



THE NEW  
INDIAN  
EXPRESS

# INDULGE

## Food

Craft brews and sizzling stone festival | **P11**

Vir Das becomes the first Indian comedian to have his fourth *Netflix* special. In our candid interview, the actor tells us why he's never cutting on humour despite controversies, landing India spectacularly on the international stage of comedy and more | **P12**

Jokes that  
**launched**

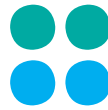
things  
to do

pick of the week

INDULGE

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2022 | HYDERABAD



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# INDULGE

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Reader,

As the year draws to a close, there's no better way to end it than having a good belly laugh. Tickling your funny bones, we have the globally renowned Indian comedian Vir Das talking about his new Netflix special, *Vir Das: Landing*. With this, he becomes the first Indian to have his fourth special — a milestone in itself highlighting his multi-cultural brand of comedy that transcends borders. The actor-comedian-musician talks to us about bridging the gap between home and the world with humour, his vision for comedy and what keeps him going despite scathing criticism at times. When it's Vir, the show's got to be both witty and funny, and so are his answers!



The onset of the New Year also paves way for a complete overhaul. From wardrobe and skincare to fitness regimen, everything needs a reset. We have fashion and beauty expert, former Miss India Queenie Singh ushering in the concept of clean beauty with luxury. Further, we have curated some beauty products that are enriched with aromatherapy and the goodness of Ayurveda. We have also got you covered with trendy makeup choices to slay the look this New Year's Eve. We also couldn't wait to make a splash over our food and drinks. We take you to Ironhill Brewery where we savour quick bites from their new winter menu like Chipotle Mushroom Tacos, and Perri Perri Veggie Sandwich before conversing with its head chef to refine another delectable dish — Crusted Fish. We washed down the snacky items with several brews like Blueberry Cider, Rice Lager and more that left us with some fruity notes infused with floral essence. We then hopped over to China Bistro's *Dolsot Sizzling Stone Festival* to discover how stones create magic and treat us with healthy and colourful dishes in *Dolsot* — a small-size piece of cookware made of Pagodite.

Post our food trails, we bring you the latest cultural happenings from the city. We have city-based stand-up comedian, Saikiran who talks to us ahead of his solo comedy show, *Matrimania*. It focuses on the brouhaha around societal pressure to get married and presumably 'start a new life'. Additionally, he shares with us about his childhood instances, how he sharpened his intellect and made a cut to comedy. We also catch up with city-based band Elyzium ahead of their NYE performance at Gachibowli. We speak to the band members, Dinker Kavala, Vidhya Sagar, Richard Maddela, and NVS Charan. While the band leaves us inquisitive about the set-list of their approaching concert, they are also ensuring that the show ends on a merry note with everyone looking forward to a pleasant year ahead. And we hope the same for you too.

Have a grand New Year's Eve! Cheers!

Edison Thomas  
Editor, Indulge



## At the movies

December 23 — present |  
Panjagutta

This week's movie pick is *Dhamaka*. In this Telugu film by Trinadha Rao Nakkin, a dynamic man who inherits his father's business and value system upgrades their merchandise by spreading its wings over the world. In order to face reality, overcome obstacles, and protect his personal and professional life for the good of all, he relies on his virtue and effectiveness. Ravi Teja and Shree Leela are among the cast members. At PVR. Details: Online.

## Beat-dropper

December 31 | Shilpa Hills

VNTM, an Amsterdam-based musician who has performed at a number of major festivals all over the world, will be here to deliver a fusion between contemporary progressive melodies and modern techno. Enjoy the artist's unique mixes, which include *Deceiving Tendencies*, *Impersonation*, *Mystic*, and many others. ₹2,500 upwards. At Block 22 Nightclub. Details: 9391533333.



## Humourously yours

January 1 | Jubilee Hills

City-based stand-up comedian, Saikiran's *Matrimania* is a show by, for, and about singles who are under enormous pressure to get married in a culture that is fixated on having everyone they know get hitched. But that's not enough — visit our culture page where he reveals interesting anecdotes from his childhood and what it is that inspires his comedy. ₹499 upwards. At Heart Cup Coffee. Details: 9618733155.



## Joking around

December 31 | Film Nagar

Well-known city-based stand-up comedians, Yash Bajaj and Varun Karyakarte, present their funniest jokes and relatable anecdotes in a two-hour comedy programme called *Joke-A-Thone*. Varun and Yash will each remain on stage for 42 minutes during this sprint of comedy, and make your evening wonderful and fun. ₹99 upwards. At Aaromalé - Café & Creative Community. Details: 9573401750.



## Rhythm divine

December 31 |  
Gachibowli

As a part of their live NYE concert, city-based band, Elyzium takes the stage to deliver their music. The band also tells us that at this event, they are making sure that the audience returns home wearing a smile, as everyone anticipates a great new year ahead. Head over to our culture page to find out more. ₹2,000 upwards and separate table packages. At Boulder Hills. Details: 040 66123456.



## Depicting realities

January 6 | Ameerpet

Arjun Das' solo art exhibition, *Land of the Leal*, centres on how he is inspired by the migrant working class' experiences in Kolkata and in his art, portrays the lives of younger workers who gave up their studies in quest of a better life in the city, a kind of imagined paradise. Free entry. At Dhi Artspace. Details: 8096663907.



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## Happy New Year!

December 31 | Banjara Hills

With Kolkata's DJ Nisha churning out foot-tapping tunes from the console, experience fireworks like never before under a clear sky. ₹799 upwards. At Rock Castle. Details: 040 23352843.

### GET IN TOUCH

Send your queries and feedback to: Indulge, The New Indian Express, H.No.6-3-1113/1, B.S.Makta Lane, Somajiguda, Near Grand Kakatiya Hotel, Punjagutta, Hyderabad - 500 016. Ph: 040 23413909 Email: indulge-hyd@newindianexpress.com

# INDULGE

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# SHUSHU BABIES BEST FOR

# KIDS



## ShuShu Babies' story:

ShuShu Babies is a baby and kids care brand founded and led by Sulakshana Reddy, a mother who is also a pharmacist. Sulakshana Reddy, Founder of ShuShu Babies, says, "Since the inception of this idea, it has been my goal to build an inclusive, affordable and ethical company based on values of trust, transparency, sustainability and a sense of purpose in what we offer. We make products that work. I am a mother first and an entrepreneur next. That gives us the credibility to not only look at the company from a business perspective but from a mother's point of view. I am a mompreneur/pharmacist. I am a gold medalist from Osmania University and that gives me a complete understanding of what I am doing and what my products are made of and as a mother, what I definitely don't want in the products." ShuShu Babies believes in providing natural, safe and effective products as an eco-friendly brand that safeguards the planet and its future generations. The driving force comes from the faith of valuable consumers and partners in its high-quality products, along with the passionate team of ShuShu Babies and its mission.

### ShuShu Babies' Pinky Promise:

Every time you opt for a ShuShu Babies product, you can be sure of the following promises:

- Safe and gentle on the skin
- PETA approved, cruelty free and vegan
- Eco-friendly/Sustainable
- Power of natural ingredients
- Goodness of Ayurveda
- Nurture and caring

Shop for ShuShu Babies naturals at a 20% discount directly from ShuShuBabies.com. Use code 'INDULGE 25' to save 20% at checkout. You can also find them online on Amazon, Flipkart, FirstCry, SustainKart, Meesho, BigBasket, and many more trusted e-commerce platforms and get them delivered to your doorstep



**S**kin care routine in tune with nature is worth having. But what about the idea of sharing this lifestyle with your little one? Babies and kids need the utmost care and attention, whether it's about what they eat, how they stay clean or how they look after themselves. Natural ingredients used in personal care products offer the same level of care as traditional products.

Childhood is a formative stage where children can explore and learn new things and healthy habits start at home. Children should be taught about self-care and a healthy lifestyle now so that when they get older, they will be well-prepared to make conscious choices.

To touch, a baby's skin feels incredibly delicate and sensitive. It is crucial not to expose kids to dangerous chemicals while they are growing up because these toxins can impact their skin's sensitivity and weaken their immune systems.

As parents, one should make conscious decisions to choose personal care products with the right ingredients. Listed below are some of the commonly found ingredients in personal care products that we should avoid:

**Parabens:** These are artificial preservatives used in skincare products. Studies show that parabens can cause breast cancer and other tumours. Parabens can also cause hormonal imbalance.

**Phthalates:** These are chemicals found in creams, soaps and other personal care products. Research reveals that phthalates can damage the kidneys, lungs, liver and reproductive organs.

**Synthetic fragrances:** These perfumes may cause cancer, nervous system disorders, skin allergies, birth defects and more. Perfumes can cause skin irritations and can even cause eczema in newborn babies.

**Sulfates:** Scientifically known as SLS (Sodium Lauryl Sulfate) and SLES (Sodium Laureth Sulfate), they are found in baby soaps, body washes and shampoos and help with generating lather and foam. Sulfates have been associated with cancer and cause irritation to the skin, eyes and lungs after prolonged usage.

**Artificial colours or dyes:** These are used to enhance the colour of certain products and have been known to cause chromosomal damage, tumours, lymphomas, asthma, skin allergies and skin irritations.

#### Why choose baby care products that are Ayush approved?

Most childcare brands claim to be natural. But how many of them are approved by Ayush? The only care a child requires in their initial years is the goodness of natural and organic ayurvedic ingredients. Ayush-approved and PETA-approved brands such as ShuShu Babies make sure that every childcare product is made only with the goodness of natural ingredients. Also, 100% vegan and cruelty-free care by ShuShu Babies comes in biodegradable packaging, which means, ShuShu Babies is not only safe for children but also safe for mother earth.

#### Why choose ShuShu Babies?

ShuShu Babies' all-natural ayurvedic range offers skincare for children plus soothes, nurtures and protects the child's delicate and sensitive skin.

Here's why ShuShu Babies is a trusted choice

for your babies and kids:

**1. Ayush approved** Ayush approves products for being 100% derived from natural plant-based ingredients and inspired by the age-old ayurvedic legacy

**2. Dermatologically tested** Each product is tested and approved by dermatologists for being 100% safe and gentle on the child's skin

**3. Clinically proven** ShuShu Babies products are tested to provide visible results and are approved as 100% effective

**4. PETA certified, cruelty free and vegan** PETA approves ShuShu Babies for not testing on animals while being 100% vegan

**5. Toxin free**

With ShuShu Babies, you are sure to get products that are free from harmful chemicals and environmental toxins

**6. Plant-based active ingredients** The entire ShuShu Babies range is enriched with all-natural active ingredients that are plant-based

**7. No cancer-causing agents** Made without parabens, phthalates, SLS/ SLES, formaldehyde donors, artificial colours and no perfume (synthetic fragrance-free) is used ShuShu Babies believes in bringing back the age-old ancestral legacy of Ayurveda to provide the most natural care to modern babies and kids. While believing in preserving the environment; they make use of biodegradable packaging only. They also aim to bring back the fun and joy in kids' lives with their innovative and childfriendly packaging. With ShuShu Babies you can trust that you are making an informed choice and your child is being nurtured by the best of nature.

#### Truly natural skincare for babies

If your child is three or under, you might like to know about ShuShu Babies' Ayush-approved baby care range.

**1. Calming lavender:** Face and body lotion The ayurvedic goodness of lavender deeply hydrates and moisturises babies' skin. It prevents rashes, skin itchiness and sunburns but also soothes and enhances the natural softness.

**2. Orange and mandarin lotion** The natural wellness of orange and mandarin helps lock in the moisture and provide long hours of hydration to your baby's skin. It also helps with skin itchiness, rashes, and sunburn.

**3. Fragrance free lotion** The fragrance-free nourishment is perfect for sensitive skin that keeps your baby happy and hydrated all day long. It greatly enhances the natural glow of your baby's tender skin.

**4. Calming lavender shampoo and body wash** A natural cleansing session is a great way to start your baby's day. It helps prevent skin dryness and strengthen hair follicles. It also deeply moisturises and hydrates your baby's tender skin.

**5. Orange & mandarin shampoo and body wash** The natural cleansers of orange and mandarin will remove all the dirt. It will also help promote healthy hair growth, prevent skin dryness and makes your baby's hair softer, silkier and shinier.

**6. Fragrance free shampoo & body wash** Our fragrance-free formula is perfect for your little one's sensitive skin. It actively prevents skin dryness, reduces hair breakage, promotes even skin tone and reduces skin allergies.

**7. Baby massage oil** The natural goodness of ayurvedic essential oils strengthens the bone muscles and relaxes the baby with a nourish-

ing massage, building a deeper bond between the baby and the parent. It will not only stimulate healthy blood flow but also moisturises the baby's delicate skin.

**8. Natural ubtan powder** Using our ayurvedic ubtan powder before every bath session will provide a natural glow and radiance to your baby's skin. It also reduces pigmentation, skin tan and promotes even skin tone.

**9. Natural baby soap** Our bear-shaped soap treats multiple skin conditions such as infections, itchiness and dryness. It also effectively cleanses and removes all stubborn impurities from the skin.

#### Truly natural skincare for kids

ShuShu Babies is a collection of safe and gentle products formulated specifically for babies and kids, with all-natural ingredients that care for your child's delicate skin and hair through the early years. Soothing aloe vera and ubtan powder from manjistha nurtures the skin, whilst the delicious scents of lavender, raspberry and mandarin create a truly sensory bathing experience. Here's a range of all-natural and cruelty-free, vegan kid care products by ShuShu Babies for children between 3 - 12 years of age

**1. Cheeky Cherry Shampoo and conditioner** An enriching shampoo and conditioner that promotes healthy hair growth, prevents dryness, helps keep your kid's hair knot-free and makes it softer, silkier and shinier.

**2. Chocolate Shampoo and Conditioner** The goodness of cocoa is wrapped in a nourishing shampoo and conditioner to prevent hair fall and dryness. It also deeply conditions the hair making it bouncy and healthy.

**3. Super Strawberry Face and Body Wash** The natural wellness of strawberries with other ayurvedic ingredients essentially removes tanning, reduces skin allergies, itchiness and redness and hydrates the kid's tender skin.

**4. Fruity Orange Face and Body Wash** The natural cleansers of orange prevent skin dryness, promote even skin tone and deeply moisturise and hydrate your kid's tender skin, making it softer and smoother.

**5. Wild Raspberry Face and Body Lotion** The soothing wellness of raspberries helps treat skin rashes, wounds and sunburns. It also deeply soothes and enhances the natural softness and glow of your kid's delicate skin.

**6. Natural Champi Hair Oil** The natural blend of soothing ayurvedic oils provides instant relaxation and strengthens the brittle hair of babies and kids. It makes the hair softer, shinier and silkier and also prevents cradle cap.



after dark

merriment/bash

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Manzoor Khan and Aameeksha Pawar



Harshit Chhabra and Harpreet



Abhimanika and Faridah



Sowkya Teddy



Mahek



Bhavya Natasha



Chef Ravinder and Shrishti



Nayaswami Shankara and Nayaseemi Dhyana

# LET THERE BE LIGHT

SEASON'S GREETINGS! HARBOURING the spirit of Yuletide and melodies, let us begin with the Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony. Held last week at the city's Marriott Hotel, it was a magical evening affair where a special X'mas tree was set up using glass bottles to promote sustainability — reuse, reduce and recycle. It was a joy-filled event with winter wonderland décor, Santa's entry, live music, Christmas carols, a festive menu, and Christmas theme delicacies. It was graced by city's elite influencers, socialites and hotel team and guests who enjoyed the free-flowing drinks and toasted champagne to celebrate the festive season.

Next up, we had nutritionist and trainer, Harshit Kaur, throwing a birthday bash for husband Harpreet Kaur that saw party lovers having a gala time on the dance floor. With DJ playing some of the coolest techno and Bollywood tracks, everyone got groovy on a rather quiet and breezy evening. Reema Arora, Shaheen Daredia and Trushna Tibrewal were some of the attendees at the birthday bash.

We also witnessed the grand launch of Borabay Salon at Sheraton. It was inaugurated by actress Namarata Shirodkar, IAS Jayesh Ranjan and fashion designer, Divya Reddy. Borabay is the brainchild of USA return Dr Anu Karjela, who has over 20 years of experience in the medical field. An ardent observer of cosmetic treatments encouraged around the globe, she aims to introduce the best salon experience in the Indian market through her new venture. The session was attended by many socialites, women entrepreneurs and bloggers.

But, how do we achieve the inner peace leading us to happiness, the buried treasure of our soul, the greatest divine birthright — a wealth beyond the dream of kings? For that, Hyderabadis were a part of another wonderful event — a free public talk on *How to be Happy Always* hosted by Ananda Sangha Kriya from the city's wellness classes, Yoga Meditation Group. The speakers for the event were co-spiritual director of Ananda Sangha India, Nayaswami Dhyana and her companion, Nayaswami Shankara who have decades of experience in preaching the teachings of Indian monk Paramhansa Yogananda. As the beacon lights of Ananda Sangha India — part of a global spiritual movement that emphasises the "fellowship of divine joy" — they promise to bring to us in palpable, practical ways Yogananda's vision of how we can achieve true happiness that can enhance every aspect of our lives.

That was about the happenings this year. See you all in 2023! Here's wishing you all a fantastic year ahead!

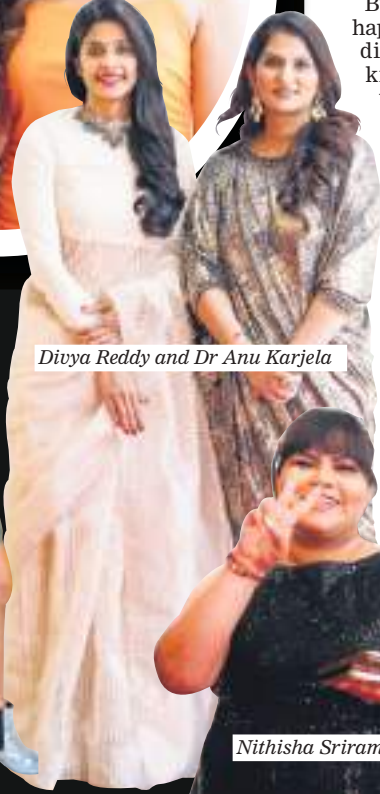
*(The writer is a fashion and lifestyle influencer and a committee member of the Telangana Artist's Association)*



Gulnar and Shivangi



Ricky and Reema Arora



Divya Reddy and Dr Anu Karjela



Nithisha Sriram



Neeta Khanuja



Aakanksha



Swati and Supriya

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### Black dove

Shine bright in this black sequin asymmetrical dress from Giambattista Valli's latest collection. Crafted with a distinct bow-shaped neckline, the off-shoulder dress comes with an a-line skirt and a straight hem that sits just above the knee. ₹7,11,202 approximately



### Go Rouge

Flaunting the delicately folded short sleeve sheath, this red midi dress from ASOS Design features a low back cut and a thigh-high slit at the rear. The knee length number designed for a slim fit is crafted from a blend of polyester and elastane. ₹8,963 approximately



### Huff and puff

Crafted from linen, this Mimosa midi dress from AJE boasts a fitted bodice and a breezy skirt. Besides puff sleeves, the black number also features cut-outs at the waist and a cute bow tie at the back. ₹58,187 approximately



### Go with the flow

Slip on this sleek dress from Oscar de la Renta that features a flowy pleated design fashioned from silk. The fern green dress comes with a gorgeous one-shoulder neckline and a thigh-high slit to give a stunning finish. ₹9,94,525 approximately

One-shoulder gowns and cut-out silhouettes are all the rage this season



### Silky smooth

Cut for a slim fit, this almond-toned gown by Jonathan Simkhai is crafted from satin and is draped from the breast down till the waist on the right. This asymmetrical dress titled Sahar features an off-shoulder with cold sleeves on the left and a slit down the knee at the front. ₹1,21,074 approximately



New Year's Eve is just around the corner and we pick out some dress-satin draped gowns, embellished dresses and one shoulder silhouettes to help you take on 2023 in style. We look at party pieces from designers like Oscar de la Renta and Jonathan Simkhai for some inspiration. — Text: Monica Tudu

### Neutral stand

This beige number by Rotate is designed with tulle netting and detailed with sequins. Cut for slim fit, the dress accentuates its short puff sleeves with distinctive ruffles around the circular neckline. ₹1,05,544 approximately



### Wrap it up

This satin dress by Rasario is tailored for a close fit and has a stunning surplice neckline that drapes to one side and creates the illusion of a wrap. Its embroidered buttons are aligned to the hip, with a slit down the knee in the front and a concealed zip along the back. ₹1,98,740 approximately



ALL DRESSED UP



# BAGGING FUSS-FREE LIFESTYLE

# B

ohomia-- a mission focussed handbag company was started with an idea of creating functional handbags so that women can find everything in a jiffy. Over time, it is re-imagining handbag designs by elevating them with enhanced style, practicality and design innovation. Their human centered design understanding involves putting themselves in the shoes of the person who will be carrying the bag to device a utilitarian product. Their thought navigates several questions that help them achieve practicality in design - what will be the purpose of the bag, possible things one may carry in it and how to ease accessibility to things inside the bag.

Apart from essential design, the look of the bags is equally impressive.

Bohomia bags range from smaller sling bags to large laptop totes, work bags, diaper bags and backpacks. They ensure you're always travel ready and organised for any trips. The bags are lightweight, weather proof, long lasting and have detailed organisational design. Most of the bags have a minimum of nine pockets along with key pockets and pen loops to ensure there is a assorted place to keep everything safely. The medium to big range bags have bottle pockets as well that ensure you don't worry about spills any more. What more? The bags are chic and come in vogueish colours that have you covered from work to weekend trips.

To ensure best quality, the brand does multiple samplings before finalising a design. The bags created from the sample are tested to determine whether they are meeting their target usage purpose. This meticulous process makes Bohomia produce limited batch collections and give competitive and classic products to the luxury customers.



Website : [www.bohomia.in](http://www.bohomia.in)



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Instagram : [www.instagram.com/wearebohomia](https://www.instagram.com/wearebohomia)

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**Out of the box**

Handcrafted from vegan faux leather, this small sling bag by Moon Rabbit is inspired by a vintage toolbox. Designed with wooden panels on both sides, the box-shaped bag features a zipped pocket on the inside and metal clasp closures at the front. The tan number comes with a sling leather belt that can be hooked to the sides. ₹5,000



**Paint it red**

This red and white striped clutch from Khara Kapas is handcrafted using ikat weaves and ethically sourced leather. The wallet features two compartments, several card holders and a zippered pouch. The bag comes with a golden metal chain. ₹6,500



**Ivy league**

This PETA-approved classic box bag by Aulive is handcrafted with artificial leather. The Noah purse in ivy green comes with a gold-toned metallic sling drop chain and a magnetic closure on the top. The box also features an elasticated pouch and card slots on the inside. ₹2,750



**Black beauty**

Inspired by '90s nostalgia, Mio Borsa's minimalistic *Bajuband* clutch in black is made from vegan leather. The flap-over bag features hand-embroidered gold and silver-toned ombre patterns that are studded with rhinestones at the front and sides. The glamorous purse comes with a detachable chain and magnetic closure. ₹6,000



**Heart of gold**

Crafted from upcycled and renewable materials, this pair of Deco Chrysler Earrings are handmade using semi-precious stones. Plated with gold and silver, the pair by Baka features multiple arches with chain endings. ₹6,900





fashion

wedding/new collection

occasion wear

# BESPOKE BRIDAL WEAR

Hyderabadi designer Aaliya Deeba's latest edit *Sitaraah* presents the sheen of the bride with royal drapes

Hyderabad had been the seat of Nizams and their resplendent glory; their culture influenced the sartorial fabric of the city with regal outfits meshed with intricate embroideries. Bringing the same grandeur in bridal wear, city-based designer Aaliya Deeba, known for her extravagant couture label Ideeb's-London, has come up with a new edit titled *Sitaraah* for the new-age bride. The edit shows her design philosophy of creating splendid and luxurious ensembles. Telling us about the inspiration, she shares, "I love watching sunrises. The reflection of the sun in the water attracted me towards celestial bodies like the stars and the sky. I was fascinated with the life cycle of stars and the light they emit over their life. *Sitaraah* is my ode to the stars and the dreamy patterns of light they emanate! They transport us to a world of whimsy with different hues. So the name *Sitaraah*, which literally translates to star, is the perfect fit for my collection."



Zardosi work

Further, talking about how she began the design process, she tells us, "I researched on multiple stars and inspired by their rich shades of colours that ranges from bright orange red and grey to white, I commenced designing — using sun signs and flowers as motifs."

*Sitaraah* has got traditional handicraft techniques with contemporary silhouettes to bring the magic of timeless bridal wear. "This collection is all about shine and magic. It is crafted with incredible shapes and volumes. I want my bride to harness the shine from cosmos on to their special day and rise in their future," the designer tells us.

The collection has *zardosi*, pearl work and thread work making it all the more ostentatious. With that, the designer stays true to decadent designs much like her past edit *Sheenaz-e-Aroosa* that harked on Indian and Persian quintessential glamour. She tells us how the edit is tailored as per the preferences of new-age brides. "They are fashion conscious and prefer to wear bespoke garments matching their own personal style. They are ready to experiment and have clarity about what they want. They want a traditional touch, but at the same time, the garment must exude a modern look. Our collection goes beyond this and provides the best comfort with western silhouettes."

Earlier, brides loved differ-

ent colours in general but would settle for shades of red and green. "Now you can see different colours from pink, lavender and purple to grey and white being bought by them. They want to look different and unique on their wedding."

Aaliya is known to capture the pulse of the brides by introducing a melange of new colours like tea rose ivory and blush pink to tangerine. This time, the edit has moon white, mustard yellow, green and hot pink. That depicts how Hyderabad is changing in its preferences. Commenting on the same, Aaliya shares, "Hyderabad has become one of the fastest growing cities in fashion with many designers from Delhi and Mumbai opening their stores here. Hyderabad brides want to wear garments that are fashionable and come with perfect fit."

She tells us about emerging wedding wear trends, "We have already seen how draped outfits are currently in fashion, which is our specialisation. Other than that, I have seen long jackets with *lehengas* and cape with *shararas* in vogue. *Kaftans* continue to be in trend inspired by Bollywood and are now making a cut to the international market."

₹50,000 upwards. Available in store at Banjara Hills.

— Priyamvada Rana

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INDULGE THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2022 | HYDERABAD



Ensembles from edit



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# BEAUTY WITH A PURPOSE

Former Miss India Queenie Singh's *Bride To BiE* kit ushers the concept of clean beauty with luxury



Queenie Singh



Bride To BiE

The Holiday Season has just begun with our heads wrapping around the most fruitful year-end resolutions. And the foremost idea that pops our mind is a complete overhaul — from the closet to skin care regime. Giving us some beauty inspirations, model and former Miss India turned entrepreneur Queenie Singh has come up with a high-end beauty kit *Bride To BiE* that assures the much needed rejuvenation. It claims to combine doctor expertise and scientific formulations to produce clean beauty products. Telling us about her philosophy behind the concept of beauty, she says, “I have an ultimate passion for beauty. I believe realistic beauty goals are achieved with knowledge, discipline and a change in routine through curated advice

from experts along with perfectly formulated products.” The eight products in the kit not only claim to work wonders for the bride but for anyone who wants a radiating face. From hydrating cleansers and face washes that restore

skin collagen to masks that tackle hyperpigmentation and under eye gels that reduce dark circles — the kit is touted as a “portal of metamorphosis” by the beauty queen herself. Telling us about the concept behind the kit, Queenie shares, “Every bride deserves to be the belle of her ball on her special day. Our clean, non-toxic and environmentally friendly skincare is a vessel to help her achieve that. We wish that people everywhere are able to undergo not only a skin transformation, but also a holistic outlook towards beauty, appearances, and confidence.” Queenie has collaborated with celebrity esthetician Dinyar Workingboxwalla to create the kit. Making us aware about the harmful chemicals that one should check before buying beauty products, she avers, “Mineral oils, artificial fragrances, sulphates, parabens, phthalates, alcohol, silicones, aluminium — these are what all skincare lovers and enthusiasts must watch out for.”

She further shares beauty tips for healthy and glowing skin. “Firstly, I would advise people on the beauty of eating right. Have varied colours on your plate. Eat plenty of greens and foods rich in antioxidants because what you put inside your body mirrors how it looks outside. Secondly, focus on the beauty of a healthy and full life. Make sure you get

ample hydration, exercise as regularly as possible, stress less, and sleep sound. I have an extremely hectic lifestyle but I try to tick these boxes on most days. Lastly, beauty is not limited to how you look. Know your energy and what your aura, opinions, and views bring to the world. Radiate self-confidence and you’ve already won.”

Hearing this, we were eager to know about her secret for flawless skin. And she reveals it is all about double cleansing. “This means using a cleanser followed by a face wash. After that, the Eyefinity All-in-One Under Eye Gel — a plumping serum, and my Superpower Eternal Youth Cream. I sometimes blend these products together and seal it all with Sundaze — my everyday sunblock. At night, I use a soothing and calming saffron based oil — Halo Uplifting and Soothing Face Oil.” Given she’s been a pageant winner, we asked her what she’d like to change in the beauty industry in India. “I would like to champion the concept of clean beauty so people have healthier skin and understand how it can transform with the right products.”

₹7,049 upwards. Available online.

— Priyamvada Rana

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📱 @RanaPriyamvada

Skin-care

## New Year's makeover

As 2022 comes to a close, we eagerly await to glam up for the year-end bash. Here are some select wellness products for the season that can help you get the desired look and kindle that sparkling inner beauty

### Ultimate Party glow

As your skin is prepared to slay the party season, Charlotte Tilbury and Nykaas have dropped their *Holiday 22* makeup range. It includes a face palette, mini lipstick kits, airbrush set, concealer and much more. This collaboration between the fashion and skincare brand aims to render joy and fun of getting dolled up for parties. ₹2,900 upwards. Available online.



### Goodness of Ayurveda

The soothing touch of nature is the best way to pamper your skin before it gets ready for makeup. Ayurvedic wellness brand Soul Tree has come up with its *Advanced Kumkumadi Everyday Radiance Essentials* kit that includes cleanser, night cream, face oils, day cream and more infused with the essence of rich organic ingredients like Mogra Saffron and 27 other herbs that claim to fight pigmentation, scars, dark spots and blemishes. ₹12,775 upwards. Available online.



### Soporific Aromatherapy

Welcome the New Year with not just a physical makeover but with a renewed spirit. And what better to channel that innate peace and calm than Aromatherapy? Personal care brand Squish Town has come up with a variety of unique *Virgin Coconut Soy Wax Candles* that claim to invigorate the heart and soul with palliative fragrances. They're vegan and come with the goodness of natural essential oils of orange, spearmint, eucalyptus and more. ₹4,050 upwards for a set of three. Available online.



### Vegan beauty

If you wish to end the year on a guilt-free note, then we've got you covered with vegan beauty options. Forest Trove has brought its cruelty-free creations like cheek tints and lip balms with extracts of botanicals and fruits. They're paraben free and claim to be packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and plant oils that regenerate the skin from within. ₹500 upwards. Available online.



# RAISE THE BAR!



The drinking space



Chipotle Mushroom Tacos



Polakova Samosa

**E**XPANDING FROM THE West — for instance, the trends from European and American countries are unfurling in the orient too — the millennials of today look for fresh flavours, as though they are exploring new cuisine and refreshing taste profiles — thanks to craft beers for pushing the envelope. Somewhere during the Industrial Revolution or even earlier, modern brewing endeavours have been witnessing a boom. To go further back in history, the Celtic folk were fairly proficient at making beer — and today, the creativity has spread like a gospel here, with brewing moulding into a jazz-like art form.

Speaking of beers, the city's 25,000 square feet Ironhill brewery attracted visitors from all walks of life, from beer aesthetes to those just beginning their expedition into craft beer. Its cosy corner transported us to a picturesque roadside view above the PNR Empire — people hoped to have a good time, or

simply enjoy a quiet evening with a glass or two of their favourite craft beer. We initially considered sipping some of their trademark craft beers and cocktails as the sunlight glistened through the Venetian blinds on a wintry afternoon.

We began our bon viveur tavern venture with the Refreshing Destiny — we took a few gulps of this gin-based cocktail or what people refer to as the 'Ironhill special', with fresh cucumber slices and mint springs. Likewise, the Spiced and Smokey Old-fashioned lent us the fondness of blended whiskey mingled with vanilla syrup, apple juice, and nutmeg. We poured the drink from the cocktail jar into a whiskey glass on ice, with fruit notes of apples, apricot and cherry for a healthy balance of spice and saccharinity. We also realised that we would not have been able to fulfil and illuminate our bar experience if we had not tried out their craft beers. We



Cream Ale, Refreshing Destiny



Perri Perri Veggie Sandwich, Spiced and Smokey Old-fashioned

took calming breaths, taking in a few taste notes of the Blueberry Cider, Cream Ale and Rice Lager — from the dominance of blueberry interspersed with floral scent to malted barley — the impressions of hedonism kept us from concentrating on anything else.

As the long afternoon faded into twilight and dusk fell on the city, warmth and fluorescence lit up the space. Rock classics enlivened the outdoor and indoor aesthetics as more guests started coming in, probably after working hours. We had Chipotle Mushroom Tacos for starters. As the salsa and micro greens garnished the savoury, the sautéed mushrooms, fresh coriander and soft tortilla added every sense of zest

in our mouths. Likewise, served with French fries, the hint of mixed vegetables, salt, pepper and house-special mayo infused in the buttery Perri Perri Veggie Sandwich immersed us in a lip-smacking escapade.

From the main courses, we sampled a Crusted Fish. "For this, we use bass fish marinated with mustard and horseradish sauce. To give it a crisp, we make a mixture of bread crumbs, parmesan cheese and parsley," Shyamal Raj, the head chef, shares some secrets behind perfecting the platter. Served with broken wheat and spicy creamy sauce, we suppressed our urge to ask for another plate of the delectable to relish for later. We entered an ideal food coma after having the Polakova Samosa for dessert. Topped with caramel sauce served with peanut chikki and vanilla ice cream, we felt like we were living in the moment when we devoured it.

₹1,200 for two including liquor. At Kukatpally.  
— Chokita Paul  
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@PaulChokita

fiesta

## Sizzling Stones

China Bistro's Dolsot Sizzling Stone Festival is a healthy and colourful treat for the palate



Stone Smoked Chilli



Chicken Dumplings



Chocolate Rolls

**THE YEAR'S ENDING** and most of us wish to tread on new beginnings. With the same spirit, China Bistro — known for its delectable spread of Asian cuisines — has launched new additions with its Dolsot Sizzling Stone Festival. For the unversed, Dolsot is a small-size piece of cookware made of Pagodite — a variety of stone used by Chinese artisans for carvings in pagodas and similar objects. The stone utensil is used to serve many hot rice dishes in Chinese and Korean cuisines. We were invited to have a taste of this new Dolsot bowl that can be customised as per individual liking. We learnt that the Dolsot has latent abilities. Cooking in the utensil makes a cracking sound that elevates the dining experience. Another interesting fact is Dolsot does not cool off quickly when removed from the stove so the dish remains sizzling hot when it arrives at the table. This is perhaps why the loose chunks of meat in the dish stay warm and intact with flavours till the end. We had a look at the dish that came spruced with colours — green leafy vegetables, red and



Buffet spread

yellow bell peppers, Thai Basil, Sichuan sauce and a gentle sprinkle of herbs. This immune-boosting wholesome bowl of flavours is sufficient for two people.

We also tried the regulars from the menu like dimsums. The green tinted Chicken Basil Dumpling won over its other variants Chicken Jiaozi and Shanghai Chicken Dumpling for its delicious filling of minced chicken, Thai Basil and oyster. As we relished them, two jewel-coloured mocktails arrived. We loved the first one — magenta-hued Cranberry Spritzer that hit us with a rejuvenating hint of crushed cucumber, cranberries and ice. The sweet-tangy notes of the drink



Cranberry Spritzer

made it more piquant than its subtle counterpart Blue Hawaiian. Surely, a great way to spice your meal!

Before we could finish it, the rich textured Sri Lankan Curry arrived. We paired it with the aromatic Jasmine Rice. Imagine the creamy flavours of coconut milk melding perfectly with curry leaves and cumin to create a salivating dish. Before bidding adieu to this treat, we ended our meal with the crispy Hot Chocolate Rolls. The cigar rolls stuffed with powdered hot chocolate, garnished with coconut and served with vanilla ice cream are a must-try for those who have a sweet tooth.

The Dolsot Sizzling Stone Festival continues till January 8, 2023. ₹1,600 for two. At Jubilee Hills.  
— Priyamvada Rana  
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Actor and stand-up comedian, Vir Das talks about his latest Netflix special *Vir Das: Landing*, why he feels as an outsider, dealing with criticism and more  
By Priyamvada Rana

comedy

# TAKING INDIA ABROAD



Vir Das



**V**ir Das is a story of several firsts. From being the first Indian comedian to have a Netflix special to being the only Indian comedian to have his fourth one *Vir Das: Landing* streaming on the platform — he's become one of the most desired Indian globally, after Priyanka Chopra. Credit to his brand of comedy that transcends borders, he's been able to tickle the funny bones across geographies with fans pouring in from US, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, Japan and more to watch his shows. Couple it with his multi-cultural background of being born in India, raised in Africa, schooled in the US and again coming home to join Bollywood — it has enhanced his understanding of the diverse diaspora.

His style of comedy veers from witty takes on politics (*Vir Das: For India*) and taking a dig at the 'isms' in racism, chauvinism, voyeurism and nationalism (*Vir Das: Abroad Understanding*) with a discern tone to using slapstick humour to break away from his bag of intelligent jokes. He's a man armed with a sharp knowledge of his socio-political and cultural milieu. That empowers him to spell out truth that is sometimes off-putting but is never bogus. He does court controversy with his acts (*I come from Two Indias*) but the same monologue rewards him with an Emmy nomination for his truthfulness as an artiste. While criticism or outrage might be a bugbear for the 43-year-old artiste, he's convinced to make people laugh and carry his country with pride wherever he travels.

That forms the intent of his latest Netflix special where he puts out a laudable laughable act of an Indian's observation in many far-away lands. The act is a profound assertion of his identity as an Indian at home and an outsider in a foreign country — who observes harsh truth and translates them into acts of comedy. As long as Vir is writing such love letters to his country and the world, he has our ears. Perhaps that's why, the comedian was trending on *Twitter* minutes after his show's release. We speak to the actor-comedian-musician who talks about his multi-cultural appeal, vision for comedy and more. Excerpts:

**How does it feel to be a global Indian?**  
Knowing that feeling, one has to give credit to Priyanka Chopra first. She is possibly the most global Indian. But yeah, it feels great to be in the list. If you put me in the room with all the comedians that have got many Netflix specials, I would rather ask for their autograph (*laughs*).

**What was the intent behind the show *Vir Das: Landing*?**  
The central feeling attached to it is coming home after travelling the world. Metaphorically, it is about a flight landing home in Mumbai. The show is about the feeling of being at other places while also carrying India with you and what it means to be truly a global citizen. These are some of the broad themes of the show. It's been written on the roads when I went to 25 countries this year and did about 183 shows. It's about what you are really thinking about when you are in a foreign country like France or Australia where while

observing the surroundings — there are these little snippets from childhood or from your home that cross your mind. They make you think about how you possibly got to the place where you are right now. So it's about that kind of nostalgia. Apart from that, I have also tried to encapsulate global themes like cancel culture, politics, influence of social media, how the world is becoming more unsafe and more in the show.

**You were exposed to different cultural milieu since childhood up until your growing up years. Did that culminate into this show?**  
I think it has. I feel I belong everywhere yet nowhere. I kind of live a life as a perpetual outsider and this show is about embracing that 'being outsider' feeling. It takes you a while, a little bit of craft and confidence to finally say at the end of it that okay, maybe I don't belong to any one particular place but this is the country that I love and this is who I am... and I am going to do more of this. So you're not trying to fit in anywhere. In a way, being an outsider to various surroundings and subjects has given me that comedic perspective.

**So when you say you carry the country with you, what's your idea of Indianness?**  
I feel there is a part of the Indian perspective that is truly global. Every big comedy market has local palatable versions of Indian content. There is an American Indian, a British Indian, an Australian Indian or Canadian Indian and so on... and those are very well-established points of view. But there isn't somebody who is representing the 1.3 billion, going out and talking to them about their own country. So with this show, I want to say that what I am doing is not an immigrant's story. I am not looking to fit in your (foreign) country or settle down in your country, but this is what I think about your country and my perspective is valid.

**You've been in the comedy industry for a decade. How would you look at its evolution?**  
Comedy has become a valid alternative to various sources of entertainment that have existed in our country. Earlier, if you had a certain amount of money, you would like to go for a music concert or a movie, but now people are prioritising comedy shows. Recently, I read a data report that showed how Indians spent more on comedy than buying IPL tickets this year. I mean who had ever thought that one could beat cricket, that too with comedy in India... but it's happening (*laughs*!).

**Why is comedy not treated as a nuanced art form like dance, music or theatre?**  
I think it is because we are still in a nascent stage. Also, it has to do with what language you are doing comedy in. Hindi comedy in India is treated with a lot of nuance because it is far more intelligent and poetic if you do it well. With me performing in English, I know there will be a certain kind of audience that I will never be able to tap into and I have to make peace with that. But we have a larger English speaking audience in India than we have in America! So if you tell me that I get to only perform for 260 million people that will be an irony in itself (*smiles*).

Continued on Page 14

cover  
story

**How does our country perceive satire?**

I feel that it's being accepted and embraced more than ever. The audience is growing to be diverse. For instance, the *Landing* show has many dramatic moments and it can make you deeply uncomfortable at times. But today, we have an eclectic audience that's accepting such shows. That was not the case earlier. For instance, at the time when comedy was not that much flourishing, a show by me or maybe Zakir Khan would go out to just regular comedy fans. And you will get a very predictable reaction from them where either they will like it or not like it. But in today's time, the audience is growing and evolving. So when your audience grows to a certain sizable amount and you have new people who are watching comedy for the first time, then there will be different kinds of reactions because it's the first time they are exposed to this kind of an art form. You have to welcome them and honour the fact that they are on board. So the reception for satire is far better today but is also varied. It is no longer just appreciating or not appreciating a show. The reception has gone beyond that and is met with discovery and also outrage at times.

**Speaking of outrage, don't you fear the consequences?**

Yes, like any artist, I do! But I don't think you can predict what is going to be controversial. That is not in my hands, so what I focus on is to just do my job with conviction. Having said that, your content may become controversial, but controversy should not become your content. These days, anything from a joke to wardrobe to a visual can offend anyone. The only thing you can do is to be focused on your craft.

**You've to combat fear many times, what keeps you going?**

I think it's laughter. I'm here just to make you laugh. I am an idiot! I will make fun of myself more than I ridicule anybody else. So if you come to my show, you'd have one resounding thought that Vir Das is an idiot (*laughs*) and I am flattered to hear it if that makes you laugh. At the same time, I'm receptive towards feedback. All we can do as an artiste is to just take the feedback, head down and mouth shut. In fact, I respond to criticism far more than I do to praise because it teaches me a lot and keeps me growing. One big lesson I've learnt over years is that your reputation doesn't belong to you — it belongs to other people. So just keep doing what you're best at and let other people decide whether you are hot or happening or not happening.

**What is the kind of jokes that audience most relates to?**

The ones about truth. Whether it's about your *chachaji* (*uncle*) or a public figure like Elon Musk — if it reveals a truth — it will make people laugh.

**Most often you don't know the people in the room you are performing for. In case you have an audience that does not connect with the set you've prepared, what do you do then?**

It's very simple, until the joke is not about you, people will laugh. But if you come to my show there might be 550 jokes in 90 minutes. A couple of them maybe about you and you may not enjoy that. But hopefully, there are 500 jokes that you may laugh at. So individually, all the people will have one or two jokes that may not sit well with them, but you have to give them enough that they do enjoy the other parts. To me, the mark of a great artistic performance is not just good jokes. It is when the audience goes out of the hall and knows who you are. That is difficult to pull off with an act but to me that is the pinnacle of a successful show.

*Vir Das: Landing is currently streaming on Netflix.*

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Cut to the  
chase

**One fashionable mistake you regret?**

I am a minimalist now. I travel with five T-shirts and two pair of pants and carry no check in luggage. I wish I had done this before as well in my 25 to 35s when I bought a lot of unnecessary things.

**How do you tackle nervousness before going on the stage?**

I try to remember the good times. I think of my wife and my parents. I also stress-eat a lot of biscuits.

**A side of you that you wish people know more?**

I don't talk a lot in public. Since I spend my stage life talking, I remain quiet and very boring at parties. I prefer sitting in a corner watching people.

**Your daily fitness routine?**

I am training to climb a mountain. I walk for about three to four hours a day from the past two years as part of building stamina. Another thing is music. About 90% of my day is surrounded by it. I make sure to have some input everyday to produce an output so I listen to an audiobook or watch a movie etc.

**What's your vision for comedy in India?**

*Chalti Jaaye Gaddi bus* (*laughs*). To make people laugh more.



Your content may become controversial, but controversy should not become your content. These days, anything from a joke to wardrobe to a visual can offend anyone. The only thing you can do is to be focused on your craft

# NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

**W**E ARE NEARING the end of this year and I'm sure many of you have already chosen your New Year's resolutions. While it's very easy to choose one, it's extremely difficult to stick to one even for a month. So this New Year, why don't we look at some basics rather than going for bigger resolutions which may never be accomplished. It's very important for us to understand that only a toxic body craves for processed or toxic food, whereas a clean and healthy body craves for healthier options. This is about our body but what about mind? In our experience of working with thousands of people across the globe, we have also noticed that a toxic body does not just crave toxic food but it may inculcate toxic thoughts that further lead to toxic actions. After all, a wise man did say: 'You are what you eat'.

**Let's look at a few actionable lifestyle shifts below:**

- Three to four days a week, if possible, try to eat only raw food till lunch time. You can include a serving of fruits with a handful of soaked nuts and seeds, can try vegetables in chopped form or even a smoothie is fine once a week. Wake up to warm water, then your

## Basic changes that everyone can make to achieve healthy lifestyle goals in 2023

breakfast can include fruits and veggies with nuts and after two to three hours, you can have lunch. This helps in getting digestive enzymes and antioxidants in the body which enhances cleansing as well; plus it gives rest to the digestive system that allows healing of the body.

- Do not keep gaps of more than three to four hours between your meals. Longer gaps between meals leads to excess acid production and an acidic body cannot heal, recover, lose or gain weight effectively. Due to longer gaps between meals, an empty stomach and then the erosive action of stomach acid i.e. hydrochloric acid (HCL) will eventually destroy mucosal linings and digestive enzymes in the stomach. This leads to serve gut related issues like acid reflux, bloating, flatulence and indigestion.

- Digestion begins in the mouth itself due to the action of salivary amylase, so focus on slowing down and chewing your food well. The more you chew, the cleaner your stomach, intestines and colon will be. This also helps in controlling portion size naturally.

- Alcohol is bad for our liver and overall health, but having it in moderation is okay. One or two drinks once or twice a week as well is fine, but overdoing this will affect the



### HEALTHY LIVING

DEEPIKA RATHOD

Chief Nutrition Officer, Luke Coutinho Holistic Healing Systems. The writer is a clinical nutritionist with a focus on healthy lifestyle choices.

function of your liver. Our liver has hundreds of functions but due to over consumption of alcohol, the entire focus of the liver shifts to detoxification, plus alcohol destroys choline — a fat burning vitamin B in our body. That's why you might have noticed that people who are heavy drinkers have excessive fat around the abdomen because of the deficiency of choline. Too much alcohol also keeps the body acidic, reduces the metabolism and can cause various disease conditions. Between every drink, try to drink a glass of water or lemon water to flush out toxins and reduce the pressure on the liver.

- Do a 30-minute workout at a stretch to improve blood circulation and increase sweat to detoxify our body.

We have five eliminatory organs and the skin is the largest in our body. With good amount of activity, we sweat and release toxins from the body which helps in cleansing our body. Whenever possible, take a walk, climb stairs instead of using the elevator; move around to track 8,000-10,000 steps throughout the day which will also add movement to the body.

Well, these are very basic changes that everyone can make to achieve a healthy lifestyle goal, but apart from that, my favourite is fasting. One can observe a 16-18 hours only water fast (once a fortnight to start with) and then bring it down to once in a week to give rest to your digestive system and enhance the healing process of the body. Let's get a healthy start to 2023!



## Pragya on the move

Actress Pragya Jaiswal gets candid about her love for fitness, dancing, and food habits

**KNOWN FOR PLAYING** powerful yet fun roles in movies like *Kanche*, *Jaya Janaki Nayaka*, and *Akhanda*, Pragya Jaiswal has always spoken of her love for fitness and health. She frequently posts videos of her workout routines or shares gym tips with her fans on her *Instagram* handle. We caught up with the actress over a phone call to find out more. Excerpts:

**Tell us about your idea of fitness.**

I come from a family that believes in the idea of a healthy lifestyle. Even as a child, I remember watching my father on a mat, performing his yoga *asanas*. And, each time we had an off day from school, he would make us do simple exercises. So, growing up, exercises have been a part of my life, it was not something that I devel-

oped after I became an actor. And, now, I have been trying to work out at least five times a week for an hour. However, on some days, I can't stick to the routine due to work commitments.

**What kind of workout routines do you prefer?**

I do a lot of functional and weight training and I feel the need to try something new for my body every few months. Right now, it is functional training that's working the best for me, and I also dance on alternative days. You got to do your cardio, right?

**Now that you've mentioned it, you frequently post dance videos. Are you a trained dancer?** (Laughs) No! I am not a trained danc-

er, but it is my first love. I think I owe my movie career to dance because that's how I was discovered — from a dance troupe. Dancing, for me, is not just any form of exercise, but also helps me while performing dance sequences in films.

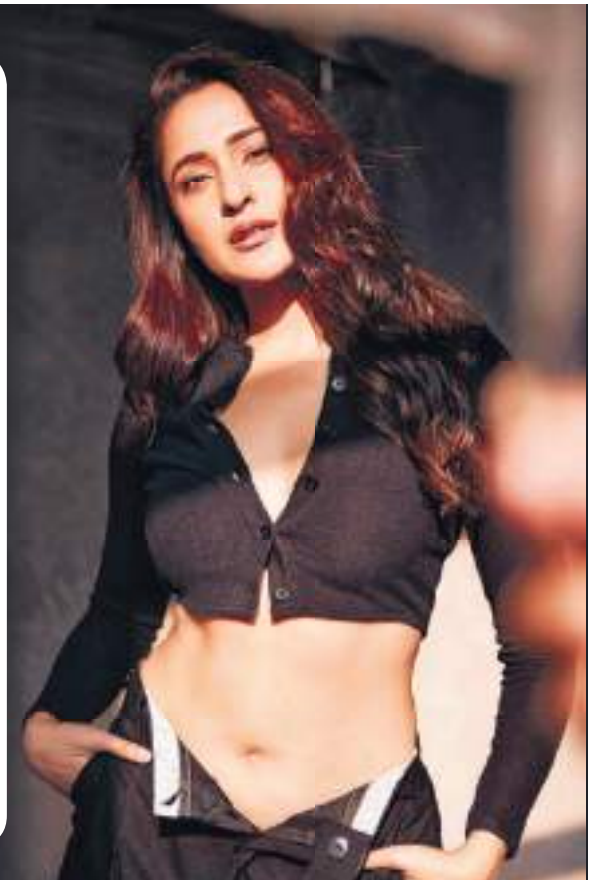
**What kind of diet do you follow? Do you have a favourite cuisine?**

I am a home food person. I am not really someone who enjoys junk food or unhealthy meals. I am not super strict when it comes to eating. I remember putting on a lot of weight during the lockdown and I just don't want to revisit that phase again (laughs). I love eating Japanese food like sushi and sashimi and there's this place called Mizu in Mumbai that I keep revisiting all the time.

**Tell us about your skincare regimen.**

It is not very hardcore. I cleanse, tone, and moisturise. I drink plenty of water and use sunscreen.

— Suchitra Behara  
@PatnaikSuchitra



conversation

# Laugh your blues away

“A

S A NERDY KID who wasn't good at academics or sports, wit and humour became a defence mechanism. Sharpening that wit to appeal to a wider audience only began after I started doing standup comedy,” begins city-based comedian, Saikiran, on his humble emergence into the field of storytelling. Ahead of his upcoming show in Hyderabad, called *Matrimania*, a humorous take

on the tremendous pressure society places on individuals in marriages, the standup comedian tells us more about what the audience can expect. “Once you hit a certain age, it seems like the only thing everyone around you is obsessed with is — when are you getting married and if you are not anytime soon, then why?” says Saikiran, who has been touring a number of shows, including the autobiographical *Nearly Nice Guy* and *Pure Veg Jokes*, which take the audience through different periods of his childhood. This time, Saikiran is performing a full solo act with *Matrimania*.

Perhaps the oldest, most widely used, fundamental, and profoundly significant kind of humour is found in standup comedy. An art aficionado and society cannot find a more telling indicator of its values, attitudes, dispositions, and concerns than laughter, and stand-up comedy is the most intriguing of all examples of humour in popular culture; perhaps because it is comparatively undervalued, as opposed to film comedy, sitcom, or a humorous piece of literature, to name a few. As exciting as the art form may seem, it is complicated to explain that one gets paid to tell jokes. We ask Saikiran how people around him — his family, friends, and relatives — react when he tells them what he does for a living. “Ten years ago when I began, nobody in my social circle knew about standup comedy. But now the awareness is quite well spread given the huge explosion of standup comedy in India in various languages. But most people just see it as mere entertainment and don't understand that it's a performance art with a rich history,” he tells us.

Humour is more than simply a means of amusement; it is more than just a way to pass the time of a week since our everyday lives are tied together with it. Comedy can be found anywhere; it can also be made when someone compliments you and you respond with a self-deprecating joke.

But why is it necessary? Do our feelings, thoughts, or actions alter as a result of comedy? “I don't think comedy can be disconnected from human emotions. The very idea of a joke comes from your emotion towards something and then just extending it till it becomes farcical,” Saikiran opines, adding, “The one thing intrinsic to humans is our ability to laugh and standup comedy takes that one step ahead giving us an

Saikiran draws from his experiences to remind us that in India, standup comedy has developed far more quickly than in other nations



Saikiran



Crowd enjoying Saikiran's show



In performance

opportunity to laugh at ourselves. Few art forms can get such an instant and visceral reaction from the audience and to laugh in a group with people over the same thing is just magical."

Interestingly, the incomparable Alexander Babu's *Alex in Wonderland* and Praveen Kumar's *Kancheepuram Maapla*, which was staged at his wedding, are two of his favourite specials of Indian standup comedians that he has seen live. One of the most original specials in recent memory, in his estimation, is Rajasekhara Mamidanna's *Love Letter to Mom*. "I thoroughly enjoyed Ashish Solanki's *Good Boy Better Show*, which had brilliant writing. I also loved watching *Nasty* by Aakash Mehta, *With Love* by Jaspreet Singh and *Polite Provocation* by Anirban Dasgupta," Saikiran tells us.

Similar to psychologists, comedians can help individuals survive challenging circumstances in their lives. Although primarily deadpan, Saikiran's comic approach has developed over time. From his early days, when his ideas were primarily simple observations, social satire, and news-based material, to more recent times, his humour has evolved to become more autobiographical and absurdist. "It's a mix of both and a few other things. Right now, my Instagram videos are

very observational while my standup is more anecdotal. Once you are a professional comedian, you are always mining for content. So, everything that I see or interactions I have with people could eventually be fodder for my writing. I always jot down something that strikes me as interesting and later, refer to those notes when writing and assess its comic potential," Saikiran tells us about his creative and brainstorming process. He realised that everything is interesting as he gained more expertise as a comedian. "If you look at anything long enough, you can find comedy in everything. The challenge is not finding things that will be funny but gauging if the audience is ready to accept it as funny," he adds.

However, comedy like any other art form needs years of diligent practice and tenacity, but one cannot practise this alone or behind closed doors, unlike many other art genres. "You need an audience to practise your comedy, not just perform it. So, it becomes important for the audience to come to open mics where every joke begins. The biggest challenge is to get the audience to live shows, especially in a city obsessed with movies," he tells us, adding, "After almost a decade of performing, I don't have stage fright anymore. But there will always be some nervousness before a show and that only dissipates after the first big wave of laughs from the audience hits you."

Saikiran takes the stage for *Matrimania* from 6 PM on January 1. At Heart Cup Coffee in Jubilee Hills.

— Chokita Paul

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Ten years ago when I began, nobody in my social circle knew about standup comedy. But now the awareness is quite well spread given the huge explosion of standup comedy in India in various languages



# PROMISES OF PARADISE

tête-à-tête

**BAND MEMBERS OF ELYZIUM TALK TO US ABOUT PREPARING A BRAND NEW SET FOR THEIR NEW YEAR'S EVE PERFORMANCE**

**O**N THEIR TOUR in Australia, city-based band, Elyzium delivered bounties of euphoria with drums breaking into a stomping rhythm, making the audience dance. At the beginning of last month, Dinker Kavala, Richard Maddela, Vidhya Sagar, NVS Charan and Anirudh Chaganty, aka, Kaali were off to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, while also performing at a couple of private wedding events in Bali. Now back in the City of Pearls after performing live abroad, we are reminded of the various catalysts for the multifaceted musical boom that occurs in the region. To start, a city with a diverse population is home to people with a range of tastes from various origins. People who are migrating from different regions of the country come together due to the IT industry and other flourishing career prospects. Likewise, the music culture in Hyderabad has evolved from being traditional and Carnatic to becoming incredibly diversified as a result of this inflow. In order for new genres to develop, the crowd's backing is as imperative as the artistes.

"Hyderabad loves the regional music scene. I think many bands have come into this space, and the audience is getting more chances to experience regional music whenever and wherever they go. It's picking up very well because people love it," Dinker, aka, DK, the lead vocalist of Elyzium tells us over a Zoom conversation. Besides him, the present lineup of the band includes Sagar on drums, Richard aka Rocky on bass guitar, Charan on keyboards and Kaali on acoustic and electric guitar.

Since 2020, as Elyzium took the stage to prove how much their fans mean to them, an overall gleaming visage was lent to the city. "We want to give a very

Clockwise L to R: Richard, Charan, Sagar, Dinker and Kaali



Kaali



Dinker Kavala



Vidhya Sagar



NVS Charan

fresh and new experience to all the audience who are planning to watch our show on the 31st. We are curating a new playlist for songs that they have never heard from us before. That apart, there will be a few more surprises on stage," Dinker tells us, adding, "We just want to make sure that everyone is happy when they leave."

What is it about regional music that lured all of them (band members) into it as a family? Although Dinker, Kaali, and their current manager, Anurag Varma, were previously associated with another band, their primary focus and goal was to serve their audience better. When one comes from Hyderabad, one intends to add more Telugu and check the potential for better and more appropriate performance in the language. They all agreed, thinking along similar lines — that Telugu music was unexplored. "Elyzium is not just sticking to Telugu. While we perform more in Telugu, we sing in other languages too, like in Hindi when there's a request. When we performed in Bangalore, we sang five or six Kannada tracks. I have done playback in Kannada too," Dinker shares.

"DK is the person who brought us all together. He has selected a bunch of great musicians. That's what he excels in — bringing all things well together. He has lots of ideas and despite his hectic schedule, he always gives his time to the band. When he called me suggesting that I form a band, I was super excited because I've known him for 10-12 years now and I was happy to work with him," Sagar tells us about the troupe's genesis. "We sit together and talk about each and every aspect of what to do, what not to do. If we are selecting a song, everyone comes up with their ideas. We discuss how to make it, and how to represent it afresh. Our collective aim is that whatever we create should sound like an Elyzium song," Charan adds how they approach their cover versions.

Needless to say, as we hum along to the band's original composition, *Pretty Ponne* on their YouTube channel, we feel the urge to spread the joy and make everyone else feel good — like the gradations of that dramatic, yet personal and light-hearted mood delivered throughout the piece. Dinker shares, "We wanted to create something which connected with the people, something everybody could sing. Sagar happened to programme the song and structure it after which the others added their bits. Harsha (Emani) penned the beautiful lyrics that are colloquial and easy."

Although Sagar, who composed the song, tells us that this song was made 'casually', for us, the melody feels like the glass is always half-full. "We made it very jovial and catchy. When I started composing the tunes of the song, it took me two to three tunes to finalise the one. It's challenging to compose a tune or even write a lyric, which can be easily sung by the public or someone who does not know music. The process was tricky. But we are happy, people liked it."

Interestingly, while choosing a name for the band, several titles came up around three months before the band's debut on Christmas at Tabula Rasa in 2020. They began discussing which one would be the most appropriate or which would make more sense in light of how they wanted to make their audience feel through their music. So, eventually, Kaali suggested Elyzium (Elysium), which means Paradise. "We all believe, what counts is how the audience feels when they witness the performance — that they have encountered heaven," Dinker smiles.

*Elyzium is performing at Boulder Hills in Gachibowli on December 31.*

*₹2,000 upwards.*

— Chokita Paul

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🐦 [@PaulChokita](https://twitter.com/PaulChokita)



Richard Maddela



*We want to give a very fresh and new experience to all the audience who are planning to watch our show on the 31st. We are curating a new playlist for songs that they have never heard from us before*

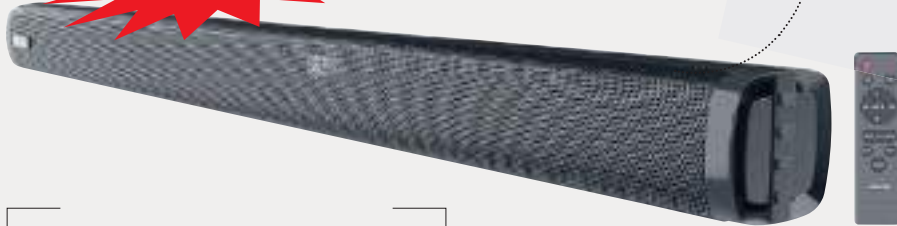
hot  
stuff

# Gadget Review

## Elista Musibar

Elista's ELS Bar 6000 is a soundbar with ample features. I set it up with my TV as well as connected to my smartphones with ease. Performance was commendable with clear vocals for dialogue and good ambient effect for dynamic scenes. *Spotify* connected via phone BT was clear and just powerful enough. The Musibar also allows for AUX, Coaxial and USB connectivity. [flipkart.com](http://flipkart.com)

₹5,499



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## Gizmore GizFit Plasma

Gizmore is a leading smart accessory, fitness gear and home audio brand in India. Its newly launched GizFit PLASMA has an excellent 1.9" display and 550 nits of brightness for sunny days. The watch sits very well on my wrist and has good aesthetics for the price. I tested out its features which include SpO2 monitoring, BT calling, body temperature and activity tracking over a week. I found the results to be reasonably acceptable for daily use. I was impressed with the finishing of the watch, strap and the colour options available. [gizmore.in](http://gizmore.in)



₹1,799

## UBON SP 135

I have a soft corner for all devices which have solar charging capabilities. So when I received the Hawa Hawai 5-in-1 solar wireless speaker (SP-135) from Ubon, it was max excitement. The device is compact and is good to go straight out of the box. The in-built torch has ample brightness, the fan is also adequate at close quarters to keep you cool. It's the FM and BT connection to the speaker which adds dramatic value, especially being able to charge via exposure to light. Available in black, red and blue, the SP-135 is good for holidays and short trips. [ubon.in](http://ubon.in)



₹1,999

## Fitshot Flair

The Flair is a 'women-centric smartwatch' aimed at female users. Flair looks great and comes with tons of features including multiple watch faces, IP68 water resistance, UV sensors to indicate UV exposure, activity tracking, SpO2, heart rate, body temperature monitoring, menstruation tracker as well as alerts for messages and calls. Available in pink, blue and green. [flipkart.com](http://flipkart.com)



₹1,999

₹1.67 lakh



## Seiko Presage SPB 359

To celebrate the 110th anniversary of its first wristwatch, the SPB359 Seiko Presage draws inspiration from Seiko's 1913 Laurel. While housing a modern automatic movement, the round case has characteristic Arabic numerals, retro-style blue hands and a large onion crown. It also features a pristine enamel dial just as with the 1913 original. Available in Limited editions. [seiko.com](http://seiko.com)

₹10,750

## Ember Mug 2

This smart heated mug is perfect for keeping your tea/coffee hot for long periods. It's so smart that it remembers your favourite temperatures and maintains it there for upto 1.5 hrs. The mug is also safe to hand wash and submersible in upto 1m in water. [ember.com](http://ember.com)



## Insta360 X3

X3 is a waterproof 360 degree action camera with 1/2" 48MP sensors which provide 5.7K 360 videos. It also sports active HDR for stabilised action videos and 4K first-person views. Epic 60fps slow mo lets you see the action in awesome detail. Timelapse mode allows upto 8K quality. Waterproof upto 50m, X3 is equally at home in air, sea or land. [store.insta360.com](http://store.insta360.com)



₹37,000

Ashok Pandian  
@ashokpandian

telewatch

**Docufilm: Wildcat**

In this film, directors Melissa Lesh and Trevor Frost examine the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centre run by Ph.D. candidate Samantha Zwicker. The show also emphasises mental illness and PTSD experience by Harry Turner, a young veteran who goes on a journey into the Amazon forest to experience love and healing. December 30, Amazon Prime Video



**Action: Aar Ya Paar**

This new action drama series Aar Ya Paar is directed by Glen Baretto, Neel Guha and Ankush Mohla. The story revolves around Sarju, a talented archer from a tribal community whose prime agenda is to save his tribe from the modern world. December 30. On Disney+Hotstar



**Crime: Lady Voyeur Season 1**

A new crime drama series directed by Luciana de Oliveira, Lady Voyeur stars Débora Nascimento as Miranda, a curious voyeuristic hacker. She finds herself in a dangerous investigation after crossing paths with her sex worker neighbour Cléo (Emanuelle Araújo) and sparks fly. January 1. On Netflix



**Drama: Step up: High Water Season 3**

This American drama series is premiering its third season and director Dawn Wilkinson promises a socially relevant storyline besides some amazing dance battles starring Ne-Yo, Terrence Green and Rigo Octavio. December 30. On Lionsgate Play.



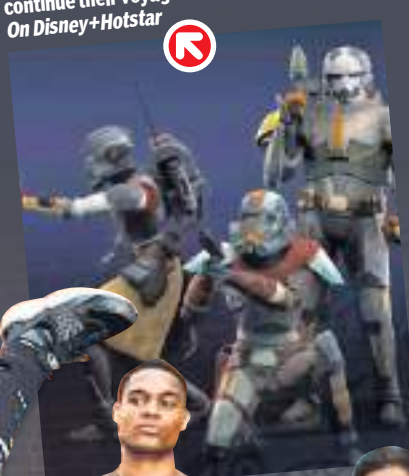
**Docuseries: Madoff: The Monster of Wall Street**

Starring Joseph Scotto and Donna Pastorello, the four-part financial thriller series directed by Joe Berlinger is a documentary based on the infamous crook of Wall Street, Bernie Madoff. With the aid of a corrupt financial system and the huge number of people involved, Madoff is able to pull off a multibillion dollar Ponzi Scheme. January 4. On Netflix



**Fiction: Star Wars: The Bad Batch**

This January, the Bad Batch series of Star Wars is back with another season where the members of the clone squad will navigate a shifting galaxy. After the Republic of Raxus Secundus is overthrown, The Bad Batch continue their voyage. January 4. On Disney+Hotstar



**Thriller: Kaleidoscope**

Directed by Rupert Jones, this anthology series featuring Giancarlo Esposito, Paz Vega and Rufus Sewell follows the plot of a heist spanning over 25 years. A master thief and his crew attempt to pull off one of the biggest robberies in history that amounts to seven billion dollars. The colour-coded episodes can be watched in any order as each sequence gives the viewers a different perspective of the heist. January 1. On Netflix



**Horror: White Noise**

Based on Don DeLillo's book of the same name, White Noise is directed by Noah Baumbach and features Adam Driver, Greta Gerwig and Don Cheadle in the lead roles. When an accidental chemical spill results in a toxic air contamination, college professor Jack Gladney is forced to evacuate the city with his family and face his fears. December 30. On Netflix



We drive the most affordable EV currently available in India, namely the Tiago.EV, and it is undoubtedly a product that impresses!

# ELECTRIC FOR THE PEOPLE

THE TIAGO.EV follows the same design language as the regular Tiago which has been around since 2016. Having said that, the design is still fresh and has a few EV tweaks that include the black enclosed panel across the front, the tri-arrow pattern on the bumper and closed off grille and the humanity line finished in steel blue that runs right across the front to mark it as part of Tata's EV range. The Tiago.EV also gets two-tone plastic wheel caps, a black roof, black mirror casings and the tell-tale EV badging on the front and rear.

## Interior

The cabin of Tiago.EV is a neat uncluttered space and once again, it is similar to what we have seen on the regular ICE version of the same car. To set

it apart just a bit, Tata Motors has given it a neat two-tone look with a black and off-white theme and this includes the white leatherette seats. Other changes include new buttons for the driver to select the level of REGEN and also an electric charging lid release button. Being an EV also means it has no gear lever and this has been replaced by a rotary drive selector. Tiago.EV gets a digital instrument cluster that has been upgraded to feature EV specific information. The car also benefits from a Harman touchscreen infotainment system, climate control and a flat-bottomed steering wheel.

## Performance

Tata is offering the Tiago.EV in two variants, namely the

medium range and long range versions. The only difference between the two are the battery packs for the medium range version gets a 19.2kWh LFP battery, while the long range version gets a 24kWh LFP battery pack. The medium range version delivers 45kW of power and 110 Nm of torque and has a range of 257 km per charge, while the long range version delivers 55kW of power, 114 Nm of torque and boasts of a 315km range. Both versions are quite appealing to drive and are well suited for urban driving cycles. They are refined and peppy which makes them quite a bit of fun to be behind the wheel of!

## Verdict

Tiago.EV is targeted at first-time EV buyers and on that

note, it is an impressive machine. Despite being built to a cost, it feels upmarket and well appointed. Coming in at a price point that is in line with most B-Segment hatchbacks, the Tiago.EV is positioned as a great first choice for those looking at moving towards an EV and having it as their urban runabout.

Price range:  
₹8.49 lakh onwards.  
— Vikram Gour

## MOTORSCRIBES

(A pitstop for modern-day car and bike enthusiasts, this column features the latest machines, reviews, roadtrips and more. By a team of automotive insiders who call themselves MotorScribes)

## safety



## India's first commuter bike with ABS

The Platina 110 ABS is the only motorcycle in the 100 - 115 cc segment that comes with the complete safety of ABS braking

BAJAJ AUTO LIKES to make history, and this time around they have done it with their entry-level commuter, namely the Platina. Now fitted with a segment-first Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), this ushers in a new level of safety for the commuter segment. The system that has been fitted on board the Platina is a single channel ABS unit. On that note, the Platina also features a 240mm front disc brake and a 110mm drum brake with CBS at the rear.

The new Platina 110, equipped with ABS enhances safety by reducing braking distance and providing better stability in any challenging braking condition. The ABS in Platina ensures complete control in emergency-braking situations that may arise due to the sudden appearance of stray animals, frequent potholes, slippery and uneven surfaces, thus protecting the rider from a fall and serious injury.

Powering the Platina 110 ABS is a 115.45cc natural air cooled DTS-i engine that delivers 8.6 PS of power and 9.81 Nm of torque. It is paired with a 5-speed transmission and is known to be extremely fuel efficient. Other key features of this bike include a comfortable seat, longer front and rear suspensions, a headlight with DRLs and a new digital speedometer as well as an ABS indicator and gear position indicator.

With all these changes and the addition of advanced technology like ABS for the commuter segment, the Platina definitely makes it to the list of safest two wheeler commuters currently available in the market. Bajaj has also done a great job of pricing it competitively at ₹72,224 (ex-showroom).

— Praveen Raja

# Mahindra Thar Diesel Breaks Cover

Mahindra is set to introduce a new variant of the Thar that will come with a smaller diesel engine and will not have 4x4



THE NEW MAHINDRA Thar has been on sale for over two years now and it continues to clock in brilliant sales numbers. Having said that, Mahindra had to discontinue the lower range variants as they did not comply with the GNCAP 4 Star rating norms, leaving only the top end models in showrooms for customers. To address this and to give the Thar a more practical touch, Mahindra is now gearing up to launch a two wheel drive variant that will come with a smaller 1.5 litre diesel engine.

From a design standpoint, Mahindra isn't changing the way this version of the Thar looks. However, the only tell-tale sign that will be visible is the absence of the 4x4 badging on the rear. The cabin also retains

the same layout. However Mahindra is including a door lock/unlock button on the center console and in place of the 4x4 shifter, there will be a cubby hole to either keep coins or store a mobile phone.

The engine that will power this model is straight out of the Marazzo. This motor displaces 1497cc and delivers close to 120 PS of power and 300 Nm of torque, which is more than ample for the two wheel drive Thar. The engine will be paired with a 6 speed manual transmission and an automatic is also on the cards.

With this change, the two wheel drive Thar will conform to GST standards that do not apply to SUVs and therefore, will be priced much lower than the 4x4 variant that gets a larger 2.2 litre motor.

Price: ₹10-12 lakh.  
— Vikram Gour



Tripura's Hojagiri dance



A tribal dance at the Hornbill Festival

heritage

# ENCOUNTERING THE HORNBILL

Indigenous folk dances, lively music, encounters with tribes and more, the 23rd Hornbill Festival in Kisama, Nagaland was a melting pot of people from different states and communities

**C**ULTURAL EXTRAVAGANCE, unity and celebration of diversity — these are some of the traits that defined this year's *Hornbill Festival*, an annual event featuring all the ethnic groups in Nagaland. Held at the Naga Heritage Village in Kisama near Kohima between December 1 and 10, 2022, the festival turned out to be a plethora of new experiences and an absolute eye-opener for someone who didn't know much about the North East.

One of the first things we notice after entering the Heritage Village is the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral R Hari Kumar, flagging off a motorcycle expedition by the Indian Navy, a 24-day rally in the North East to raise awareness about Indian independence and recruit more volunteers from the area. Fifteen riders clad in denim and riding jackets — each on a Royal Enfield motorcycle — driving through the crowd majestically while Shankar Mahadevan's *Hum Taiyar Hain* played in the background, made for quite a goosebump inducing, patriotic sight!

We move on to the never-ending rows of textile, pottery, woodcraft and food shops and spot exquisitely crafted black earthenware that is native to the *Tangkul* tribe in Longpi (Nungbi) village at Manipur, hand-woven *dupattas* and winter shawls, vivid beaded jewellery, bamboo baskets and more, making us feel spoilt for choice. We also come across interesting wine options made of kiwi, hot sauces infused with peach and passion fruit, and dried meat pickles that promise to bring in the heat of the *Naga Morich* (the Ghost Pepper), touted to be one of the spiciest peppers to ever exist.



Motorcycle expedition by the Indian Navy

As we walk through the crowd, we spot wood and thatch huts that each showcase the attire, weaponry, crockery and accessories special to each of the tribes in Nagaland, including the *Chakhesangs*, *Konyaks* and the *Kachari Morung* and smaller communities like the *Dimasas*, *Meches* and *Boros*. We also see representatives from each of these tribes, dressed in their colourful native attires and huddled around cosy bonfires. We consider ourselves lucky for getting the chance to witness this beautiful moment — the spirit of unity in diversity,

with each tribe coming together to celebrate their culture, music, food, and art forms.

The highlight of our trip to the *Hornbill Festival* was, however, the performances of the folk dance form native to each of the Seven Sisters. The charmingly playful and adorably fluffy Snow Lions from Sikkim/ Arunachal



A mural of headhunters in Kisama

## Hornbill trivia 101

It all starts with the hornbill — a bird that has been depicted in several Naga myths, folklore, songs and dances. Its feathers were used to decorate the headgear of the Naga warriors. Since the Nagas believe that the hornbill is a harbinger of good and a symbol of valour, it has been respected by the community for ages and subsequently, became the face of this festival. Initiated in 2000, the main objective of the *Hornbill Festival* was to unite the 16 major tribes of Nagaland. Since their cultures and customs differed and resulted in conflict for decades, the idea was to celebrate all tribes for their diversity and unite them. Now, the tribes are known as one: the Naga people.



Snow Lions from Sikkim

Pradesh, featuring artistes in furry costumes of white and green with the face of a snow lion, danced and rolled in rhythm to music, occasionally bounding up to the audience to play with us! This was followed by a mind-blowing martial arts performance of *Thang Ta* from Manipur, *Laho* from Meghalaya, *Hojagiri* from Tripura, *Popir* from Arunachal Pradesh and more, during which groups of dancers from each of the seven states came forward into the arena and moved in tempo to the beat of the drums. Guess they don't call the *Hornbill Festival* 'a festival of festivals' for nothing!

We leave the Heritage Village with a heart filled with warmth and a feeling of serenity, taking home the satisfaction of getting a peak into this joyous cultural celebration that was a world of its own. While our visit to the *Hornbill Festival* was quite brief, it was in no way unforgettable.

The next *Hornbill Festival* is expected to take place on

November 23, 2023. Nearest rail-head and airport: Dimapur.

— Praveena Parthiban

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Tribal representatives at Hornbill

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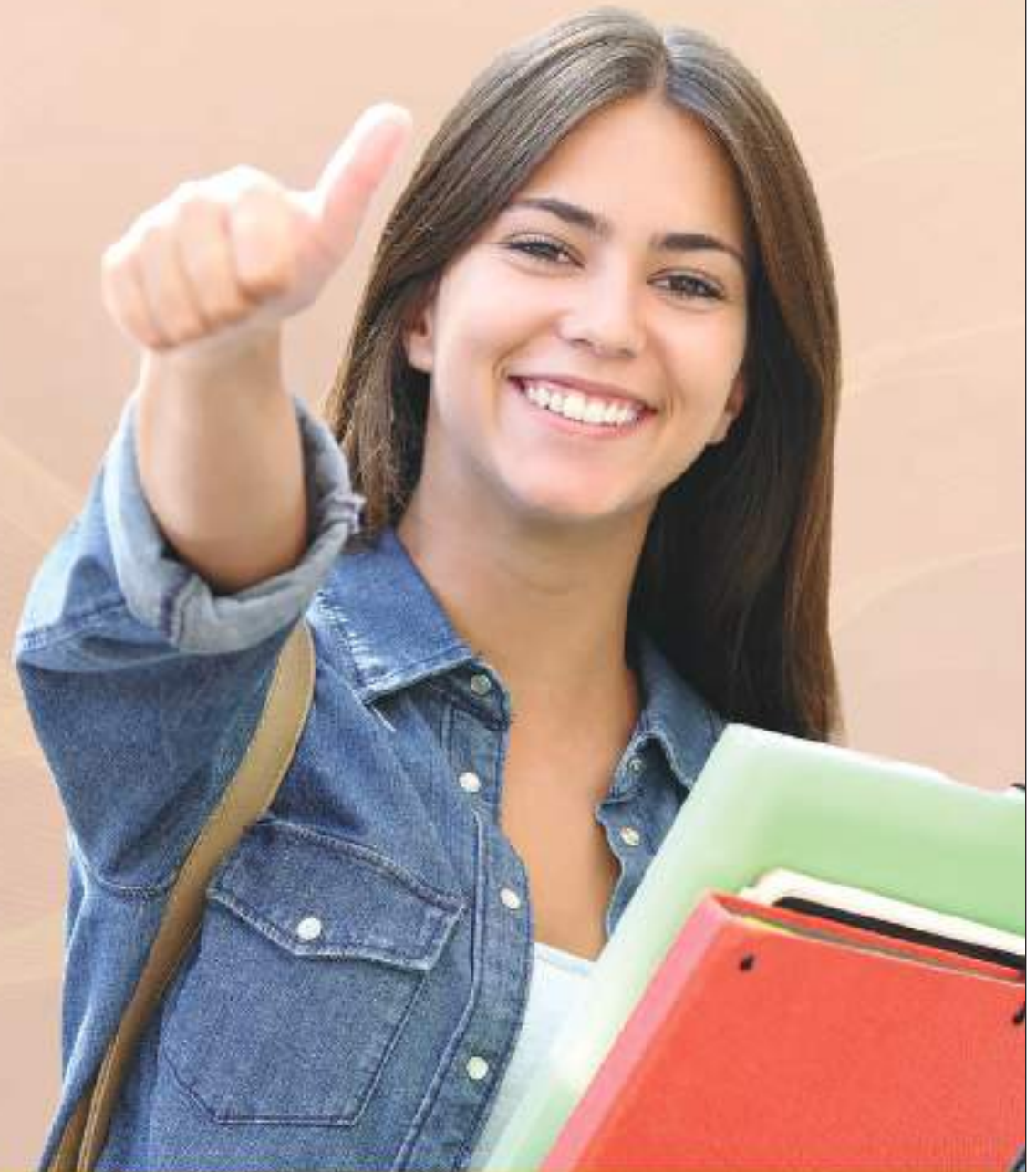
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