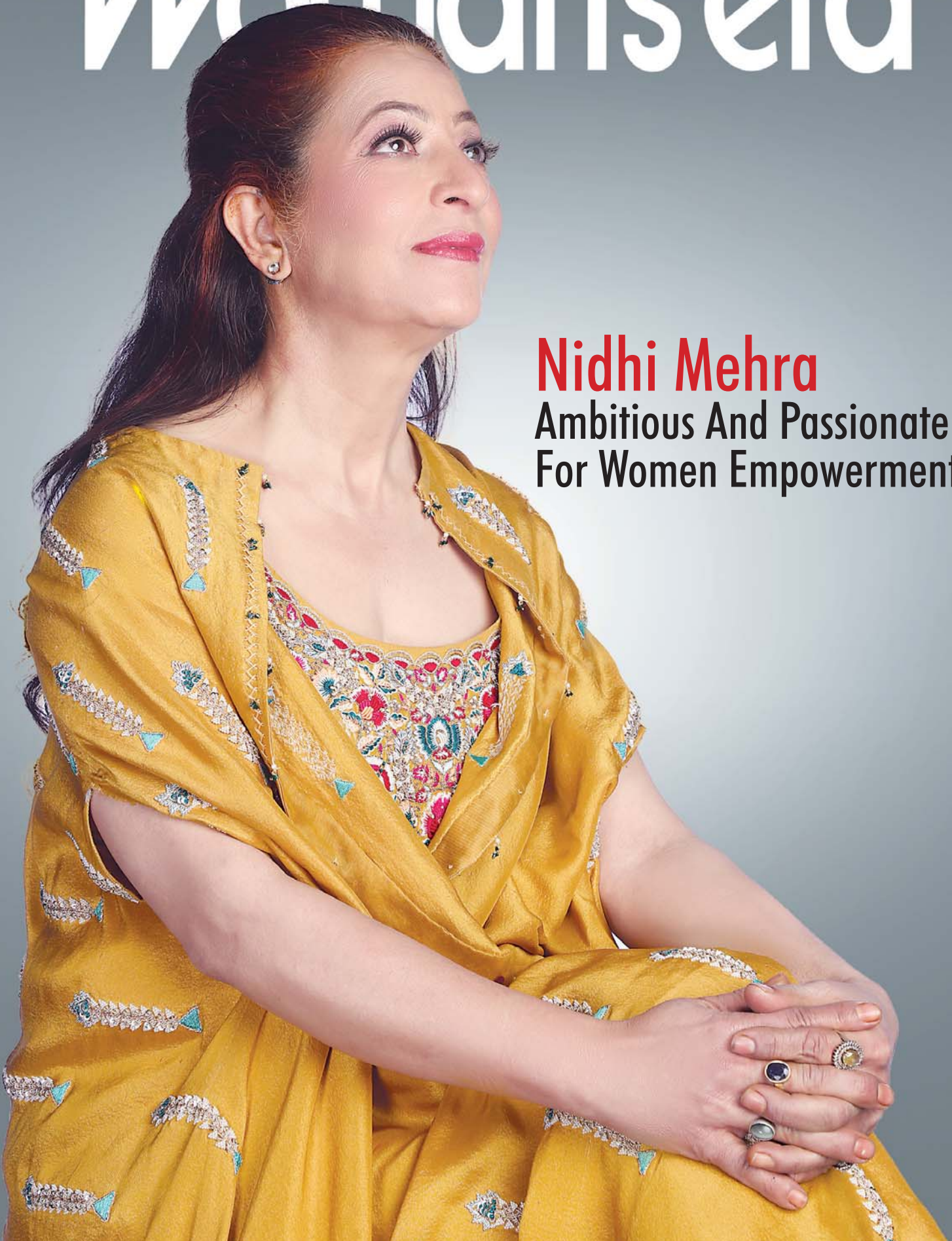


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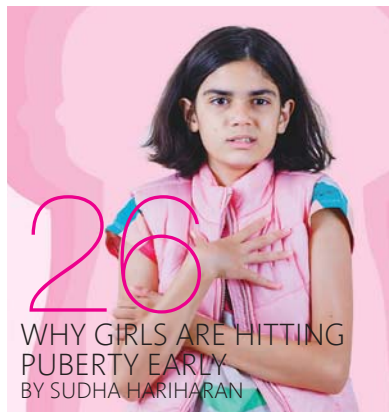
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Rahul Gandhi Yatra

Successful so far in getting the rhetoric from all political parties and sundries. However, whether it will have the effect of getting the Congress back on track is still debatable as most of the office bearers of the Congress are weary of getting the Gandhis back into the driving seat. It is appreciable that Rahul Gandhi has endeavoured to be seen out in the public and away from his foreign sojourns which were taking away most of his time.

It also gives the political parties a chance for a well-defined opposition, which was missing so far. The funding for such a yatra is definitely not an issue for a party like Congress having reaped the benefits of being in power for almost half a century. Without taking sides in this editorial, politics and its power does not remain with one person all the time. As Modi loses his grip on his BJP mates and seems to be in suo moto control of all of the media, the ground report does not seem to appreciate Modi's claws anymore. There are holes in the BJP functionaries as seen in the wrestling Federation of India follow-out. Further, the Hindenburg report on the Adani group damaged the prospects of that company, even when it went ahead and bought a media company which would have had the same effect that the Hindenburg report had on the recently filed FPO.

Babas are making hay of the Indian populace. The new urban middle class and the upper middle class are hullabaloo about the new urban babas they are following. A whole lot of new Babas have suddenly cropped up in various parts of north India and drive a huge following. Usually, these centres attract very small faces and have a high level of women audience who come to seek blessings, some words of wisdom, and to bond with a certain kind of community. Though it may be termed as disastrous for a family which is a small ecosystem in itself, to be disturbed by the thoughts of somebody who is offering larger advice to all and sundry.

It is advised that caution be exercised in getting communes with societies that are following a certain Baba since they are not banned by any stretch of the imagination, and are only fun for seekers for building a small little empire or kingdom to support their kinship. There is not one example of community welfare which has come out of Baba-like endeavours. But the most famous ones run companies which are some of the largest FMCG companies in India, purely on the merits of business and real business at that. Hence to say that a Baba is going to heal me and give directions for a better life is not just a far-fetched thought but a hoax which has been planted in a devotee's mind.

Pakistan In Turmoil

All three island nations across the Indian continent are in turmoil. Starting with Sri Lanka where China had laid out its plan, Pakistan has followed a similar pattern. Though the problem with Pakistan is twentyfold with internal upheaval, US intervention and their own civil army tussle.

However much can be attributed to China's presence for economic reasons. The worst hits are children and women, with an uncertain future of what will happen to their livelihoods and education. Migrating from Pakistan is a lot more difficult than migrating from any other country in the world, and even if you were to migrate, getting a job for a Pakistani is a lot more difficult than it is for an Indian.

One could safely say that the present position of Pakistan and Sri Lanka will not change in the coming future and that these two states will integrate into internal war economies (constant civil war situation) with little or no control of the government. Lest they may be colonised for the personal gains of either the large companies on the planet or some sort of a pseudo-religion, which may offer better economy and security for the common citizen. Though the latter is quite far-fetched and still some time away, it will eventually happen, as no other country in the vicinity would like to accommodate these two countries as their own.

With the plummeting value of the Pakistani rupee, it can be safely said that nothing is safe there. There is large-scale migration over the porous borders of Pakistan, and since it is a country which does have an urban space, most of the population is now living in the fear of what would happen next.

The great Indian migration is worse for the middle class. The educated urban middle class and the young always like to come and work in large metros seeking higher salaries and opportunities in business. Now is the time and age when this mindset has to change since there has been a lot of caste cleansing in their own states. Migrating to a larger metropolis usually means getting out of the clutches of caste status for the young, which also translates into getting an opportunity to make more money.

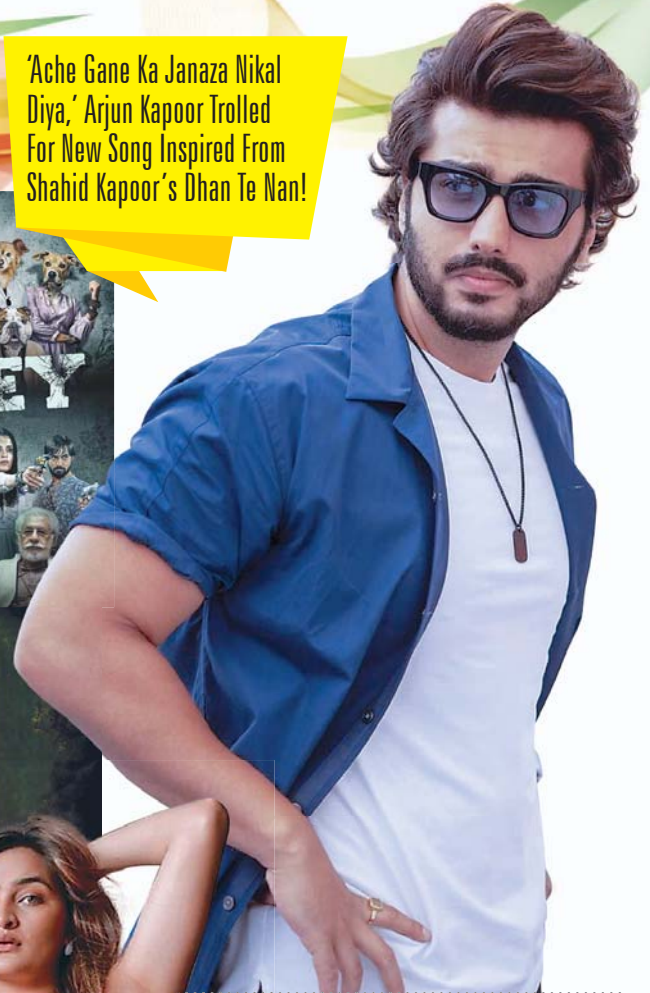
With the advent of technology, and that companies are now looking to hire talent from any nook and corner of the world, it is easier for the migrating urban middle class consisting of young talent to seek jobs over the internet, or migrate into an appropriate non-metropolis area for their living. Usually, youngsters do not think about being precise in relocating themselves and end up in a dark large city which has a higher cost of living and a fluid lifestyle. Hopefully, this mindset will evolve in the coming years as the largest cities get locked with traffic jams and are not such a good place to live emotionally than one's own country.

editor@womansera.com 

CINEPLEX

'Ache Gane Ka Janaza Nikal Diya,' Arjun Kapoor Trolled For New Song Inspired From Shahid Kapoor's Dhan Te Nan!

Remakes and remixes of popular Bollywood songs have become a trend. Taking this forward, now the makers of upcoming film *Kuttey* are coming up with a new rebooted version of chartbuster 'Dhan Te Nan' from the 2009 movie *Kaminey*. Though the creators are excited to bring 'Phir Dhan Te Nan' for audiences, seems like viewers are not much interested in it. In fact, a certain section of social media has already begun slamming makers for destroying an iconic song. A netizen said, "Kuch bhee kar lo Shahid Kapoor jaisa nahi kar paoge they ruined one more song." Another unconvinced netizen wrote, "Another iconic song ruined. This is Shahid Kapoor banger."



Fashion Blogger And Model Sonali Malhotra Talked About Facing Body Shaming

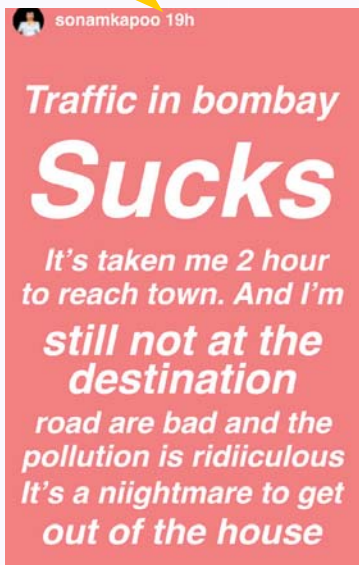


25-year-old model, beauty and fashion blogger, Sonali Malhotra talked about how she faced body shaming on social media and how it motivated her to talk and post more content on body positivity. "It's so hard for people around to accept a woman's body and the fact that big boobs are normal." Talking about how she dealt with body shaming Sonali said, "It's hard for people to understand that 70 per cent of women have large breasts, it's absolutely normal, I dealt with it in a way where I decided I will post more, I'll wear what I want and I'll actually talk about it, maybe that will get them to stop talking."

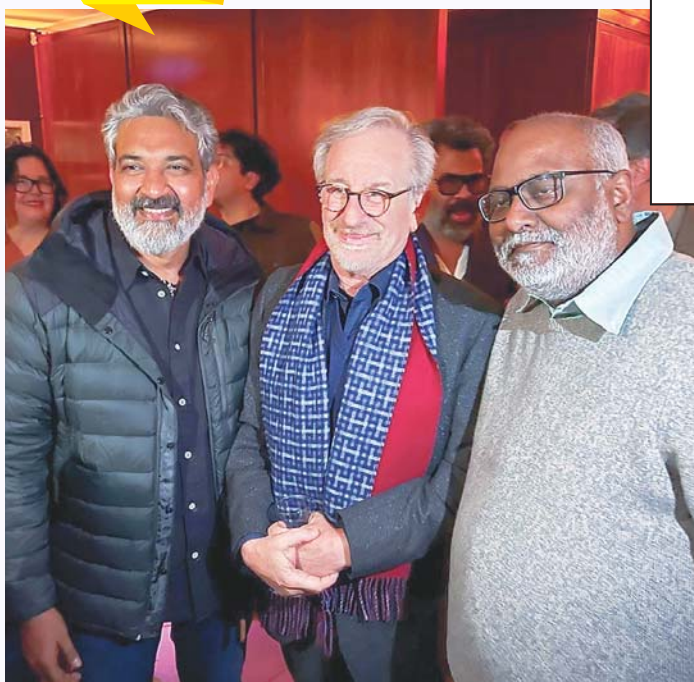
FROM BOLLYWOOD...

Netizens Trolled Sonam Kapoor As She Complained About Mumbai's Traffic & Pollution

Sonam Kapoor was going to Bandra Bandstand from her home in Juhu. Unfortunately, the actress got stuck in Mumbai traffic. She faced difficulties due to the increasing pollution in the city. She took to Twitter to express her anger. She wrote that 'it is torturous to drive through Mumbai'. It took her an hour to reach the Bandstand from Juhu. She said that there is too much construction and digging everywhere. Pollution is through the roof. Netizens brutally trolled her for her words. A person commented, "Dekho Delhi wale Log Mumbai main Pollution ki baat kar rahe hai."



After Winning Best Song Title, There's Another Blast Of RRR At Critic Choice Award



RRS Rajamouli's film RRR won the Critics' Choice Award for Best Foreign Language Film. In this category, Rajamouli's films compete with films such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Argentina 1985*, *Bardot*, *Chronicle of the Autumn of Many Truths*, *Up Close and Decision to Quit*. A video clip of Rajamouli posing with the award was posted on the Critics' Choice Awards Twitter page. His face showed the joy of receiving the award.

Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor is often trolled for his failed career graph. Something similar happened recently. It all began when Arjun said that his half sister Janhvi Kapoor is 'less confident' and gets 'insecure' when it comes to her work. The actor also mentioned that Janhvi is a fearless person, and is always ready to take risks in life. Unfortunately, netizens took notice of only the first statement from Arjun and began trolling him. A user slammed the actor and wrote, "Arjun bhai usse seekh le aur tu bhi thoda underconfident ho le." Another stated, "He is so overconfident that obviously he will find the other person underconfident." A third one joked, "He is so confident that SRK comes to him for pep talk."

'SRK Comes To Him For Pep Talk': Netizens Trolled Arjun Kapoor After He Called Sister Janhvi Kapoor 'Under confident'



'Sukesh Chandrasekhar Made My Life... ' Jacqueline Fernandez Claimed A Shocking Revelation To Delhi Court!



According to media reports, Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez claimed that alleged conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar "played with my emotions and made my life hell". According to Fernandez' testimony, Chandrasekhar claimed to be the owner of Sun TV. The actress added that she later found out that Chandrasekhar was arrested for posing as a high-ranking official in the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Justice, and only learned his real name after learning about his criminal past.

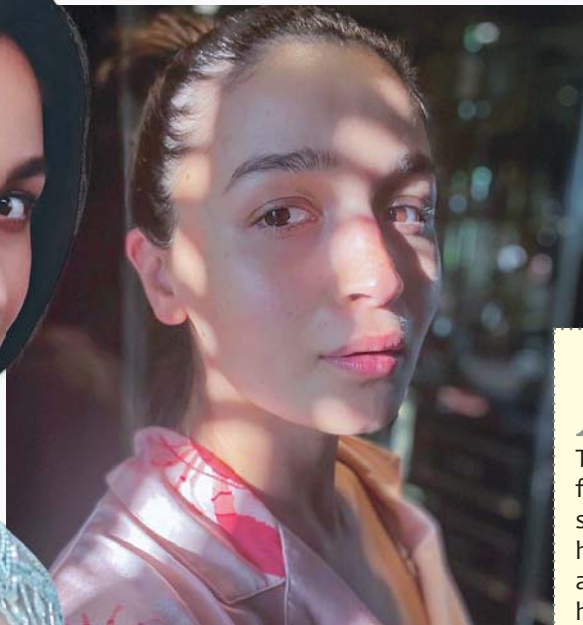
In a heartbreaking piece of news, the late actor Shushant Singh Rajput's dog Fudge has passed away. The doggo was very close to the actor and had spent some really beautiful moments with Shushant. The dog passed away one morning, three years after the actor's death. "Both are now in heaven and in a better place," wrote one user, "this is such heartbreaking news that doggo was so close to Shushant," commented another user.



Shushant Singh Rajput's Dog 'Fudge' Passed Away, Fans Remembered The Actor's Bond With Him



Alia Bhatt Shared A No Make-Up Selfie As She Soaked Up In The Morning Sun



Alia Bhatt loves sharing sun kissed pictures on her social media handle. The actress never shies away from dropping her no makeup selfie. She once again took to her Instagram handle and shared a beautiful photo of herself with her fans. In the picture, Alia could be seen soaking up in the sun with absolutely zero makeup on her skin.

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Lands of Tulips

Getting lost in the colourful world.

By K Nalini

Since the day I saw the Hindi movie *Silsila*, my dream was to visit the famous land of Tulips in Amsterdam, “The Keukenhof Gardens.” I had also read the popular historical novel *The Black Tulip* a work of romantic prose written by Alexandre Dumas. Are there really Black Tulips, I wondered.

I got the opportunity to go to Denmark for a conference. From there my husband and I flew into Amsterdam airport called ‘Schiphol.’ Amsterdam is the capital of Netherlands. We stayed in a hotel called “House of Tulips!”

It is very easy to travel in Amsterdam. It boasts of an impressive public transport network including metros, buses, trams, ferries and trains to go around the capital. While in Amsterdam, I enjoyed travelling by Amsterdam Tram. It is the most scenic way to travel through the city.



History Of Keukenhof

The history of Keukenhof dates back to the 15th Century. In 1949, a group of 20 leading flower bulb growers and exporters came up with a plan to use the estate of ‘Castle Keukenhof’ to exhibit spring flowering bulbs. They started the Keukenhof Spring Park. It opened to the public in 1950 and was an instant success with 236000 visitors. During the past 72 years, Keukenhof has developed into a world famous tourist attraction.

Before you visit Keukenhof Gardens you should know the history of the place. Keukenhof in English means ‘Kitchen Garden!’ It is also known as the ‘Garden of Europe, one of the world’s largest flower gardens situated in the municipality of Lisse, in the Netherlands. It covers an area of 79 acres and approximately 7 million flower beds are planted in the garden annually. It is widely known

KEUKENHOF IN ENGLISH MEANS ‘KITCHEN GARDEN!’ IT IS ALSO KNOWN AS THE ‘GARDEN OF EUROPE, ONE OF THE WORLD’S LARGEST FLOWER GARDENS SITUATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LISSE, IN THE NETHERLANDS.

for its flowers, especially Tulips.

The Tulip flower originated centuries ago in Persia and Turkey where it played a significant role in the art and culture of the time. The Turks wore the Tulips in their turbans. Europeans mistakenly gave Tulips their name which comes from the Persian word meaning ‘Turban!’ The flowers popularity spread quickly particularly in the Netherlands. Though Tulips are grown throughout the world, people still identify the cultivated varieties as ‘Dutch Tulips’.

Keukenhof Gardens is 40 kms from Amsterdam. It takes about 50 minutes to go by train. Public transport makes reaching Keukenhof quick and comfortable.

From your hotel, go to one of the “Departure Locations”. Then take the ‘Keukenhof Express Bus’. You can buy a ‘Combiticket’ to Keukenhof and a ticket for Public Transport. These tickets are valid for the day and provide transport to and from Keukenhof.

Points to Remember

- It is open from the last week of March until the first week of May. It is advisable to check the exact dates.
- We cannot walk through the Tulip fields. This is to avoid damage to the bulbs.
- You may bring your own food and drinks but you may not be allowed to eat your own food and drinks in the restaurant.
- Visitors can easily spend 3 hours at Keukenhof. At the start of the Spring season. You can see Crocuses, Daffodils, Hyacinths and early Tulips. Later in the season you can see larger Tulips.

Black Tulips

The meaning of Tulip is generally ‘Perfect Love’. Like many flowers, different colours of Tulips also often carry their own significance. Red Tulips are strongly associated with ‘True Love’. The Purple symbolises ‘Loyalty’. The Black Tulip symbolises



Black Tulips.

‘Power and Strength’. Their mysterious and elegant shade depict ‘Loyalty’. Black Tulips are a rare hybrid of tulips. We were fortunate to see one of the most cultivated Black Tulip called ‘The Queen of the Night Black Tulip!’

The Tulip Garden In Pithoragarh District

The world’s biggest Tulip Garden will open up in Uttarakhand in India! This will be the second Tulip Garden in India. Foresters and the locals have turned Uttarakhand’s waste land in to a Tulip garden of 124 acres! Over 7000 Tulip bulbs were imported from Holland. There are also other flowers like Iris, Liliium and Daffodils. Tulips bloom in large numbers. The garden is located in the Himalayan town of Munsiyari. It is located facing the majestic Panchachuli ranges, the five famous Himalayan Mountains.

Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden

The famous ‘Tulip Garden’ in Srinagar is the Indian version of Keukenhof which is equally beautiful. It is called the ‘Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden’. The Tulip Garden is located at the foothills of Zarbarwan Range in Srinagar. The garden is ensconced within the mountains with beautiful landscaping in and around. It is currently, Asia’s biggest Tulip Garden with an overview of Dal Lake. It is spread



Tulip Garden in Lake Kalatop Forest, Himachal Pradesh.

over an area of 74 acres of land. It opened to the public in 2007. Around 4000 visitors enjoyed the bloom of the 25 per cent of the 15 lakh flowers. 1.5 million Tulips bloom here. The garden remains open till the end of April and then it closes.

After terrorism and the Covid pandemic, which we hope is almost over, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden is set to open to the general public in April, after full two years, with prolific 15 lakh flowers. This year the garden is to be thrown open earlier than usual due to comparatively better weather. The best time to visit Srinagar Tulip Garden and see the Tulips in bloom is from first to the third week of April.

Tulip Garden in Pithoragarh.



Before the Covid pandemic, about 2.59 lakh people visited the garden! It generated an income of Rs 58 lakhs for the Department of Tourism of Jammu and Kashmir.

Kashmir Tulip Festival

It is worth witnessing this festival which is organised every year to celebrate the onset of tourism in Kashmir in the month of April. You can book a ‘Kashmir Tulip Garden Tour’ from ‘Holidays Srinagar’ to be part of Kashmir’s Tulip festival. The festival is celebrated for two days with the largest number of Tulips in bloom as well as other varieties of flowers including Daffodils and Hyacinth.

Palampur Tulip Garden in Himachal Pradesh

This is the first Tulip Garden in Himachal Pradesh and the third tulip garden in India. My husband who was an army officer was posted at Palampur. It is also the home of the Kargil War Hero Captain Bikram Batra, PVC. No Tulip Garden was there at that time. This garden was inaugurated only in 2017. Palampur is 30 kilometers from Shimla. The Tulip Garden is in Craignano Nature Park. It is spread over nearly 24 acres. Tulips bloom here from March to May.

Beauty of Palampur Tulip Garden

The beauty of this garden is that it is being developed at an altitude of 1000 feet from sea level. It is stunning to see Tulips blooming in the middle of a forest. The small Tulip Garden in the midst of Oak, Pine and Cedar trees is becoming a big attraction. Around 4000 red and pink Tulips are blooming in the garden at present and it is expected to see more Tulips in the next season.

The forest department has announced that they will procure yellow and blue Tulips next season to attract more tourists and lovers of flowers. The Tulip bulbs are brought from Chandigarh but they originated in Holland. Seeing the beautiful flowers in vibrant hues blooming in the middle of a forest is a rare scenario.

Plan ahead which Tulip garden would you like to visit this April? It does not matter which garden you choose, beautiful flowers always make people feel better and happier. They are the food for the soul.

Arrival

When your Dutch Grown tulips arrive and you can't plant them immediately, it's important to store them correctly: unpack them right away and put them in a dry place with plenty of air circulation, where the temperature is between 40 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

VARIETIES AND GROWING TULIPS



Largest group of tulips: Triumph Tulips are by far the largest group of tulips, including many different varieties by selective breeding. Growing only 10-16 inches tall (25-45 cm) on sturdy stems, they withstand April's showers and offer a vibrant display of colours in the garden in mid to late spring. Flowers are single and cup-shaped and bloom in an endless assortment of colours.

Different types of tulip flowers: In horticulture, tulips are divided into fifteen groups (Divisions) mostly based on flower morphology and plant size. 1: Single early – with cup-shaped single flowers, no larger than 8 cm across (3 inches). They bloom early to mid season.

Star tulips: These are long-lived perennial Tulips that bloom very early, with early and midseason Daffodils. The flowers of most varieties open wide like a star or water lily. Some have mottled or striped foliage.

Best hybrid tulip to buy: Darwin Hybrid Tulips. The Darwin Hybrids produce long-lasting flowers on strong stems that are perfect for cutting, and the brilliant colours of these very popular. Tulips show up beautifully in the landscape. Darwin Hybrids usually perform well for several years, making them among the best perennial Tulips.

Planting tulip bulbs: Keep the following tulip planting tips in mind before planting: Keep the tulip bulbs really dry. Keep them well ventilated as well.

Plant your tulip bulbs in the fall from September to December, or they send their leaves up in time to get frozen by winter. Don't plant too early.

Tulip Cultivation in India

It is limited in India. However, in Himachal Pradesh and hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir are perfect for Tulip cultivation. Mostly tulips thrive in colder winters because of the long chilling requirement for bulbs. They can be grown in pots, containers, prepared beds, borders, basins of other orchards like apples, cherry etc. They can also be grown in greenhouse, polyhouse and shade net as well.

Garden & Container Planting

Like all flower bulbs, tulips need a cold period to develop their roots and get ready for spring. So once you feel fall's first chill in the air, it's time to get planting. If you live in Hardiness Zone 9 or higher (In India Hardiness Zone is between 10-12) the

soil won't get cold enough for the root-developing process to happen, but you might consider "FORCING".

Flower bulbs are tough cookies that are easy to grow, but one thing they hate is getting their feet wet: a bulb that is 'bathing' in water will rot in no time. So avoid soggy soil at all cost. Another thing you can do is to upgrade potentially soggy soil by adding organic material such as peat, bark or manure. When it comes to planting bulbs in planters, the mantra is exactly the same: drainage-drainage-drainage. Get a pot or box with at least some drainage holes at the bottom. Planted in fall the tulips will bloom in spring.

You can impress your friends and family with stunning indoor Tulip blooms with fragrance the next year. Best of luck !

We

Hi GPS Lady! You Are Really Awesome

Much like the GPS, life recalibrates itself.

By Ritu Kamra Kumar



Last year, our son shifted to Noida and we decided to pay him a visit. We started our journey and soon upon entering Noida, we used the Google Maps: GPS services to reach our destination without any hassle. We religiously followed the directions of GPS lady but ended up travelling same roundabout for umpteen times as the GPS lady softly kept on saying 'You have reached your destination...'

Unfamiliar with the territory we told our son to send a live location and finally by fits and starts we

reached our destination, that is, his home.

Well; 99 per cent GPS works incredibly well. The Google maps app on our smart phone gets us to where we need to go and we don't have to think twice about it. But many a time, it goes awry in rather unexpected ways. When we are caught in the thick of traffic, GPS lady politely tells to keep on the left for 500 metres and then turn right at roundabout. Then you tend to get confused like should you keep left or take the right turn.

You suddenly get panicky as the motorists behind you honk, two-wheeler riders pass by you giving you weird glances with choicest abusive torrents.

Amid all this chaos you miss the second turn. Rerouting begins. The GPS lady goes in zone of silence for a few seconds as you drive right, left not where to go.

Often this leads you to *The Road Not Taken*. Chasing down the instructions of GPS lady, you have no idea where you have reached; like a rat in a maze.

Once, while travelling to Delhi when the National Highway was blocked by the agitating farmers, following the instructions of Google baba aka GPS lady, we took a narrow lane that promised to take us back to highway.

But after meandering through bushes and thickets it led us to a dead end, where an imposing building with its locked gate stood staring at us.

Taking a U-turn and again finding our way through the directions of villagers we somehow reached the National Highway and heaved a sigh of relief as GPS lady spoke in her sweet sound to drive straight for 20 kilometres.

So, GPS has its advantages as well as disadvantages.

The funniest thing about GPS lady is that she may give you the right direction but you fail to decode it properly as you focus on driving in a busy lane. After you

have taken a wrong turn, of course unintentionally, she speaks with same politeness, no reprimandation for not listening to her words carefully, telling you to turn right at the second roundabout taking an exit.

You exit, it tells you to turn left, and you find yourself at the dead end of the road.

You feel like telling her ruefully 'Error 420: Road not found'.

But in exasperation you go back, can't argue with her and once again fall into her glamorous trap. Rather now more alert and agile, you become a good boy and as per her instructions take the third exit at roundabout. And the roundabout looms and it has more exits than an octopus has tentacles and you are lost in an eddy. But determined to reach your destination you take up cudgel against the soft spoken lady, promising with yourself to outwit her.

But this time, her accent with which she pronounces the names of roads like Ajmal Khan Road or Thyagaraja Marg, lost in getting the road's perfect name, road flashes past you as you zoom to another marg and the rerouting begins.

Hats off to her patience... She again sweetly tells me to go straight for 2 kilometres and take U-turn. You feel indebted to her and start musing if only your wife had this much patience. You start following her instructions again: turn left, then right, keep straight and finally you hear the much awaited words: Your destination is exactly at your left.

You look left and find a plot filled with garbage. You look at your smartphone and utter in desperation, "HI! Good lady! Come back, this is not the place I have been looking for driving zig zag for hours!"

This fiasco makes me realise that, much like the GPS, life recalibrates itself if you ever take a wrong turn. **We**

Nidhi Mehra: A Multifaceted Entrepreneur

Creating a buzz in the industry with her presence.

Nidhi Mehra, an alumna of St. Mary's Convent, Kanpur has been associated with the media for more than two decades now. She has worked with AIR and Doordarshan. Having gained that rich experience, she now works as a freelance Emcee.

She has recently launched a product under the brand name "SKINTIFIC" Soy wax candles, luxury soaps, reed diffusers and minoxidil, thus working towards her dream of becoming an entrepreneur. She is associated with education for the last two decades and presently working with a prestigious institution in Lodhi Road.

Apart from all her achievements, she has been keenly interested



in Yoga since childhood. A self-confessed fitness freak, she believes in holistic development through a regular practice of Yoga. Yoga includes physical poses, concentration and deep breathing. In fact, it gives you the energy to work to your full potential and is a medium to de-stress yourself in today's world.

She is also a trained classical singer, having learnt vocal music from Gandharva Mahavidyalaya.

She believes in and consistently works for social causes majorly by teaching underprivileged children. Giving back to society is something she believes in, and ardently urges everybody to wholeheartedly follow.

Dare To Differ By Dr Kusum Chand

A doctor's quest for a gentle cure. By Our Correspondent



Dr Kusum Chand, Author, *Dare To Differ*

Dr Kusum Chand is a proud product of modern medicine (allopathy); a postgraduate of the latter half of the 20th century, an era when modern medicine was growing by leaps and bounds. However, her unprejudiced mind could discern a weakness in the therapeutic system and so, instead of basking in its success, she embarked on decades of more learning and experimentation with

homoeopathy, a system much ridiculed, yet, surviving for more than two centuries. Popularity and success notwithstanding, Dr Chand has wrestled for years with the intricacies and complexities of straddling two streams of medicine. Unfazed, she has pursued her quest for a more effective way of treating disease. It took her more than two decades to personally validate its effectiveness, a period when she became popular

as a 'two prescriptions doctor'. In formulating each prescription, Dr Chand's main concern has been the health and wellness of the patient and preserving her integrity as a doctor. She has dared to differ from conventional medicine in using drugs diluted to an inconceivable extent and from homoeopathy in using multiple medicines at the same time.

Dare to Differ is certain to resonate with people across the globe looking

for validated work on a gentler system of healing that promotes an integrated system of medicine. Here's an excerpt of a candid interview of Dr Kusum Chand with Woman's Era:

From your book, it seems that you were a diehard allopath when you graduated from medical school. How did you become interested in Homeopathy? What caused a change of heart?

In the hospital, I saw serious cases, and diagnosing, reviving and doing procedures was exciting and satisfying. In a charitable outdoor clinic, I saw patients in the early stage of disease with many symptoms. ALLOPATHY cured the disease but some symptoms remained. Homeopathy claimed to cure the disease by curing the symptoms, which attracted me.

Tell us having practised both systems of medicine, how is the practice of allopathy different from the practice of homoeopathy?

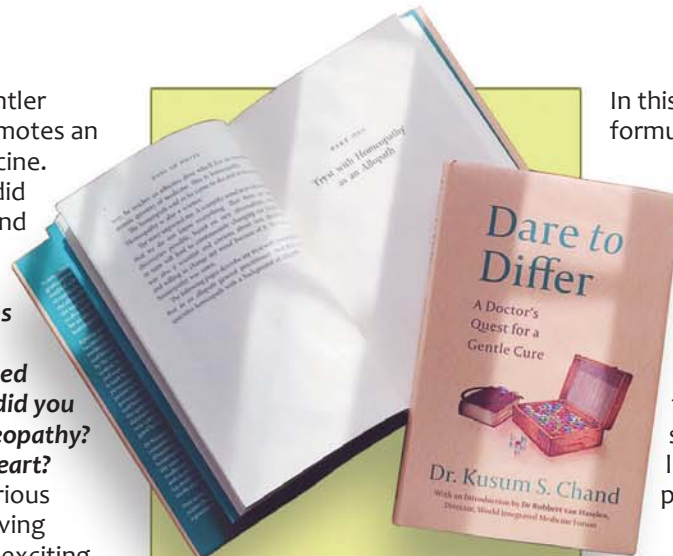
In allopathy, the emphasis is on diagnosing the microbe and treating it with suitable medicine. Homoeopathy boosts the self-healing immunity of the body.

In your book, you talk about becoming known as a 'two prescriptions doctor' amongst your patients. Tell us more about this phase of your practice.

In the beginning, I felt that only allopathy could cure the disease and homoeopathy was good for symptoms, hence two prescriptions.

Dr Chand, when you were having such good results with a combination of allopathy and homoeopathy, especially in your two prescriptions doctor phase, what made you decide to give up allopathy together?

It was a personal choice. By that time, I was completely enamoured with the principle of homoeopathy similia similibus curenatur and wanted to chart the boundaries of homoeopathy. My sole purpose was to get quick and reproducible results.



In the author's own words, "In my about fifty years of medical practice, I have learned that there are many therapies besides modern medicine, each one is good, but none is a panacea including allopathy. In various stages of the disease, different therapies may be more apt and in chronic disease, simultaneous use of more than one therapy may be beneficial. My experiments in the treatment of chronic urinary tract infections and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis have shown that simultaneous use of homoeopathy with allopathic antibiotics can be beneficial in combating antibiotic drug resistance.

The effort in this book has been to not ask questions or to give answers, but to share with you my confusion, disillusionment, excitement and eureka moments. This book does not fall neatly into any one category. And thereby hangs a tale which I hope the readers will enjoy."

DARE TO DIFFER IS CERTAIN TO RESONATE WITH PEOPLE ACROSS THE GLOBE LOOKING FOR VALIDATED WORK ON A GENTLER SYSTEM OF HEALING THAT PROMOTES AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF MEDICINE.

In this, I used logic and intuition and formulated a regime of medicines to address immunity at multiple levels.

But overall, did the patient end up with a double dose of medication?

Yes, compliance was more, though I was using two systems, interestingly the sum total of medicines was less than the single allopathic prescription.

There is a common perception, isn't there, that Homeopathy is not a serious medicine. Dr Chand and Dr Manchanda, what do you say about this notion?

I think the high dilution of the medicine is the cause, people feel how can it treat the disease without any medicine. But medicine should be judged by its effect and not by its size.

So it's not as if you are anti-allopathy?!!

Allopathy is the mainstream medicine for serious and emergency cases.

What is your concern and dream of integrated medicine for Antimicrobial Resistance in medicine?

Medical pluralism is a unique feature of the Indian healthcare system and homoeopathy is the second most popular system in India. Its infrastructure includes 234 hospitals, 182 colleges, 5910 dispensaries and 217,860 registered practitioners. With such an infrastructure already in place, homoeopathy can be easily implemented as complementary to mainstream treatment protocols.

My experiences and experiments of over two decades have convinced me of the usefulness of homoeopathy in the management of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis. The addition of a homoeopathy regime would lead to a shorter duration of antibiotics, fewer adverse effects and more compliance.



Chital Macher Muitha

Indian featherback, often known as chital, is a pricey and sought-after fish. The fish meat is formed into bite-sized balls, fried, and then cooked in delicious gravy to make “Chital Macher Muitha”. It is a traditional meal from East Bengal and requires some effort to cook. But the effort is worthwhile.

CUISINE MOVING *Across The Border*

Check out these evolving Bengali cuisines. By Pooja

Bengali cuisine features a lot more seafood in its dishes than any other South Asian countries, such as shorsha hilsa, a curry cooked in mustard gravy using common hilsa fish. The vegetable bharta is the go-to starter in a Bengali meal, made of mashed potato and can be mixed with vegetables or meat of your choice. Bengali cuisine is much loved for its subtle yet fiery flavours. Famous for Maach, Hilsa fish is known as the ‘queen of fish’.

Shutki Maach Bata

West Bengal dislikes Shutki Maach because of its awful decaying odour. But in Bangladeshi cooking, it is regarded as a delicacy. Basically, “Shutki Maach” means dried fish. It is a common practice for preserving fish. Smashing and frying the fish in a fiery, spicy, garlic sauce that will blow your head and your taste buds is how “Shutki Maach Bata” is produced.





Pui Chorchori

The “Pui Shaak” and the fish head are combined in this meal. This recipe can also include other seasonal vegetables including pumpkin, jackfruit, brinjal, and potato.

Shingi Macher Jhol

Shingi Maach has the astonishing ability to last for a very long time without water. They contain large amounts of calcium and protein. For this reason, individuals who are recovering from the disease are frequently given Shingi Maacher Jhol. It is a wholesome dinner with a delicate spice flavour.



Ilish Bhapa

Steam is referred to as “Bhapa” in Bengali. Therefore, “Ilish Bhapa” refers to Hilsa cooked in steam. Hilsa, mustard paste, and finely chopped coconut are used to make this hearty dish. Among Bengalis, Hilsa is a crowd favourite. People with East Bengali ancestry frequently boast about the diversity of Ilish recipes they have in their cookbooks, which is common.



DRAPE YOUR CHILD IN A MOTLEY OF LOVE COSTUME

It has visibly profound effect. By Bindu Saxena

Hold your horses!

- How many minutes per day do you spend with your child?
- What happens when your child feels less loved because of your work priorities?
- Do you have a full-time servant or domestic help who takes care of your child if you are a working woman?

If you are one of the above parents, this article is for you.

Does the following thought come to your mind ever? If not, it must:

If my child is in a situation where she does not receive a sufficient dose of love and care, she may not develop a close bond with me. And when left unsorted, she might end up in a condition called attachment disorder.



Attachment disorder usually develops in babies and children who have been continuously overlooked, abused, in day-care centre, or separated from their parents for some reason.

However, one cannot deny a similar situation in families where, even though living with parents, they may feel lonely because their parents are unable to share quality time with them.

Let us begin with a small test:

First and foremost, when did you tell your child last time that you loved her? Here, I do not intend to ask you the platonic or romantic love affirmation through the three words "I love you, baby" that one utters. Nope. I want to stress the package that comes under that umbrella.

In simple terms: it is HOW OFTEN AND HOW you convey that to your child. And it is what I wish to draw your attention to through this piece.

I focus here on women or couples who spend long hours at their workplaces. The subjects under discussion would primarily be the primary school kids, who start noticing and perhaps understand with a subtle confusion of how, when, why, where, and what of things that happen around them.

After they turn eight, they start processing random thoughts like respect, love, kindness, and care. It is when parents must delve deeper to understand them.

Listed below are a few titles that one should carefully deal with.

Instructions to your daytime house help:

- Install a camera in the parts of your house that your child will access - for study, play, watching television, or a little rest.
- Respect: Your servant must know that your child is the most significant member of the family she has to tend to - especially when no one else is there at home to look after her.
- Servant must be polite towards the child and treat her with equal respect like that given to an adult member.



ATTACHMENT DISORDER USUALLY DEVELOPS IN BABIES AND CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN CONTINUOUSLY OVERLOOKED, ABUSED, IN DAY-CARE CENTRE, OR SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS.

- She must take proper care in laying her meals with table mats and essentials.
- Give a printed list to her in the language she understands comprising the snack, fruit, or milk time.
- Instruct her about your child's playtime with friends so that she organises her attire.
- She must not disturb the child when she relaxes and studies.
- Ask her to allow the use of her mobile phone if the child wishes phone interaction with either parent for any assistance.
- Instruct your servant on the meal plan - specific to baby's taste.
- Be assertive that she should never leave your baby alone in the home, even if it is for diabolic pleasure.

Your role when you are away

- Make contact with your child through a mobile device (if the child is small) of your domestic help. This act assures the involvement of the parents from a distance.
- Call and ask when she has arrived from school and let you know if her day went well.
- A one-minute quick interaction about her homework is a good recall. Ask if she needs anything concerning school so you can procure it on your way back.
- Begin the conversation with an 'I love you' sentence with loving salutations.
- Say a few words of appreciation in her praise and applaud when she shares some achievement in the class, however trivial it may be.
- Keep a smile on your face when you speak with your kid even if you had a bad hair day at the workplace.
- Give good listening and affirmation to the child if she has a tale to tell. The older your child is, the harder it will be because kids develop emotional armour and lash out to keep you from getting too close.
- Even if there is a rupture in the bonding process a day before, even if you find it annoying or dislike any aspect of her, you must



sound normal. You can fathom a smile or a frown through a telephone connection too.

**When you are back home,
Do this:**

Fall in love with your child. These are simple ways but need practice.

Parent burnout is natural, but your child is too small to understand such deep topics. She will like to get close to you once you are back home, and if your preoccupied mind rejects that attempt by her, it would have a damaging effect.

Remember here: the child is not alone now but could be lonely for the mother.

Showing distraction and disinterest would kill the tender mind emotionally. Her attempt to come close to you may be an implied sorry for anything done over the past.

Instead of showing a cold

**SHOWING
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INSTEAD OF SHOWING
A COLD SHOULDER,
HOLD HER CLOSE.**

shoulder, hold her close. Trash all syndromes that envelop you. Rather than exhibiting a distant and mechanical attitude, try to model calm and establish a connection.

Notice those baby steps your child makes to hang around a little more than she usually does. Celebrate the

moment with a positive transition that took off without even a minor argument.

Look for the good, shift your thinking and focus on the idea that involves more love without much dramatisation.

If something is grating on you and anger ensues, take responsibility for your feelings. Signal yourself to switch your preventive mode - no matter what is bothering you. Even if you are chronically, physically, mentally, or emotionally exhausted, get it out of your subconscious.

Alert and guide your conscious mind to help you fake a smile. Twinning and wearing colour-coordinating dresses is another powerful way to affirm love.

It is not that easy to regulate your emotions. This motherboard does not have switch-off and switch-on buttons. Try, test, fake... Repeat. The fruits would be fulfillment.

Initially, your behaviour might confuse your child, but it would save you from relationship erosion. So keep grouting to save leaks in the relationship.

Studies suggest that a child raised in an unloving, disrespectful, and inconsistent environment tends to grow up feeling unsafe and untrusting. Build bridges of love.

The Last Word

Let your child hear this often:

I cherish you. I adore you. I am a blessed parent. I am better because of you. My love for you is unconditional and eternal. All of the good in my life is because of you. You are the best child I could ever have. I thank the divine intervention for blessing me with you.

Be all-embracing, all-accepting. Practise even when you are annoyed. Keep repeating till it becomes a habit. Let these words ring in the tiny tot mind. And wait for the magic!

Your child is not a low-hanging fruit. Remember, it took you nine months to transform a seed into a fruit. Enjoy your fruit of labour. It's PRECIOUS!

Decorate yourself with her sweet love, and let you both glow.



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Why Girls Are Hitting Puberty Early?

Causes and ways to deal with problems associated with these changes.

By Sudha Hariharan

As per the National Institute of Health, girls experience the onset of puberty between the ages of 8 and 13 years, whereas boys typically experience this in the age group of 9 to 14 years.

However, these days at least 8 out of 10 girls are attaining puberty at the age of 7 and 8 years.

Puberty—a biological transformation that not only switches on the reproductive organs but also drives changes in sleep cycles, facial structure, voice, fat distribution, body hair, and height—can be a pretty rough ride for anyone.

The main reasons for the girls attaining puberty earlier can be attributed to sedentary lifestyle, lack of physical activities, and consumption of junk food. Now, girls are entering puberty about a year earlier than they did back in the 1970s according to global data on breast development.

The age of breast development – which represents the first clinical sign of female puberty – has declined an average three months per decade between 1977 and 2013, according to analysis of data combined from 30 different studies.

Early menstrual bleeding – the last clinical sign of puberty for women – is associated with a higher risk of obesity, type-2 diabetes, heart disease and allergies.

Three leading gynaecologists Dr. Suhasini Inamdar, (Motherhood Hospitals, Bangalore), Dr Gayathri D Kamath, (Fortis Hospitals, Bangalore) and Dr. Asha Dalal (Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital) enlighten us on this topic.



Does puberty start sooner now?

There may be a decline in the typical age at which boys and girls enter puberty. As it is, the menarche, a girl's first menstrual period, signals the beginning of female puberty. The first period can come on later in puberty and may not be a reliable indicator of the beginning of puberty.

Another issue is that research frequently relies on less reliable adult memories of menarche. Menarche, according to the researchers, is the most significant precursor to puberty. To identify between girls who are prepubescent and pubescent, this is employed in clinical evaluations.

To distinguish between premature and typical onset puberty, breast development is also evaluated, says Dr. Suhasini.

Dr Kamath avers, "The reason for early menarche in the current generation of girls is linked to childhood obesity which is an outcome of reduced physical activity and bizarre eating. The pandemic changed the lifestyle of many young girls, and this trend was much more visible. Obese women and girls have more oestrogen levels due to the conversion of body fat into oestrogens. Hence these hormonal changes in obese girls trigger early menarche."

How young is too young for puberty?

When children experience precocious puberty, they do it earlier than is often predicted. This condition occurs when girls show signs of puberty before the age of eight and boys before the age of nine. Younger girls who have early menstruation and breast development may be teased and subjected to body shaming. They could also be cranky and angry.

Early puberty among boys might make them violent or aggressive. Defiance-related behaviours in kids with premature puberty are also possible at this time.

They could also develop sex drive earlier than their classmates. If young people act on sexual impulses, then



THE PANDEMIC CHANGED THE LIFESTYLE OF MANY YOUNG GIRLS, AND THIS TREND WAS MUCH MORE VISIBLE. OBESE WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE MORE OESTROGEN LEVELS DUE TO THE CONVERSION OF BODY FAT INTO OESTROGENS.

they have trouble controlling, it can be challenging for them to deal with this mentally.

According to Dr. Kamath, the pandemic too was responsible for changing the lifestyle of many young girls, and this trend was much more visible. Obese women and girls have more oestrogen levels due to the conversion of body fat into oestrogens. Hence these hormonal changes in obese girls trigger early menarche.

Girls who begin their menarche early have an increased lifetime exposure to oestrogen in the breast and uterine lining (endometrium). This predisposes these girls to a slightly higher breast and uterine cancer incidence. They appear vulnerable because menarche occurs

before the brain has learned stress-buffering strategies. It has been found that such girls are more prone to depression and substance abuse.

Bisphenol A, found in plastics, was identified as an oestrogen-mimicking compound. These chemicals are hypothesised to disrupt the endocrine milieu causing early menarche.

What results in early puberty?

Precocious puberty typically has an underlying reason that is unknown. The pituitary gland receives signals from this area of the brain, which causes it to release hormones that cause the ovaries or testicles to produce sex hormones.

The brain starts transmitting these signals earlier than it should during precocious puberty. This could occur for several reasons, gene mutation is one recognised cause, when puberty first manifests itself, and it is influenced by this gene.

Families are susceptible to passing along this genetic abnormality. Precocious puberty is inherited in about 5 per cent of boys.

There are some changes in both boys and girls that could be symptoms of premature puberty.

These are: more mature appearance, pubic, underarm, or facial hair, acne on the face and tendency to be overweight.

Dr. Dalal holds the view that there are several hypotheses but obesity or

increased BMI has been consistently associated with early puberty. Fat is like an endocrine gland and secretes oestrogen which can act on the hypothalamus and pituitary and induce puberty.

Girls are overweight today due to improved nutrition and the absence of diseases due to better health care. Eating of processed high fat foods is a big contributor. Wrong nutrition is a big culprit.

In fact there is a link between Intra uterine and post natal nutrition and the onset of puberty. Bottle or formula-fed babies are more likely to get their periods earlier.

The specialists agree that there are environmental chemical pollutants that act as endocrine disruptors. These may be found in toys, lipsticks, shampoos and perfumes etc. BPA (Bisphenol A) and Phthalates are potent chemicals.

Stress is also an accelerator of puberty. Divorce in family, single parent families, domestic violence can also lead to early periods as they



cause stress in the minds of children.

Whether excessive screen time or lack of sleep is associated with early puberty are being researched.

Going through puberty early can be hard for kids emotionally and socially. Girls with precocious puberty, for example, may be

confused or embarrassed about getting their periods or having enlarged breasts well before any of their peers. They may be treated differently because they look older.

Parents should give their child a simple, truthful explanation about what's happening; explain that these changes are normal for older kids and teens, but that his or her body started developing a little too early.

Parents also need to watch out for signs that teasing or other problems may be affecting the child emotionally. These include poor grades, problems at school, loss of interest in daily activities and even depression.

How parents react affects how well kids can cope up with these bodily changes. In order to promote a healthy body image and promote self esteem it is important to avoid making comments about the child's appearance.

Instead parents should praise children for their achievements in school and sports.

We

IN-LAWS/OUTLAWS

Unique Rug Seller

It was a fine morning, when I came downstairs and found that no one was at home except me and my mother-in-law. We didn't really share a great relationship together, she always wanted to have a daughter-in-law who is from the same caste as they are. So it was hard to be in her good books even after my endless efforts.

That day when I came down, the doorbell rang so I went to open the door and found a young man, who was selling some rugs door to door. My mother-in-law came to check what the matter was when the rug seller started talking about his unique rugs. He told us that he was selling different kinds of rugs that soak water immediately. He poured some water on the rug, it disappeared making the rug absolutely dry and leaving everyone

amazed. Most of the people in the locality bought rugs from him, but we were still not sure. We asked him to do the same on some other rugs, but he said that it would degrade their quality and that he could not do that. He pushed really hard, trying to sell his rugs to us but we just pretended that we urgently needed to go somewhere and shut the door on him. Then my mother-in-law and I looked at each other and started laughing. That day we gave our bond a new start.

– Katyayni Ghosh

The Unequal Pay

I work as an HR head in a company, and my salary is slightly higher than my husband's. He never had any problem with the difference in our salaries, but after our marriage, my mother-in-law used to taunt me for this. One

day my husband was out of town, when my mother-in-law asked me to accompany her shopping. We went to the mall, and she bought a number of useless things. The next day, she forced me to order a new television, I told her that the one we have is working properly. After some time, I realised that she was just trying to waste my money. But what she wasn't aware of is that my husband and I share our money.

When my husband came back from his meeting, he asked his mom about the purchase of the TV, and she said that she needed a new model. My husband tried to make her understand that it was not only my money but also his that she was wasting it. After the conversation, she asked us to cancel the TV order. She apologised for her behaviour but she still taunts me for earning more. According to her, I control my husband just because I earned more than him.

– Sidra Ansari

Your Body



Q A

I AM A 28 YEARS OLD WORKING WOMAN. My daughter is about two months old. I want to know about the toilet training of the child.

In the early months of life, the gastrocolic reflex is active and the infant tends to defecate after each feed. This reflex weakens by the age of four months. By the age of seven months, the bowel movements become irregular without any relation to eating and the infant is often indifferent to soiling.

The infant can be placed on the toilet seat by the age of ten months as, by this time, he can sit with good control. The child can walk to the toilet by the age of 15 to 18 months and is usually ready for initiating toilet training. By the age of two years, the child is trainable. At three years, he can withhold and postpone his bowel movement. The child should be encouraged to go to the toilet by the age of one and half years but the attitude of the parents to toilet training should be relaxed without anxiety or tension.

M Y MOTHER IS ABOUT 65 YEARS old, and for the last month, she has been suffering from intermittent itching and scratching. Itching remains so intense as to interfere with sleep, and dry, leathery plaques appear on the neck, ankles and other parts of the body also. We have consulted a skin specialist for this problem. After examination and investigations, the doctor told us that she is suffering from lichen simplex chronicus and advised treatment. I want your opinion.

Lichen simplex chronicus represents a self-perpetuating scratch-itch cycle. Intermittent itching incites the patient to scratch the lesions. Itching may be so intense as to interfere with sleep.

Dry, leathery, hypertrophic, lichenified plaques appear on the neck, ankles, perineum or almost anywhere. The patches are rectangular, thickened and hyperpigmented. The skin lines are exaggerated. This disorder can be differentiated from plaque-like lesions such as psoriasis, lichen planus and nummular dermatitis. Steroid ointments in an augmented vehicle are effective without occlusion and are used twice daily for several weeks. These super potent steroids are

probably the treatment of choice but must be used with careful follow-up to avoid local side effects. The injection of triamcinolone acetonide suspension into the lesions may occasionally be curative. The disease tends to remit during treatment but may recur or develop at another site.

I AM A 50-YEAR-OLD WORKING WOMAN, I was cleaning my ear with a match stick last week. During cleaning, I felt severe pain so I closed the cleaning but the pain in my ear persisted. I consulted an ENT specialist for this problem, and after examination, he told me that my tympanic membrane had ruptured and advised treatment. I want to know about the causes and treatment of ruptured tympanic membranes.

Causes of tympanic membrane rupture are 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, and fractured base of the skull. Treatment consists of systemic antibiotics to prevent infection, blood clots should not be disturbed for about ten days or more. Never syringe or put any ear drops. 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 80 years old and seriously disabled, unable to do her routine work. We have consulted an orthopaedic surgeon for this problem. He advised occupational therapy. I want to know about the benefits of occupational therapy.

Occupational therapy is useful mainly in helping seriously disabled patients to find ways in which they can more easily carry out the various activities of everyday bathing, toilet, cooking, feeding, boarding public transport and many others. Many useful aids for the disabled are available and those that are appropriate should be brought to the patient's notice.



HAUTE *Cuisine*

From the land of finger-licking food.

By Kamlesh Sandhu

Fig Halwa

FIG HALWA

INGREDIENTS

Figs-200 grams

Water -one cup

Suji -150 grams

Ghee -100 grams

Sugar - 100 grams

Condensed milk -100 ml

Cream- 50 grams

METHOD

Soak the figs in a cup of water for 3 hours or till they are swelled up. Place the figs in a mixer jar with the same water and grind finely and make paste. Heat the ghee in a pan and add suji and fry until it turns golden. Add the paste of figs and stir it until ghee starts seeping out. Add the sugar and cream for 3-4 minutes till sugar melts. Turn the flame off. Take out halwa in a serving bowl and decorate with roasted cashew nuts.



TURIYA PATRA

INGREDIENTS

Turiya (chopped) - 250 grams
Cashew nuts (roasted) - 12
Cumin seeds - ½ tsp
Asafoetida - 1 pinch
Whole red chilli
Mustard seeds - 1/2 tsp
Tej pata - 1 PC
Turmeric powder - 1 tsp
Cinnamon - 1 piece
Green chilli to taste
Onion (chopped) - 1/2 cup
Garlic paste - 1 tsp
Tomato (chopped) - 2
Besan - 1 tsp
Patra - 200 grams
Coriander powder - 1 tsp
Oil - 4 tbsp
Red chilli powder to taste
Salt to taste

Turiya Patra

METHOD

Heat the oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds, cumin seeds, asafoetida, tej pata, cinnamon and sauté for few seconds. Add the onions and garlic paste and sauté for 2 minutes. Add the garam masala, coriander powder, whole chilli and the tomato and sauté for few minutes until the oil starts seeping out. Add the turiya, besan, salt and red chilli powder. Cover with a lid and cook it well. Add one cup of water and cook on a low flame 2 minutes. Cook it well for a few minutes. Serve hot with roti.

PINEAPPLE PAYASAM

INGREDIENTS

Coconut milk - 2 cups
Jaggery - 100 grams (or to taste)
Rice powder - 1 tbsp
Cashew nuts and raisins - half cup
Ghee - 1 tbsp
Cardamom (powdered) - 8 or 10 pieces
Pineapple (chopped and cooked) - 2 ½ cup

METHOD

Heat the ghee in a frying pan and add the cashew nuts. Fry them till light brown.

Take the cashew nuts out in a plate and turn the flame off. Add the raisins in hot ghee, fry until they start to swell, take them out and keep aside, add the pineapple in same ghee and stir it till the water evaporates.

Add cardamom and jaggery and stir well. Add coconut milk and rice powder and bring it to boil. Cook on slow flame a few minutes. Turn flame off and decorate with dry fruits.

Pineapple Payasam



Beet Braised Lentils

Garlic paste – ½ tsp
 Green chilli (chopped) -2-3
 Oil for fry
 Red chilli powder - 1 tsp
 Mango powder - 1 tsp
 Green coriander leaves for garnish

METHOD

Peel the skin of the Gourd and cut into 3 inch pieces. Make every piece Hollow. Take out the centre part of the gourd pieces and keep it aside. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a pan

BEET BRAISED LENTILS

INGREDIENTS

Beetroot (grated) - 250 grams
 Whole lentil (soaked for 4 hours) - 100 grams
 Onion (finely chopped) - 1
 Garlic (chopped) - 1 tsp
 Tomato (chopped) - 1 cup
 Garam masala - 1/2 tsp
 Cumin seeds – 1 tsp
 Red and green chilli paste to taste
 Cumin seeds powder – ½ tsp
 Coriander powder - 1 tsp
 Yoghurt -1 tbsp
 Ghee- 2 tsp
 Green coriander leaves for garnish
 Turmeric powder - 1 tsp

METHOD

Boil the lentils with a glass of water, salt and turmeric on full flame in cooker till the first whistle. After that lower the fame and cook on low flame for 10 minutes. Switch off the gas and keep aside.

Heat ghee in a pan, add cumin seeds and fry until it crackles. Add the onions and garlic and sauté for 2 minutes.

Add the chili paste, turmeric powder, garam masala, coriander powder, Cumin powder, and tomatoes and sauté it well.

Add beetroot and cook it on a low flame. Add salt, chilli powder and boiled lentils. Add ½ cup of



Stuffed Bottle Gourd

water if needed, cook on slow flame and add the yoghurt in the last. Garnish with green coriander leaves.

STUFFED BOTTLE GOURD

INGREDIENTS

Gourd - 2 (small sized)
 Onion (chopped) - 1
 Turmeric powder - 1 tsp
 Potatoes (boiled) - 2
 Garam masala - 1 tsp
 Coriander powder - 1 tsp

to fry the stuffing, add the cumin seeds to crackle add the onions and fry them till golden brown, then add garlic paste, turmeric powder, coriander powder, Garam masala , potatoes, red chilli powder, green chilli (chopped), mango powder, and salt and mix well. Take it off the flame. Allow it to cool. Stuff the filling into the gourd pieces and heat 2 tbsp oil in a pan and set all pieces in frying pan. Cover it with the lid and keep it turning from all sides within few minutes gourd will be ready. Sprinkle a little salt over every piece turn the flame off and serve hot.

LOADED SWEET POTATO

INGREDIENTS

Sweet Potato - 2
Green onions (chopped) - 2
Garlic (grated) - 5 cloves
Carrot (finely chopped) - ½ cup
Capsicum (finely chopped) - ½ cup
Oregano - 1 tsp
Chilli flakes - ½ tsp
Salt to taste
Oil - 3 tsp
Lemon juice - 1 tsp

METHOD

Grease sweet potatoes well with oil or ghee. Take a pan and grease it with 1 tsp oil or ghee on the bottom.

Put the sweet potatoes on bottom and cover it with a lid tightly. Now turn the flame on and set flame on a low.

Turn sweet potato from all sides after every 2 minutes. Within 10 minutes, the sweet potatoes will turn cool and ready. Heat oil in a

Loaded Sweet Potato

pan; add the garlic and sauté until golden. Add carrot, capsicum, green onion and cook till it softens, take off from the flame, add salt oregano, chili flakes, lemon juice and mix well. Now cut the sweet potatoes into halves put the vegetable mixture on the half and heat it again for few seconds and serve it hot.



BHARWA KELE KI SABZI

INGREDIENTS

ripe bananas - 3
Ginger (grated) - 1 tsp
Red chilli powder to taste
Green coriander leaves - 2 Tbsp
Asafoetida - one pinch
Turmeric powder - ½ tsp
Cumin seeds - ½ tsp + ¼ tsp
Salt to taste
Tomato sauce - 1 tbsp
Oil for cooking + stuffing - 3 tbsp

METHOD

Wash the green coriander and chop it finely. Mix all the ingredients in a bowl. Wash the banana and trim both edges. Cut a banana into two or three pieces. Slit the banana from the middle and stuff the prepared mixture of spices into the slit. Now heat oil in a frying pan, add the cumin seeds and when it starts crackling add turmeric powder and salt to taste. Stir to mix. Now set the stuffed banana in a frying pan and cover with lid and cook on low flame. Turn it from all sides time to time until it cooks well. Serve hot with rotis or as snacks.

Bharwa Kele Ki Sabzi



Sweet Potato Lentils



SWEET POTATO LENTILS

INGREDIENTS

- Lentils (soaked) - 100 grams
- Sweet potatoes - 2 (medium size cooked and cut into pieces)
- Onion (chopped finely) - 1
- Bell pepper (medium sized, chopped) - 1
- Garlic - 5 cloves
- Oil for frying
- Carrot (chopped) - ¼ cup
- Tomato (chopped) - 3
- Coconut milk - 2 cups
- Garam masala - ½ tsp
- Turmeric - ½ tsp
- Salt to taste
- Coriander powder - 1 tsp
- Cinnamon - 1 inch stick
- Black cardamom two pieces

METHOD

Cook the lentils with four times the water; add the salt and turmeric powder into the pressure cooker. Cook the lentils in the cooker on full flame until the first whistle. After one whistle turn the

flame low for about 10 minutes. Heat the oil in a frying pan and add cinnamon and cardamom and fry for 1 minute. Add the onion and garlic and fry till golden brown; add the turmeric powder, Garam masala, coriander powder, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and carrot and sauté for a few minutes. Add the coconut milk and cook for few minutes and then mix the

lentils and cook on a low flame for 2-3 minutes. Garnish with Green coriander leaves.

JACKFRUIT SEEDS CURRY

INGREDIENTS

- Jack fruits seeds (chopped length wise) - 250 grams
- Tomato Puree - 1 cup
- Onion (finely chopped) - 1
- Carom seeds - ½ tsp
- Garlic paste - ½ tsp
- Coriander powder - 1 tsp
- Cumin powder - ¼ tsp
- Salt to taste
- Green chilli paste to taste
- Red chilli powder to taste
- Turmeric powder - 1 tsp
- Sugar - ½ tsp (optional)
- Oil - 2 tbsp

METHOD

Boil the Jackfruit seeds, chop them lengthwise and keep aside. Heat the oil in a pan and add carom seeds, onion and garlic paste; sauté for 2 minutes until golden brown. Add turmeric powder, cumin powder, coriander powder, green chilli paste in it; add the tomato



Jackfruit Seeds Curry

paste and sauté until oil starts seeping out. Add the jackfruit seeds and then add salt and red chilli powder and mix well. Add 1½ cup of water and cook for 3-4 minutes on a low flame until the gravy becomes thick. Garnish with green coriander leaves and serve hot.

PALAK PANEER SEEKH KABAB

INGREDIENTS

Paneer - 200 grams
 Spinach (chopped) - 250 grams
 Onion (finely chopped) - 1
 Garlic (grated) - 1 tsp
 Ginger (grated) - 1 tsp
 Garam masala - ½ tsp
 Salt to taste
 Corn flour - 1 tsp
 Oats - 50 grams
 Mango powder - 1 tsp
 Cumin powder - ½ tsp
 Coriander powder - 1 tsp
 Green chilli to taste
 Oil for shallow frying



METHOD

Heat oil in a frying pan, add cumin seeds. When cumin seeds crackle, add the chopped onions, ginger and garlic paste, add the spinach and salt and cook for 3-4 minutes till the spinach is cooked. Take out from the oil and keep aside to cool. Add garam masala,

paneer, salt, corn flour, oats, mango powder, coriander powder, green chilli, cumin powder and mix well. Take a handful of the mixture and stick them to the skewers. Heat the oil in a frying pan.

Put all skewers kebab into the frying pan to shallow fry. Keep turning the sides of the kebab every 2-3 minutes. Fry the kebab from all sides till golden brown. Serve with chutney.

Finger Millet Paniyaram



FINGER MILLET PANIYARAM

INGREDIENTS

Wheat flour - ¼ cup
 Ragi flour - 1 cup
 Curry leaves - 10-12
 Asafoetida - one pinch
 Mustard seeds - ½ tsp
 Cumin seeds - ¼ tsp
 Red and green chilli (to taste)
 Baking soda - ½ tsp
 Salt to taste
 Spinach (finely chopped) - 2 ½ cup
 Onion (chopped) - ½ cup
 Oil for frying

cabbage muthiya



METHOD

Heat the oil in a pan, add in mustard seeds, asafoetida, shallots/onions, curry leaves, green chillies in it and sauté for a minute. Add spinach and sauté it for 7-8 minutes, till the raw smell from the leaves is gone. Now take wheat flour, ragi, salt, baking soda in a bowl. Add the spinach mix. Add in water and mix well into a thick batter. Let it sit for 30 minutes. Heat a paniyaram/appam pan with some oil. Pour a spoonful of batter in each paniyaram. Cook for 2 minutes till the bottom is crisp. Flip over and cook for another 2 minutes. Remove it and serve hot with any chutney.

CABBAGE MUTHIYA

INGREDIENTS

Wheat flour - ½ cup (or oats flour ½ cup)
Suji (or corn flour) - ½ cup
Besan - ½ cup
Cabbage (grated) - 250 grams

Green chilli paste (to taste)

Garlic paste - 1 tsp

Sesame seeds - 2 tsp

Sugar - 1 tsp

Turmeric - 1 tsp

Coriander powder - 1 tsp

Red chilli powder (to taste)

Ginger powder - ½ tsp

Carom seeds - ½ tsp

Salt to taste

Yoghurt - 1 tbsp

Baking soda - ½ tsp

Oil - 2 tsp.

METHOD

Mix all the ingredients listed under Muthiya except the soda and leave it aside for about 10 minutes. The cabbage releases some water which should be good enough to bind it all together. You can add more water if needed.

Add the baking soda. Conversely, if the mixture becomes too watery you can add more flour till it all comes together as soft dough. You should be able to give it a log shape when you grip the mixture between your hands. That's when you know it's done. Get your steamer ready with some

hot water. Coat your hands with some oil and pick up little balls of the mixture and shape them into logs. You can also use an instant pot for steaming; Steam for about 20 minutes on medium heat. Check with a toothpick to make sure it's cooked from inside. Let them cool for a few minutes before tempering. You can also let them cool completely and keep it in the fridge in a zip lock bag or air tight container and temper them when you are ready to eat.

For the tempering, heat oil in a pan. Add the mustard seeds and let them splutter. Add the sesame seeds and the curry leaves and also the green chillies, if using. Let them cook for a few seconds and add in the sliced Muthiya.

The size and shape of the Muthiya is totally as per your preference. Cook the Muthiya for a minute or two till all the tempering is well coated and you see a pretty golden colour. Drizzle some lemon juice on top, mix well and switch off the gas. Finely garnish with chopped coriander and/or grated coconut.

Ballad Of A Warrior!

Reviewing 'The Secret In My Blood'
by author Akanksha Agarwal.



Akanksha Agarwal Author.

The *Secret In My Blood* is a lattice of emotions expressed by a woman through her being that is analogous to life. The analect recites the intricate torrid state that marks the tumultuous journey from a girl to a woman. Every word epitomises the indefinite feeling of love. The poetess weaves the alchemy of blood and love that demands to be reckoned, one meaningless without the other. The poems depict the fervour and rhapsody between a man and woman with vivid characterisation. Akanksha renders a vignette that illustrates implicit yearnings, the joy and ecstasy of passion and love.

It discusses various forms of love and is broken up into three parts. The author beautifully expressed it, from *Ovulating In Emotions* to *Bleeding In Love* to *Fertile To Fly*, between a man and a woman that is well-defined.

The poems are about love, pain, hope, and hopelessness. The depth of each poem keeps the reader engaged throughout. Not to mention how captivating this book is, thanks to the stunning illustrations. The author conveys a lovely message throughout, from being in love to falling in love, from heartbreak to pain. As the title suggests, *Ovulating in Emotions* depicts the onset of love. It's that moment when you

literally feel like you're walking on clouds and dreaming. It also refers to a time when a person is so engrossed in all the lovely ideas that they can't imagine life without their love. Poems in *Bleeding in Love* describe heartbreak and subsequent suffering. As previously stated, there is no happy ending to every love story. And at that point, the

negative feelings start to overwhelm us. That is how love is felt. Moving on, *Fertile to Fly* evokes the fervour that essentially characterises love. Humans are born with the need for physical intimacy and companionship. That is the subject of the poems in this section.

The emotions are straight from the heart. And, when we talk about "love" and "sadness", they are two extremely opposite yet linked emotions that we cannot keep ourselves away from. And, they impact us hugely in more than one aspect. If you are an emotional reader, you will like more than one segment of this book. The way the author expresses emotions and feelings through her words is something amazing. As you can see in the above line, comparing "love" with a "mother's womb" is something an intelligent yet emotional person can come up with.

Another positive attribute of the book is some well-thought and well-designed illustrations. You can find them in almost all the poetries. It gives an interesting and pleasurable experience to the reader.

A heterogeneous mixture of stories told in poetic ways. Emotions took over linguistics. Each word carries all emotions and makes you ponder at every moment.

– Our Correspondent

We



NOMOPHOBIA

A Threat to Childhood. By Samir Ranjan Majumdar

Indeed, the cellphone is undoubtedly a helpful tool in the world of education and learning. But too much or excessive dependence on cellphones and allowing children unmonitored access to cell phones and digital technology not only destroys their ability to focus on just one thing at a time, reduces their ability to retain information, makes them irritating or show inappropriate behaviour but also seem to have turned their world into a lonely place.

A teenage girl in some part of West Bengal was recently found to have attempted to sell her blood to purchase a cellphone because her mother turned down her request to buy her one.

Advik, a 3-year-old child, will not eat food until he is given a cellphone. While he accesses the comic videos and becomes engrossed in watching them, while his mother feeds him and he gulps down the food.

When his mother goes to take bath, Ayush, a 6-year-old child, takes her cellphone, hides in a bedsheet, and watches motor race videos tuning down the volume to almost nil.



Anwasha, a 10-year-old girl, becomes angry and irritable when the phone is taken away from her or she is unable to use the phone. Viewing the screen continuously for a long time has already harmed her eyes and affected her eyesight.

A 13-year-old class VII student in a part of Gujarat not only stole cash from his house but also used his mother's debit card details to pay for an online game.

On 23 November 2022, a 12-year student of class VI of Islampur, West Bengal committed suicide because his parents scolded him for playing too much on the mobile phone and ignoring his studies.

Triparna, a student of engineering, uses the smartphone as a helpful and hugely productive tool. She got her PAN, aadhaar, voter identity card, ration card, and passport for her grandparents by making an online application through her smart android mobile phone.

A 12-year-old boy was murdered by his 16-year-old cousin in Goblaj village of Kheda taluka because he had refused to lend his mobile phone to his cousin.

On 2 September 2021, a 17-year-old boy in Kawas village of Hazira, Gujarat killed his 40-year-old labourer father in a fit of rage over being reprimanded for wasting time playing games on mobile phone.

On 2 September 2021, a 16-year-old girl in Surat's Ved Road killed herself as her parents refused to hand over her mobile phone as they thought she was wasting time on it ignoring her studies.

Global Problem

World over, there is hardly any family which is not facing increasing cellphone abuse by children or kids, causing miseries and huge tension in their personal lives.

The advent of mobile phones has undoubtedly brought about a big revolution in the world of communication opening up a huge array of divergent possibilities and access to a world of great opportunities for mankind.

These mobile phones not only

help us stay connected to relatives and friends living far away from us, but are also proved to be a very helpful tool in the world of education and learning.

But as science and technology galloped ahead, it has brought some of the dark realities which mankind worriedly wants to get rid of today. The children are the ones who are worst hit because they use phones incessantly and are slowly becoming addicted.

THE CHILDREN USE CELLPHONES, COMPUTERS, AND LAPTOPS TO MAKE GRADE AND MANAGE THEIR SOCIAL LIVES THROUGH VARIOUS APPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS. AVAILABILITY OF STUDY MATERIAL AND A SENSE OF ACHIEVING THE BEST RESULT HAVE DRIVEN THE CHILDREN TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF CELLPHONES.



Their parents are finding themselves in a very baffling situation about how to save the childhood of their children from being increasingly spoilt.

Researchers, doctors, and psychiatrists all over the world have published various reports pointing out the seriousness and magnitude of the complex relationship of today's children with technology and the concomitant problems arising out of their excessive dependence on cellphone and its ill-effect on their health.

The children use cellphones, computers, and laptops in and out of the classroom to make grade and manage their social lives through various apps and social media platforms.

Availability of study material and a sense of achieving the best result have driven the children to make the best use of cellphones and, in the process; many of them are becoming addicted.



An open letter to the world's children



Why I'm worried:

The world wide web was born in the same year as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 30 years ago. Today it has radically changed the world and reshaped childhood and adulthood alike. More than 1 in 3 children globally are thought to be regular users of the internet, and as this generation grows up, that proportion is set to grow and grow.

Debates about the benefits and dangers of social media for children are becoming familiar, and more action to protect children from bullying and exposure to harmful content is certainly needed. Parent and children are also becoming aware of the risk of sharing too much personal information on social media. But the truth is the data contained within social media profiles created by children are just the tip of the data iceberg. Less well understood but at least as important, is the enormous accumulation of data being collected about children. As children go about their daily online lives, browsing social media, using search engines, e-commerce and government platforms, playing games, downloading apps and using mobile geolocation services, a digital footprint composed of thousands of pieces of data is accumulating around them.

Too often, children do not know what rights they have over their own data and do not understand the implications of their data use, and how vulnerable it can leave them. Privacy terms and conditions on social media platforms are often barely understood by highly educated adults, let alone children. An analysis from The New York Times, showed that many social media privacy policies require a reading comprehension level that exceeds that of the average college student, meaning many users, especially the very young, are probably consenting to things they can't fully understand.

From Henrietta H. Fore
UNICEF Executive Director

III Effects

According to some studies, the most common detrimental effects of mobile phones on children are:

- Behavioural problems especially increased anxiety and/or irritability and/or feelings of unease if phone is not accessible
- Addiction to gadgets
- Depression
- Sleep disturbances
- Eyesight problems
- Obesity
- Academic performance
- Academic malpractice
- Access to inappropriate media
- Attention and hearing issues

COMPULSIVE USE OF THE INTERNET AND SMARTPHONE APPS CAN CAUSE CHILDREN AND TEENS TO NEGLECT OTHER ASPECTS OF THEIR LIFE, FROM REAL-WORLD RELATIONSHIPS TO HOBBIES AND SOCIAL PURSUITS.

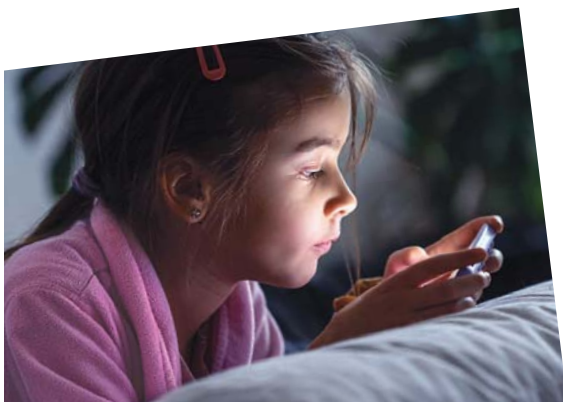
- Problems of the nervous system
- Exposure to harmful electromagnetic waves and radiation

Other adverse effects of the use of the mobile phone by children relate to impulse-control problems like virtual relationships, information overload, cybersex addiction, and online compulsions.

Addiction to social networking, dating apps, texting, and messages can extend to the point where virtual, online friends become more important than real-life relationships.

Similarly, compulsive use of the Internet and smartphone apps can cause children and teens to neglect other aspects of their life, from real-world relationships to hobbies and social pursuits. Children can unknowingly and accidentally find access to pornography sites and once a child becomes addicted to the use of Internet pornography, sexting, nude-swapping, or adult messaging services, it will have a very grave effect on their emotional health as well as shattering impact on education and growth of a healthy and positive mindset.

Some studies suggest the following questions for the parents to ask themselves to find out whether everything is alright with their children:



How to Solve the Problem



- Does my child become angry, irritable, anxious, or even violent when the phone is taken away or unable to be used?
- Does my child skip or avoid social events or extracurricular activities to use the smartphone instead?
- Is my child's personal care (hygiene), friendships, family relationships, or school work negatively affected by smartphone use?
- Does smartphone use interfere with my child's sleep routine?
- Are there any major changes in my child's eating habits that can't be explained otherwise?
- Are there any major mood changes that can't be explained otherwise?
- Does my child check mobile phones frequently, almost every minute even if there is nothing important to do?
- Is my child often late to attend to a work?
- Does my child delay important tasks giving priority to his or her mobile phone?
- Is my child addicted to online gaming?
- Is my child unable to concentrate? or is displaying absent-mindedness?

Following are some of the tips to keep the children away from the mobile phone or desist them from excessive use:

- Parents/legal guardians should take the children to the park or a nearby playground to spend time running and playing. If playground is not there, get them enrolled with a sports club.
- To take children on regular walks to explore the beauty of nature.

Parents Primarily Responsible

The common scenario in today's home all over the globe is mindless scrolling and viewing by each member of the entire family either in drawing room or bedroom.

Since they themselves spend a lot of time on their smart phones, asking children not to use the mobile may not help, as children are bound to follow in their parent's footsteps. There is also no clear-cut way to desist children from the use of mobile. Mrs. Sampa Singh, a housewife, says that she allows her teen daughter to connect with peers, seek help on school assignments and imbibe broad based knowledge on various topics.

- To go out on outings to hill stations, sea shore, religious places.
- Talk to them and impart in them habits of reading, creative writing, art, painting, singing, playing instruments, training in martial arts, doing simple science experiments.
- Discourage the use of mobile phones during mealtime, study hours, bedtime or when it is time to go out and play.
- Keep smartphones away from the children while travelling in moving vehicles, like car, bus or train.
- Playing games like carom, ludo or engaging children along with you in activities such as cooking or gardening or arranging rooms book shelves stacking clothes in cupboards will make them feel valued and useful.
- Check the handset.
- Switch off phone during the night, if possible, and do not leave the phone in children's bedroom at night.
- Do not let children take phones to school.
- Do not give children a phone at a very young age.

The gram sabha of Bansi, a village in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra, has adopted a welcome decision to tackle mobile addiction among children.

The children below 18 years would not be allowed to use mobiles and if anyone is found with mobile, they would be fined Rs 200.

Every day, a siren goes off from a local temple at 7 pm, signaling people to put off their mobile phones and other gadgets and switch off television sets etc to indulge in reading books, studying and talking with one another.

The second alarm at 8:30pm signals end of the detox period, as reported by a national daily.

We

Personal Problems

Q & A

I AM A 22-YEAR-OLD SPINSTER. A YEAR ago, my elder sister got married. During her wedding function, I saw her husband's cousin and fell in love with him at first sight. The man is a dentist and is five years older than me. I have not been able to get rid of the thought of him ever since I saw him, I don't think I can even digest the thought of him marrying someone

else. But I did not get a chance to speak with him at the wedding or even later. He, too, didn't show any interest in me. Later I heard that he was in love with a woman his age and he had planned to marry her. If that happens I think I would commit suicide. I have met his sister a few times, and I recently told her that I admired her brother and I would like him to advise me on a career choice. She told him this, and he spoke to me about what career I could consider. But after that, he did not make any effort to contact me again. Should I try to contact him in some other way? Please give me some advice.

What you feel for this dentist is not love but infatuation. When you love a person, you love him for a mixture of his looks, qualities, character, etc. but you know nothing about this man. You were just attracted to the way he looked, moved, smiled, etc. This is infatuation. The man has not given you any second thought. He is in love with someone else. Even though you managed to get him to speak to you once, he hasn't tried to contact you again. All this makes it obvious that he is not interested in you. The man's lack of interest does not reflect on you at all, and you must not let it affect your self-confidence.

Probably he was already in love when you saw him, and he was not looking for any other woman because of this. But you must accept this now and try to forget him. Saying that you will commit suicide for a man, you don't know and who does not know you at all gets married is immature. Divert your mind to work and entertainment, and try to forget this man. You are very young, and your whole life is stretched out in front of you. You will fall in love with someone else, get married, and be happy.

I AM 23 YEARS OLD. I HAD AN ARRANGED marriage six months ago after I finished my graduation. I did not talk to my husband before I got married. I had only a fleeting glimpse of him. Our marriage was settled because our mothers had been best friends in both school and college. I remember that I felt very happy when I was told before marriage that my husband-to-be was a very intelligent college lecturer with a string of degrees to his name. But what made me very happy and proud then is the cause of my misery today. The fact that I am not at all a suitable match for my husband, I am not half as intelligent as he is, and I know nothing about the matters he likes to talk about- literature, politics, business and the like. I am also out of place amongst his friends, all of whom are as intelligent as him. My husband too obviously feels the same way too. He has begun to ignore me, and he avoids taking me when he goes to parties. He otherwise behaves well and does not harass me in any way. But I am very worried about how my marriage would work out, especially since I found out a few weeks ago that I am pregnant. I am so worried and depressed that I haven't yet told him about this. What should I do?

Your worry is understandable. Arranged marriages are tricky to arrange these days because compatibility between husband and wife has become much more important than it used to be earlier. So a man and a woman should be given ample time to meet and talk before their marriage is arranged. When this isn't done, it could lead to situations such as the one you are in. But there is no reason to be depressed. Marriage is much more about business or books. If you make a pleasant home for your husband and discharge your wifely duties lovingly, he will be drawn towards you. Tell him about your pregnancy. He will probably be very happy. Do not be overawed by his string of degrees. You could have earned some too if you had continued your education! But begin to read about things happening in the country and the world. You should ask your husband's advice on what you should read. This will please your



husband and will give you a common subject to talk about. But while you try to enter your husband's world, also be your own woman. Take up hobbies that you are interested in and grow as a person. You can also continue your education through correspondence. By doing all this, you will earn your husband's respect, and the two of you will be drawn closer together.

I AM A 25-YEAR-OLD UNMARRIED woman. I have a boyfriend who is a few years older than me. We are in love with each other and are planning to get married. My boyfriend is handsome, caring, sensitive, loving and talented. He is doing well in his career. Both his parents and mine have agreed to this match. Both of us are Christians, though his family members are original Christians, while my father converted to marry my mother. My father also has a mistress. My problems are fairly silly ones, but they are preying on my mind. One is that some time ago, there was trouble between my well-off father-in-law-to-be and his brothers, whom he supported and employed. His brothers even went to court, but then the matter was settled amicably. The trouble is that my brothers and their families still live with my future in-laws, and I am nervous about this. The second matter is that my boyfriend and his family are very dark-skinned. My family is much fairer in complexion, and even though I know looks are superficial, I can't help being afraid that my children may be born very dark. What should I do? Should I break off my engagement or go through with the marriage?

The two incidents that you have mentioned are small ones, but even such matters can ruin a marriage. So you should think about these matters and make up your mind about them before you get married. The matter of your would be father-in-law's brothers quarrelling with him has got nothing to do with you. It is best if you keep yourself uninvolved in such matters. Remember that you are an outsider who will enter their family while they are related by blood. So, you should leave them to settle their quarrels. Anyway, they seem to have done

this. So, there is no need for you to worry. It is very sad, we Indians give so much importance to our complexion. A person's complexion depends on the amount of pigmentation on his skin, but we have made it a basis of social standing. This is sad and foolish. Remember that if you decide to marry this man, your acceptance of him must be wholehearted, and you must never mention the matter of complexion to him.

I AM 26 YEARS OLD AND HAVE BEEN married for 8 months. My husband is a wonderful man and we are blissfully happy. My husband is open and broad-minded, and we talk very frankly to each other. We have also told each other all about our pasts. My husband asked me if I had sexual fantasies, and he told me about them. I said that I didn't, but that's not the truth. I often fantasise about making love to men I find attractive—the husbands of friends, colleagues, film stars and the like. I feel bad that I have lied to my husband. Should I tell him the truth? Am I normal in such fantasies?

If your husband is as broad-minded as you say he is, he would probably not be shocked if you tell him about your fantasies. Having such fantasies is normal, and many people have them. But many husbands wouldn't want to hear their wives say that they thought of colleagues and the husbands of friends, they probably wouldn't mind film stars making love to them. On the other hand, some husbands may not mind (your husband may be among them), and it could well lead to sexual games that satisfy both partners. You have to take a call on this, based on your knowledge of your husband.

I AM 20 YEARS OLD AND IN LOVE WITH a 24-year-old boy. He too loves me and we want to get married. My problem is that my parents are very conservative and will never agree to my having a love marriage, even though my boyfriend belongs to the same caste as I do and comes from a family that is equal in status and wealth. So, my boyfriend and I have decided to have a registered marriage.

But I do not have a birth certificate and my age is given as three years less than it actually is in my school-leaving certificate. So, according to the certificate, I am 17 years old and under age to get married. How can I convince the authorities that I am actually 20?

The registrar's office will only go by your school certificate and will not accept any declaration by you. Even if you try to get an affidavit from the court correcting your age, you will have to give some documentary proof of your statement that the age on the school certificate is wrong. Of course, you can try to get your birth certificate from the authorities. But was your birth registered? If you were born in a hospital or a nursing home, the authorities would have sent the information of your birth to the Municipal Corporation/ local body which issues birth certificate. If you cannot manage to get a birth certificate, you will just wait till you are 18 (according to your school-leaving certificate) to get married.



Have you a personal problem of any nature, which you hesitate to discuss with your family or friends? Share it with us. We will try to help you.

Address your letters to:
Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110 055.



Ardour and Allegory At the 28th Kolkata International Film Festival

Jean-Luc Godard, who recently applied a jump-cut to his own life, was paid a Homage. By Sudipto Mullick

She was patently armed. At the 28th Kolkata International Film Festival 2022 award ceremony. None sooner, the penultimate Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award, that for the Best Director for International competition on ‘Innovation in Moving Images’ was announced, one-half of the director duo of the film, ‘Hitler’s Witch’, her live-in partner Ernesto Ardito having to stay back in Argentina, donned FIFA WC Qatar winner-captain Messi’s jersey both as an ardour and allegory – a device that cinema liberally employs, to thunderous applause.

Encrusting her dramatic gesture, a nearly-teary Molina stated that for them “it wasn’t just winning a World Cup. As Third World citizens, we have to work under so much pressure; the struggle is intense. I had brought along the jersey with the thought that if I win an award, I would wear

it. Also, winning this award for our film against patriarchy, Nazism and hatred is another achievement for us.” Interestingly, the evening’s just previous award winner, Iranian



Molina wins Best Director for ‘Hitler’s Witch’.

director Nahid Hassanzadeh, who picked up the Special Jury honour for ‘Shokoube Khamoush’ (‘Silent Glory’), also drew attention to the ongoing turmoil in her land when she dedicated the trophy to “all the personnel involved with Iranian cinema. Those who are fighting for life, fighting for freedom. Hope they can live with liberty.” The ultimate announcement saw Spanish and Bangladeshi entries – US-immigration visa-interrogation drama, ‘Upon Entry’ (Dirs: Alejandro Rojas & Juan Sebastian Vasquez) and ethno-cultural-anthropological effort, ‘Kura Pokkhir Shunye Ura’ (‘The Golden Wings of Watercocks’) directed & produced by Muhammad Quayum, respectively as joint winners of the Best Film trophy, which comes with a 51 Lakhs INR prize money.

Before it was made known that Tajikistan director-producer, Muhiddin Muzaffar had won the

NETPAC citation for Best Film for 'DOV' ('Fortune'), the 'Hiralal Sen Memorial Award' for Best Film in Indian Language was presented to Telugu film, 'Muthayya' directed by Bhaskar Maurya about a just-septuagenarian remote village dweller's successful attempt to become a debut movie actor. In the same category, the best director nod went to Deepankar Prakash for his Rajasthani film, 'Naanera' ('Grandfather') and the Special Jury Award was split between 'Chhaad' ('The Terrace'; Dir: Indrani) and 'Sikaisal' ('If Only Trees Could Talk'; Dir-Prod: Dr Bobby Sarma Baruah). This Indian language film section which showcased Asia's first split-screen film, Jagan Vijaya's 'Beginning' and 'lockdown feature', Tora's Husband' (Dir: Rima Das) also included two North Indian entries: 'Global Adgaon' (Dir: Anilkumar Salve) and The Fallen Are Connected (Dir., Scn. & Wri. by BS Pradeep Verma). Incidentally, two Indian features: 'Munni' (Dir: Ismail Moodushedde) and 'the Keysmith' ('Chabiwala') by Raja Ghosh were shortlisted in the NETPAC section.

'Mein, Mehmood' ('I am, Mehmood'/Hindi) by Prataya Saha secured the Best Indian Short Film award beating 20 competitors, eleven of which were in North Indian languages (Hindi, Marathi, & Haryanvi), while the Special Jury acknowledgement was divided between 'Xunyota' ('Void'/Assamese) by Nabapan Deka and 'Haater Sporsho' ('The Divine Touch'/Bengali) by Dr Prosenjit Choudhury. The Best Indian Documentary Film was handed to an Andaman-Creole-Hindi project, 'Nybream - The Unsettled Shade', directed & produced by Neha Sharma. This field of ten also comprised 'Imroz - A Walk Down Memory Lane' (Dir: Harjit Singh/Panamanian Creole English) and 'Pandhari Ke Rang' (Dir: Nilesch Alias, Sachin Shirke, Baramdeo Alias, & Pankaj Sharma).

Kura Pokkhir Shunye Ura by Muhammad Quayum wins Jt. Best Film Award.



Deepankar Prakash, Best Dir. (Naneera) Indian Languages.



Jean Seaberg/ Uttam Kumar



Charlie Chaplin/ Appu

MOLINA STATED THAT FOR THEM "IT WASN'T JUST WINNING A WORLD CUP. AS THIRD WORLD CITIZENS, WE HAVE TO WORK UNDER SO MUCH PRESSURE. ALSO, WINNING THIS AWARD FOR OUR FILM AGAINST PATRIARCHY, NAZISM AND HATRED IS ANOTHER ACHIEVEMENT FOR US."

Twin Treats

Having mysteriously brought forward from its original January 2023 schedule, the 28th KIFF edition held between 15-23 December became one of its kind to be held twice in a year, 7 months and 20 days after its preceding version (April 25-May 1), which in itself was pushed ahead, covid-affected, from its historic November (10-17) perch. Perhaps, extending the binary fervour, the promo materials, featured Charlie Chaplin ('The Kid') sitting beside Subir Banerjee ('Pather Panchali'); Jean Seaberg ('Breathless') conversing with Uttam Kumar ('Nayak'); Al Pacino ('Scarface') gunning alongside Amitabh Bachchan ('Sholay') inter alia captioned under 'Meet the World at the World of Cinema'.

Godard's Last Jump-Cut

Birth-centenary tribute screenings were accorded majorly to Alain Resnais ('Hiroshima Mon Amour' and 'Private Fears In Public Places'); Pier Paolo Pasolini ('Accattone', 'The Gospel According To St. Matthew',



Scene from Joint Best Film 'Upon Entry' (Spain).



Amitabh Bachchan/ Al Pachino



Sudhir Mishra.

'Oedipus Rex' and 'Salo or The 120 days of Sodom'); Michael Cacoyannis ('Electra', 'Zorba the Greek', 'The Trojan Women', and 'Iphigenia'), and Asit Sen ('Uttar Falguni' and 'Dweep Jele Jai'). Ut. Ali Akbar Khan and Angela Lansbury were also specially celebrated through *Kshudhita Pashan* and *The Picture Of Dorian Gray*, respectively. Jean-Luc Godard, who recently applied a jump-cut to his own life, was paid Homage with 'Alphaville', 'A Woman Is A Woman', 'Contempt', and 'Breathless' and an exhibition titled: *The 'Immortal' Object Of Art*.

Heard Here

One of the distinguishing sections of KIFF since 2015, the 'India Unheard' category was supposed to be competitive in its latest installment but wasn't. But nonetheless, eager audiences left no seats unwarned to experience rare-languages films in Santhali ('Tortoise Under The Earth'; Dir: Shishir Jha), Maithili ('Lotus Blooms'; Dir: Pratik Sharma), Bayari ('Dhairya'; Dir: Aditya R Chiranjeevi), Rajbanshi ('Mansai – Beyond River'; Dir:

Ashutosh Das), Rabha ('Darling'; Dir: Hiren Bora), and Kurmali ('Tusu'; Dir: Biswajit Roy). Of this set, Byari – spoken mainly in Karnataka and northern Kerala, which incorporates Malayalam idioms with Tulu phonology and grammar was the rarest.

Un'Gamely'

A Special Category called 'Game On' was introduced in this chapter but despite coinciding with FIFA WC, not a single film on soccer was on display, a horrendous omission. Instead, six (of seven) cliched Hindi commercial films filled up the numbers. One would have expected some 'audience drama' from the soccer-crazy Calcutta's incidental on the 'on-screen' goings-on during the last show at 7 PM on December 17 and 18 – the third place and final matches of the ongoing World Cup.

But the unbreachable mobile jammers that hampered communication access all throughout might have caused a reasonable exodus to succumb to the magnetic pull of the pitch. On the final day, only a handful decided to withstand all 140 minutes of Ruben Ostlund's 'Triangle Of Sadness', this year's Cannes Palme d'Or for Best Film winner. Also unexpected: almost no Messi/Maradona T-shirts on December 19 onwards, among a tribe that divides its football allegiance chiefly between Brazil and Argentina.

Sudhir & Shaji Speaks

Delivering the Satyajit Ray Memorial Lecture: 'Understanding cinema in changing times of OTT',

Sudhir Mishra, the realistic filmmaker opined that, "I think all the tax money that govt earns from films must come back to cinema", threading it with caution, "Government steps in a dangerous way. So, it has to be autonomous". Holding a masterclass on 'Visual Metaphors & Moving Images', Shaji N. Karun surmised that "Metaphor resides in our smile, our hearts, our brains, in nature, in colour, in art, in the dimension of past, present and future – in every inch of the world within and without us, so to speak."

Distant Drives

Decent viewing criteria emerged in this year's Cinema International list, but alas for ludicrous scheduling, which saw important screenings like, 'Decision To Leave', the latest Cannes Best Director winner; Berlin IFF 2022 Best Film, 'Alcarràs' (Carla Simón); 'Crimes Of The Future' (David Cronenberg), 'One Fine Morning' (Mia Hansen Love), and few others exhibited miles away from the epicentre.

At least we got to see Cannes 2022 Grand Prix winners 'Closer' (Lukas Dhont), 'No Bears' (Jafar Panahi/Venice FF Special Jury Prize), 'Joyland' (Saim Sadiq/Cannes FF 2022 Queer Palm & Un Certain Regard Jury Prize) and celluloid-marathoner, Lav Diaz's '187-minutes 'short-film', 'When The Waves Are Gone', inter alia. Audience behaviour too contributes towards this collective experience. This year it seemed to be at its dismal worst. Like the presumable winter which deceived to settle, this KIFF hobbled to fully set.





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BREAKING *All Stereotypes*

Women have come all the way. By Ritu Kamra Kumar

The other day, as I entered a park for my evening stroll I found many women in colourful and copious attires pampering themselves – gossiping and having yard chat.

Some were taking a brisk walk, others doing yoga and many indulged in various physical activities. It made me smile as the sight was very refreshing and rejuvenating.

How women have come all the way – their journey from home and hearth to workplace, gyms, parks, public places, and jocund joy of partaking in recreational activities has been phenomenal! Their road had been bumpy and arduous.

However looking at their pleasing personas I hummed the lines of Rabindra Nath Tagore-

“Where the mind is without fear,
Where the head is held high...
Into that heaven of freedom,
My Father, let my country awake.”

The modern age has brought in the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity. Women have become progressive and have broken the glass ceiling, opening the doors to all avenues with the key of capability and diligence.



They walk in the corridors of power with grace and panache carving a niche for themselves in every field. Be it politics, education, social activism, armed forces, corporate sectors, civil services, bollywood, media, art and culture.

The young women, these days, are enthusiastically participating in a recruiting rally under Agnipath Scheme. The self motivated candidates have trained on roads and in fields. The Army plans to induct about 1700 women soldiers over the next few years.

The Air Force and Navy, too, are in the process of inducting women fighters. Everywhere you find them in big numbers earning handsomely holding key leadership positions and acting as role models for others.

There are numerous high profile women achievers from different and distinguished sectors. They work together on sisterhood, solidarity and refuse to be footnotes in the script of their lives.

*A bit of dandelion, unwanted,
women were made to feel,
Demure, dejected in despondency
her fate sealed.*

*Daring dandelions made other
women realise- she is jewel of all
flowers,
Wafting on the breeze benign,
scattering seeds of wisdom in every
bower.*

The modern woman has emerged as bold and beautiful, charming and challenging, an aware and awakened individual who defied hierarchy, rediscovered her roots and rewired and reshaped her destiny.

Contemporary Women

There have been many explorations of the idea of the contemporary Indian women. Be it web series like *Bombay Begums*, *Four More Shots Please*, these series examine the complexities of the choices made by women of today.

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AND DILIGENCE.**

Women can be seen sharing their haunting apprehensions with ease, happy anecdotes with pleasure, future wishlists as they celebrate their accomplishments. True are the words of Nellie L. McClung, "Women are going to form a chain, a greater sisterhood than the world has ever known."



Yes! They do form a chain as they either go on solo trips to far off places or a small group goes around the world to have glimpse of different cultures and traditions.

As I walked in the park I had the opportunity to have a peep into the lives of modern women who, like me, have been working women and homemakers too.

I found them discussing innovative hairstyles, their experiences about recently opened salons, new trends in costumes and cosmetology, tattoos, bubble bath to destress and keto diet to detox, visits to recently opened eateries with friends, ordering online food to celebrate cheat day etc.

One of them, who was scheduled to go to Goa, excitedly talked about the beach wear that she intended to wear there and to be fit and fine with perfect body curves, she had enrolled herself for Zumba classes.

Their open temper and conversation on veritable and various topics which were supposed to be forbidden areas for women made me chuckle.

Next day in the evening, as I walked towards park I had a sense of elation as I found a group on swings reciting dialogues of the

movie *Gungubai*, and appreciating the performance of Alia Bhatt as a prostitute and how every woman should speak against injustice and be vocal, help the underprivileged and women from low strata of society.

Their interactive session on women-centric movies made me realise that I have missed watching *Tumhari Sulu* and I watched it on the very same day, revelling in celebration of womanhood.

The words of Charlotte Bronte in her much acclaimed novel *Jane Eyre* echoed in my heart – “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent Will.”

On this pleasant note, I slept at night as a piece of log – uncut, unpruned and unbridled.

MODERN WOMEN ARE INHERENTLY HAPPY HUMAN BEINGS WHO HAVE SHED OBSOLETE DOGMAS AND TAKE PRIDE IN RUNNING HOMES AND HAVE ABILITY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS EFFORTLESSLY.

My strolls in the park continued and I encountered many epiphanies.

A woman was telling her husband on phone to don the cap of cook and prepare dinner that night as she had an online meeting at 8:30 in the evening.

How comforting and relaxing her tone and tenor was!

Definitely, role reversal has blurred the line of gender defined roles. We can witness a sea of change in the societal attitude. My kids and husband easily find their way around the kitchen, many a time, surprising me with their culinary skills.

Thanks to ‘Youtube’ recipes, now cooking hasn’t been the domain of women only.

As I go for my monthly evening get together with college friends; my husband readily opts to prepare his meals for the dinner.

True with roles intermingled, today’s woman has far greater control over her home and professional aspirations. Online shopping too has made women go gaga over the range of apparels, handbags, footwear and information that the digital world is offering.

Breaking The Cliche

Today’s woman is conscious about the intake of calories and fat and prefers to discipline her family with food habits with novel, easy and healthy cooking.

I wonder if there are women like the ones I met in the park in every locality in our country, breaking the mould, not taking orders and no more only Shrimati ji but exerting their identity and individuality with remarkable achievements, receiving applause and accolades.

Yes! Gitajali Shree’s Booker Prize for literature for her *Tomb of Sand* is a recent example for the same.

There are many such women working ceaselessly and tirelessly to reach the sky and create a niche for themselves.

Riding high with freewill many a dandelion has attained glorious height. Together, they have pollinated a blast of blissful togetherness. Uplifting fading and





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yellows and grey gravel to beautiful brightness.

Today, frail florets of dandelions stand in canopy of dazzling delightfulness.

Women, these days, are enterprising, charming, cool, confident, educated, liberal and raised on the principles of being self-reliant.

They understand it isn't easy to juggle between domestic compulsions and professional commitments but they have created a well-knit support system among themselves and in their families to deal with rough patches of their lives.

Women bond on the anvil of authentic bonds which help them to create more serotonin – a neurotransmitter that helps combat depression and create a general feeling of well-being.

They indulge in uplifting their spirits without any guilt, rather fearlessly with fun and felicity.

As I left the park on one particular day, I found women telling one

another to celebrate Cheat Day to soothe their taste buds. On wings of affinity and affluence today's women fly high and sky is the limit for them.

Women like Maya Angelou have been their role models, who said, "A wise woman refuses to be anyone's victim".

How can a new age woman ever let this happen to her?

Women listen to their mood swings and pamper themselves. Society has gently learnt to respect the emotional well being of women.

How listening to the conversation of women in the park, interacting with colleagues in the college and finding my domestic help articulating her likes and dislikes so candidly, without any inhibition infused me with peace and positivity.

Tears of joy welled up in my eyes. The women voicing their choices and with gleeful gait and ringing laughter has been an enlivening and enlightening experience for me.

Well, modern women are inherently happy human beings who

have shed obsolete dogmas and take pride in running homes and have ability to solve problems effortlessly.

Dandelions Umbrellas have sprung up in spaces forbidden and denied.

Blossomed into golden hues flooding the world with 'Dens Lionis' - lion's pride.

A withering weed no more, dandelions stand tall.

Women of today are no more Shrimatiji but assert their individuality and define their roles on their own, live life on their terms. Salute to their dexterous diligence, the world stands at their beck and call! Kudos to the women who broke the mould, set upon them since the beginning of civilization, stood up for what they wished to be, did what they felt right, for in them lies the salvation of future feminine power.

Let women be imperfectly perfect with her flaws and foibles, let her be the architect of her destiny, because she is the one on whose shoulders rests the humanity. **We**



Fake Flirting

My husband and I used to work at the same office. It was his old habit to flirt with almost every girl in the office, including me. At first, I did not play into his charms but he promised me that he would discontinue his habits. And after our marriage, I expected him not to do this as it was embarrassing for me. But after our marriage, we got into small arguments over the same topic.

One day, a girl came into my cabin and told me that my husband was flirting with her, and she was not comfortable with that. She

requested that I talk to my husband about the same. After going back home we had an argument regarding the same. He said that he was just being friendly but I had known him for years now. In a few more minutes, our argument was a full blown fight, and it got even more intense when he pushed me towards the table.

I stumbled and I cut my forehead on the table, and my husband had to take me to the doctor. In the hospital room, he apologized and promised me that he would not repeat it again and would never hurt me. After a week, I saw him flirting with a girl

again, and then I knew that I had to do something about it. I told my friend about all this and asked him for his help. We planned to fake some flirting in front of my husband to show him how it felt.

I started flirting with my friend right in front of my husband, and then he went to my husband, saying that he felt uncomfortable around me.

After two days, my husband came to me like a burning ball of fire and started shouting at me. He said, "You should have some manners. This is not how you should behave." that hypocrite.

After he was done shouting, I told him that it was my entire plan to show him what I had to go through all this time. After knowing all the truth, he felt really embarrassed and eventually tried to control his habit of flirting.

After that incident, the only girl in the office he ever flirted with was me.

– Kavita

Beauty Queries



Q & A

MY HEIGHT IS 4' 11". SHORT height is a hereditary characteristic of our family. I feel embarrassed when people pass snide remarks about my height. I am also bulky at the waist and abdomen. I want to look tall and slim.

There are scores of people who are even shorter than you. You can look taller if you wear clothes in pastel shades or with vertical designs. A hairstyle can also add inches if you have short hair or a style up to jaw level. Avoid curls and waves. Keep it plain and smooth. I am afraid you have to shed extra fat yourself, for reducing the fat, there is no other way except regular exercise and a low-calorie diet. It is not so much the

height, but the extra weight which is making you look shorter. What you need is a balanced figure.

MY HAIR IS GETTING THIN, GREY and short in length. I use herbal henna to dye my hair and apply oil the night before I wash my hair. I am 22 years old and completely fed up with my problem.

You need a well-balanced diet to keep your hair in good health. Eat lots of fruits, salads and vegetables. The length of the hair depends on the nutritious diet and hereditary factors in the same way premature greying of hair is either hereditary or due to some health problem and lack of nutritious diet.

Massage your scalp with bringraj oil half an hour before you shampoo your hair. Use a sulphate, paraben and silicone-free shampoo. Continue dyeing with henna if it suits you.

WHAT IS A FACE PACK? IS IT available in cream form or as a lotion? I have a scratch mark on my forehead. Can I use a face pack? My nose has some black spots which make it look darker than the rest of my face.

A face pack is available in cream, gel or powder form. The pack is specially formulated to suit different types of skin such as dry, oily and normal. The scratch mark can be treated with a whitening cream of a good brand available in the market.

The black spots you have mentioned seem to be blackheads on your nose. To remove them, steam your face for five minutes. Wash with soap and water and try to clean the dots with a piece of cotton wool dipped in the skin tonic. Use cleansing grains and a face pack meant for oily

skin once a week. Do not rub or pinch the skin. This will inflame the delicate skin over your nose.

IHAVE VERY LIGHT EYEBROWS. I would like to have them very thick. I would also like to have long and lustrous eyelashes. Presently I am applying castor oil daily to my brows, but there is no improvement.

While olive oil, castor oil and Vaseline might be the cheaper options, nothing beats a great eyebrow serum that's specifically formulated to help stimulate brow growth. You can use products that include ingredients like keratin and soy proteins known to promote healthy hair growth.

Make it a part of your nightly skin routine, applying it before bed so it works its magic while you sleep. Serums aren't the only products that can help your eyebrows grow thicker; Add walnuts, mangoes, dark leafy greens and sweet potatoes to your daily diet to help with hydration and blood circulation – both big factors in hair growth.

WHAT IS RETINOL WHICH MANY beauty products contain? Why is it very important for the skin? I am a 45-year-old woman and my beautician recommends retinol-based facial creams for me. Are these good?

Retinol is very good at treating sun damage on the skin, fine lines, discolouration and other such signs of ageing. It also shrinks large pores, stimulates the production of collagen and blood circulation, and relieves acne. It is almost like a magic formula for rejuvenating tired skin.

Retinol is added to many creams and lotions in the cosmetic field. It is simply a weaker version of tretinoin—vitamin A. Yes, it can be beneficial for you, especially at your age when distressing signs of degeneration make their appearance. Apply the cream twice a week on the face, neck and upper chest and you may see gratifying results within a couple of weeks.



GUSTATORY Celebrations

Scrumptious regional cuisines of India. By Kavita Nagpal

RASGULLA MACAPUNO

INGREDIENTS

Rasgulla -15 pieces
Fresh coconut water- 1 glass
Macapuno (coconut meat) -1 cup
Saffron (soaked in milk) -½ tsp
Pistachios (crushed) - 4 tsp
Full cream milk - 2 cups

METHOD

Prepare the macapuno. Grate the soft kernel of a young coconut into thick strips. Mix it with white sugar and a small amount of water. Simmer in a pan for a while until it turns into sweet syrup without dissolving the kernel strips completely. Pour the rasgullas in a deep glass bowl.

Rasgulla Macapuno

Add fresh coconut water, milk, macapuno and soaked saffron. Refrigerate and serve chilled. Garnish with pistachios just before serving.

PAAN BLANCMANGE

INGREDIENTS

For the paan syrup

Fresh paan leaves (torn into pieces)- 3

Rose petal jam(gulkand) - 2 tbsp

Fennel seeds -1 tbsp

Water (divided) - ¾ cup

Green cardamom pods- 4

Sugar - ½ cup

Green food colour - 2 drops

Rose water - 1 tsp

Lemon juice - 1 tsp

For the paan syrup

Whole milk (divided) - 3 cups

Cornflour - ¼ cup

Paan syrup - 6
tbsp

To garnish

Whipped cream -
6 tbsp

Slivered pistachios -
2 tbsp

Dried rose petals - 2 tsp

METHOD

For the paan syrup

Soak the fennel seeds and cardamom pods in ¼ cup of water for an hour. Transfer to a blender,



add the paan leaves, rose petal jam and blend until smooth. In a heavy based saucepan, combine the sugar with the remaining ½ cup of water. Bring to a boil over medium-low heat. Add the paan mixture and the green food colour. Cook for 10-12 minutes, stirring frequently until the mixture thickens. Turn off the heat, stir in the rose water and lemon juice. Set the paan syrup aside to cool.

For the blancmange

Combine ½ cup milk with the cornflour and stir to dissolve. Pour the remaining milk into a heavy based saucepan and bring to a gentle simmer over medium-low heat. Stir the cornflour slurry once more and add to the warm milk. Using a wire whisk, stir the mixture continuously for 5-7 minutes or until the milk thickens to custard like consistency. Turn off the heat. Mix in 6 tbsp of the prepared paan syrup and whisk well to combine. Pour the blancmange mixture into 6 dessert bowls and cool to room temperature. Then cover with a foil and refrigerate to set (at least 4-6 hours). Serve the chilled paan blancmange garnished with a

Paan Blancmange

dollop of whipped cream, some slivered pistachios and dried rose petals.

MALPUA WITH PISTACHIO CREAM

INGREDIENTS

For the malpua

Flour - 1 cup
 Khoya - ½ cup
 Sugar - 3 tbsp
 Cardamom - ½ tsp

Baking powder - ¼ tsp

Water - 1 ½ cup

Ghee (to pan fry malpua) 2 tbsp

For pistachio cream filling

Pistachios - ½ cup

Khoya (not very thick) - 1/3 tbsp

White sugar - 2 tbsp

For the sugar syrup

Sugar - ½ cup

Water - 3 tbsp

Drops of rose essence

Saffron

Pinch of cardamom

Lemon juice (to stop crystallization) - ¼ tsp

Some almonds or pistachios to garnish

METHOD

For the sugar syrup

Take ½ cup sugar in a pan and add water. Let it come to a one string consistency. Take it out of the heat and add some rose essence, saffron, cardamom and lemon juice. Set aside.

To make the malpua

In a large mixing bowl, add the crushed khoya and mix well. Add the sugar, cardamom and mix well. Add the flour. Now add water little by little to make a smooth paste. The consistency of the batter should be of a pancake or a dosa. It should not be too thick or too



thin. Last add the baking powder and whip the batter for 2-3 minutes for a softer malpua. Take a shallow non-stick pan and add 2 tsp of ghee. Let it get hot, use a ladle to pour malpua. Let it cook on one side, you will see it browning, then flip it and cook for another minute. Let it cook in medium heat and take it out. Pinch the sides of the malpua and form a cone. Let it set for a few minutes. Then stuff the cream, drizzle some syrup over it.

For the pistachio cream

Grind the pistachios with sugar to a fine paste. Take it out and mix in soft khoya. It should not be runny. It should be of piping consistency. If the cream is too thick, add a tsp of milk. Make sure it holds its shape while piping. Serve warm.

Lotus Root In Yoghurt Sauce

LOTUS ROOT IN YOGHURT SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

Fresh lotus root (sliced 1/2" thick) - 397 gm
 Salt to taste
 Yoghurt - 3 cups
 Chickpea flour - 1/2 cup
 Ghee - 5 tbsp
 Garlic cloves (mashed into a paste) - 4
 Ginger (mashed into a paste) - 1"
 Red onion (minced) - 1/2
 Garam masala - 1 tsp
 Cumin seeds - 1/2 tsp
 Green cardamom - 3 pods
 Black cardamom - 2 pods
 Clove - 1 whole
 Cinnamon - 1 stick
 Dried mint - 1 tsp

METHOD

Boil the lotus root in a pot of salted water. Reduce heat to a minimum; cook until tender. Whisk yoghurt, chickpea flour and 1 1/2 cups water in a bowl. Add 3tbsp ghee to the pan. Melt over

medium high. Cook garlic, ginger and onion until golden. Add the yoghurt mixture; boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer until thickened, 8-10 minutes. Stir in lotus root, the garam masala and salt; cook 2 minutes. Melt the remaining ghee in a pan over medium heat. Cook cumin, cardamom, clove and cinnamon until aromatic for 1-2 minutes; stir into lotus mixture with mint.

CORN IN COCONUT CURRY

INGREDIENTS

Tender sweet corns (each cut into five roundels) - 2
 Coconut milk - 1 1/2 cup
 Cornflour - 4 tsp
 Oil - 2 tbsp
 Cinnamon - 2 sticks
 Cloves - 2
 Cardamoms - 2
 Lemon juice - 2 tsp
 Salt to taste
To be ground into a smooth paste
 Onions (sliced) - 1/2 cup

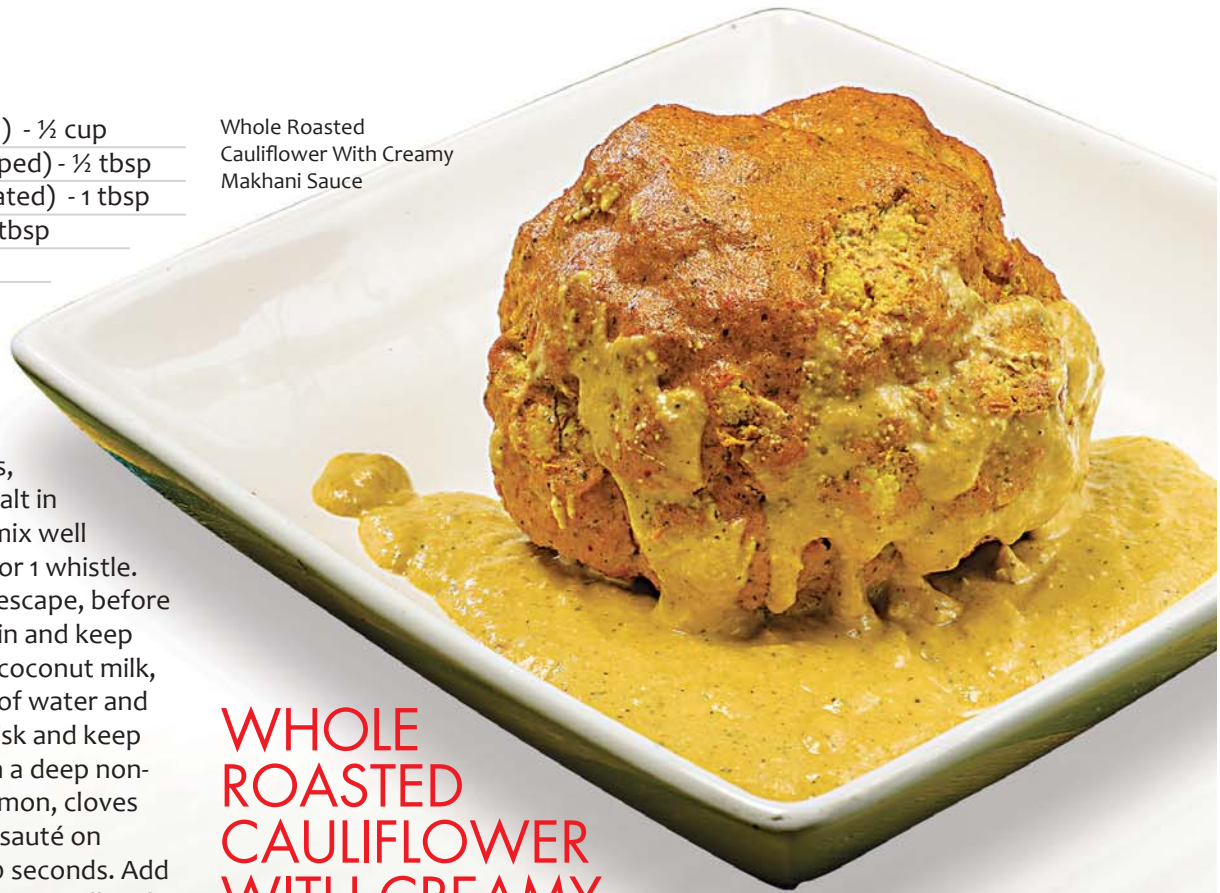


Coriander (chopped) - ½ cup
 Green chillies (chopped) - ½ tbsp
 Coconut (freshly grated) - 1 tbsp
 Garlic (chopped) - 1 tbsp
 Poppy seeds - 4 tsp
 Ginger (chopped)
 - 1 tsp

METHOD

Combine the sweet corn roundels, enough water and salt in a pressure cooker, mix well and pressure cook for 1 whistle. Allow the steam to escape, before opening the lid. Drain and keep aside. Combine the coconut milk, cornflour and 1 cup of water and mix well using a whisk and keep aside. Heat the oil in a deep non-stick pan; add cinnamon, cloves and cardamom and sauté on medium flame for 30 seconds. Add the prepared paste, mix well and cook on medium flame for 2 minutes while stirring continuously. Add the boiled corn roundels, coconut milk water mixture and little salt, mix well and cook on medium flame for 8 minutes while stirring occasionally. Serve hot!

Whole Roasted Cauliflower With Creamy Makhani Sauce



WHOLE ROASTED CAULIFLOWER WITH CREAMY MAKHANI SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

Cauliflower (head leaves and tough stem removed and washed) - 1
 Water (to blanch)

Salt - 2 tsp
 Turmeric - ½ tsp
 Chili powder - ½ tsp
For the sugar syrup
 Oil - 2 tsp
 Medium red onion (chopped) - ½
 Ginger (chopped) - 1 inch
 Garlic (chopped) - 5-6 cloves
 Dry red chili - 1 (or chili flakes to taste)
 Medium tomatoes (chopped) - 3
 Garam masala - 1 tsp
 Cumin powder - ½ tsp
 Coriander powder - ½ tsp
 Turmeric powder - ½ tsp
 Dried fenugreek leaves (kasuri methi) - 1 tbsp
 Coconut milk - ¾ cup (169.5 ml)
 Ground cashew - ¼ cup (59.15 g) (or 1/3 cup soaked cashews)
 Salt - ¾ tsp
 Raw sugar - ¼ tsp (or 1/2 teaspoon maple syrup)

METHOD

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Use enough water so all of the cauliflower can be immersed in

Corn In Coconut Curry



it. Add salt, turmeric and chili and blanch/cook the whole cauliflower. Cover and cook for 4 minutes on each side (top and bottom, Flip after 4 minutes).

Sauce: In a pan, add oil and heat over medium heat. Add chopped onion and sauté until golden, 6-7 minutes. Add ginger, garlic chili and sauté for another 2 minutes. Add the spices and mix. Add tomatoes, salt, sugar, fenugreek leaves, mix and cook covered until tender. Mash the larger pieces. 8-10 minutes. Cool slightly, and then blend with coconut milk and cashews into a smooth thick puree. Taste and adjust salt and spice.

Bake: Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F / 200°C. Oil the baking dish if desired. Place the blanched cauliflower in a baking dish. Slowly drop the puree on top to cover the entire head of the cauliflower. Some sauce will fall on the side. Keep about a 1/3 of the sauce to serve on the side later. Bake in pre-heated 400 degrees F / 200°C for 40-45 minutes till the cauliflower is dry to touch and sauce thickens a

bit. Turn the dish around after 30 minutes. Heat the remaining sauce to just about a boil so it thickens and serve on the side. Serve hot with flat breads (Naan/Roti), or salads or quinoa. Chop and fill up wraps.

STUFFED CHICKPEA FLOUR DUMPLING CURRY

INGREDIENTS

For the Dumplings

Chickpea Flour (Besan) - 1 cup
 Baking Soda - ½ tsp
 Fresh Ginger (chopped) - 1 ½ tbsp
 Coriander (chopped) - ½ tbsp
 Yogurt - 2 ½ tbsp
 Ghee - 2 tbsp
 Water Oil (for frying) - 2-3 tbsp
 Salt (For the Stuffing) - ½ tsp
 Grated Paneer - 1/3 cup
 Green Chilli (Finely chopped) - 1
 Ginger (Finely Chopped) - ½ tbsp

For the Gravy

Whisked Yoghurt - 1 cup
 Coriander Powder - 2 ½ tsp
 Red Chili Powder - 1 tsp
 Garam Masala - 1 tsp
 Turmeric Powder - ½ tsp
 Ghee - 1 tsp
 Cumin Seeds - ½ tsp
 Fenugreek Seeds - ½ tsp
 A generous pinch of Asafoetida
 Coriander to garnish
 Salt - 1 tsp
 Water - 1 cup

METHOD

Dumpling preparation

Sift the chickpea flour, baking soda and salt into a bowl. Add the ginger, coriander, yoghurt and ghee. Add 1 tbsp of water at a time and knead the ingredients to make firm pliable dough. Divide this into equal portions. In a separate bowl, mix paneer, chilly and ginger.

Meanwhile, heat the oil for frying the dumplings.

Now flatten the chickpea flour balls and press them. Fold and shape the ball into croquette/elongated oval shaped dumplings.

Deep fry these dumplings until they turn light golden. Remove them from the oil and keep them on paper towels to drain the excess fat.

Gravy preparation

Add the dry spice mix to the whisked yoghurt along with salt, asafoetida and mix well.

Heat a pot or pan and add the ghee. When the ghee is hot, add the cumin seeds and fenugreek seeds. Let it fry for a minute and reduce the heat and add the yoghurt mix. Add the turmeric and 1 cup of water and cook over medium flame for 4-5 minutes.

Now slowly add the fried dumplings. Cover and let it simmer for 10 minutes. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.

Stuffed Chickpea Flour Dumpling Curry



SPINACH, CORIANDER AND CURRY LEAVES DOSA

INGREDIENTS

Spinach or Amaranth leaves (chopped) - 1 cup
 Coriander leaves (chopped) - ½ cup
 Curry leaves (chopped) - ¼ cup
 Ginger (chopped) - ½ Piece
 Green chillies (chopped) (more to taste) - 2
 Dosa batter - 2 cups
 Cumin seeds - 1 tsp
 Asafoetida (Hing) - ½ tsp
 Salt To taste
 Oil as required

METHOD

In a blender combine together spinach, coriander leaves, curry leaves, ginger, green chillies and 1 cup dosa batter. Grind to form a smooth paste. Transfer this to a bowl, add cumin seeds, asafoetida, remaining dosa batter

Spinach, Coriander And Curry Leaves Dosa

and salt to taste. Mix well until combined. Heat a tawa/dosa pan. Lightly brush it with oil. Spread a ladle full of batter on the tawa to form a thin and large circle.

When the top looks dry, brush it with oil or ghee. Cook until it turns golden and crisp. Serve hot with chutney.



YAM KOFTA CURRY

INGREDIENTS

For the kofta

Yam (sweet potato) - 2 cups (washed, peeled and diced)
 Gram flour (besan) - ¼ cup
 Green chilli (finely chopped) - 1
 Salt as per your taste
 Ginger (finely chopped) - 1 inch

For Curry

Tomatoes (finely chopped) - 3
 Ginger (finely chopped) - 1 inch
 Green Chilli (finely chopped) - 1
 Mint Leaves (Pudina) - ¼ cup
 Salt to taste
 Garam masala powder - 1 tsp
 Cumin powder (Cumin) - 2 tsp
 Sugar - 1 pinch

Yam Kofta Curry

METHOD

To begin making the Yam Kofta Curry Recipe, prepare all the ingredients for the kofta and keep them aside. We will begin with making the curry for the Yam kofta.

Curry Base for Yam Kofta

In a mixer jar, combine tomatoes, ginger, green chilli, and



mint leaves and grind to a fine puree along with some water. Heat a kadai on medium flame, add cumin. Once the cumin seeds start crackling, add tomato puree and stir the tomato puree for a couple of minutes. To this, add the dry masalas - cumin powder, garam masala powder, salt and a pinch of sugar.

Bring the tomato puree masala to a boil, turn the heat to low and simmer the tomato kofta curry for 4 to 5 minutes until the raw taste goes away and feels cooked. Once the tomato kofta curry is cooked, turn off the heat and keep aside. Check the salt and spices and adjust to taste. The gravy of the Yam Kofta Curry recipe is ready.

For the Yam Kofta

Wash, peel and dice the yam/ sweet potato, and set aside. In a pressure cooker, place the diced yam, 1/4 cup of water and pressure cook for 4 whistles and turn off the heat. Let the pressure release naturally. Open the pressure cooker, drain the water, and transfer the yam/ sweet potato into a mixing bowl and mash the yam

to a smooth mixture using a potato masher.

Into the mashed yam, add the besan, green chilli, ginger and salt. Bring the yam kofta mixture together. Check the salt and adjust the taste accordingly. Shape the kofta mixture into small balls. Place a pan on heat. Add a little oil in each of the cavities.

Once the oil has heated, place the yam kofta into the cavities and pan fry them until it is golden and crisp on all sides. Flip it upside down and continue to cook until done. Once the yam koftas turn golden brown and look crisp they are done. The koftas are ready.

Add these Yam koftas in to the prepared kofta curry and let them sit for at least 5 minutes before serving.

BADAMI PANEEER CURRY

INGREDIENTS

Paneer (cubed and pan fried) - 250 Gms
Ghee/oil - 1 tbsp

Pinch of asafoetida
Garlic (minced) - 1 tbsp
Ginger (grated) - 1 tsp
Onion (chopped, big chunks) - ½ cup
Bell peppers (chopped, big chunks) - ½ cup
Canned tomato sauce (not ketchup) - ¾ cup
Almond flour - 1.5 tbsp
Red chilli powder - 1 tsp
Garam masala - 1 ½ tsp
Coriander powder - 1 tsp
Turmeric - ¼ tsp
Ground cumin - ¼ tsp
Heavy cream - 4 tbsp
Milk - ¾ cup
Water - ½ cup (or more to adjust consistency)
Cardamom powder - ¼ tsp
Sugar or honey - ½ tsp
Crushed kasoori methi - 1 tsp
Salt to taste

METHOD

For gravy

In a wide pan, heat up ghee. Once hot add in the ginger and garlic and sauté for 30 seconds. Add in onion and bell pepper chunks and sauté for 1 minute.

Add in tomato sauce and almond flour and stir continuously for 1 minute for almond flour to cook. Add in water and stir once. Lower the heat to low setting. Cover the pan with a lid and let it simmer for 5 minutes. Open the lid and add the spices and salt to taste.

Cook for two minutes. Slowly pour in the cream, 1 tbsp at a time and keep stirring the gravy. Add milk slowly at room temperature while stirring the gravy to avoid any curdling or splattering. Cook covered for 2 minutes. Now add in cardamom, sugar and kasoori methi. Give a taste test and add paneer. Let it cook for 3-4 minutes covered on low heat. Garnish with sliced almonds.

We

Badami Paneer Curry





BROWN AND PROUD

Skincare that truly cares for all shades of brown skin.

Skincare brands have traditionally looked at brown skin - always as a problem that needs to be treated and transformed into a lighter shade, ignoring its natural beauty and need for care. Brwn pro-melanin care is a revolutionary new brand that says that it is time to appreciate, cherish and nurture all shades of brown skin, light or dusky. Which is why the brand is getting so much love across the country. And the products seem so perfect because they take extra care of the specific needs of brown skin such as uneven skin tone, hyperpigmentation, optimum hydration. Brwn is beautiful!

We spoke to real women to check what they had to say!

“Being a makeup expert, I have come across tons of moisturisers, bb and cc creams. This is absolutely perfect for that no makeup, makeup look.” - Saima

“For an Indie brand, I love this initiative SO MUCH. I love the texture and how my skin feels in it. And I love how it makes me feel as a person.”- Liji Johnson

“Being a brown girl myself, I am so happy to see brands coming up with such amazing products. Lots of love” - Arpana

“I am a doctor- that’s why I am loving this product.” - Dr. Rashmi Dansena

Tinted Moisturiser

Revolutionary pro-melanin care formula with the right balance of vitamins, prebiotics and natural ingredients that gives an even tone, moisturises, blocks up to 97% UV rays and tackles hyper pigmentation.

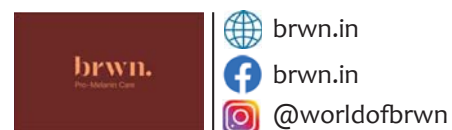


Lip Crayon

Travel friendly retractable lip crayons that are Crème matte, long wear and PETA certified. Colours include browns, purples and look oh-so-amazing on all shades of brown skin.

Serum

This milky white emulsion-based serum enhances skin texture and health, and makes it radiant with health and vitality. Contains kakadu plum (richest known natural source for vitamin C).



New Launches

RAS

RAS, India's first Farm to Face luxury skin care brand has introduced its line of Bath Essentials. Cruelty-free and vegan, the three different ranges Brighten, Nourish & Refresh include body washes, body scrubs and body lotions that are meticulously designed to give a spa-like experience at home. The range includes a dream ingredient list including actives like AHAs, lactic acid, glycolic acid, salicylic acid and natural goodness of Aloe Vera, sandalwood, grape seed oil, willow bark, calendula and more, that gives you radiant and glowing skin while also strengthening the skin barrier. MRP - Rs. 4780/-
Website: rasluxuryoil.com **Instagram:** @rasluxuryoils



CHOKHAT

Chokhat is a Home Decor brand with a vision to provide products at an affordable price to everyone. The company designs products that are both aesthetically beautiful and functional, with a premium feel. The brand understands what the middle-class segment expects in terms of affordable quality and style. They are committed to the motto of being an affordable brand at all times and deliver the best products to their customers every day!

Website: chokhat.in **Instagram:** @chokhat.in

CHOKHAT

COCO SOUL

Coco Soul, is a food and personal care brand by Marico. At the heart of Coco Soul lies the Goodness of a not-so-secret ingredient – Coconut and the Magic of Ayurveda. The product range includes 100% Cold Pressed Virgin Coconut Oil (Coco Soul Foods), a range of Hair, Skin, Body and Baby Care products. Formulated to be gentle, safe, non-toxic and sulphate, paraben and cruelty free.

Website: mycocosoul.com **Instagram:** @mycocosoul



COCO SOUL
 100% VEGAN & CRUELTY FREE



SKINTIFIC

The homegrown brand SKINTIFIC offers products ranging from soaps to diffusers and candles. Skintific soaps come in merlot, shea butter and charcoal flavours with a soothing fragrance. Another product you should not miss is the Skintific Reed diffuser. Soya wax candles, available in lavender and coffee fragrance, the candles are non-toxic and cleaner-burning. Minoxidil 5% hair growth serum is a serum designed to stimulate hair growth and slow balding.
Instagram: @skintific_

GIOIA

Gioia, is an Italian luxury leather goods brand. Every collection they create aims to couple ethically sourced, high-quality materials with impeccable craftsmanship and working conditions. They use leather as their core material given its durability and biodegradability. Their team of technicians have sourced the leather from the Leather Working Group certified tanneries and examined them using the rigorous BLC Leather Technology standards. This ensures that the materials aren't just of high quality, but also that the leather used is a by product of other industries.

Website: www.gioia.in **Instagram:** @gioia.in



HANDS OF GOLD

Hands of gold is home to a universe of products that exude culture and craftsmanship from Kashmir. The products include one of the rarest gourmet honeys, the premix kahwa which allows you to enjoy Kashmir in every sip, the exotic paper mache, cold pressed oils, and woollen stoles and shawls. These products are organically sourced and are 100% handmade. All these handmade products are offered with the aim to contribute to the local craft as much as it is an attempt to uplift the artisans of the valley.

Website: www.handsofgold.in **Instagram:** @handsofgoldkashmir

PURESENSE

PureSense is a personal care brand that offers a range of Skincare, Mood Elevating Fragrances, Bath and Body products. Indulge in pure treats that help you soothe, relax, and unwind. Keeping this in mind, PureSense products are carefully crafted to look, feel & smell amazing, uplifting your mood with every use. The portfolio has ~70 SKUs across various categories. PureSense products have no parabens, no sulphates, no carcinogens, are 100% cruelty-free. Available on Amazon, Flipkart, Nykaa, Myntra, and Swiggy.

Website: www.puresense.co.in

Instagram: @puresenseworld



DENNISON

Founder Ashwini Seth and Co-founder Sonalika Seth of Dennison came up with a thought for fashion-centric people. Dennison has a collection for office and college goers, women and men both. For women Dennison has launched dresses, formals and casual shirts. In the men collection, the brand has azo free dye block print, bargu prints; tie n dye prints in shirts and kurta to look smart, notable in office or college.

Website: www.dennison.in

Instagram: @dennisonfashionindia

Eternal Elegance

House of innovation and fusion by Arpita & Sulakshana

Arpita Sulakshana as a flagship store is nestled in the streets of Kapil Vihar, Pitampura in Delhi. Arpita Sulakshana couture specialises in women's Indian wear with signature western twists and outlooks which include – but are not limited to – unconventional lehengas, cape sets, suits and dresses. They aim at preserving the Indian heritage but with a modern lens and outlook which exude elegance and grace with a dash of boldness and pride.



The Modern Baraat Hand painted Lehenga made with raw silk and leather embroidered kali's. Paired with an embroidered net dupatta.

Raw silk lehenga in hand painting with mirror work embroidery. Comes with a power sleeve concept and scalloped border.



Embroidered lehenga set in Raw silk fabric, paired with a shimmer net and scalloped dupatta.



Hand painted lehenga in canary colour. Made with Pure silk fabric, paired with a mesh embroidered dupatta.



Designer Arpita Khullar & Sulakshana Kukreja wearing their own collection.



Priceless Ornaments

Made For Her

Mrs. Shweta Bansal has chronicled her journey from Mathura to Mumbai and designing of Jewellery has always been her passion. Her journey started fifteen years ago when she started designing for her friends but very soon her work didn't go unnoticed and today she is owner of successful company called Made For Her. She understands her client's taste and customises designer jewellery to match their requirement. From luxury, and exquisite to elongated moissanite on silver base cushion cuts, she has an alluring range of unique designs to choose from. To add a feather to her achievements she was also a finalist in Glad Rags Mrs. India.

Earrings with detachable cushion-shaped emerald framed by drop and marquise-shaped moissanite .



Shweta Bansal Jewellery Designer.



Ruby and Diamond Necklace .The necklace of cluster design, set with oval-shaped and cushion-cut rubies, highlighted by round diamonds.

A scintillating diamond kada to adorn the queen inside you.



One of a kind bracelet made in diamonds and pearls that have been laser cut specifically for this design and channel set beautifully into it.



...Crafting Dreams With Precision



creativebansaldesigns@gmail.com



@shwetabansal_official

Odhni: A luxury designer label that harmoniously blends traditional and modern designs

With an objective to beautify women with Indian ethnic wear and to make them feel like a belle of the ball, Odhni was started by Mrs. Anju Jain and Mrs. Shashi Jain in September 1999, later, they were followed by their sons, Puneet Jain and Yatin Jain. Their collection consists of textured heavy bridal lehengas embellished with resham, zardozi, sequins, crystal work having beautiful stones, sequins, beads, zari, and Kutdana. Their collection diverges into western, Indo-Western and exclusive premium bridal lehengas as offered by wnw brand, thereby providing a memorable shopping experience to both online and offline buyers.

A time-honoured red and mustard coloured lehenga, hand embroidered with floral and geometrical motifs, paired with a net and velvet patch dupatta.



A contemporary cherry red Kutdana and beadwork western lehenga, perfect for reception or sangeet.



Tradition floral motifs in an olive green lehenga, paired with a floral red net dupatta.



A traditional silk and velvet bridal lehenga with mughal motifs, paired with a sunrise orange and red scalloped organza dupatta.

Affluent Trends

Indian soul with a global appeal by Sonia Jetleey

Sonia Jetleey, as a designer is known to strike a balance of the international trends with Indian sensibilities. She has dressed the most successful women in different walks of life. Her ready-to-wear fall winter collection called 'Sukun' showcases her journey with the weaves and crafts of India. The garments are artistically created with ajrakh block print from Kutch, Gujarat and Chanderi weave fused with digital printing to create wearable art. Owning a 'Sonia Jetleey' is like owning a piece of poetry.



Hanky style Shirt dress in very peri shade of purple.



Chanderi cowl sapphire blue dress with digital print.



Hanky style long tunic with divine pants in Marigold colour.



Ajrakh Block Printed Tunic with textured yoke and cuffs in Black colour. Ajrakh Block Printed Slim pants in Black colour.



Chanderi wrap around dress in olive green.



Designer Sonia Jetleey.



Traditional Indian Handloom

Weaving a way into your merry-making.


Weaver Story has always marvelled the world with its traditional crafts collections and contemporary, distinct hand-woven fabrics. Their perpetual effort to pamper you with the original handcrafted fabrics that come straight from the looms of weavers sets them apart. Weaver Story celebrates Indianness. The exquisiteness and intricacies of their original handloom collection in sarees, lehengas, dupattas, blouses, and pashmina shawls are an essence of those.

Sheer Chandaris:
Indulge in our exquisite collection of intricate hand-woven Chanderi sarees. Distinguished by its unique Buttas or motifs and the alluringly transparent and delicate sheer texture, Chanderi has entranced and enraptured from royalty to the common man for centuries.



Shikargarh Banarasi Sarees:
Immerse in the luxury of the finest weaves & craftsmanship in the Shikargarhs from Banaras. Intricately woven into the delicate silk yarns are the celebrated Forest Figures woven to perfection by the master artisans.





Wedding Lehengas: Each lehenga has been thoughtfully created with myriad hues to suit the grand occasion. The ensembles have been put together with fine hand-woven textile from Banaras with ornate zardozi embroideries from Farrukhabad.

GenZ Ways of Investment

Easy access to online financial tools.

By Our Correspondent



Younger generation is always associated with more action, high risk appetite and new trends. It could be fashion, it could be related to travel, enjoying food or even related to finance. With social media, we have seen the world coming closer. While some people use social media for connecting with old friends, communicating with relatives, others use it to find what the latest trends are.

The Younger generation adapts quickly and youngsters aren't shy of trying new things. This has led to strong growth for online investing and crypto-currencies. While governments and finance experts across the world are finding ways to regulate crypto-currencies, the segment is fast evolving. There are new concepts like Distributed Finance (DeFi), non-fungible token (NFTs) and Metaverse that youngsters are embracing quickly.

GenZ and Money Management

Gen Z is the most diverse generation in history, and they are growing up in a world that is increasingly digitised and interconnected. This has led to a number of changes in their approach to money management. It is also the most fintech-savvy generation, and they are comfortable using a wide range of financial technology products and services. They have a clear understanding of what they want to achieve with their money. This has led to a more strategic and long-term approach to investing.

Gen Z is a tech-savvy early investing generation that will only

continue to make up a larger and larger portion of investors and consumers in the following years. This is a new generation of investors that are quickly changing the landscape of finance. They are more likely than any other generation to invest in companies with a positive environmental impact.

Gen Z angels and other retail investors are already having a major impact on the world of finance, and this is only the beginning. Their capital investments will create support for industries such as renewable energy, sustainable fashion, and plant-based food. In addition, their commitment to social and environmental causes will pressure publicly traded companies to adopt more sustainable practices.

A new generation of impact investors will become the majority of the investment world shortly. By understanding the motivations and trends of Gen Z, we can have an idea of shaping the future of finance.

It is important to conduct due diligence before making any investment decision. While the internet offers ease of use, there is also a risk of falling prey to online scams. All these can be avoided by carefully checking the websites, following basic security protocols and by not sharing sensitive information on insecure networks. Business firms have projected a strong future for online commerce and financial markets. With more people joining these networks, things are only going to improve. **We**

New

Launches



THREE SIXTY COLLECTIONS

Duffel Bag: Handcrafted from genuine leather, it features a waxy finish, a checked fabric lining, and an antique sooty appearance. It is priced at Rs 12,665.

Sling Bag: Its stylish design and genuine leather construction will make it last for years and the detachable strap makes it easy to carry.

Website: threesixty.life **Instagram:** [@threesixty.leather](https://www.instagram.com/threesixty.leather)

Story Of NEW MOM

How I came through the trauma of an induced illness.

By Plavita Kaushik Gandhi

On 18 December 2021, exactly on the 18th day of my postpartum after delivering our happy and healthy baby boy, my life changed forever. For good or bad let us not judge but now I am ready to welcome a new life that is full of gratitude and is even better than the one I grieved.

Here, I would like to share my story of this most horrific turning point in my life. After the delivery, my body had just started the healing process. As a new mom, I was still struggling to cope up with my changed body and my newborn's needs. In those days, COVID was on its peak. During the whole pregnancy, my gynecologist kept telling me to get vaccinated but my husband and I decided to wait till the delivery and instead we took all required precautions. Thankfully, my pregnancy went all well without getting myself infected by the virus.

However, after the delivery when my gynac and other doctors in the hospital insisted me to go for the vaccine, I went for Covaxin on 17 December 2021. The next morning, when I woke up and saw myself in the bathroom mirror, I saw, my eyes little droopy.

However, I did not take that seriously. Then while having my morning cup of coffee, I felt some coffee spilling out through the corner of my lips. Still I did not take it seriously. Later in the day, my husband and my mother-in-law both noticed my droopy eye. They said it might be the side effects of the vaccine. I too felt it might be a side effect and will be gone within 24 hrs. But, they both insisted me to visit the doctor. I called my gynac and she referred me to a neurologist.



So finally, I took an appointment and visited the neurologist. He asked me to close my eyes and I was just able to close the half of my left eyelid. He asked to blow my cheeks and again I was not able to fill air in my left cheek.

He then sent me to an ENT specialist to get my ears checked. The specialist ran some tests and said that my ears were doing completely fine. I went back to my neurologist. He diagnosed it as Bell's palsy.

My husband and I never heard of such a condition. He explained to us that it's a condition where the nerve (cranial nerve 7) that controls the facial muscles gets swollen or compressed because of some viral infection.

It causes weakness or paralysis of one side or sometimes both sides of the face. It is mostly temporary and cures on its own mostly within a month. The exact reason of Bell's palsy is unknown yet; so there is no particular treatment to it as such.

In my case, vaccination might be the reason but might not be as well. As there are not many such case studies so, it cannot be ruled that vaccination did this. Moreover, we understood he did not want to make a statement.

He also said he could clearly rule out it as Bell's palsy so did not suggest us for any MRI. He also mentioned that symptoms of Bell's palsy take 48 to 72 hours to reach its severity. This meant my condition had not reached its peak yet.

He then put me on steroids, pain meds and antivirals for two weeks. After two weeks if required, he asked us to visit a physiotherapist. I was concerned about taking the steroids as I was breastfeeding but he said it was safe. Honestly, my husband and I did not realise the severity of it till then.

Once coming back home, we Googled about it. Found out that it is a condition which is temporary but sometimes it can be permanent. Sometimes, it takes a month to cure and sometimes it may take years.

We went through lots of stories of people with such a condition who are battling with it for years. We also came across some stories where people fully recovered. We were trying to remain positive and maintain our calm.

But I lost my calm when I found the steroids I was taking might not be safe for the baby while breastfeeding. My husband and I were very keen to keep our baby exclusively on breastfeed for the first 6 months and not put the baby on formula milk.

Even our baby was getting used to breastfeed and was rejecting formula milk when tried. This made me worried and made me cry gallons. I was getting emotional, as I so much wanted to breastfeed.

WE WENT THROUGH LOTS OF STORIES OF PEOPLE WITH SUCH A CONDITION WHO ARE BATTLING WITH IT FOR YEARS. WE ALSO CAME ACROSS SOME STORIES WHERE PEOPLE FULLY RECOVERED. WE WERE TRYING TO REMAIN POSITIVE AND MAINTAIN OUR CALM.

Though my baby and I were still struggling and were new in our breastfeeding journey, I still did not want to give up. Finally, we consulted few more doctors and felt relieved when found out that, I could still breastfeed while on steroids.

Next morning, it happened that we did not expect to happen. I woke up with a crooked face. The left side of my face had fallen down – eyebrow fallen, eyelid fallen, lip fallen, frozen and immovable. By then we realised it was getting severe and reaching its peak.

I did not have guts to see myself in the mirror. I think deciding to avoid the mirror initially was quite wise of me. My mother-in-law could not stop her tears seeing me. My husband tried to stay calm in front of me but I knew he was broken. Both of them were unsure what to do next.

They kept asking me what I wanted. They wanted to comfort me so asked if I wanted to call my family who are staying in a different state or do I want to go to some other doctor or sleep for some time or maybe eat something I like.

But I was blank. I did not know what to say or do. I just knew I wanted some time to sink in what had happened, wanted some time to understand what Bell's palsy is, some time to cry my heart out and most importantly I wanted some time to prepare myself for this battle as I would sense by then that it's going to be a tough one.

My husband understood it.

He said, "Plavita, studies available on net say that 85 per cent people who develop Bell's palsy recover fully and I am sure you will come under these 85 per cent. I will do whatever is needed to get you fully recovered. Now, you have two choices. First, you physically isolate yourself from the people outside. Take your time to heal. Relax and take it easy. Focus on your recovery and the things you like. Second, give it a damn. Go out meet people. Live the life you were living before this happened and by doing all these you can still focus in your recovery. Whether you



choose the first or second, in both cases I know, you will recover fully. Whatever you choose I am with you and remember you are the most beautiful girl and I love you.”

Honestly, these words were so motivating. I know myself. I had to choose the first option because I am not a person who would give a damn about a crooked face. At least, when I know I have a chance to recover. God forbid if it was meant forever then, maybe, I would go for the second option. Here, I feel so blessed and grateful that I at least have options. I don't have to go out to earn my bread and my finances can be taken care of. I can completely feel for the ones who cannot have these choices.

But initially my mother-in-law couldn't understand this. She panicked and ended up sharing my condition with some people who actually were of no help but instead created an even more panic environment.

I remember some people visiting me for just formalities' sake and then never bothered to visit again or check on my health until now. However, soon my mother-in-law understood it and cooperated with me. She took so much care of me. She gave me so much love that I am so grateful for. She has been a support throughout. I am blessed to have her and her son in my life.

As my paralysis set in, I descended into a deep depression for almost

next two weeks, I used to look at my old pictures and be devastated. Looking into the mirror instantly turned into a horror.

A slanting face, a non-blinking static eye, a broken smile, a forehead that does not move with eyebrows, non-aligned jaws were enough to shatter confidence in me.

Thankfully, there was no physical pain except my static eye that was giving me trouble. It became dry and I had to use artificial teardrops every time. I had to tape my eye to shut whenever I slept. My mental health went for a toss. It made me panic when certain thoughts came to my mind like can I ever be able to live a normal life like before. Can I be able to pursue my career as being a designer I needed to interact with my clients? Will I be able to attend my son's school functions. Will my son be ashamed of my face?

These random thoughts and more kept coming to my mind. It was getting stressful day by day. I felt torn between my parental duties, my household duties and my effort to recover from my delivery wounds and these palsy wounds. All at the same time.

AS MY PARALYSIS SET IN, I DESCENDED INTO A DEEP DEPRESSION FOR ALMOST NEXT TWO WEEKS, I USED TO LOOK AT MY OLD PICTURES AND BE DEVASTATED. LOOKING INTO THE MIRROR INSTANTLY TURNED INTO A HORROR.

A Little Help

Moreover, I have a little OCD as well. I like everything organised and under my control. I had a very organised and disciplined house. Now, everything was a mess. As I was so occupied, my maid was taking over the house making it even messier. I had to deal with it, as I was dependent on her for help.

All this was making me claustrophobic. As a new mom I was very excited to experience sleepless nights, changing diapers, massaging the baby, singing lullaby and all. Though I had a maid for all these still I wanted to do it all myself. I was not ready to trust any soul when it came to my baby. But my healing body was not supporting it. I was exhausted all the time. This made me feel very sad and guilty. Soon, I realised it's okay to ask help. I asked my mother-in-law to stay for some time. She agreed and stayed back until I felt better and could take care of the baby's need single handedly. As I mentioned earlier, she is a sweetheart and has been a great support.

At the end of second week, some kind of awakening happened to me. I was looking into my baby's face and I realised only a happy mother can raise a happy child. I can't give up. I needed to fight back at least for my baby's sake. Every moment with my baby was special and it will not come back, so I could not let it go. I am the pillar of my little family. If I break, everything breaks and I cannot let that happen. And that was it. I woke up as a worrier.

I told my husband I was ready to fight back and I promised him to stay happy no matter what. This attitude of mine gave strength to my husband. He then did some research and made my treatment plan, which we followed thoroughly.

Here I want to mention, while trying to find out more about Bell's palsy and its treatment we realised that especially in India, people are still unaware of it. There are lots of misconceptions about it. Even resources for its treatment are less. We had tough time getting proper information about the treatment and



finding the right sources. Anyway, the following months were filled with every conceivable treatment that we thought could fix my face.

Physiotherapy; acupressure; acupuncture; Ayurveda; homeopathy; osteopathy; allopathy, auricular therapy we did everything. Though our treatment expenses reached lakhs, there was a satisfaction that each treatment helped me recover to some percentage. Honestly, going through all these treatments was not easy. There were disappointments as the recovery process everywhere is slow. One needs lots of patience. Whether it's getting electrically stimulated or punching needles into face or having those bitter Ayurveda medicines, nothing was easy.

Moreover, attending therapy sessions every day and going for doctor's appointments carrying a baby along was not easy either. My poor baby! I am so proud of him. He cooperated so well. Even my husband to, hats off to him.

He started managing his office from home so that he could accompany me to my therapies, helped me manage home, baby and our pet. He made me do my facial exercises; blow balloons, chewing gums always and helped massage my face. Nothing was possible without his support. Most importantly, he kept me motivated and feel beautiful always. He never made me feel uncomfortable; never forced me meeting people or going out. He always asked me to take my time and not stress about anything. Here I also have to mention about someone who having been my constant support and that's my pet dog; my daughter Miss Lollipop. Her unconditional love kept me going. Her hugs are most comforting, I must say. Also, my mother and sister kept calling me every now and then to check on my health and this was a support too. I felt good talking to them. They even visited me along with my brother and sis-in-law for few days. This made me feel so happy. As the months passed by, slowly and gradually I was recovering. By

sixth month, I had recovered 75 per cent. However, we still did not give up. We were still fighting back. We had hope. Though I was no longer crying over my palsy, I was still hibernating at home amongst my own people. I was almost living a normal life but only inside my home. I was having fun with my hubby, baby and my pet; eating, laughing and celebrating milestones of my baby. I made sure my baby did not miss anything. Whether it was his *mundun* (tonsuring) or his half birthday or his anaprasan, we celebrated all in our own little way. But now it was high time that my baby got used to going out and I didn't want to compromise on that. Here came face mask to my rescue. I wore mask and started taking him to parks and for strolls. I avoided known faces though.

SOME SAID IT WAS MY KARMA, SOME SAID I WAS PROUD OF MY FACE, SOME SAID WHY WAS I IN HURRY FOR THE VACCINATION AND SOME SAID I CHOSE THE WRONG HOSPITAL.

Sometimes, I use to feel bad about the fact that I had to stop some of my near and dear ones to visit my baby and me, as I was not comfortable to meet known faces yet. By this time, I got courage to share my mental health and my condition with few friends and relatives. Some showed genuine empathy, offered their ears, and also provided emotional support. Here especially I would like to mention my best friend who stays in Bangalore. She has been truly supportive. But unfortunately there were some people as well who kept judging me and kept passing on their comments.

Some said it was my karma, some said I was proud of my face, some said why was I in hurry for the vaccination and some said I chose the wrong hospital. I could clearly see some people finding a sadistic pleasure as I was in pain.

Recovery

Some did not even bother to call back and check on me. Some also asked me to accept my crooked face, as it would never be fixed. My answer to them is if it's my bad karma then it's my good karma that I am recovering. Yes, I am proud of my face because I am beautiful inside out. I took vaccination after consulting four reputed doctors. The hospital and the gynac we choose are the most expensive, reputed and experienced in town.

And I won't accept my crooked face because I am working hard for full recovery and am sure I will achieve it someday.

Anyway, by end of the year, I was about 92 per cent recovered. I started going to malls and parks without a mask. I even took a small trip to Vietnam to celebrate my baby's first birthday. It was my baby's first trip abroad and we had lots of fun.

We also clicked many family pics and made many lovely memories. Infact, my baby said his first word 'car' during the trip. Earlier, I was sad that I was not able to click many photographs and make videos with my baby because of my crooked face. But it's getting better now.

Today, it has been more than a year since I developed Bell's palsy. It is barely noticeable now though I feel it every damn moment. I have recovered 95 per cent till now and it is still in recovering stage. I am sure I will be better than this and have a full recovery soon. I am so grateful for this. Now, I know what it feels like to heal. I value my privileges. I value my health; my body more. I value everyone who stood by me throughout. I value my loved ones. Most importantly, I value my life.

This episode has been a great teacher. I have come out as a more confident, humbler and braver person. It has given me a purpose and again a new lease of life.

I would like to celebrate my healing with my loved ones who stayed through the course and to forge new connections and bonds even stronger than the ones I lost. **We**

The **AMBROSIAN** Spread

A novel way of cooking Indian cuisines. By Anita Lal

COCONUT MILK RICE AND TANDOORI CHICKEN

INGREDIENTS

For the tandoori chicken

Chicken - 500g
Yoghurt - 2tbsp
Salt to taste
Garam masala - ½ tsp
Red chilli powder - ½ tsp
Vinegar - 2 tbsp
Ginger-garlic paste - 1 tbsp

Black salt - ¼ tsp
Cashew powder - 1 tbsp
Oil - 10 ml
Chaat masala - ½ tsp

For the coconut milk rice

Soaked basmati rice - 1 cup
Ghee - 2-3tbsp
Cashews - 15
Bay leaf - 1
Cinnamon - 1
Green cardamoms (split) - 2
Cloves - 4
Cumin seeds - ½ tsp
Large onion (sliced) - 1
Whole green chillies (split) - 2
Ginger-garlic paste - 1 tsp

Salt to taste
Coconut milk - ½ cup
Water - 2½ cup

METHOD

For the tandoori chicken

Make long incisions in the chicken. Mix all ingredients together, except for the chicken, oil and chaat masala. Marinate the chicken in this mix and keep aside for a few hours, preferably overnight. Brush a pan with oil and heat. Place the chicken pieces in the pan. Do not add the extra marinade. Reduce the flame once you hear a sizzling noise. Cover and cook for 8-10 minutes.

Open the pan, drain off the liquid, reverse the chicken and continue cooking for another 8-10 minutes. If there is any extra liquid, remove again. Ensure there is no liquid in the pan. Cook till the chicken is done. Once done, skew the chicken, brush with oil and grill on an open flame for a grilled look and burnt smell. You can also do this step in a barbecue. Sprinkle chaat masala.

For the coconut milk rice

Heat the ghee in a pan. Add cashews and fry till golden. Remove the cashews from the pan and keep aside. In the same pan, to the same ghee,

Coconut Milk Rice And Tandoori Chicken



add bay leaf, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves and cumin seeds. Allow to splutter. Add onion slices and sauté till translucent and soft. Add ginger-garlic paste and stir. Add the split green chillies, fried cashews and salt, stir. Add the rice along with the coconut and water. Cook on high flame, give a good boil, then reduce the flame and cook till the rice is cooked. Sieve the rice to drain the extra liquid, if required. For an additional flavor you can add green peas and carrot, curry leaves or coriander, as per your choice before adding the rice. Top with tandoori chicken. Serve.

STIR-FRIED NEEM LEAVES AND BRINJAL

INGREDIENTS

Brinjal, (cubed) - 200g
 Neem leaves - 3 stalks
 Mustard oil - 1 tbsp
 Panchphoran - ½ tsp
 Turmeric powder - ½ tsp
 Salt to taste

Stir-Fried Neem Leaves And Brinjal



METHOD

Heat mustard oil in a pan. Add panchphoran and allow spluttering. Add brinjal, turmeric powder and salt. Allow to cook until firm in shape but soft in bite. In a separate pan, heat mustard oil and fry the neem leaves until crisp. Add the fried neem leaves to the brinjal, toss and serve. Should you find it too bitter for your palate, discard the neem leaves, the flavoured neem oil with brinjal will give a mild flavor in itself.

PANEER SHASHLIK

INGREDIENTS

Paneer - 250g
 Juice from a ½ lemon, or more depending on the size
 Salt to taste
 White pepper to taste
 Red bell pepper (cubed) - ½
 Yellow bell pepper (cubed) - ½
 Green bell pepper (cubed) - ½
 Red, firm tomato (cubed, seeds discarded) - 1
 Onion (cubed) - 1
 Ginger-garlic paste - 1 tbsp
 Besan (optional) - 1 tbsp
 Cream - 25 ml
 Yoghurt - 25 ml
 Tikka masala - 3 tsp
 Chaat masala (as required)
 Fresh coriander (as required)

Paneer Shashlik



METHOD

Marinate all ingredients together except oil, chaat masala and coriander leaves. Skew the paneer, bell pepper, onion and tomatoes. Repeat to fill the skewer. Brush the pan with oil and grill the skewered paneer till done. Grill on an open flame for a grilled look and burnt smell. You can also do this step in a barbecue. Sprinkle chaat masala and fresh coriander. Serve with mint chutney.



Crispy Cajun Potatoes

CRISPY CAJUN POTATOES

INGREDIENTS

Baby potatoes - 16-18
 Extra light olive oil - 2 tbsp
 Salt to taste
 Mayonnaise - 2 tbsp
 Cream - 2 tbsp
 Siracha seasoning - 1 tbsp
 Cajun seasoning - 2 tsp

METHOD

Pre-heat the oven at 230°C. Mix the baby potatoes, extra light olive oil and salt in a baking tray. Bake for 15 minutes, tossing the potatoes half-way through. Meanwhile mix mayonnaise, cream, Siracha, Cajun seasoning together. Pour in a piping bag.

When the potatoes are ready, smash them with a fork. Pipe or

drizzle the Cajun dressing on top and serve.

KASUNDI PANEER BHAPA

INGREDIENTS

Paneer (cubed) - 150g
 Kasundi - 2 tbsp
 Cream - 2 tbsp
 Salt to taste
 Green chilli - 1
 Garlic - 2 big cloves
 Raw mustard oil - 1 tsp

METHOD

Pound the garlic cloves and green chilli together. Add to kasundi, cream and mustard oil. Flavour with salt. Marinate the paneer for 10 minutes. Place in a closed tiffin box or a bowl covered

Kasundi Paneer Bhapa



with a tight foil. Steam the paneer for at least ten minutes. Serve topped with a slit green chilli.

KIDNEY BEANS AND QUINOA GALOUTI KEBAB

INGREDIENTS

Kidney beans/rajma (boiled and drained) - 300g
 Large potato (boiled, mashed) - 1
 Medium onion (finely chopped) - 1
 Quinoa (boiled and drained) - 30g



Kidney Beans And Quinoa Galouti Kebab

Ginger-garlic paste - 1 tbsp
 Green chilli (finely sliced) - 1
 Red chilli powder - ½ tsp
 Cumin powder - 1 tsp
 Garam masala - 1 tsp
 Salt to taste
 Fresh coriander (finely chopped) - 1 tbsp
 Oil to fry

METHOD

Mix all ingredients together. You may add another boiled potato if the dough doesn't come together. Divide mixture into equal balls and

flatten them lightly. Heat the oil in a pan and shallow fry the kebabs till crisp and golden brown. Serve with chutney of your choice.

AWADHI SULTANI DAL

INGREDIENTS

Yellow pigeon peas (arhar dal) - 1 cup
 Water - 2 cups
 Turmeric powder - ½ tsp
 Salt to taste
 Milk - 1 cup
 Cream - 2 tbsp
 Ghee - 3 tbsp
 Cumin seeds - 1 tsp
 Ginger- garlic paste - 1 tbsp
 Long green chilli (finely chopped) - 1
 Small onion (finely chopped) - 1
 Kitchen king - 1 tsp

For the tadka

Ghee - 1 tbsp
 Red chilli powder - 1 tsp
 Whole red chillies - 2

METHOD

Boil the yellow pigeon peas with water, salt and turmeric powder till well done. This may be done in a pressure cooker to save time. Add milk and cream to the dal and mix gently. In a separate pan, heat

Orissa Style Spiced Shrimps



Awadhi Sultani Dal

ghee, add cumin seeds and allow to splutter. Add onions and cook till light golden. Add green chillies and ginger-garlic paste.

Add kitchen king and give it a good stir. Add the dal to this and allow the flavours to develop. Meantime in a separate pan, prepare the tadka.

Heat ghee, take off from heat and quickly add red chilli powder and whole red chillies.

Add to the steaming hot dal. Ensure the red chilli powder is not burnt lest it should add a bitter taste to the dal.

ORISSA STYLE SPICED SHRIMPS

INGREDIENTS

Shrimps - 500g
 Mustard oil - 3 tbsp
 Yellow mustard seeds - 1 tbsp
 Cumin seeds - 1 tsp
 Curry leaves - 2 stalks
 Small onion (finely chopped) - 1
 Garlic - 5 large cloves
 Large green chillies (chopped) - 2
 Turmeric powder - ½ tsp
 Red chilli powder - ½ tsp
 Salt to taste
 Coriander leaves (and more for garnishing) - ¼ cup

METHOD

Heat the oil in a pan. Allow the mustard seeds, cumin seeds and curry leaves to splutter. Add the onions, garlic and green chillies. Cook until translucent and soft. Add the shrimp, turmeric, red chilli powder and salt. Cook until the shrimp are pink. Add the coriander leaves, transfer to a food processor and coarsely grind. Garnish with the remaining coriander leaves and serve.



Beetroot Poriyal



BEETROOT PORIYAL

INGREDIENTS

Beetroot (boiled and cubed) - 250g
 Vegetable oil - 2 tsp
 Asafoetida - ¼ tsp
 Black mustard seeds - 1 tsp
 Split black gram (Urad dal) - ½ tsp
 Curry leaves - 1 stalk
 Green chillies (split) - 2

Grated ginger - 1 inch
 Grated coconut - 4-5 tbsp
 Salt to taste

METHOD

Heat the oil in a pan. Add asafoetida, mustard seeds and split black gram. Allow to brown. Add curry leaves, green chillies and ginger. Give it a stir. Add the beetroot and salt. Toss on high heat. Add the coconut, mix well and serve.

HILSA IN MUSTARD GRAVY

INGREDIENTS

For the fish marinade

Hilsa fish pieces - 4
 Salt - ½ tsp
 Turmeric powder - ½ tsp
 Red chilli powder - ¼ tsp

For the mustard paste

Yellow mustard seeds - 1 ½ tbsp
 Black mustard seeds - ½ tsp
 Large green chilli - 2
 Large garlic cloves - 2
 Water - ¼ cup

For the mustard gravy

Mustard oil - 2 tbsp+ 1 tbsp
 Yellow mustard seeds - ½ tsp
 Cumin seeds - ½ tsp
 Turmeric powder - ¼ tsp
 Red chilli powder - ½ tsp
 Sugar - ¼ tsp
 Tomato (pureed) - 1

METHOD

For the mustard paste

Soak the mustard seeds in water for at least an hour so as to soften them. Drain off the water. Grind them in a mortar and pestle with garlic, green chilli and ¼ cup of water.

For the fish

Marinate the fish with salt, turmeric powder and red chilli powder. Keep aside for 30 mins. Fry in a shallow pan with minimal oil till half-cooked.

For the gravy

Heat mustard oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds and cumin seeds, allow to splutter. Add the pureed tomato, turmeric, red chilli powder and sugar. Cook until it leaves the oil. Add half of the mustard paste with one cup of water. Should you like it more pungent; you can add more of the mustard paste and

Hilsa In Mustard Gravy



adjust the water (more or less) as per your desired consistency. To this add salt and the fish. Cover and cook on medium flame till well done. Top with a tablespoon of mustard oil before serving.

MUTTON COOKED WITH WINTER GREENS

INGREDIENTS

Mutton - 500g
 Mix of spinach and mustard greens (steamed and pureed) - 1 kg
 Mustard oil - 4 tbsp
 Onion (finely sliced) - 1
 Tomatoes (finely chopped) - 3
 Garlic paste - 1 tbsp
 Salt to taste
 Turmeric powder - 1 tsp
 Red chilli powder - 2 tsp
 Garam masala (optional) - ½ tsp
 Green chillies (chopped) - 4
 Ginger juliennes
 Ghee - 1 tbsp

METHOD

Heat the oil in a pressure cooker. Add sliced onions and fry until golden brown. Add the tomatoes and cook till it dries up and leaves the oil. Add mutton, garlic and salt;

and cook on high flame till the raw smell goes. Add the turmeric and red chilli powder and continue cooking. Pressure cook or slow cook the mutton till almost cooked. When almost done, add spinach and mustard greens, green chillies; and cook until it almost dries up. You can add garam masala if you like for an additional flavor. In a separate pan, heat ghee, and pour over the mutton just before serving. Garnish with ginger juliennes.

PANEER KOFTA CURRY

INGREDIENTS

For the kofta

Paneer - 150g
 Boiled potato (grated) - 50g
 Cornflour - 1 tbsp
 Cashew nut (chopped) - 1 tsp
 Raisins - 1 tsp
 Oil to fry
 Salt to taste

For the gravy

Onion (thinly sliced fried golden brown) - 300g
 Yoghurt - ½ cup
 Cashew powder - 2 tbsp

Paneer Kofta Curry

Ginger-garlic paste - 2 tbsp
 Butter - 2 tbsp
 Salt to taste
 Pepper to taste
 Garam masala - 1 tsp
 Kitchen king - 1 tsp
 Turmeric powder - ½ tsp
 Cream - 5 tbsp
 A pinch of lemon-yellow colour (optional)

METHOD

For the kofta

Mash paneer and boiled potato together. Add salt and cornflour to this; and roll into balls. Add a stuffing of cashews and raisins in the centre. Fry in oil until golden brown and keep aside.

For the gravy

Make a paste of the fried onions, curds, ginger-garlic paste and cashew powder. Melt butter in a pan and add the onion paste. Add salt, pepper, garam masala, Kitchen king, turmeric powder, lemon-yellow powder and some water to bring it to gravy consistency. Add the koftas when the gravy gives a good boil. Cook on slow flame for another 5 minutes and not more or else the koftas will disintegrate. Remove and top with a drizzle of cream.

Mutton Cooked With Winter Greens



Rakesh Bedi

An Actor With Par Excellence

Interview of a versatile entertainer.

By Santosh Mehta



Popular Bollywood film & television actor Rakesh Bedi was born on December 1, 1954 and brought up in Delhi, and did a diploma from the top-most film institute that's the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune. However, Rakesh does not have any godfather in the film industry and his father Madan Gopal Bedi used to work in the Indian airlines therefore as a Delhite, he studied in Kendriya Vidyalaya Andrews Ganj.

Noted actor, Rakesh Bedi is known by his nickname Rakesh. He got married to Aaradhna Bedi and has two lovely daughters: Ridhima and Ritika. Ridhima is married and also an actress whereas Ritika is a Manager.

Rakesh started working in Bollywood films in 1979, now, it's almost 43 years in the Bollywood film industry. Initially, he used to work with Pier Rot's theatre group in Delhi. Because there were no other platforms or options available at that time and he had to work for a living.

Rakesh has worked on approximately 208 Bollywood hit films till now. However, he got his first break in Bollywood with 'Hamarey Tumharey' (1979) and it

is the debut film of his professional career.

Besides acting in films, he has acted in television series such as *Ye Jo Hai Zindagi* while I am writing, I can still imagine the interesting tune of *Ye Hai Zindagi* which got popular among his audience and they appreciated his comedy role which is enjoyed by all. Some of his popular television shows are: *Shrimaan Shrimati*, *Yes Boss* and the latest is *Wrong number* which got light comedy along with an interesting story therefore, *Wrong Number* got appreciated due to his acting skills and enjoyed by all.

Rakesh Bedi has been entertaining his audience for a very long time and performed a variety of roles.

Some of his popular films are *Chashme Buddoor* by Sai Paranjpye who's known for her noteworthy cinematic direction.

That's the reason *Chashme Buddoor* got highly appreciated because of its light romantic comedy starring noted actors Deepti Naval and Farookh Sheikh along with Rakesh Bedi.

Apart from these films, he has known for his brilliant performances in *Ahsaas*, *Sohini Mahiwal*, *Ram Teri*

Ganga Maili, *Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahin*, *Junoon*, *Yes Boss*, *Machli Jal ki Rani hai*, *Mughal Azam*, *Ek Duje Ke Liye*, *Bade Miya Chote Miyan*, *Gadar*, *Vaada*, *Dil Hai ki Mushkil*, *Coolie No 1* among others.

No doubt, he is an outstanding real hero who has performed a variety of different characters and names a few of them: Police-Inspector, Head constable, Bank Manager, Sardar and also a lover or common man. Thus, this is a great achievement as an actor, who's still in the limelight even at the age of 68 years!

And now, it's good news for his audience and fans that three of his upcoming films are going to be released soon *Chhatriwali*, and *Shehzada* among others. These films are directed by noted film directors.

Besides, acting in Bollywood films now, he is working in web series and is also getting much in demand therefore, he is quite busy shooting for web series: *Suranga*, *Show Stopper* and *Chamak* among others.

Rakesh Bedi is always in the limelight either for his entertaining movies or comedy serials. Now, three of his upcoming films are going to be released very soon.

In a recent interview, he gave interesting insight about his upcoming roles.

Who is the director of 'Chhatriwali'? What kind of story is 'Chhatriwali'?

'Chhatriwali' is directed by Tejas Prabha Vijay and it is a story of an unemployed young guy who is searching for a job and comes from a small town of Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal) but not getting any kind of job. Ultimately, he has to accept the job as a condom tester.

What kind of role are you playing in 'Chhatriwali'?

In 'Chhatriwali' I am acting as a chemist shop owner and discouraging the girl who wants to use a condom. It's also an interesting and different kind of role but I enjoyed working in this film.

Who is acting along with you in 'Chhatriwali'?

I am acting along with a galaxy of Bollywood stars such as Punjabi girl Rakul Preet Singh, Sumeet Vyas and Satish Kaushik among others. All are working in 'Chhatriwali' and it's a beautiful team.

What kind of script is 'Shukra Dosh'?

As you know in Hindus our Pandit believes that in some boys' cases, they got Manglik dosh in their kundali and did not get married. Then, Pandit suggested them to do pooja. This story is based on Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal).

Did you enjoy your role in 'Shukra Dosh'?

Yes, I enjoyed my role in 'Shukra Dosh' and played Pandit's character who tells that boy, he had Shukra dosh in his kundali. It's one of my interesting roles.

Would you like to tell me something about your 'Suranga'?

'Suranga' is a web series and will be shown on the Atrangi channel;

earlier it was on the Ullu channel. I am acting as a bank manager. There is an incident of robbery in the bank and how this bank manager acts in that situation.

Would you like to tell the story of the 'Show Stopper'?

'Show Stopper' is a web series and it's a story of a father and daughter. In this web series, a young daughter wants to become a successful model in her professional career but her father is against her modelling career. She is slowly doing her modelling without giving him any hint.



What kind of story is 'Chamak' web series and your role?

The 'Chamak' web series is a story based on Punjab's music industry and it has shown the real situation of the music industry, how it operates and there is a big political racket involved in this industry. It's a Mafia kind of drug story of Punjab and it's still on the production side.

Would you like to tell something about your initial journey in Mumbai?

Yes, it's not easy at all, especially coming from a different background without having any godfather. I was a stranger there.

Would you like to recall your solo play in Delhi?

Yes, I still recall my solo play in

Delhi when the whole theatre was jam-packed and the play was written by noted theatre personality Vijay Tendulkar.

Is it true that you got a recognition with 'Chashme Buddoor'?

Yes, it's true because the story is too powerful and close to the middle-class family starring Deepti Naval and Farookh Sheikh along with me. It got hit at the box office.

You are working as an actor, director, producer, writer and teacher, what is your favourite take?

As an actor, I enjoy everything in equal proportions and I love all kinds of roles. A lot of people come to me to get trained.

What's the secret of getting attached to your film?

As an actor, it's very important to understand my audience and am fortunate to connect with my sincerity and hard work but the content and the direction of the film must be powerful.

How's your experience in 'Mera Baap Kaun Hai'?

I played Samiksha Bhatnagar's father in 'Mera Baap Kaun' and I played a Gujarati person who loves his daughter very much. But there was a time when our children started complaining and as a parent, I solved their problem.

Even the kind of relationship my character has with the in-laws of my daughter in the film is very interesting.

Would you like to share your own experience working with Vivek Dahiya and Samiksha Bhatnagar?

My experience with both these actors is great. Samiksha is a sweet girl, and Vivek is popular on television. I enjoyed working with them. Apart from these, the subject of that film attracts me a lot therefore, I worked in it.

Is it tough for you not to have any film background or anyone in this profession?

In my childhood, I used to participate in dramas at my school and in all kinds of extracurricular activities. I always won prizes from my school. Although I was not into sports, I played cricket. My love for acting started from there.

Who are your favourite Actors?

I am a huge fan of Charlie Chaplin. I saw and enjoyed all of his films and I remember I used to mount projectors at my friend's house and watch all his movies. He inspired me a lot to become an actor.

What is your opinion about OTT? Is it a good option?

I think OTT is one of the greatest things not only for actors but for everyone in the entertainment industry. For OTT one needs writers, content makers and actors so, it's always useful for everybody.

Do you think that there are many platforms for actors now? How is it different from the times when you joined in?

Yes, there was a time when there was only one platform for me but now, there are a variety of different options available such as 'OTT', 'Hotstar', 'Amazon' and others and social media have a strong hold on actors and newcomers too, creating a huge range of opportunities.

Would you like to share your memories of the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII) Pune?

As an actor in the beginning, I think everyone has to struggle a lot. The initial days are difficult for every actor but for me, it was easier because I passed out from FTII and did a course from that prestigious Institute. Fortunately, famous film director and producer of 'Sholey' G P Sippy was there as a Chief Guest and I got an offer from G P Sippy in 'Ehsaas'.

Which films do you still remember and that gave you good space?

I feel fortunate to be part of these beautiful films such as 'Chashme Buddoor', 'Ek Dujhe Ke Liye', 'Hamare Tumhare', 'Bulandi' and others. It was tough but I kept going.

Do you miss popular actor Govinda or working with him?

Yes. I miss working with Govinda because I have worked with him in many films and he has a great sense of humour. Then I missed acting with the late Shafi Inamdar who was with me in 'Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi' and Satish Shah.

Any message for the upcoming younger artists?

I always believe that making people laugh is the purpose of a message and the play will give some interesting thoughts to my audiences and fans. They should learn some positive things after they watch my performance.

We

CAMPUS RUMPUS

MEOW - MEOW KITTEN

It was my first year in college when I got punished for the first time. One day, it was my friend's birthday so I got her an electrical kitten as she loves cats.

The kitten was called a 'meow-meow kitten' as it made a 'meow' sound just like a real cat when we switched on the small button on its side. My friend loved the gift, and she kept it in her bag as we were going to our class.

In our class, the lecture was going on when suddenly, the kitten started making meow sounds. Maybe, the kitten hit the ground, and now it was embarrassing us. Everyone was laughing and started looking here and there. Then our

teacher got up and started looking for the sound when she found out that it was Riya who was causing all this trouble. She asked her to leave the class, but then I told her that it was my gift and that it was not her fault. But she was so frustrated till then that she asked both of us to leave the class.

We both left the class with our kitten and started laughing at the funny as well as an embarrassing incident.

—Kajal Singh

MY OVER SMARTNESS

It was the first day of college when two students confused me as their senior. After my class, I was getting really bored when an idea hit me that I should prank my batch mates. They were thinking of me as a senior. It was a great time to have fun around.

In the canteen, I went to a group of people and sat with them, and then I started scaring them by saying that Mrs Pooja, an English teacher who was in her first year,

was a dangerous teacher. After listening to me very carefully, they started laughing. I got confused and gave them a weird look. After laughing for almost 15 minutes, a boy amongst them got up and said, "Ask Pooja ma'am to be gentle with you, and also told her that we will visit her soon." After this, they again started laughing.

Then I realised that they were actually my seniors, and with my over-smartness, I had tried to prank the wrong people.

—Riddhima Agrahari

Do you remember any amusing, interesting, exciting incident in your college recently? Why not tell WE readers about it? Send it typed or neatly written, certifying that the incident happened in your presence, to:

Woman's era
WOMAN'S ERA,
Delhi Press Building,
E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110055.

My Family, My Friends and Me...



I AM THE ELDEST DAUGHTER IN MY family with three siblings and our father died when I was twelve. Since the age of 18, for the last fifteen years, I have shouldered the economic responsibilities of my family.

Now, I want to marry a widower and my mother says that he is not good. I think she is afraid of losing my financial support. I can give her the money but I feel she doesn't want me to be happy. What should I do?

You are now 33 but you have not mentioned the age of the widower. Also, in fifteen years at least one more sibling of yours should be an earning member. The responsibility of the household should be shared by all members of the family.

If your mother has concrete reasons identified as to why she does not find this man suitable, you should not disregard her. Just because you have not been married yet you should not settle for the second best. Weigh your options clearly to make an informed choice.

I HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR A YEAR. In my home, we always had a pet dog but my husband does not want one. I feel incomplete without a dog around – what do I do?

The way we are brought up is important to what we want in the future. If your husband never had a pet, then he is not aware of the joys a pet can bring into a family. If having a pet is so important to you, you can talk in detail about the logics including why you want it, how you will train the dog and who will be responsible for feeding it, taking it out for walks, etc. involve him by asking what breed of dog fascinates him.

Maybe, he will come around but if he does not, you have to think of possible options to replace this desire

in your life. You could get involved with a charity working for stray dogs or you could opt for silent pets like fish, etc.

I COME FROM A SIMPLE BACKGROUND and got married to a man who works in a bank. He has a hectic social life but he always leaves me behind even when he goes to picnics or parties with his friends. I feel left out, what should I do?

You are within reason for feeling left out at being ignored. Your husband was not forced into marrying you and he has responsibilities towards you. Have you explained to your husband how rejected and left you feel?

Maybe, he is not even aware that you would like to go out with him. Emphasise the fact that you value your time with him; ask him why he does not include you in his plans. Also, improve your interpersonal skills and forge friendships that allow you to cultivate your hobbies and networking group.

I HAVE RECENTLY TURNED 50 AND FEEL I have wasted my life. Both my daughters have taken up jobs and do not want to marry. My husband will retire in a few years' time and I have no hobby apart from my family. Can I change anything so late in life?

You are obviously undergoing the period of menopause which is affecting your emotional balance as well. You have brought up two independent-minded girls and should be proud of their decisions.

These days, many girls are getting married late and there is nothing wrong with that choice. It is never too late to inculcate a hobby.

Go back in time and see what you enjoyed doing—reading, writing, helping with social work, or anything that attracts you. You can also

inculcate new hobbies and activities, try surfing the internet for the same. Keep yourself engaged in stuffs that entertain you. Yes, you can change the way you look at life.

Treat it as the best time of your life when your duties are limited, not your opportunities.

I AM 30 YEARS OLD AND HAVE WORKED with abused and battered women for 10 years. It has put me 'off' to love and marriage. Now, there is a new colleague from Europe who is showing interest in me and I am so confused. What should I do?

Everybody deserves a happy situation and a loving partner. Just because you have seen and worked with abused and battered women it does not mean that there are no happy relationships.

Many women have understanding and loving men in their lives. It should not scare you and you should be willing to love and live with a decent man. Rise above your confusion and look at the person concerned dispassionately.

M Y BROTHER AND I WERE VERY close though I am three years younger. Now that he has gotten married and spends so much time with his wife I feel left out. He keeps saying I will know when I get married and go to my husband but why does he have no time for me now?

It is good that you shared a good relationship with your brother. But now that he is married he needs to divide his time, and you, as a good sister, need ways to support him.

Instead of resenting this act of your brother you should try to get close to your sister-in-law. Yes, you will get married and go away and your brother is not ignoring you, he is just doing what is normal by creating a family unit with his wife.

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

Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055. or log on to Womansera.com

Fashionable

*Winter
Wonderland*

Trendy fashion for adorable kids.

Red colour one-piece dress. Paired with a one-sided, full-sleeved kaftan of the same colour and a black shimmer full sleeved shoulder on the other side. With a black belt and a textured legging detail.

Loose straight jeans with a brown puffed up full sleeved woollen top.





A layered shimmering evening gown, with a flared up heavy net in the inner layer, carrying a baby pink soft woollen coat.



Long textured leggings with a two layer top. A long flare top in the inner layer and a long full sleeve woollen top for the outer layer.





MANIPUR

Travels

Exploring the Jewel of India. By Rupa Motwani

The joy of 1 is immense. It becomes all the more interesting when you are accompanied by your children, one of whom has just crossed over into adulthood, the other into teen-hood and both have adventurous spirit and have been co-planners for this trip.

So, after a lot of debate, research and persuasion (to whom else but to the last man – my husband) ‘we’ a family of four decided to take a short holiday trip to Manipur.

A holiday for a middleclass family like ours should include adventure, leisure and pleasure – all in one trip. It’s like the combo deals of the malls.

With these thoughts we set out on our vacation to the beautiful state of Manipur. This was one of the places where last minute tickets were available at reasonable rates as many had not yet discovered the charm of Manipur.

The flying time is 1 hour 20 minutes and we landed at the military airport of Imphal, called Bir Tikendrajit International Airport.

We could feel the freshness in the air as we stepped out and our lungs started gulping in cool unpolluted

air much like a person who has been resuscitated or smacked back to life.

We couldn’t wait to move out and, in a few minutes, got the necessary visiting permit to stay in the state for 15 days and we were finally all set to explore...

Manipur is located at a height of 790m above sea-level and is wedged among hills on all sides. It is called the ‘Jewel of India’ – again unknown to many.



Loktak Lake Kaina Hills, Imphal, Manipur.





It is surrounded by Nagaland in the north, Assam in the west, Mizoram in the south and Burma in the East.

This northeastern state has an amicable climate; we went in October, which was very pleasant. It has distinct summer, winter and rainy seasons. The valley gets the reflection of the heat in summer, and cold in winter from the surrounding hills.

Historically speaking, it merged with India in 1949, when Maharaja Bodhchandra Singh was the ruler.

Manipur has been the land where many battles have taken place, the notable being the battle between the Japanese and the Allied Powers during World War-2.

LOKTAK LAKE IS THE LARGEST FRESH WATER LAKE IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIA. SENDRA PARK AND RESORTS IS A VERY BEAUTIFUL PROPERTY. THE PROPERTY IS SURROUNDED BY THE LOKTAK LAKE ON THREE SIDES. ONE COTTAGE WAS BOOKED FOR US. THE COTTAGE OVERLOOKED THE HUGE LOKTAK LAKE.

The Imphal Peace Museum located at the foothills of the Red Hills (Maibam Lokpa Ching) has a lot of memorabilia of this war, and brings alive the tragedy, memories, and history of the war that took place.

The museum is a living memory of the Battle of Imphal and other World War-2 battles fought on the Manipur soil.

This was our first stop and it touched our inner feelings for the state and what the people have been through.

From there we proceeded directly to Loktak Lake. Loktak Lake is the largest fresh water lake in the Southeast Asia. It has an area of about 280 sq. km.



Peace Museum, located at the foothills of the Red Hills, Manipur.

We had decided to stay at the Sendra Park and Resorts for two nights. It is situated on a hillock in the district of Bishnupur.

As we drove to this resort, the lush meadows and the fresh air elevated our spirit. It seemed that the mountains on both sides were riding along with us. The scene was befitting of the beautiful and enviable Hindi movie scenery that we all love. Sendra Park and Resorts is a very beautiful property. It is surrounded by the Loktak Lake on three sides. One cottage was booked for us. The cottage overlooked the huge Loktak Lake. It was a very fancy cottage where the first floor had a lot of glass panelling.

When you wake up in the morning it's like you have been sleeping in the midst of the lake and you are greeted by one of the best sunrises in your life. We immediately freshened up, ate our lunch and went to the lake.

Ethereal, Cool And Tranquil

We hired a boat, which took us deep into the lake. There were long tailed fishing boats in which the fishermen were busy trying to catch fish. Loktak Lake has floating circular swamps called Phumdis. The best time to go for a boat ride is at sunset when the reflection of the sky on the lake is ethereal. The cool, tranquil ambience and the serenity transported us to another world.

They say, nature is one of god's beautiful creations. Away from this human built world, sailing amidst such rich bio-diversity, is very soothing to our minds and elevates our happiness quotient.

THE IMPHAL PEACE MUSEUM LOCATED AT THE FOOTHILLS OF THE RED HILLS (MAIBAM LOKPA CHING) HAS A LOT OF MEMORABILIA OF THIS WAR. THIS BRINGS ALIVE THE TRAGEDY, MEMORIES, AND HISTORY OF THE WAR THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE JAPANESE AND THE ALLIED POWERS.

Keibul Lamjao National Park was our next place of site seeing. It is located in the Bishnupur district. It is the home of the endangered Sangai deer and wild Boar.

The national Park is characterised by floating decomposed plants called Phumbi. A guide offers us the experience of a lifetime – To walk on the floating biomass.

We immediately accepted. We got on the boat that took us through the tall grass, wearing gumboots and after going approximately 200-300 metres alight on the biomass. The floating biomass is so bouncy yet sturdy that we can walk on it.

It was a unique and unforgettable experience walking on the biomass wearing the long boots. A feeling of walking on water that is like jelly.

Geljang Resort which is in the Churachandpur district, is a hidden beauty filled with water activities. The sky is a different colour in each



INA-Museum, Imphal, Manipur.

direction you look and so is the water. You can see 4-6 different shades of water with the sun and cloud and the mountains acting as filters and reflectors.

It is a safe resort for boat rides, ATV rides, other activities and an excellent picnic spot for families. But we felt, it could be developed better as a tourist destination.

We then visited the INA Museum in Moirang district. It was at Moirang, that the flag of the INA was first unfurled on 14 April 1944.

The museum has an impressive collection of letters, photomaps, badges of ranks, and other war memorabilia that remind the visitors of the sacrifices made by the soldiers under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

We also visited the Moirang bazaar which had many local bakeries. We have a sweet tooth, and, in Manipur, besides the local bakeries who only bake cream cakes, no other Indian sweets are available.

One evening, as we were walking in the local market, we saw a strange site. There was a group of three ladies, each packing gulab jamun in a plastic packet, sealing it with wax



Manipuri woman selling glutinous rice at Eema Bazaar, Imphal, Manipur.

and selling each for Rs 10 – a very happy moment for us.

On the way back to Imphal from Loktak Lake, we drove towards Sadu Chiro waterfalls in Senapati district.

The road was smooth and there were green lush meadows where the cows were grazing. It made us feel that we should have a house here in the fields.

As we drove towards the waterfall, and made our way up into the mountains, the cool breeze and the mist emerging from the water was extremely alluring. The approach towards the falls, which is at a height

Black Pottery, originally made by the Tangkhul Naga Tribe with serpentinite stone.



of 300 m, initially, cuts through the forest and foliage and finally, a long climb up the slippery stone steps and a balancing act where part of the stone steps have broken. However, all the efforts to reach these waterfalls, is worthy to relish the exquisite beauty of the Sadu Chiro waterfalls.

As we climb up the steps, we can feel the cold waterdrops on our body. The gushing water flowing from the cliffs is a spectacular site and has remained engrained in our mind. It is also called the Leimaram Waterfalls on the Sadar Hills.



Sadu Chiro waterfalls in Senapati district.

The Search For Black Pottery

These beautiful pieces of earthenware are originally made in the Ukhrul district by the Tangkhul Naga Tribe. But we could not go there and discovered a tribal lady selling them near the RIMS Hospital Road.

The black stone pottery is made from a mixed paste of ground black serpentinite stone and special brown clay found on the banks of the river Longpi. The craftsmen do not use the potter's wheel. Each creation is unique and imperfectly perfect. We picked up a few kitchenware pots, and although it was a challenge to bring it back home – we just could not resist the temptation to purchase them.

Whenever we travel, we always like to explore the local culture and traditions. But unfortunately, I was not able to eat the Manipuri thali as it had different fish dishes and, I am a vegetarian! But I really liked the Chak-hao dessert.

It's a special kind of sticky black rice cooked in milk (like our white rice kheer) and has an impressive purplish-black colour and unique fragrance.

We just had to bring a few packets of the black rice to recreate the same magic for our friends. The main occupation of the local people

is farming and fishing. They mainly produce rice, garlic and potatoes.

The special All Women run IMA market was a must visit. A large local market selling all kinds of local products was very crowded.

But it was very intriguing to see the enthusiasm with which the women were chattering among themselves in Manipuri language and doing brisk business too.

The lotus blooms in the Imphal valley. The tender leaves, flower and fruit of the lotus, are eaten as a part of the Manipuri cuisine.

The lotus fruit, locally called Thamchet in Manipur, is sold on the streets, and we brought a few home. We all can get the processed or roasted form of the fruit which is called Makhana.



Govindaji Temple.



Kangla Sha, the protective dragons in Kangla fort which was the sacred capital.

Harvesting of the lotus has filled the Loktak Lake in Manipur with freshness. Lotus is the national flower of India. Lotus silk is considered a highly exquisite and rare fibre obtained from its stem. It is used to make neck-ties and scarfs.

As we drove towards the capital city, Imphal, enroute was the historical Kangla Fort. The fortress is located on the western bank of the Imphal River. Kangla was the sacred capital and is a symbol of their

KANGLA FORT IS A TRANQUIL PLACE, HAS SEVERAL TEMPLES, TWO LARGE WHITE KANGLA SHA, A PAVILION WITH THE SPECTACULAR ROYAL, LONG BOATS, AND THE WORLD'S OLDEST POLO FIELDS.

prosperity. It was taken over by the British after the 1891 Anglo-Manipuri war. It is so big that we took a guided tour on the golf cart. It is a tranquil place, beautifully maintained, has huge lawns, moats, ponds, big trees, several temples, two large white Kangla Sha (protective dragons), a pavilion with the spectacular royal, long boats (used by the Royals), and the world's oldest Polo fields. The entrance and exit are through an ornate gate. The game of polo, or as it is called Sagol Kangjei, originated from Manipur. According to a legend, Manipur's deity King Kangba invented the game in the 14th century BC.

Birthplace Of Raaslila

The state of Manipur is the birthplace of Raaslila – a renowned form of classical dance which was created by Maharaja Bhagya Chandra. The dance has devotional themes of Radha Krishna, characterised by gentle eye movements. We enjoyed watching it.

From there we went to visit the old Govindaji Temple, the largest Hindu Vaishnava temple in Imphal. The temple is simple in design with two gold plated domes, a paved court and a large raised Congregation Hall. The Govindaji temple houses idols of Krishna, Radha, Balabhadra,



The rules-based Polo game originated in Manipur.

Subhadra and Jagannath. The time we visited, the evening *arti* was going on and the devotional atmosphere encompassed us all and made us feel very peaceful.

Commonwealth Burials Of World War-2 Soldiers

Another important tourist place is the War Cemetery in Imphal. The cemetery has 1600 Commonwealth burials of World War-2 soldiers. Most of the soldiers were below 25 years.

Serene and well maintained, the War Cemetery carries little stone markers recording the sacrifices of those gallant soldiers. It broke our hearts to read the messages from their families on the tombs.

What had these young soldiers done to lose their lives, having not experienced the world but victim to somebody else's war; and leave their families heartbroken, and alone. It makes one realise that war is never ever a solution and only kills young soldiers.

In Imphal, we were staying at the Classic Grande Imphal, nestled in the heart of the city. We were surprised at the tasty South Indian food served there. The local shops are like a thrift market selling not only exact copies of branded shoes and shirts but with a huge range on offer.



Andro village, located in the foothills of Nongmaching range.

Manipuris are very fashion conscious and very well dressed too. Communication at times becomes challenging as the local people speak only Manipuri, and at such times sign language is our only saviour to get a message across.

On the last day of our stay, we visited the Andro village. It is a small town in the Imphal East district. It takes about an hour to reach Andro, driving through rugged roads with very few vehicles.

Andro village is tucked away in the forested foothills of the Nongmaching range. This quaint village is known for its scenic beauty, traditional pottery called Charan Taba and local brew.

The villagers are very warm and hospitable. They live in thatched huts. It is inhabited by one of the Lois communities of Manipur. They make an indigenous brew called Sekmai and Andro wine and vodka by fermenting rice.

We had the opportunity of seeing and tasting the traditional way of processing the sweet wine.

Also located there, is the Santhei Natural Park, which has been developed around a water reservoir and is a popular picnic spot.

Interestingly, there is also an Andro all girls football club.

It is very apt that the Femina 2023 is now being held at Manipur and will put the state of Manipur in focus and people will rediscover this hidden Jewel of India.

It would be a boost to the state that is needed and an opportunity for the people, all over to experience nature that is pure and waiting to touch us and refresh us with her magic. Till Then...

We



Shelter

It happened about 30 years ago.

I was trying to put my three-month-old to sleep when I was suddenly startled by the loud ringing of the telephone. It was my husband alerting me that a thunderstorm warning had been issued. He asked me not to get worried since it was the first thunderstorm after we landed in New York. It was dark outside, I was very confused, and could not figure out why my husband was not at home in the middle of the night. I could hear the rumble of thunder and the rain lashing outside. I turned on the TV for an update (Cell Phones were not in common use those days). All the channels showed the news about the thunderstorm. The viewers were advised to stay away from the windows. Before I could even place the remote down, I heard a loud noise and was alarmed to see that the top of the roof of the tall adjacent building had been chipped off by a lightning bolt. At the same time, sounds of fire engines blaring and ambulance sirens all around the apartment complex could be heard. This woke my little one, and I rushed to the bedroom.

I held my baby close to me and ran around to find a safe place in the house, all the time, wondering why my spouse was not at home. I could not believe that almost all of our walls had large windows. Now, I was really at my wit's end. I first thought of knocking on my neighbour's door, down the hall but decided against it since she was an 84-year-old living all alone. I had hardly seen any other neighbours since we moved in. I ran downstairs and knocked on the first door I saw. A lady opened it and I explained to her why I was there. She

welcomed me into her house and her husband gave me a glass of water to calm me down. It slowly dawned on me that it was not the middle of the night but just the afternoon. That explained why my husband was calling me from work. I must have dozed off and could not pin down the time. I sheepishly thanked the kind couple and rushed back home.

The next day, the weather calmed down. I looked out to see if there were any other damages and saw a fallen tree, and I noticed a police car was parked near it. A cop was helping a man in handcuffs into the car. I tried to get a closer look, and I realised it was the husband who offered me the glass of water the previous day.

He had been booked for domestic violence!.

– Sunitha Muralidharan

Faith

Papa, my father-in-law, had been sick for a long time now. The air inside our home was infested with impending doom. It was then that I got little ducklings home. I wanted to bring home some cheer.

The little ducklings were only ten days old then. They needed care and attention. The gardener had brought some chicks home last year. Half of them died in quick succession. I did not want the ducklings to have the same fate. I decided to shoulder the responsibility of their upkeep. I made sure they had adequate food and water at their disposal. I cleaned the litter tray twice, sometimes even thrice. There was no ammonia smell in their surroundings, and their cage was clean and hygienic at all times. It was like having a newborn baby at home. I fussed over their well-being all the time. Sometimes, Papa used to watch them flutter their wings, put their beak in water and drink the contents emitting a low machine-like sound. They could drink water like anything.

All went well for a couple of days, but soon the lobby area started emitting a particular smell. The droppings of birds, misdirected, sometimes landed on the walls and

floor and not on their litter tray. The cage was shifted outside. It was the first week of December, and it had begun to get cold. I was worried they might get hypothermia or the cage might be manipulated by our mongrels. Their safety used to be at the back of my mind, making incessant checks on them in the dark of the night. They survived the winters though Papa left us for his heavenly abode.

During the time of grief and extreme sadness permeated deep in the nooks and corners of my home, I stuck to my regimen. Taking care of ducks gained strong importance in my life akin to a ritual. I wanted all of them to survive, grow strong and proliferate. I invested myself in their well-being as if my faith rested on their shoulders. They never let me down. They are around eight months old, now fully mature, strong, and sturdy. They do not need a cage. They have a room of their own in the backyard for the night, and they roam free in the daylight. We even made a little pond for them to bathe in.

When I was young, I read the story, *The last leaf* by O Henry. The story revolves around a girl who is critically ill and who pins her hope for life and rejuvenation around a vine on the wall shedding its leaves. Her belief that if the leaves of the vine are lost, she will lose her life as well makes her wire her hope and optimism around the one thing, that last leaf. An artist paints that last leaf for her, and she survives along her faith.

I wonder if my instinct to save all the young ducklings was an instinct to save my diminishing faith in death and decay. My ducklings have grown into strong and able ducks. They listen to my voice and recognise me and go on endlessly quacking. They trail after me as if I am the mother duck. I coo to them softly sometimes. I am thankful for their presence in my life at a very difficult moment. It was like taking a very difficult test, and I am glad I passed it along with them. We survived!.

– Dr Rana Preet Gill



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AFTER THE DARK...

All they need and expect from us is moral support, love, respect, social security and acceptability, recognition and respect. By Samir Ranjan Majumdar

When I got employment in a tiny beautiful Himalayan state capital and started living there, my friends said, "Wow..., you are so lucky to live in the hills and must be enjoying living amidst the lofty mountains..."

True, living in a hill station is the most joyful experience. Hill stations undoubtedly not only provide us a perfect gateway during the summers to escape the sweltering heat of the plains but also draw a flock

of tourists to enjoy the snow during winters.

During my three years of stay in the hills, I found the hills most enchanting, quiet and serene, sky blue and clear during winter, air fresh, surroundings green, and most importantly, free from the din and bustle of normal city life.

The chirping of birds and the gurgling sounds of waterfalls rejuvenate our life in the hills.

During my stay in the hills, I did not see any "gherao", long processions of people shouting slogans

at the top of their voices, and loudspeakers blaring here and there.

I found that the people in the hills are very kind, hospitable, law-abiding, disciplined, calmer, and happier. The crime rate is very low and I keep my wet clothes on the balcony of my flat on the ground floor without any fear of those being stolen. Clothes were never stolen.

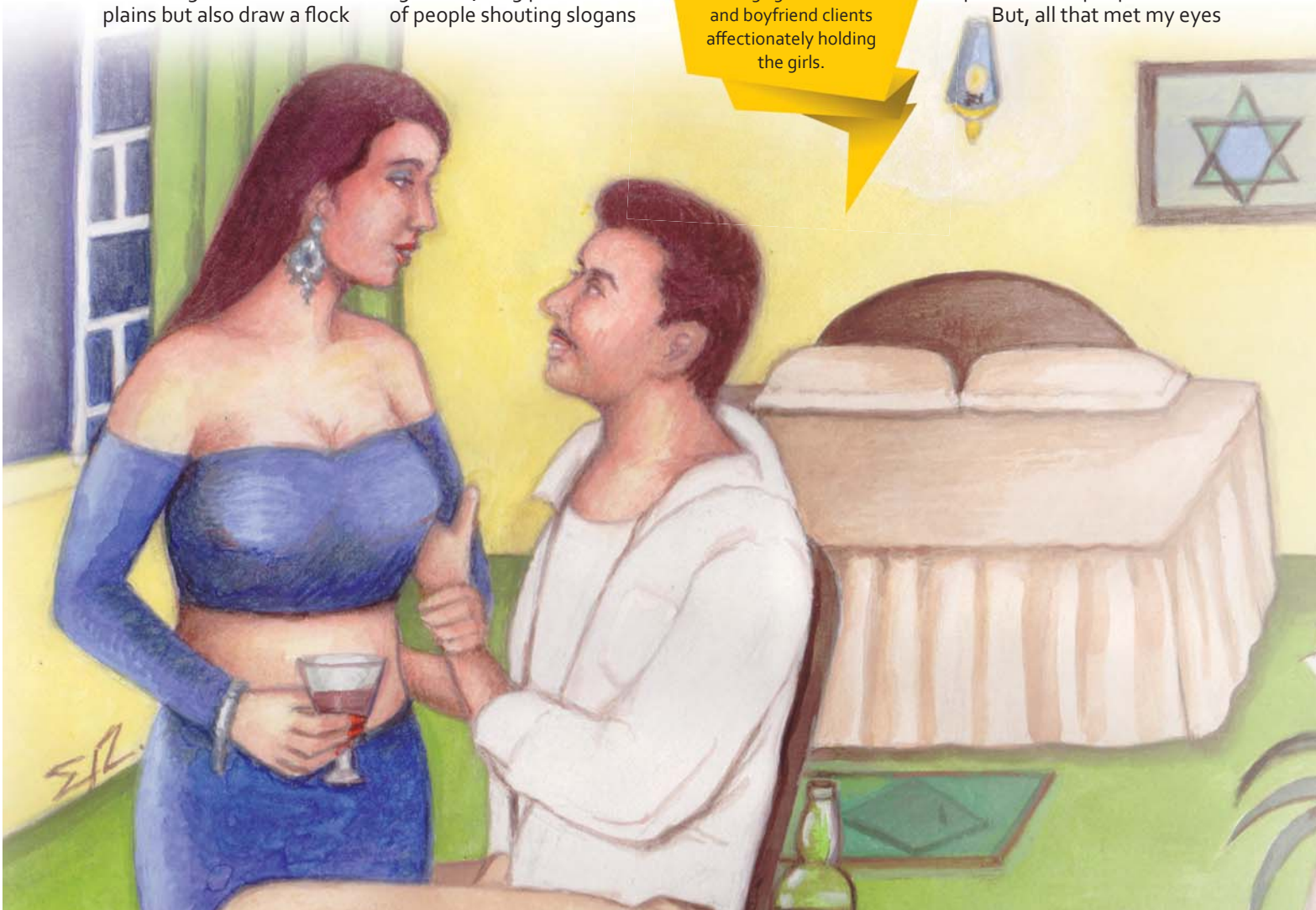
People living in villages go out to markets without locking their houses. It reminds me of Ram Rajya.

Even though life in the hills is tough because of rigid terrains, water problems, frequent cuts of power supply, horrible cloud bursts, fear of earthquakes, brutal winters, landslides, etc. the smile never fades from the faces of the people.

All these have mesmerised me and made me fall in love with the place and its people.

But, all that met my eyes

I have seen many of the girls giggling with men, sharing light moments and boyfriend clients affectionately holding the girls.



appeared to me to be not well. What gave me pain are the conditions of life of some of the young girls and women after the sun sets. I find restaurants with bars and sing-songs-on-Karaoke facilities dotting the town where I live and other places in the state.

For writing this piece, I visited several restaurants with bars and talked to many young girls and women to have first-hand information from them about their plight and lifestyle, the factors forcing them to take up job in bars and whether they are exploited by the men, what they do when some customers become violent, whether they are happy working in bars, etc.

I have found that most of the bar owners employ young girls in the age group of 18 to 20 years. I have seen many of the girls giggling with men, sharing light moments, and boyfriend clients affectionately holding the girls. Most of these girls smoke bongs and drink and its cost is borne by their customers.

Mrs. A is in her 30s. I met her in a bar serving customers with drinks and food. She bemoans, "I had been deserted by my husband when I was carrying. He married another teenage girl and walked away from my life leaving me in a lurch. I did not have any means to earn livelihood for myself and my child."

"Life without love is worse than the life of a street dog. I don't have any dreams for myself. I just dream for my son that he gets a good education,"

she added.

The stress of dealing with financial and emotional crises, sudden void of security caused by desertion by her husband, and absence of support from relatives and friends has forced her to take up employment in a bar to meet even the basic necessities.

Police have made it compulsory for all bar owners having sing-songs-on-Karaoke facilities to make their bars soundproof so that loud noise does not disturb the people living in the adjoining houses.

Bars are well decorated with lighting. But in a dizzying display of lights, and inside this shining behemoth, customers spend money on luxury foreign brands of liquors and costly exotic food while the girls and women working in these bars pass their days somehow with a morsel of food.

Miss B says, "My mother expired when I was in class eight. When my Mom was alive, she used to love me and take proper care of me as is expected of every mother. I had dreamt to become a teacher. My colourful dreams were shattered when my father brought another woman as his second wife.

My stepmother started misbehaving with me and after she gave birth to a male child, she even stopped giving me food. She used to force me to work as a servant. My Dad remained a silent spectator to her all these tortuous acts. I stopped going to school.

Finding no alternative and as per the advice of one of my friends who also

suffered the same ordeals, I left the house at the age of 19 and joined this bar. I am independent now. I earn and spend it on myself."

"Are you safe and secured here?" I asked.

"I have reconciled with my fate though I know ours is the profession that has been looked down upon by society", she replied.

"I have entered this profession by choice and have no qualms about it. I don't mind sleeping with any customer if he pays me as per my demand. You sell your brain, we sell our body. What's the fuss

Sliding the straps of her little black dress and curling up her pink lips in a shy smile as she watched her image in the mirror mounted on the wall of the bar, she continues, "I am very careful in using condoms Saheb. You know Saheb, AIDS is a dreaded disease which everyone in our profession is aware of."

about it? I feel, our society is still very judgmental," she confessedly argued.

"I tell you, most of the aged customers are well behaved. They pay me handsomely and buy me a dress," she added. Sliding the straps of her little black dress and curling up her pink lips in a shy smile as she watched her image in the mirror mounted on the wall of the bar, she continues, "I am very careful in using condoms Saheb. You know Saheb, AIDS is a dreaded disease which everyone in our

profession is aware of."

"Sometimes, I feel very lonely because, you know, I cannot share everything with my loved ones," she laments.

Miss C, belonging to a middle-class family with her father working in a bank and her mother working as a teacher in a private school, is a student studying in BA 2nd year in a local college.

When enquired as to why she is working in the bar, she replies, "I cannot afford a lavish lifestyle without working somewhere. I utilise my free time to earn some money. I don't want to ask my parents for money every time. So, I took up the job in the bar. But I must tell you that I am very strict in dealing with customers. I do not go out on a date with any of the customers."

"Many girls are virtuous and will not compromise with their dignity and stay true to their principles," she added.

"I return home by 8 PM to avoid some gossip and speculations in the neighborhood of our home. To date, I have stopped myself from getting emotionally attached to someone," she says further. "Clothes and make-ups are generally gifted by my clients," says Miss D. "The customers as well bar owners want our body to be in shape and our pants to be skintight with hips bulging out," she added.

"Sir, the so-called respectable women look down upon us, treat us as cardboard creatures, and pose as if they are very much superior beings.

In what ways is their

behaviour better than ours? We know their ins and outs. We have seen what these unmarried and even married women of respectable families are doing in the rooms of guests staying in posh hotels," retorted Miss E.

"We also know what they are doing when they go out with their men friends for a long drive. What is carrying on behind the closed doors of high society women is also not hidden from us. The only difference is that they know too well how much money the 'man' is going to spend or is spending on them," she continues.

"We, in this small hill city, are far better than them. I agree that some of us, on being lured by the glittering world and hopes of earning higher income, have gone to big cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, and Delhi to serve big cities' nouveau riche. Many of them have come back totally broken, some fully exploited some with serious health issues and they are all now repentant," she concluded.

Miss F says, "Many of the customers treat and behave well with us. They come here, spend some hours, sing songs on Karaoke and give us hefty tips. What we could understand from their conversations is that they just want some companionship, someone with whom they can talk about their feelings, their life stories and we also found that such customers are not having good relationships with their wives."

"Some of the visitors to bars are businessmen, engineers, lawyers, doctors,

architects, policemen, and others from educated backgrounds," says she.

"Mr. P is an erudite scholar. He is a regular visitor to this bar. We are three girls working in this bar. He treats all of us equally. He talks about various subjects. His conversation touches on political issues, movies,

"Some of the visitors to bars are businessmen, engineers, lawyers, doctors, architects, policemen, and others from educated backgrounds," says she. "Mr. P is an erudite scholar. He is a regular visitor to this bar. We are three girls working in this bar. He treats all of us equally. He talks about various subjects.

science, history, the Ukraine war, the Covid-19 pandemic, the greenhouse effect, etc and he can talk in-depth on any topic. Whenever we try to touch him, he cleverly moves away. We respect him and want more customers like him to visit our bar," says Miss G.

"Mrs. M, the owner of our bar, also likes him and respects him. So, you see, all those who visit bars are not bad or of bad character or come here to seduce us," she says affirmatively.

"Sir, money is the matter which matters the most in this materialistic world. People will only remember me for what I have achieved at the end of my life and not for what I have done. Today, I am in a position to finance the educational expenses

of my younger sister who is studying in B.Com part-I. She has full faith in me. I share everything with her. As we don't have parents, she loves and respects me as her Mom. Tell me, am I doing anything wrong?" she questioned me.

"Believe me or not, I have not gone on a date with anybody till now though many of the lecherous customers try to seduce me, request me for a date," she added.

I met another virtuous woman who has her husband and children. She says, "Everyone in such a profession has their own problems and circumstances. I cannot sell my body for a few rupees and eventually plunge my life into darkness forever."

"I must tell you that we rarely share our mobile numbers with every customer. I have shared my mobile number with

two or three men only after finding them to be most trustworthy and harmless," says Miss Z.

"We come from far-flung village areas. We prefer to serve in this capital city because of payment of higher salary. We take a small room for rent and three to four girls stay in the room. We cook together, eat together and go out to our respective workplaces. Once in two or three months, we all visit our native places. We take to our houses/native villages those of us, who left their parents out of some compulsion. This is how we are eking out our livelihood," tells Miss X.

"Some of the customers don't ask us much about our family or where I come from. All they ask us is our hobbies, what kind of food we like, whether we have any boyfriends, whether we can share our mobile number with them or not,



whether we can go out with them on a date etc," says Miss R.

"Some customers even offer us a salary better than what we get in the bar on the condition if we agree to work in their house or office. Some even offer employment in some offices at a salary and in a working environment better than the present one we are in," says Miss M.

"It is not that some of us have not fallen prey to such lucrative offers. Some of our friends who went out of the state told us that at the initial stage, they took some time to adjust to the comparatively fast-paced life of a big city. Slowly and steadily, they started letting go of their inhibitions and tried to concentrate more on living it large since they had got a chance. They started meeting new people, going out on a long drive, hanging out in expensive joints, and

trying out new things," says Miss N.

"It is a dark and twisted world out there in big cities and the shocking incidents of maltreatment and forced body invasion narrated by my friends make me wonder just how we humans have managed to become the most advanced and yet, most barbaric of races. But at the end of the day, those of our friends had to come back with tears in their eyes," she told me.

In my last lap of visits to various bars, I went to a building situated about 20 km away from the heart of the city.

The address of this building was given to me by a girl according to whom it was a brothel.

Mr. P. is an erudite scholar. Whenever we try to touch him, he cleverly moves away.

"Brothel...?" I enquired with surprise.

"Yes, Sir. High-priced prostitutes visit this place, though prostitution is not practised as openly as we see in Sonagachi, Kolkata, and Falkland in Mumbai or GB Road, New Delhi." she said.

It was 3 pm when I entered the building. A lady in her forties welcomed me saying "Namaste". I reciprocated the same.

I found a big hall beautifully decorated. There were 10 tables with four chairs around each table in the hall. Seven tables were occupied by boys and girls. I took a seat at the window-side corner table. The lady came to me and sat in one of the chairs.

"Where are you from, Sir?" she enquired.

Before I could reply, a girl came and placed the food menu on my table and enquired about what I would like to have. I ordered a chilled premium beer.

"Take Sir to the room," said the lady to the girl.

"Lot of noise is here in the hall Sir. You will find the room very comfortable," said the lady.

The girl took me to a room. I found sofa sets with a central table kept in the room. The room was about 12x12 in size.

The girl put a bottle of premium beer and left.

By the time I drank half of the bottle, two ladies in their thirties and dressed in a sexually provocative manner entered the room and were seated on the sofa opposite me.

I was checking messages on my mobile. One of the ladies interrupted saying "Hello, Sir." "Hello," I replied.

"Are you new to this place?" one enquired.

"Yes", I replied.

I found that both of them could speak English fluently. I guessed them to be from well-to-do families and well-educated.

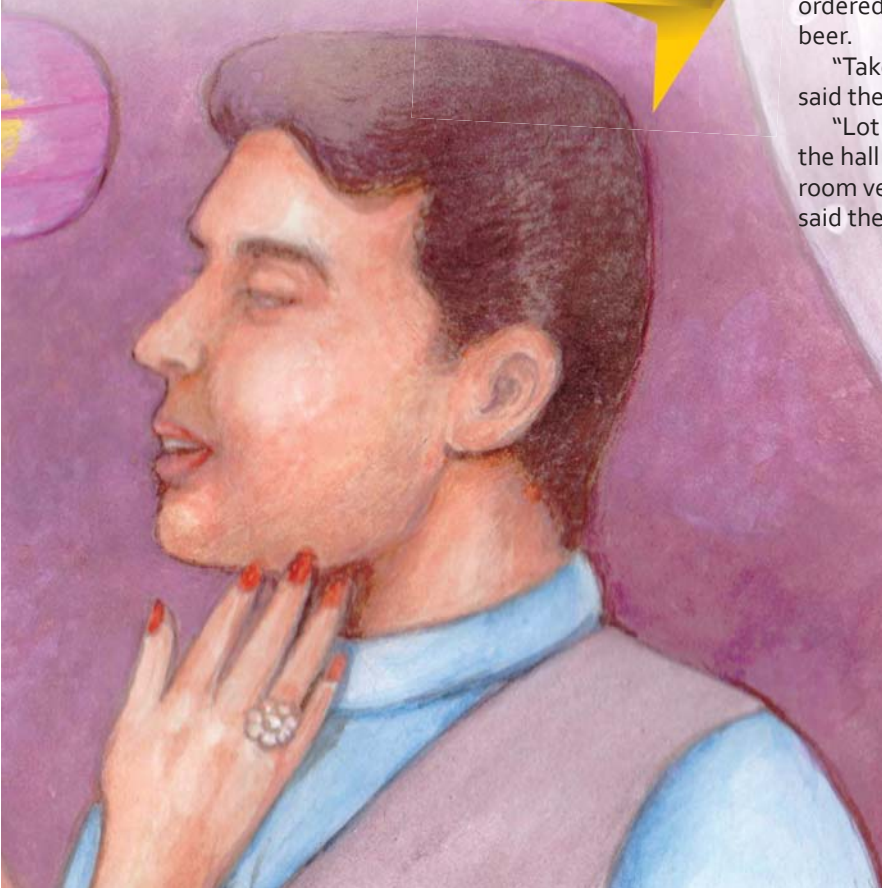
"Will you not offer us drinks?" said the other one.

"Oh, yes", I said thinking that they could, if inebriated; speak out truths about this place. We started discussing various topics. After half an hour, I introduced myself as a writer and indirectly broached the issue of prostitution. It appeared to me that both of them thought of me to be a customer.

"Frankly speaking, we are not whores as you might be guessing. We have family and this is our part-time profession," said one lady whom I found to be frank and extrovert.

"Sir, the lecherous men are like bees who will not be content with the nectar of one flower as we floozy women take over their needs and see them fly over to the next damsel in line," she told me.

"We know many of the



girls are into this profession primarily due to abject poverty and..." before she could finish, another lady interrupted, "Please stop the discussion."

"Sorry Sir. Please enjoy the drink and our company. If you desire..." before she could end, another lady said, "No, no, Sir appears to be not like the other guys." "Anyway, this is not a new problem. It has been in our society since time immemorial. Nobody could solve this problem."

What hurts us is the tall lectures the members of the so-called peer groups and other people associated with different social research organisations deliver about our life. They visit us in AC cars, talk to us, give suggestions on how to improve our lifestyle, reform our conditions and

remain connected with mainstream society, etc.," said a lady.

"We don't want your sympathy or empathy. Where were the peer groups and those from social research organisations when young girls were suffering from abject poverty, mental agonies, and maltreatment on the family front, hunger, and total neglect? Where were they when we were in a fix on what to do or not to do for our survival?"

No one came forward, listened to our woes, and lent a helping hand to tide over the crisis. We don't blame anybody. We blame ourselves. We are at the receiving end. We also know that we are the most despised and criticised lot," she rued.

"When will we get a permanent solution to

this nagging problem? Could you please tell me, Sir?" asked one "We know you have no answer. Like other members of so-called peer groups, social research organisations, and reformists, you will also leave this place and vanish into oblivion," said one.

"And by the time you reach your home, many more young girls would have already joined this profession or trafficked and sold to some brothels or tortured, tormented and abused or allured by some fake friends or fake well-wishers, abused and pushed into flesh trade. So please stop gaining an insight into our lives and leave us to our fate," saying this both of them left the room.

Having returned to my residence, I wrote this piece to tell you their stories as a sister, a mother, a daughter

– as a woman, not just a sex worker. We cannot and must not conclude that all those who live in dark alleys are all of the easy virtue. I found the majority of them are excellent and dignified human beings with lively hearts and great aspirations to better their financial condition marry and settle down in life.

All they need and expect from us is our moral support, love, respect, social security and acceptability, recognition and respect for their profession, effective and prompt response from the administration whenever they land in trouble.

And most importantly, they need safety from the human traffickers, dirty-minded bar owners and clutches of lecherous customers and fake well-wishers.

We

NEIGHBOURS ALL Plant Lover

I got one more plant for my front door and hoped this one won't die or get stolen. For the last two months, all my plants at the front door either died or stolen by someone a few days after I put them there. Five days later, my plant was not there, this pissed me off. So, I decided not to put any plants out there.

The other weekend, there was a kitty party at my neighbour's house, we all were having fun when my phone rang, and I went to her inner balcony to answer my call. I saw that she had more than 40 plants, and out of those some were my door plants. Suddenly, a soft voice came from behind, "I am really sorry. I had no intention of stealing your plants."

I was shocked, and I asked, "Then why?" She continued, "I love plants, and when I saw your plants dying because you forgot to water them, I

took them and tried to bring them in better condition. I thought of giving them back to you, but I was scared you would forget to water them."

After the conversation, I realised that she was right, I was so busy with my work that I always forgot to water my plants.

I promised her that I would try to take care of them and that if someday I am not there to water my plants then she can do that. We agreed to that and started looking after our plants together.

– Neha

A Life Saviour

In 2019 I lost my father because of a serious heart attack. After my father, I was left with my mother and a lot of responsibilities. But perhaps the universe hated me too much as, after almost a year of my father's death, I lost my mother in a car accident. Because of my losses, I went into depression, did not talk to anyone, barely left my house and even quit

my job. One day, I was on my roof, had serious conflicts with myself and somewhere thought of suicide came to my mind.

I was standing still looking down from the 10th floor when I heard a voice from behind. It was my neighbour Sunita aunty.

She is an old lady in her late 50s who has known me since I was a child. She came to me and said, "Child, your parents would never love this. They know you are very strong, don't prove them wrong. They wanted you to be happy and successful so do it for them".

After listening to her, tears started falling down my cheeks, it was the first time I was crying after my mother's death.

The next morning, she took me to a doctor and helped in applying for my job. After a long time, I felt calm. I also thanked god for sending such a lovely person to save my life.

– Kavita



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Sologamy

A Journey To Life You Love

A way to assert women empowerment. By Kiran Rawat

Sometimes... I like to be alone. I enjoy freedom and solitude. In those moments I remember who I am and what I want in life.” - Anonymous. Someone has written the above line in great love for self and solitude. But what if someone chooses to embrace solitude for lifetime? What’s wrong with it?

Kshama Bindu, a 24-year-old woman from Gujarat, gave a pleasant surprise to our entire nation with her decision to marry herself.

Although it could be seen as an act of rebellion by the protectors of religious sentiments but actually neither any Hindu Sangathan banned her for this move, nor was there any outrage in media regarding it.

Everyone was amused at her decision. She even celebrated this decision of hers by marrying herself in witness of her close friends and relatives. She is the first Indian to embrace Sologamy - an act of marrying self in public. Following this, a TV actress, Kanishka Soni, too embraced sologamy. She declared that till now she is completely in love with herself and her family.

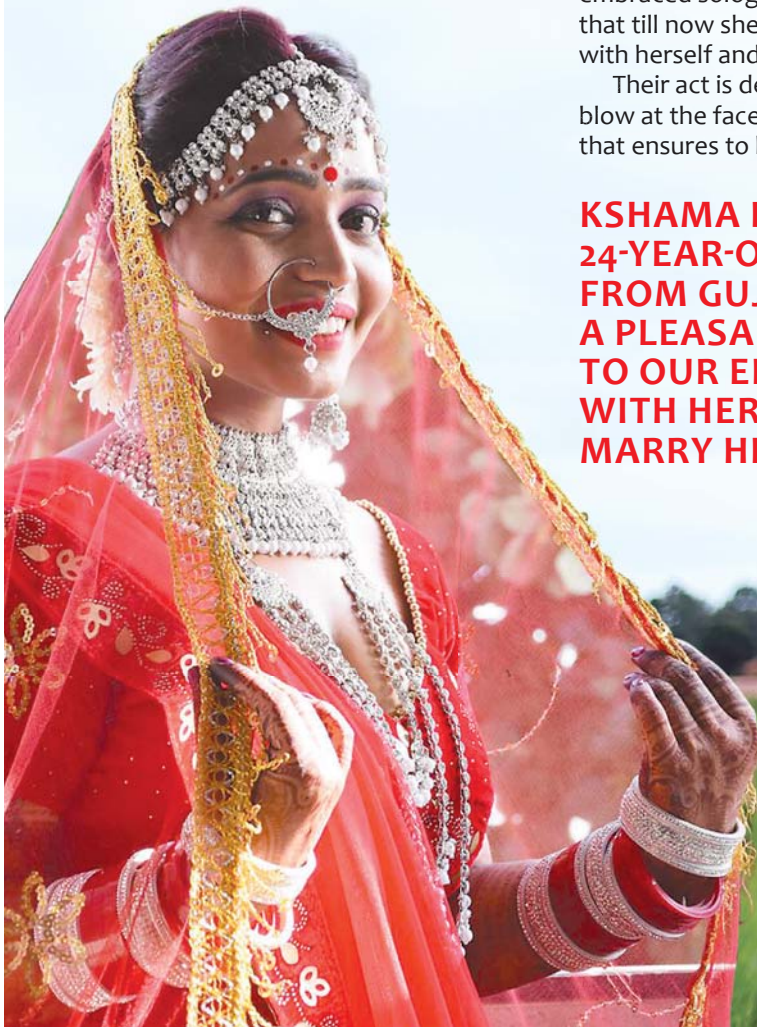
Their act is definitely not only a blow at the face of male chauvinism, that ensures to keep fear lurking in

the minds of women, but also it is an empowering act for the entire womenfolk. This episode sends a clear message to the society that girls today are not weak but they know how to rule over their lives.

‘I love you’ are those three magical words we are always eager to hear other saying them to us. These words open floodgate of happiness in our life. We feel more confident, happier and more at ease with ourselves. Life also suddenly treats us to its best. But there is no fixed rule for these magical words.

Why wait for someone else to make us feel worthy of our existence? Why not we say these words to ourselves with the word ‘myself’ or ‘me’ replacing ‘you’.

KSHAMA BINDU, A 24-YEAR-OLD WOMAN FROM GUJARAT, GAVE A PLEASANT SURPRISE TO OUR ENTIRE NATION WITH HER DECISION TO MARRY HERSELF.



Yes I know this sounds completely crazy or impractical idea as we always need someone to share our thoughts, views and worries with. However, some people are introvert. They may achieve so much in life but they remain very sensitive inside.

They love their own world. So there is no harm in deciding to live life on your own, when you know you are quite complex to be understood by anyone except your family. And you decide to go solo for the journey of life. Nobody can stop you because ours is an independent country where the Constitution gives you the right to life. You have freedom of choice.

Marriage is a responsibility to hold on to a delicate relation. A self-dependent girl who is happy with her life, family and herself, decides to live alone because she wants to be more successful; she wants to explore the world all solo; she wants to care for her parents as they did for her; for

her marriage is not the synonym for sex. Girls today are so full of energy that you cannot expect them to stay trapped within four walls of the house. Their lives flow like tunes flow in music or words flow in poetry.

In western world, the idea of individuality is highly stressed upon but maintaining the familial bond of not only the immediate family but also of the extended family is of utmost importance in India. So idea of sologamy cannot easily fit into our social norms. But there are numerous women who, for one reason or the

other, have silently remained solo for life. Like our Bharat Ratana awardee the late Lata Mangeshkar. Her tremendous contribution to music in Indian cinema bows head of every Indian in reverence for her.

She lived her life all solo and no one ever questioned her decision. The only difference between Kshama Bindu and any other lady who remains solo for life is that Kshama glorified her individuality by marrying herself.

Embracing Sologamy

This glorification is the part and parcel of our lives since we are a child. Every year we celebrate our birthday which again means glorification of our individuality. So Sologamy can be viewed as a bigger event that glorifies your individuality manifold and validates your decision to stay solo for life.

The reason why girls are embracing sologamy:-



GIRLS TODAY ARE SO FULL OF ENERGY THAT YOU CANNOT EXPECT THEM TO STAY TRAPPED WITHIN FOUR WALLS OF THE HOUSE. THEIR LIVES FLOW LIKE TUNES FLOW IN MUSIC OR WORDS FLOW IN POETRY.

The girls today are financially independent. Their view for the world is quite wide. They want to explore the world on their own. They want to live a completely independent life without compromising their individuality.

And marriage is such a big institution that requires you to grind yourself. You required to imbibe values of family you are entirely new at the age of 25 or more or less. This was considered a case with arranged marriage but girls are also finding same constrains in love marriage as well.

Everyone wants stability in life and a good life partner. However, youth today confront frequent break-ups. The instability in relations is leading the lasses to think they can better manage their life with their first family. Marriage is meant to enrich our lives. But sometimes, despite our trying hardest, wrong marriages bricker our belief system. In such situations, our first family, consciously or unconsciously, builds support for our survival with heads held high.

A Good Choice?

So why Sologamy can be considered a good choice?

It helps girls assert their individuality.

In our society, self assertion in a girl is sensed as an act of rebellion. But this is the most important factor they desperately need to lead a life full of dignity. When we don't know how to assert ourselves we are actually living the lives of so many but our own.

To carve out your individuality and assert it can be as simple as breaking a nut for one and for other it can be as difficult as bringing a pearl from the deep inside a sea. Education does play an important role in shaping our minds but sometimes even education fails to make a girl headstrong.

We have so many cases of a well educated woman feeling helpless to assert herself even where she is not at fault. I completely agree that in order to raise a family, especially a woman has to make herself mentally

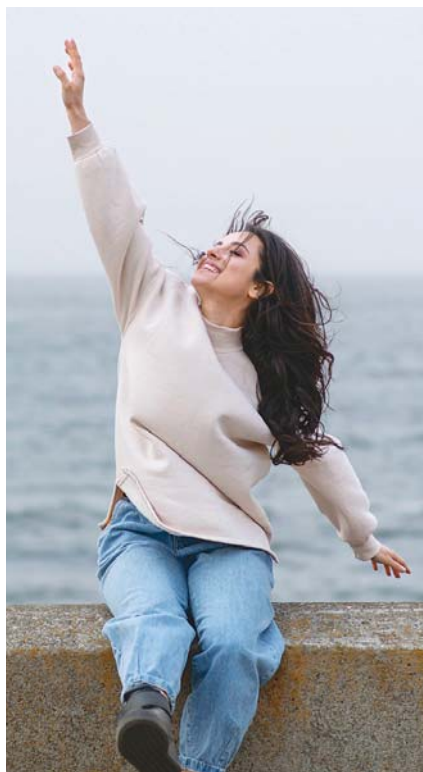
still and strong like a tree who bears the fruits only with its roots firm in the soil.

However, a woman at the same time should be as fierce as a tigress when someone takes her for granted. This is the magic of human mind power. We can bear a wide range of potentiality. So it is quintessential for a woman to work on her potentialities to be able to assert herself in various scenarios.

It helps girls ward off undue pressure of getting married at 'right age'.

A girl and her parents bear immense social pressure of 'arranging' a marriage. A burdened mind ceases to be decisive. The cases of mismatch in bride and groom are abundant in our society.

SOCIETY WANTS A GIRL TO BE MARRIED MAXIMUM UP TO THE AGE OF 25. BUT THERE ARE MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF FAMILY WHO MISS THIS TARGET BY SO MANY DAYS, SO MANY MONTHS OR EVEN SO MANY YEARS.



Society wants a girl to be married maximum up to the age of 25. But there are millions and millions of family who miss this target by so many days, so many months or even so many years. So is it a criminal offence? Does this make the family liable to judicial action? No! Not at all!

The right to privacy mentioned in our Constitution, protects us hence gives us our very much deserved right to a dignified life. When a girl says she is happy in her own life so we should allow her to be so till she is actually mentally prepared for marriage.

In that case, if a girl decides to be all alone in the journey of the life ahead of her, so it is fair enough to allow the girl go ahead with her decision. Sologamy is the best option to seal a stamp on her decision.

In a Bollywood movie *Ruhi*, when the girl is asked to choose between two boys, she chooses to be with the demon inside her. And in the last scene of the movie the male protagonists are seen asking her to 'palat' as Sharukh Khan did to woo Kajol in *DDLJ*.

But here, the girl decides to not look back and smilingly rides solo on her scooty. Although that was just a scene of a horror comedy movie but actually girls today want to go solo in real life. Interestingly, a commercial of a scooty brand has aptly defined the freedom of girls today in their punch line, 'Why should boys have all the fun?' Girls are asserting that they not only possess a heart but also a brain.

In Navratri, every year, girls are worshipped as goddess. Sologamy can be viewed as another event to glorify the identity of a woman, who carries both male and female deities inside her.

A right decision for taking care of parents. Last but not the least, in case a girl has no brother, or just out of her choice, she wants to stay solo to serve her parents for lifetime, sologamy is the better of the other options. In nutshell, there is no harm in going for sologamy when you know you won't be happier with anyone than your own self.

Teenache



Q & A

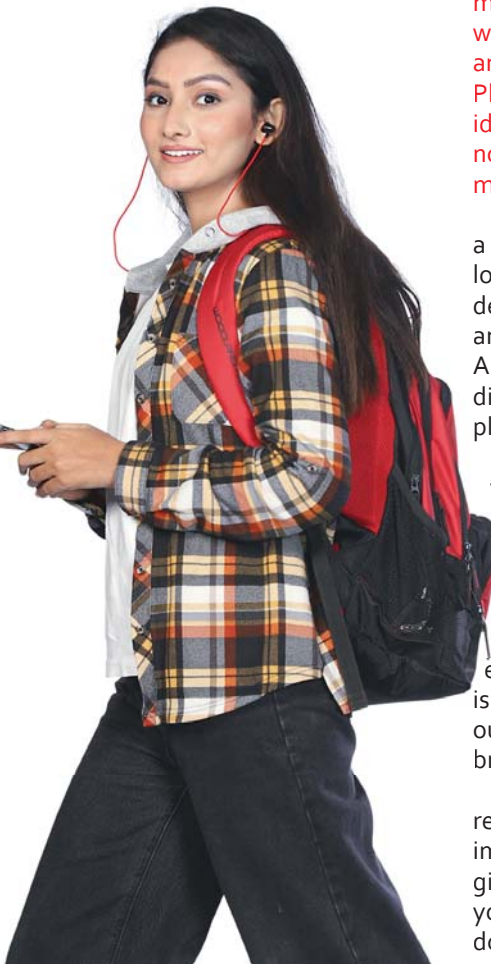
MY LOOKS ARE MARRED BY spectacles I am forced to wear because I am myopic. I am, otherwise, a good-looking teenage girl. Although I long to get laser surgery done, my parents are dead set against it. They feel that it is only my vanity which is prompting me and that vanity in a girl is bad. Every day we have arguments because of this. Is it possible for me to do it on my own, or must I have my parent's permission? I am 16 years old. Please advise..

Naturally, for a teenager, looks are of paramount importance. What makes you feel that spectacles are unattractive? There are many trendy models of eyewear which will make you look gorgeous. Try out different models to see which style suits you best. Several people wear spectacles to look good even when they are not needed. Laser surgery is not without risks. You have to be very careful about choosing an experienced and qualified eye surgeon. Also to think about is the cost of the surgery. How will you get the amount you need for that one surgery? Whether the result is permanent or not is a moot point. Cases of blindness and irreparable damage have also been reported. Also, no doctor will perform surgery on a minor without parental permission, as it could get him into trouble with the law if things go wrong. So, doing it on your own is out of the question. Wait till you are an adult before thinking about this option.

I AM AN 18-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO HAS fallen in love with a 50-year-old man. He is my father's friend, a widower with a young son. He is very affectionate and caring. I know I will be very happy with him. I am afraid

to reveal my feelings to my parents. Should I act or wait for this person to make the first move? If he hesitates, should I propose to him myself? What is the right etiquette?

Do not rush into revealing your feelings, for it is likely that this man is only treating you like a daughter, and you have misconstrued the situation. Remember, he is a very mature and worldly-wise man. He would never betray your father's trust by wooing you. If you propose to him, you may shock and embarrass him. It is also not seemly for a young girl to propose



marriage to a man much older than you. You are perhaps subconsciously seeking a father figure in your partner. And he fits the bill. He is too old for you. After a few years, when you want to go dancing, he will want to take a nap! Make friends of your age, and soon this crush of yours will become a thing of the past. And when you are much older, you will laugh over this episode.

MY BOYFRIEND AND I STUDY at the same college. We are both 19 years old. He loves me dearly and I feel the same way about him. He swears that he will marry only me after he finds a good career and can afford to have a wife, home and kids. Although I have accepted his proposal, I am not sure whether his feelings will remain the same after five to six years. He also could change his mind. But now, to make sure that I will always be his, he wants me to tattoo his name on my thigh or back. He feels that this will show him that I will not marry anyone else. I am worried about this. Please tell me whether this is a good idea. Frankly, at the moment, I do not want to lose him. If I refuse, he may move on.

You are right, five to six years is a long time to believe whether the love will last or not. If suddenly you decide that he is not right for you, and will want that tattoo removed. And removing a tattoo is very difficult, except with very expensive plastic surgery.

This is a very selfish request on your boyfriend's part. Does he want to brand you like cattle? If so, ask him to get a tattoo with your name too. Why only must women show their lifelong loyalty? Why can't the men be expected to do the same? When it is the men who are most likely to fall out of love? Ask him to get himself branded too.

He does not seem to know what real love and commitment are. He is immature and manipulative. Do not give in to his demands. If he leaves you because of this, let him go. He doesn't deserve you.

AMSTERDAM

Men will be men, but women tame them. By Rajni Gupta

Stepping out of the doorless hotel bathroom in a towel, Anya found Sameer still glued to his phone, not bothering to look up even once. It irked her.

They were in *Amsterdam* for the sake of love. They should be practically honeymooning especially considering they would be married for 15 years the following day.

She unzipped her suitcase and pulled out a floral printed dress.

"Aren't you going to close the thing?" Sameer asked.

She drew a breath then returned to the bathroom, suddenly too self-conscious to change before him. It irritated her — this desperate need to be desired. Used to be she didn't even care about sex, often clamping up as though undergoing a pelvic exam.

Sameer leaned across the table toward Anya. Without thinking she did the same.

The waiter took several shots, from different angles. Woozy, Anya smiled for all.

Then, the chance discovery of orgasm earlier that year, following a steamy episode of *The Americans*, left her powerless to the reward centre of her brain.

When ready, Anya let Sameer know the bathroom was his if he wanted to freshen up.

Once he was inside, she closed the suitcase and zipped it back because, well, resistance cost inner peace. Through the lemon-scented fog of the doorless bathroom she noticed Sameer gazing at himself in the mirror, turning this way and that.

Clad only in boxers, he was sucking in his paunch, to reduce which he was taking steps, literally. It occurred to her that he would be just fine being on vacation by himself. She turned away, feeling a hollowness inside. Why couldn't *she* be as self-contained?

Outside the window, the sun shone brightly on the canals by the

Centraal Station. Adjoining gingerbread houses lined the streets. Unlike their suburban neighbourhood in Charlotte, the place was thronging with people, tourists mostly going by the incessant photo-taking.

When Sameer was ready, they ate a quick breakfast of *poffertjes*, and apple pie with ice cream under the filigreed shadow of elms at the outdoor café adjacent to their hotel. Then they walked all the way to the Van Gogh museum.

Back in art school Anya had done a paper on Van Gogh, yet she had no knowledge of his Japanese inspired works, and of how prolific he was in his short life. She had goosebumps just standing there amid his work.

Anya herself was an artist, an illustrator really, but gave up her job when she got married and moved to the US. She longed to return to work, to experience the thrill of creating and feeling valued,



but it was hard to get hired after being out of the workforce for so long.

Now, she was afraid to try even. She could still create, a small voice inside her said, not for the first time.

As though the universe agreed, several blank easels stood in invitation at the nearby Rijks museum garden. Leaving Sameer to click pictures, Anya strode toward an open easel and picked up a charcoal. Her eyes scanned the landscape, settling on a wavy-haired woman sunning herself.

Anya sketched the portrait in three-quarter view, face lifted to the sky, eyes half closed, lips curled in a half smile, hair billowing out and beyond.

"It's good," Sameer said coming from behind Anya.

Anya allowed the pride to sink in while it lasted. She'd captured movement and stillness at the same time. There was so much potential in her. That it was choked for so long made her eyes well up.

No one was responsible, but she herself, and now it was her responsibility to undo it. Funny enough she had always called herself an artist even when she'd stopped working. That was and will always be her identity. She took in a deep breath and her chest swelled.

Sameer pointed his camera at Anya and clicked.

"You look beautiful, happy."

Their eyes locked and she sensed a deeper meaning. Could it be he noticed that she'd lately been teetering toward the morose end of the

spectrum? Could it be, he cared? The thought warmed her to him.

"Let's go back to the hotel for a nap," Sameer said.

Anya would have liked to finish shading the sketch but decided she could use a nap too, jet-lagged as she was.

Rolling up her sketch and tucking it in Sameer's backpack, she asked if they could take a tram. She had a blister from her new shoes.

"Let's walk," he said, hand automatically reaching for his paunch. He'd set a daily goal of 20,000 steps for each of the 8 days they would be in Europe. Anya could use the exercise too.

She slapped a band-aid on her blister, making a note to wear the broken-in ones for the remainder of the trip.

At Dam Square, among all the meme artists and gift stalls and tourists, there was an elderly man happily splayed on cobblestone, inviting pigeons to peck birdfeed off him. Anya smiled. The beauty of everything! Sameer noticed too for his camera was ready.

Before they turned into their street, the statue of Venus beckoned at the entrance of a sex museum. Curious, Anya led Sameer in.

There were erotic images, artifacts and sculptures from all over the world including her native India (from before foreign notions of veils and Victorian ideals). Anya was intrigued.

The other tourists too looked on intently at this portrayal of the

most intimate of human behaviours, as though it were art. Maybe it was. In meditation, which she'd recently turned to, creativity and sexuality were aligned.

The museum made her so hot that back at the hotel, as she freshened up, she was giddy with anticipation. By the time she climbed into bed, however, Sameer had already dozed off.

She put her arm around him. He clasped her hand and brought it close to his heart. For a moment, his

Anya was an artist, an illustrator, but gave up her job when she got married and moved to the US. She longed to experience the thrill of creating and feeling valued, but it was hard to get hired after being out of the workforce for so long. Now, she was afraid to try even. She could still create, a small voice inside her said, not for the first time.

heartbeat mirrored hers, and then it slowed. When his breathing became heavy, she turned away. Suddenly cold, she pulled the covers up to her chin. It was late afternoon. Voices and laughter floated up from the café outside. The whole world, it seemed, was up except her husband.

At home it was the same. She understood his work tired him out, but what excuse did he have here? A sense of loneliness overcame Anya. It wasn't

aloneness that she was comfortable with.

A series of quotes on "To Feel" hung on the wall, each encased in its own small window within a life-size picture frame.

"To feel is to not be indifferent", one quote read.

Sameer wasn't exactly indifferent. He loved her, if not passionately anymore, then in a quiet companionable sort of way. It would be enough if nature, in her attempt to optimise her final window of fertility (not that she wanted more children), weren't pumping Anya with desire.

Sameer's desire, on the other hand, was aimed not at Anya, but elsewhere. When he confided in her about the lap dances, Anya's entire world shook including her place in it. How could he claim it was harmless!

Determined not to let the thought ruin their vacation, Anya steered her mind toward her breathing. It relaxed her and she yawned. Just as she was about to drift into unconsciousness though, Sameer's snoring rattled her awake.

Unable to disregard it as white noise, Anya could no longer relax and the tide of thoughts flooded back—Sameer smiling at cheer leaders at a basketball game; Sameer impervious to her needs; Sameer too obsessed with his own fitness to care about her blister...

When the church bell tolled six, Anya got ready.

"If you're done napping, can we go for dinner?" Anya said throwing back Sameer's covers

Grunting, Sameer burrowed back under the covers. Anya flopped on a chair and began rampaging through a magazine.

"Something wrong?"

Sameer asked surfacing.

"No," Anya said, without looking at him.

He made a grunting sound—something between patience and impatience—and came to stand by her. Locating and massaging a knot in the back of her neck, he said, "Something is."

She flipped to the next page. A well-endowed swimsuit model stared back with smoldering eyes. Anya didn't miss the sharp breath Sameer took. She snapped the magazine shut.

The insecurity, she'd been fighting, returned. In a world obsessed with neo-fertility-goddess morphology (curvy slim), why didn't natural selection weed out small boobs? If there was an evolutionary

advantage, it eluded her. She remembered how Sameer's face had lit up initially when she'd briefly considered plastic surgery.

Sameer stopped massaging her neck and walked his fingers down her chest. "Looks like you need your medicine."

In a recent post-coital bliss, she'd jokingly claimed sex as medicinal. His teasing her about it, further vexed her, and she batted his hand away.

"Hey?" he said, looking hurt.

"I'm dressed now. You should have shown your enthusiasm earlier."

He gave a laugh. "Is that what this is about? You know I was tired."

"Let's just go get dinner?" she said, flushing.

He pulled her to him and kissed her, right there on the bridge. She yielded, guards floating away. A breeze blew at her blouse and tickled her belly.

They sat on the patio of a small American restaurant. Anya squinted at the sun skidding off the canals. As they sipped chilled Heinekens and scanned the menu, a group of women walked by, heels clacking, smell of weed trailing—a bachelorette party going by their phallic headbands. Sameer stared, amused.

The waiter, a young local with a ready smile, came over to take their order. He bent close as Anya, in her soft voice, asked for a veggie burger with fresh mozzarella and fries with mayonnaise.

As he repeated the order, Anya, given to relying on lip-reading in addition to hearing when it came to accents, watched the words form and roll out of his mouth, the dimple on his right cheek vying for attention.

When their burgers arrived, Sameer asked the waiter to take a photo. Sameer leaned across the table toward Anya. Without thinking she did the same. The waiter took several shots, from different angles. Woozy, Anya smiled for all. As soon as the waiter left, her smile retreated.

"Are we good?" Sameer asked extending

his hand. She looked at him then, right into his eyes. There was a glint there, from moistness or just play of light hard to tell, but it made him look so vulnerable, her heart melted.

He was making an effort. There might come a day he would give up. She took a deep breath and released her grudge.

"Yes." She reached over and placed her hand in his. His face lit up. She marveled at how boyish he still looked.

Their next stop was the coffee shop—that was where the guidebook said they would find weed.

Anya had never tried it before, not even in college. Now, in the throes of mid-life, she was eager. The coffee shop was narrow and small, and smelled of weed and smoke.

Sameer and Anya ate a "space" cake each. As people around them smoked, fumes curled and settled in Anya's chest, giving rise to an odd restlessness within. If second-hand smoke could do that to her, what would the space cake do? Would it make her lose control? Oh Gosh no. Not in this age of viral videos.

She wanted to return to the safety of the hotel,



but Sameer gestured for her to calm down. Only she couldn't. The tighter the smoke curled around her, the higher her paranoia rose.

"Let's go back to the hotel please," she pleaded.

Sameer nodded but made no effort to rise. The weed was making him even calmer.

"Please," Anya pleaded again.

He stood up. Anya didn't miss the fleeting annoyance cross his face.

It was dark outside and the air was cool. A few steps ahead, they saw a crowd and realised they were at the red light district. It was something on their must-see list so they decided to walk through.

In the windows of the adjoining gingerbread houses on either side of the canal, stood model like women in lingerie. At first Anya felt conscious staring, rather of being caught staring, but seeing as all eyes were focused on the windows, she became emboldened.

From cynics came comments like:

"She does nothing for me."

"How about some dick?"

The judging eyes didn't faze the women in the window—one tapped her foot as though to some song in her head, and another nonchalantly drank coffee with cake. This was an entirely different world, a world that dared you to drop your inhibitions. It made Anya hot.

She turned to Sameer, but her thrill disappeared at the sight of his dreamy expression.

And he couldn't look at her like that!

"I think I'm going to be sick." Stepping out of the crowd she took several deep breaths.

"Must be the weed," Sameer said. "Want to sit down?"

She stared at the canal, neon lights rippling and jumping off its dark surface. It made her dizzy.

"I want to go back to the hotel."

"We've only just begun."

"Please, Sameer."

His jaw tightened and without another word he began walking back in the direction of the hotel.

"Don't be angry," Anya said, catching up.

"It's always about what you want."

"That's not true."

"We are leaving for Paris tomorrow," he reasoned. "Tonight, is our only chance."

"Okay, fine," she said.

"Let's get it over with."

He cheered immediately, like their children on getting extra gaming time.

As the crowd swelled, Sameer's hand automatically reached for hers. She liked the warmth and protectiveness, but kept her gaze away, focusing her now-heightened senses on the crowd. She could smell the mix of perfume and weed and the canal's moldy odour. Her native Hindi reached her from just ahead.

"At least massage *toh karwa sakte hain*," an Indian man was saying to his friend.

She thought the man was kidding, and was kind of amused at the desperation, but the next instant he and his friend

approached the window.

Anya's cheeks burned. How could they! They came from a culture where, until recently, movies didn't even show kissing, turning the camera to a couple of flowers instead.

"I can't believe they went in?" Anya said, drawing Sameer's attention.

"What do you think this place is?" Sameer said coolly.

"No one else is going in."

"You don't know that."

"What if those guys were married?"

She remembered how scared she was to cross the road until Sameer tugged her along. Once inside the hotel, she'd hastened to their room because the walls were beginning to tilt. And then she'd crashed. Her mouth was so dry; she drank greedily from the water bottle on the nightstand. How long had she been asleep?

"What if they weren't?"

"Why are you defending them?"

"Why are you talking about them?"

Men... They were all the same. Weak...

Her distrust of men was shaped at age seven, following a violation. The image of her husband with an undulating stripper flashed before her, filling her with hostile suspicion. Would Sameer have gone in too, if alone?

Getting a lap dance wasn't exactly cheating, she reasoned. It seemed to

be the quintessential male behaviour. She ought to loosen up and indulge in a little "harmless" fun herself.

Yes, how about some dick!

Only there were none on display. The unfairness made her seethe afresh.

After the tour, when Sameer thanked Anya for her patience, she remained silent and distant.

"What happened now?" he asked, irritation in his voice, like she had no right to her feelings. She lost it then.

"I can't get over all the double standards!"

Sameer dropped Anya's hand and walked ahead, as though the remark was aimed at him, which in a way it was. She felt a twinge of satisfaction at that. But when he didn't turn back, a cold fear crept in. Was this the end?

As she stood there in that strange place, surrounded by strangers, the one familiar walking away, clouds in her mind cleared away, revealing the single most important truth.

As though their thoughts were in sync, he turned around, and noticing that Anya hadn't kept up, came back.

"I love you," she said, eyes filming, and just like that the tension diffused.

He pulled her to him and kissed her, right there on the bridge. She yielded, guards floating away. A breeze blew at her blouse and tickled her belly. She looked down to find if she was in fact wearing a dress.

The pot was playing tricks.

Anya awoke with a start, mouth parched, heart

pounding like a train on a bridge. Was she having a heart attack? The space cake! She should never have finished the whole thing. For a moment, she couldn't remember where she was until she saw the "to feel" quotes.

To feel is to let your senses run wild.

She had no memory of getting back to the hotel. Did she get drugged and mugged?

Throughout the night, she would wake up with a start to that same question, and each time, her eyes, like now, would dart first to the backpack that contained their passports, then to the window to make sure she wasn't on display, and finally to her spouse, who, who, who now wasn't in the room, his side of the bed un-slept in.

"Sameer?" she called

in a laboured voice. Her mouth felt like sandpaper.

No response. Panic rose inside Anya. Did Sameer go out? By himself...? As though her thoughts had outrun sound, his voice reached her, slow and warped as if squeezed through time and space when in fact it had only travelled from the bathroom.

Anya remembered then, the walk back to the hotel—how she'd felt the shuddering of the earth as trams and cars whooshed past; the time bomb ticking of the walk signal, so loud, it was odd no one else seemed alarmed.

She remembered how scared she was to cross the road until Sameer tugged her along. Once inside the hotel, she'd hastened to their room because the walls were beginning to tilt.

And then she'd crashed.

Her mouth was so dry; she drank greedily from the water bottle on the nightstand. How long had she been asleep?

"We've been back only five minutes," Sameer's voice floated over.

Did he just read her mind? Were their thoughts aligned?

"Come here," she called, feeling a surge of love.

After another eon, Sameer's throaty grunt of a 'yes' reached her.

She heard the water splashing in the sink. It went on and on like the relentless guffawing outside. Glancing again at the window to make sure the curtains were pulled close, she began undressing—removing first the dress, and after a moment's hesitation, the rest.

When she looked down at herself she thought her body was perfect, and kicked away the covers.

"Mmm. Mmm," Sameer said walking over, a wide grin spreading across his face.

Removing his clothes, he jumped into bed. For a while they lay in each other's arms, kissing. She didn't mind that his mouth tasted of weed, or that his stubble grazed her skin. She was only pleased that his eyes were closed and engrossed. Shutting her own eyes she thought of the young waiter with a single dimple.

When their bodies began writhing, Anya got on the top. She came quickly, breathless and buoyant at once. Words swam and crystallised before her eyes.

To feel is to awaken and go beyond.

We



Lost File

Once I was travelling by train from Delhi to Jaipur for office work. I was very tired, so I slept on the train and forgot my station. When my station came, someone woke me up, and I had to leave in a hurry. When I reached my hotel, I realised that one of my files was missing. I tried contacting customer care at Jaipur railway station and a few more places where my file could be; like the cab or the hotel reception. In the end, nothing helped. It was late at night, and I lost all hope.

The next morning, I got a call from an unknown number. I did not receive the call, but it rang again so I picked it up. A strong manly voice said, "Hello! Ma'am, I have found a file at the railway station, and your number was mentioned on it." Excitedly, I said, "Yes, it's mine. And it would be a big help if you could return it to me." After that, we decided to meet at a café which was in the middle for both of us.

After 2 hours I met the guy in the café. He was a decent-looking guy. He returned the file, and I thanked him multiple times. Then we sat there and talked for some time when I came to know that he was looking for a job and that's why he had come to Jaipur. I told him that there were a few vacancies in my company as well, and he could try applying there. After that meeting, I went back to my hotel.

One day, I reached my office when my colleague told me, "We had a meeting with our new sales department manager." I was surprised

to see, it was the same guy I met a few months back in Jaipur. After the meeting, I asked him what he was doing here and how? He said, "On your recommendation, I applied for a job in your office in Jaipur, and after a few months, I asked them for a transfer to Delhi so that I could meet you and say thank to you." His words made me smile. Shyly I said, "What a great reason to get a transfer," to which he said that he had one more reason. I asked what, and he said, "I wanted to be around you." That made me smile even harder.

After that, we started working together and spending a lot more time with each other. Without delaying any further, he proposed to me, I somewhere felt this might be too early. He was a nice guy, and I liked him so there was no reason to say no. After a few years, we got married and kept on working together, this time in my personal life as well.

–Sharmistha Thakur



NEWS PICTURES

Milan Fashion Week Men's A/W 2023: Gucci to Emporio Armani

The menswear season continues with Milan Fashion Week Mens A/W 2023, heralding an eclectic schedule which spans both the city's stalwarts – Prada, Giorgio Armani, Fendi among them – and a small but energetic contingent of young designers providing a fresh take on Italian style.



Milan Fashion Week



Miss Universe 2022

USA's R'Bonney Gabriel wins Miss Universe 2022

R'Bonney was crowned by the outgoing queen, Miss Universe 2021 Harnaaz Kaur Sandhu. The other two top honours went to Venezuela's Amanda Dudamel, who was declared the first runner-up, followed by Dominican Republic's Andreína Martínez, who was adjudged the second runner-up.

Harnaaz Sandhu flaunts traditional roots on stage at Miss Universe 2022

What Harnaaz wore was a blue-and-pink lehenga further enlivened with colourful accents and sequin embellishments. Her voluminous lehenga skirt also boasted of chevron patterns. Apart from being doused in a splash of colours, her blouse and the dupatta were also accentuated with gota patti details.



Traditional Outfit

Best Original Song

Bollywood's "RRR" soundtrack triumphed at the Golden Globes 2023

The musicians from the southern region of India are the trio behind the catchy and upbeat song "Naatu Naatu" from RRR, which won in the "Best Original Song-Motion Picture" category. It beat several US and Mexico-based musicians and their ballads.



BAFTA Tea Party

Inside The 2023 BAFTA Tea Party With Kate Hudson, Cate Blanchett & More

The BAFTA Tea Party welcomes nominees, members and guests for a uniquely elegant gathering. The event is an exclusive affair, limited to invited guests and BAFTA Members only. The event benefits BAFTA's renowned education and inclusion programs in North America.



The 2023 FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC)

The FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) ran for the first time in 2022 and the series has expanded from four to five rounds as a result of the success of the inaugural championship. The seventh World Championship running under the governance of the FIA will head to North and South America for the first time, in the Middle East and a season finale at the Rallye du Maroc in North Africa.



FIA World Rally

Top States in EV Revolution



Auto Expo 2023: Home to Many EV Start-Ups

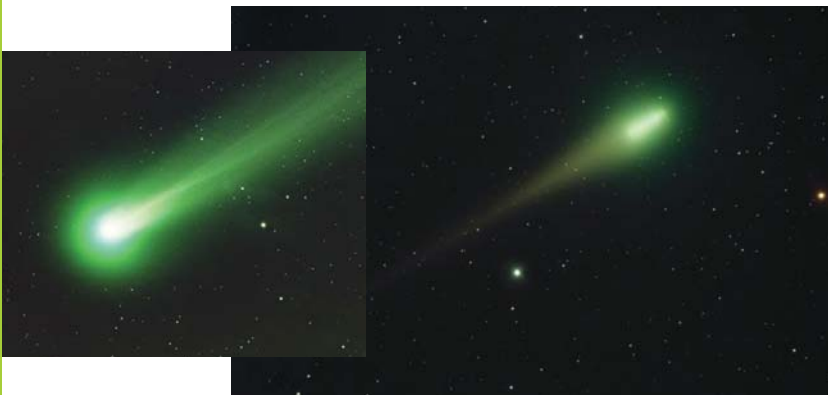
While Uttar Pradesh and Delhi are top states in terms of EV revolution in India with 30 per cent of such vehicles on road, Karnataka, with its tech hub Bengaluru, is lagging behind. Needless to say, that Karnataka is one of the first states in the country to come up with an EV policy focusing on ecosystem development. But as of now, it has not yet reached the bar for mass adoption to challenge Uttar Pradesh or Delhi.

After Months Of Hype, Prince Harry's Memoir Goes On Sale

After months of anticipation and a sustained publicity blitz, Prince Harry's autobiography 'Spare' finally went on sale in his native UK, threatening more embarrassment for the royal family. Some UK stores opened late for the midnight release of the biggest royal book since Harry's mother Princess Diana collaborated with Andrew Morton for 'Diana: Her True Story' in 1992.



Approached Comet



A Newly-Discovered Green Comet Approached Earth

It was last seen by Neanderthal, but astronomers only just learned of its existence, and it will be gone before we know it, possibly leaving us waiting another 50,000 years or more for another glimpse. They discovered a new comet C/2022 E3 just in time for its closest approach to Earth in early 2023 — but after this encounter, it won't be coming by for a very long time.

AS YOU SAY

DON'T HESITATE



In the article, *Managing Maddening Questions*, by Arshia Sheikh, December 2022, the writer gives us valuable tips for managing the annoying questions

of the judgmental people in our daily life. Some people ask us questions out of sheer curiosity, but many toxic people ask us personal questions merely to disturb our peace of mind.

We come across such people at our workplace, neighbourhood and in even our family. We can divert the attention of such people when they ask some embarrassing question, start asking them a question too or avoid answering it at all by exercising patience. If we cannot ignore such a person and it is unavoidable, then also, maintaining a dignified silence is the best option. If someone persistently asks us unwanted questions, we should not hesitate to retaliate since what matters to us most is our own mental peace.

—Harinder Kaur

TAKING BABY STEPS



In the Dec issue of WE, the article 'The Perfect, Student and The Counsellor' was an interesting read, showing the need for counselling for all ages. Slowly people

have started learning the importance and need for a Counsellor. Good that people have realised whom to

approach in times of an issue which causes stress and anxiety, probably with education on the rise.

We have started taking baby steps, and we have a long way to go to create more awareness of the benefits of counselling. A counsellor is a person to whom one can confide and vent out trouble-causing issues.

At the student level, Cathy, despite excelling in academics and co-curricular activities, had her own doubts about failures, which Ankita, the Student Counsellor, clearly explains.

—Preetha Rengaswamy

IGNORE YOUR ILL-ADVISERS

Referring to the article, *The Mantra Complex*, by Romola Shanbhag, December 2022, our ill advisers mislead us, and sometimes we take a hard decision on their advice when they constantly pressurise us for it. We only come to realise our folly when we have to face the consequences of that decision. Our advisers can be family members or a friend.

Many relationships get strained, and even marriages are broken due to these interfering people. Be careful before you act upon their advice, whether it is favourable to you in the long run or not. Use your own mind and visualise the outcomes as you may have to regret later on for acting upon

someone's provocation.

Don't keep a fixed image of someone in your mind on a family member's projected image, as you will never be able to realise the true worth of that person if your mind is poisoned against him or her. Remember it is your life and take your own decision as sometimes an overindulgent person in your life can give it the wrong direction.

—Harinder Kaur

ENABLING SELF-CONTROL

The article *Less is More* by Santosh Pattanaik on WE-December 22 is informative. The writer has clearly driven home the point from the start

that as children are always curious and enamoured with very objects and gadgets, it is a natural tendency for them to throw tantrums to get it at any cost. And modern children have developed a desire to possess any object/gadget at any cost once



they set their eyes on it. It is obvious they put pressure on parents or grandparents to achieve their objective. Despite every child being unique in their own way, possessing

their own strengths and weaknesses, the pressure on the new-age parents is tremendous as they feel depriving a child of something is like a sin.

This is where the parents need to set limits and explain to the child the values of life to inculcate a healthy attitude in the child. On the contrary, when parenting is a dynamic phenomenon, and the child is a constantly growing person, norms and limits are important because they teach children mutual respect and responsibility for their actions.

Finally, this helps regulate a child's behaviour, thereby raising self-confidence to get along well with their family and friends while allowing them to learn from mistakes by enabling them to have self-control as they grow up to face challenges in life.

—R.Srinivasan

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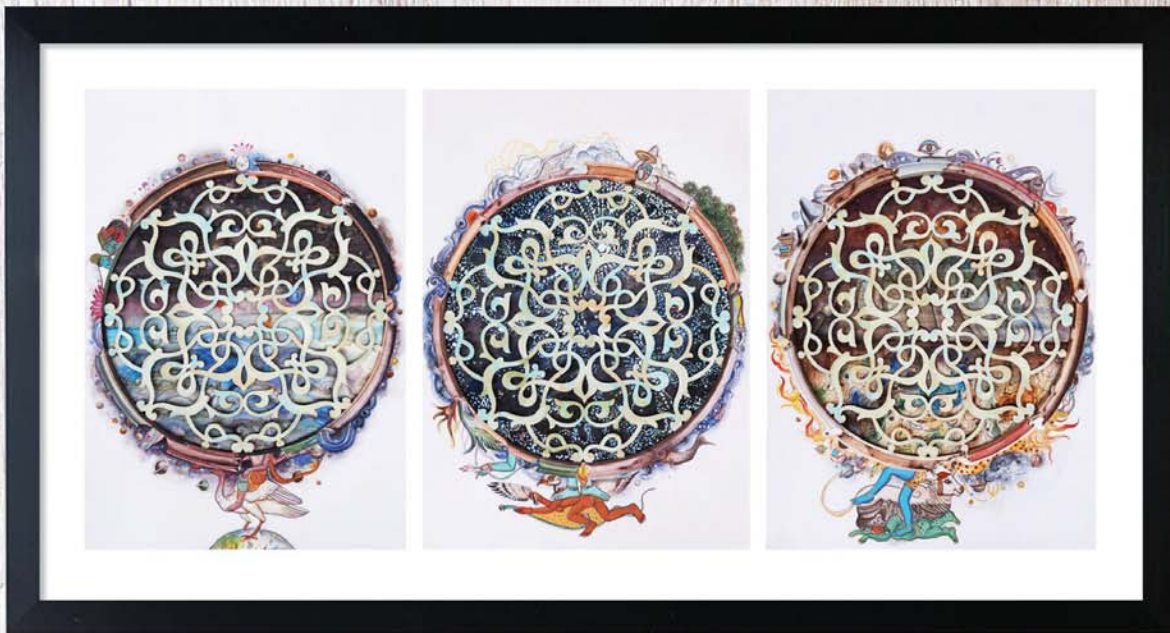
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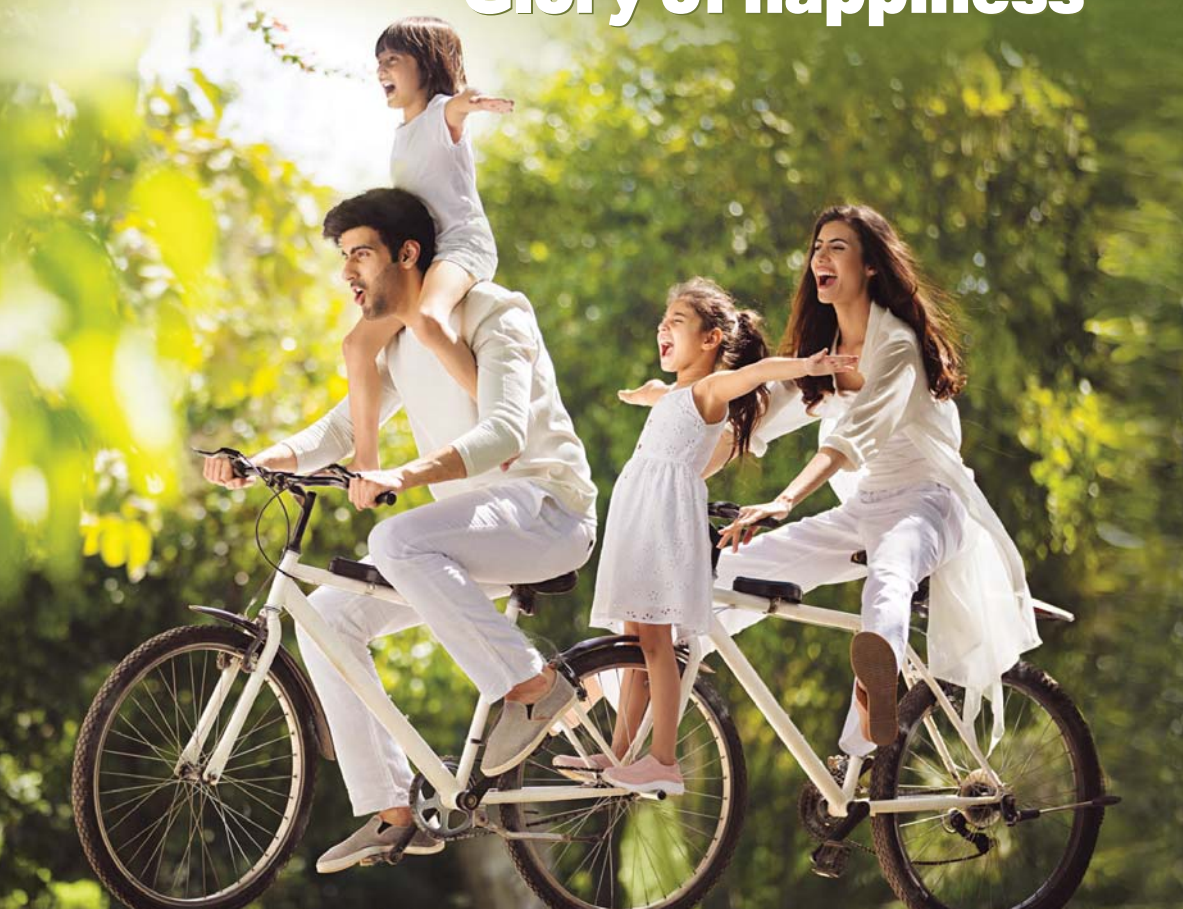
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