legitimacy is a sad commentary. Therefore, it can be said that the cause of the defeat in the final encounter after being branded as hot favourites to lift the cup is perhaps betting cannot be ruled out altogether. Anyway, as failure is a stepping stone to success, India, still a formidable team, hopefully will try to erase the loss in the World Cup by concentrating on winning rather than monetary gains in the T20 World Cup.

—R Srinivasan



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