SPECIAL ISSUE

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OCTOBER 4, 2021 ₹75

INDIA TODAY



THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

INSIGHTS FROM SCIENTISTS, PREACHERS AND INSPIRATIONAL INDIVIDUALS ON HOW TO FIND YOUR BLISS AND SHARE IT

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ALGO QUEEN

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hosted by **Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham**



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- Coding has become a crucial skill for those searching for the best career prospects or planning to up-skill further
- Computer Programming is now recognized as an essential ability and considered a competitive advantage while applying for 21st Century jobs

Why is Girls Learning Coding Important?

- Even though there is a huge demand for coders, women are significantly underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
- It is important to show girls that learning coding is not only beneficial for their future, but can also be fun
- Our world now relies on technology and the demand for programmers will only grow

PRIZES

Gold Medals for Teams Ranked 1-5

Silver Medals for Teams Ranked 6-10

Bronze Medals for Teams Ranked 11-15

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A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND GLOBAL PROGRAMMING CONTEST FOR GIRLS BY AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM

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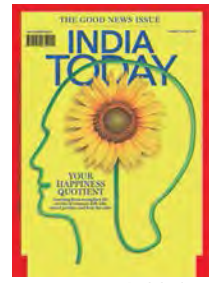
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Happiness is a many-splendoured thing. It is different for everyone and impossible to define. If you ask spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, he will tell you, "Happiness is just an idea when you don't know it, and you *are* it when you know it." It is obviously a state of mind with a complete absence of negative emotions, which leaves a person feeling positive or relaxed. Ask a psychologist, and they will tell you that happiness has two aspects: the hedonistic one, where you feel pleasure and enjoyment but which by its very nature is fleeting; and the eudemonic one, which equates happiness with a meaningful life that is full of positive relations with people and the environment. It would be unusual for anyone to be constantly happy as life is full of its share of suffering. You will never know happiness if you have never been sad. That said, everyone is engaged in the pursuit of happiness, one way or another.

This has assumed greater relevance now, with the Covid-19 pandemic having caused collective death and misery on a global scale, disrupting lives and livelihoods unlike any other time in recent history. Over 4.6 million people have died from the pandemic worldwide since last year. Economies are being ravaged. The living have to cope with greater economic insecurity, anxiety and disruption in every aspect of life. For several people, challenges to mental and physical health remain.

To dispel some of this gloom, we decided to bring out a special issue and spread positivity. Our cover, 'The Quest for Happiness', examines what it means to be happy and what individuals are doing to get there. We approached a range of spiritual leaders and prominent psychologists to find out their definitions of happiness. The common learnings from them were: a few basic material needs must be met for being happy in life; good physical health; synchronicity between aspirations and reality; harmonious relationships with family, friends and community; a purpose in life and meaningful work; compassion and helping others. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, author of *The Art of Happiness*, writes in this issue: "If a person is happy, his or her family will be happier; if families are happy, neighbourhoods and nations will be happier. By each of us working to transform ourselves, we can change our human way of life and make this a century of compassion." Bhutan has taken this seriously and introduced the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Dasho Karma Ura, president of the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies in Thimphu, believes his country's unique GNH concept is a tool for governments and even individuals to balance the extremes of materialistic maximisation of income and the intangible constituents of human wellbeing.



January 14, 2019



January 15, 2018



January 30, 2017



January 11, 2016

Many feel happy by doing good to others. Our bureaus fanned out across the country to chronicle their inspirational stories. The aptly named Smile Foundation caters to underserved communities in over 2,200 villages and urban slums in 25 states of India through more than 400 welfare projects directly benefitting 1.5 million children. A teacher in a small town in Assam runs a school for special children abandoned by society. A nature conservationist's charity has helped create city forests in Gurugram's concrete jungle. A Mumbai restaurateur has begun recruiting some of Mumbai's out-of-work *dabbawalas* for home delivery of food from his upmarket outlets. Happiness trainer Jaswinder Pal Singh prevented a friend from taking his own life by advising him to focus on three Gs—gratitude, goodness and giving. These men and women do much more than putting a smile on people's faces; they also facilitate their mental and physical wellbeing. We hope the positive stories of the exemplary individuals featured here will inspire you and help you better understand the dimensions of happiness and wellbeing.

We also have a cross-section of 43 Indians answering the question: what makes them happy. It makes for interesting reading. Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw says he's the happiest when he solves a complex problem. Lyricist and poet Gulzar says 'the feeling of happiness holds meaning, not the fact of its existence'.

Given the importance of the subject for individual and national wellbeing, we plan to carry a regular feature on happiness from our next issue onwards. It will culminate in a daylong festival of happiness to be held early next year.

As for me, I have found happiness in the work I do. For that, dear reader, I am grateful to you. Thank you.

(Aroon Purie)

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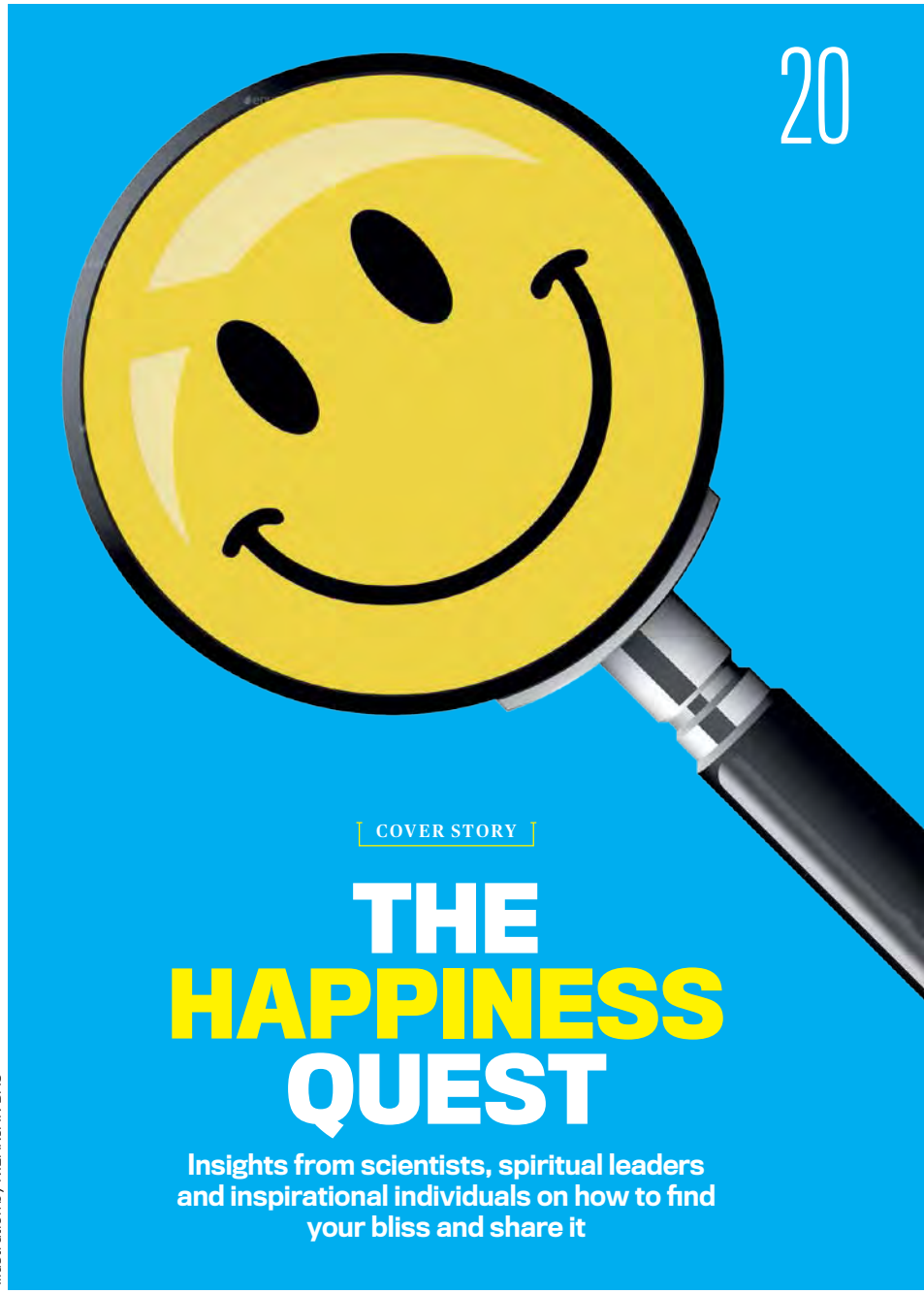
INSIDE

UPFRONT
PUNJAB: CHANNI'S CHALLENGES PG 10

BENGAL: THE POWER OF A *PADA* CLUB
PG 18

LEISURE
CAN MEN LOVE WOMEN? PG 85

Q&A WITH MALAIKA ARORA
PG 92



20

COVER STORY

THE HAPPINESS QUEST

Insights from scientists, spiritual leaders and inspirational individuals on how to find your bliss and share it

Illustration by NILANJAN DAS

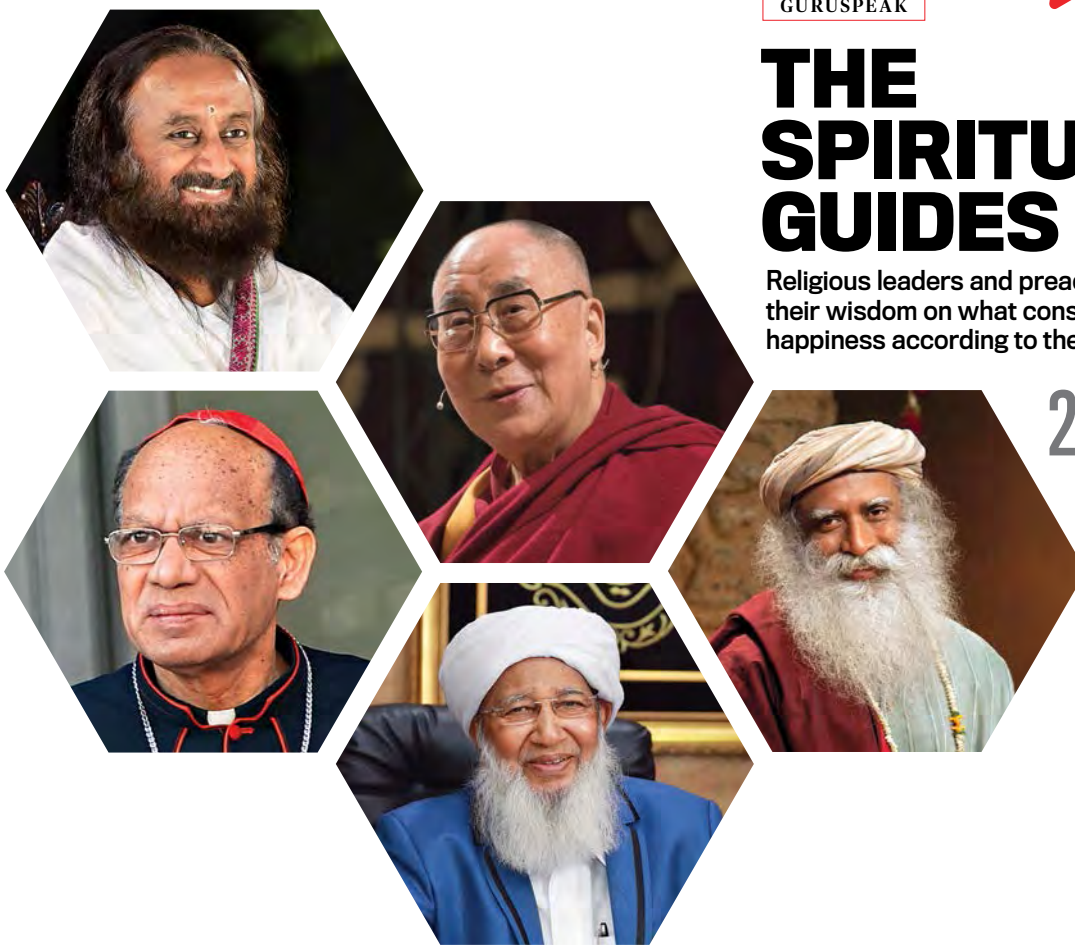
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GURUSPEAK

THE SPIRITUAL GUIDES

Religious leaders and preachers offer their wisdom on what constitutes happiness according to their traditions

24



EXPERTSPEAK

34 SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

Experts outline the psychological and physiological dimensions of the state of being happy

VOX POP

WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY

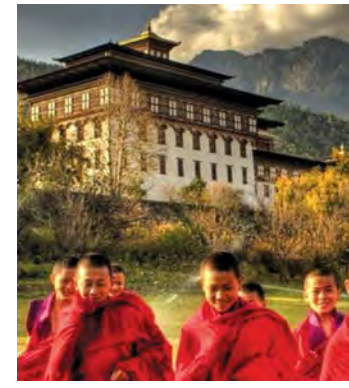
From long walks on the beach and a good book to the sound of their children's laughter and hanging out with friends, 43 personalities from across fields share their idea of joy

42

GUEST COLUMN

66 BHUTAN SHOWS THE WAY

The nation pioneered the Gross National Happiness concept to monitor its economic progress



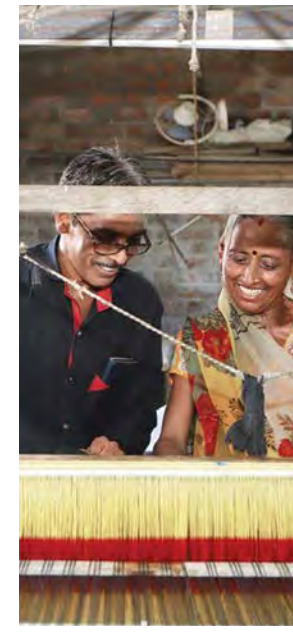
INSIDE













EXEMPLAR 70

SMILE MULTIPLIERS

Dynamic individuals and institutions from all over the country who have found special ways to open hearts and spread cheer











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GUJARAT: BJP BETS ON NEWBIES
PG 14

UPFRONT

BENGAL: POWER OF A *PADA* CLUB
PG 18



SANDEEP SAHDEV

POWER POINTS
New CM Channi (left) with PCC chief Sidhu at his first press meet, Sept. 19

PUNJAB/ CONGRESS

CAN CHANNI DELIVER?

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

On the morning of September 20, Charanjit Singh Channi, 58, was sworn in as the 17th chief minister of Punjab, in the process making history as the first Dalit to occupy the chair. He took oath along with two deputy CMs, prominent Jat Sikh leader Sukhjinder Randhawa and Om Prakash Soni, an upper caste Hindu businessman. It's a big gamble the Congress is taking, trying to alter caste equations in the state. Since the 1966 state reorganisation, Punjab has always had a chief minister from the dominant Jat Sikh community (with the exception of Giani Zail Singh, an OBC Ramgarhia Sikh), and Channi's big challenge will be to prove to the Dalit community that the Congress didn't pick him just as a nightwatchman.

It won't be easy. Even before he took oath, party general secretary Harish Rawat flubbed his lines and said the Congress would fight the assembly poll due in February 2022 under the leadership of Punjab PCC (Pradesh Congress Committee) chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, a Jat Sikh, only to be rebuked by the likes of Sunil Jakhar (ex-PCC chief) and other non-Jat Sikh leaders in the party who called it an insult to Channi. Rawat quickly clarified that what he meant was a Sidhu-Channi joint leadership.

The Congress also has to watch out for ex-CM Capt. Amarinder Singh, 79, who resigned a day earlier after tus-

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sling with Sidhu for months. The power shift is hugely symbolic—Amarinder, a Jat Sikh, is the titular maharaja of the erstwhile Patiala fief. Channi, a three-time MLA from Chamkaur Sahib, is a Ramdasi Dalit Sikh.

As per Census 2011, Dalits make up 32 per cent of the population of the state, with Ramdasis/ Ravidasis being dominant among them. The choice of Channi as CM might propel the Jat Sikhs towards the SAD (Shiromani Akali Dal). Jat Sikhs make up 18 per cent of the electorate, but have dominated Punjab's politics, culture, Sikh religion and intelligentsia. The development skew is clearly visible: according to the 2015 Agriculture Census, Dalits own less than 3 per cent of the farms, whereas the Jat Sikhs own 93 per cent.

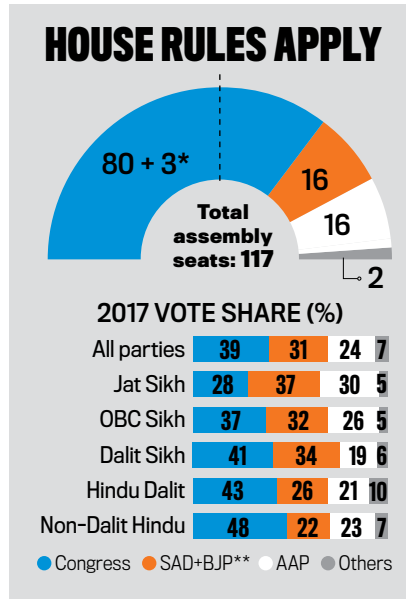
The Dalit community in Punjab is a mixture of 39 sub-castes, with a blend of Sikhs and Hindus. "In the past, Channi has raised many of their issues. Now is his chance to do something about it," says an ex-cabinet colleague. With Channi in the saddle, the Congress will be looking to get a majority of the marginalised Dalit vote. According to a Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) study, the Congress got 41 per cent of the Dalit Sikh and 43 per cent of the Dalit Hindu votes respectively in 2017.

A MIFFED CAPTAIN

Channi's major challenge will be to offset the potential damage an upset Amarinder could do to the party. In his exit interviews, Singh played the victim card, saying he had been humiliated by the Congress. The Captain even went to submit his resignation letter wearing his Sikh Regiment colours. He chose to skip Channi's swearing-in ceremony (though he sent a congratulatory message) while parallelly holding a meeting with his camp followers from the Congress.

Amarinder has already upped the ante on the nationalism issue. Just before he resigned, on September 18, he targeted Sidhu for his "close links" with the Pakistani establishment. Sidhu had courted controversy during the Kartarpur Corridor opening in late 2019 and in 2018 when he hugged Pakistan army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa at the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Congress leadership will expect Channi to get the Hindu voters who have been apprehensive of Sidhu's perceived radical Sikh stand. Amarinder's attack will have struck a chord with the Hindu voters in Punjab, who make up 38.5 per cent of the electorate. In 2017, they voted Congress.

The BJP has reportedly made overtures to the former Patiala royal; they feel he could make a huge difference in at least 45 urban and 28 suburban seats in the assembly poll. "The anti-incumbency was not just against Amarinder, but also the Congress. He now has the sympathy of the Punjabis, for the way he was treated by the Congress leadership," says a top BJP leader.



*AAP MLAs who joined Congress
**The alliance has split since

Source: CSDS

THE RISE OF THE NATIVE

In 2007, Amarinder had backed Channi as an Independent candidate from Chamkaur Sahib to counter then PCC chief Shamsher Singh Dullo (another Ramdasi Sikh). Channi went on to support the SAD-BJP government in the state. Amarinder inducted him into the Congress in 2012. Later, Channi fell out with him and, after joining the Pratap Singh Bajwa camp, became the Congress Legislature Party leader.

Channi is now a Rahul Gandhi loyalist. Over the past four-and-a-half years, he has been a rallying force for anti-Amarinder MLAs in the party. It was Channi and Sukhjinder Randhawa who orchestrated the rebellion against the ex-CM after the April 2021 high court verdict quashed the SIT report on the 2015 police firing after the Guru Granth Sahib desecration incident. Sidhu was the face of the rebellion, but it was Randhawa and Channi who got the warring factions to back Sidhu as PCC chief.

When it came to the crunch, Sidhu had to back Channi. The CLP leader's name cropped up late in the evening on September 19 after Sidhu had nixed the party high command's earlier choice for CM—Randhawa. Sidhu's bid to project himself as a candidate also fell flat, leaving him with no choice but to back Channi towards the end.

A prominent Dalit face in the party, Channi had for long been demanding more space for the community in the government. His close relative, Aruna Chaudhary, was part of the Amarinder cabinet. Another relative, Mohinder Kaypee, is a former MP from Jalandhar and an ex-PCC chief. Together, they have influence over a sizeable Dalit community in Pathankot, Jalandhar, Anandpur Sahib, Hoshiarpur and the Ropar belt of Punjab.

The Channi-Sidhu combination has a task on their hands to keep their respective communities together. Channi does want more Dalit representation, but cutting down on Jat Sikh numbers will slacken Sidhu's grip on that powerful community. Being out of power in Haryana, the Jats were already sulking, and they have now begun to fear a similar fate in Punjab. Sidhu will have to manage their edginess, but Channi may not offer him all the space he might want. Channi has termed his appointment as the beginning of a "*yug parivartan*", an epochal shift in Punjab politics. That it surely is, but we'll have to wait and see whether the political symbolism of his appointment translates into enduring socio-political change in the state. ■

GLASSHOUSE

COSTLY REBOOT

On September 13, BJP chose the relatively unknown **Bhupendra Patel** as Gujarat chief minister, and went on to name 21 first-timers in a cabinet of 24 ministers. While the party hopes to beat anti-incumbency with this daring overhaul barely months ahead of the 2022 assembly election, it is also proving to be a nightmare for the state government's publicity department, which has to trash all the publicity material—hoardings, calendars and posters—created for former chief minister Vijay Rupani, his deputy Nitin Patel and the old cabinet. It's still calculating costs for a new mega publicity drive to introduce Patel and his new cabinet to the voters. The costs, officials believe, will be steep. Changing governments in an election year clearly isn't cheap.



Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

TRIPLE THREAT

Three Maharashtra politicians are on the radar of the Enforcement Directorate—former home minister **Anil Deshmukh** of the NCP and transport minister **Anil Parab** of the Shiv Sena for their alleged role in a Rs 100 crore extortion case, and rural development minister **Hassan Mushrif** of the NCP, for his alleged role in a Rs 127 crore bank scam. State leaders of the Congress, the third constituent of the ruling MVA troika, must wonder if/ when the roving eye of the ED will focus on them.

ANI



ANI



Beginner's Luck

Bihar deputy chief minister **Tarkishore Prasad** recently called up the newly appointed Gujarat chief minister Bhupendra Patel to congratulate him. During the call, the two chatted about their rise in their respective state units. Prasad was plucked out of the backbench to become deputy chief minister in November 2020, while Patel was chosen to replace Vijay Rupani. Is there a Gandhinagar-Patna bromance in the offing?

CALENDAR ART

Former IAS officer **Arvind Kumar Sharma** made a dramatic entry into Uttar Pradesh politics this January when he was sworn in as an MLC. After briefly slipping into the background, Sharma made news again recently for distributing calendars in UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath's home district Gorakhpur. This was not good publicity, though, since local BJP leaders were quick to point out that the calendars only had photos of Sharma with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and none of Adityanath. Sharma has worked with Modi often in the past two decades—first during the latter's time as Gujarat CM and then as PM. His loyalties are well known.



–Sandeep Unnithan with Kiran D. Tare, Amitabh Srivastava and Ashish Misra



MANDAR DEODHAR

SAYING IT WITH ROSES
Gujarat chief minister Bhupendra Patel being congratulated after his swearing-in

BJP IN GUJARAT

Betting on Newbies

By Kiran D. Tare

On September 12, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose first-time MLA Bhupendra Patel to lead Gujarat, little did anyone expect that the new chief minister would also have a nearly all-new cabinet. As expected, the thorough overhaul left stalwarts like Nitin Patel, Saurabh Patel and Pradeepsinh Jadeja furious at being dropped and led to an unprecedented scenario where the Gujarat Raj Bhavan had to postpone the swearing-in ceremony of the new council of ministers by a day, to September 16.

Barring three, all ministers, including the CM, have no previous experience of governance. In 2001, too, the party had taken a big gamble on an inexperienced Narendra Modi and made him chief minister in the wake of the devastating Bhuj earthquake that year. That gamble paid off handsomely for the party—and the man it had then backed.

In 2016, the BJP chose Vijay Rupani, who represents the minority Jain community, when the politically influential Patidars, who form 18 per cent of the state's population, mounted huge rallies to demand reservations. Rupani became the second BJP chief minister after Modi to complete five years in office till he was sacked on September 11.

Political analyst Shirish Kashikar says Bhupendra Patel's biggest challenge will be to combat the unrest among the senior leaders who have been shown the door—former deputy chief minister Nitin Patel and former minister of state for home Pradeepsinh Jadeja. Nitin Patel has sizeable clout among the Patidars of north Gujarat. Jadeja represents another influential community, the Kshatriyas, who are strong in central Gujarat.

Soon after he was out of the race for the chief minister's post, Nitin Patel released a statement that read: 'My place is in the hearts of the people and will never go away. I have drunk the water of Mehsana. The voters are my strength.' However, another senior state BJP leader was dismissive of Nitin Patel's clout and his potential to do any damage: "Like former chief minister Suresh Mehta who had refused to work under Narendra Modi, he too will fade away." Mehta had quit, following which his political career too came practically to an end.

Jadeja, who was believed to have Union home minister Amit Shah's ear, had gained absolute control over the BJP's affairs in Ahmedabad. He was, therefore, expecting something bigger. At a private conversation, he is believed to have confided in another leader that he had had enough of the home department. "I want something new, something bigger," the leader recalls Jadeja as having said. Instead, he found himself out.

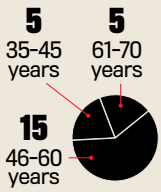
Nitin Patel and Jadeja have been replaced by Rushikesh Patel and Arjunsinh Chauhan, respectively. Rushikesh, a Patidar, is also from Mehsana and has been given charge of the health department earlier held by Nitin Patel. Chauhan, a Kshatriya, has been made the minister for rural development, a department that has a connect with 60 per cent of the people. Similarly, Deva Malam and R.C. Makwana have replaced two influential

Reshuffle Calculus

The new cabinet makes more room for backward classes and neglected regions of the state

AGEWISE

(The new cabinet has a skew towards younger ministers—20 <60 against 13 in Rupani's cabinet)



CASTEWISE

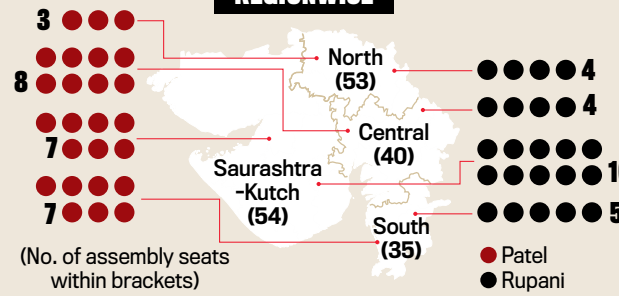
(Representation in their cabinets)





BHUPENDRA PATEL		VIJAY RUPANI
7	Patel	8
1	Koli	2
1	Jain	1
2	Kshatriya	4
2	Brahmin	1
2	SC	1
4	ST	2
6	OBC	4

REGIONWISE



(No. of assembly seats within brackets)

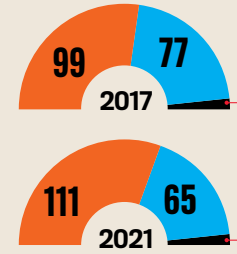
Saurashtra and north Gujarat tend to heavily influence the poll outcome in Gujarat. The BJP has chosen to focus on south Gujarat, which is a party stronghold, and central Gujarat, where it is weak

Then and Now

The BJP has increased its numbers from 99 in 2017 to 111 in 2021, poaching 12 MLAs from the Congress

TOTAL SEATS **182**

BJP Congress Others



Koli leaders—Parshottam Solanki and Kunvarji Bavaliya—the second most influential community after the Patidars. For the first time, two Scheduled Caste candidates have found place in the cabinet—Manisha Vakil from Vadodara and Pradeep Parmar from Asarwa.

'Operation Clean-up', as a BJP strategist terms it, was possible because the party believes it has no effective opposition in the state. The Congress, which won 77 out of 182 seats in 2017—its second most impressive tally after 2002—now cuts a sorry figure. It has lost 12 MLAs to the BJP. Yet, it has failed to appoint a full-time state president since February, carrying on instead with working president Hardik Patel, the architect of the 2015 Patidar reservation agitation. A hero then, Hardik lost steam after he joined the Congress in 2017. Right now, he too is sulking as the Congress has not made him a full-time president. In a statement, Hardik tried to fuel rebellion in the BJP without directly attacking fellow Patidar Bhupendra Patel. "I expect that in the little time left before election, you will work towards all youth, farmers, women and underprivileged sections. The biggest lesson for you is your old friends—the former ministers and chief minister. They have been sidelined due to the sins of the BJP in the past four years."

The other political formation that is emerging as a powerful opposition in the state is the Aam Aadmi Party. It has been steadily inducting prominent faces from media, industry and social services. Among them are noted journalist Isudan Gadhvi and businessman-philanthropist Mahesh Savani. However, what they lack is a credible face to lead the party in the state. AAP created a sensation when it won 27 seats in the Surat Municipal Corporation in February. But the BJP believes it was because the Patidar Andolan Samiti was backing AAP and not the Congress. "Voters in Gujarat," says BJP chief spokesperson Yamal Vyas, "do not care for AAP's Delhi model [of state welfarism]. The Delhi model is ineffective here as the Gujarat model of development has wide acceptance."

The state administration has also been going after Gujarat AAP head Gopal Italia. In December 2020, he was arrested by the Mehsana police for unlawful assembly; in June 2021, an FIR was lodged against him for his allegedly anti-Hindu remarks five years ago. Italia claims the BJP's move to induct four ministers from south Gujarat is an outcome of AAP's strong presence in the region. "It is clear they are afraid of us," he says.

The BJP is hoping the new chief minister, a Kadva Patel, will help them neutralise anti-incumbency; the 'clean slate' he starts with will ease the way, the party high command expects. His close ties with the Patels and trusteeship of the Sardardham Vishwa Patidar Kendra, which wields significant influence among the Kadva Patels, are also seen as potential boosters. Under Modi, the BJP had denied tickets to almost half its legislators in 2007 and 2012. It may well replicate the experiment in 2022. ■

Graphic by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

CRIME AGAINST WOMEN

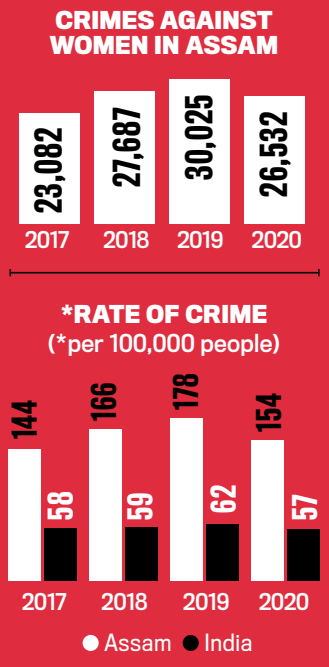
ASSAM'S WAVE OF WORRY

By Kaushik Deka

DUBIOUS RECORD

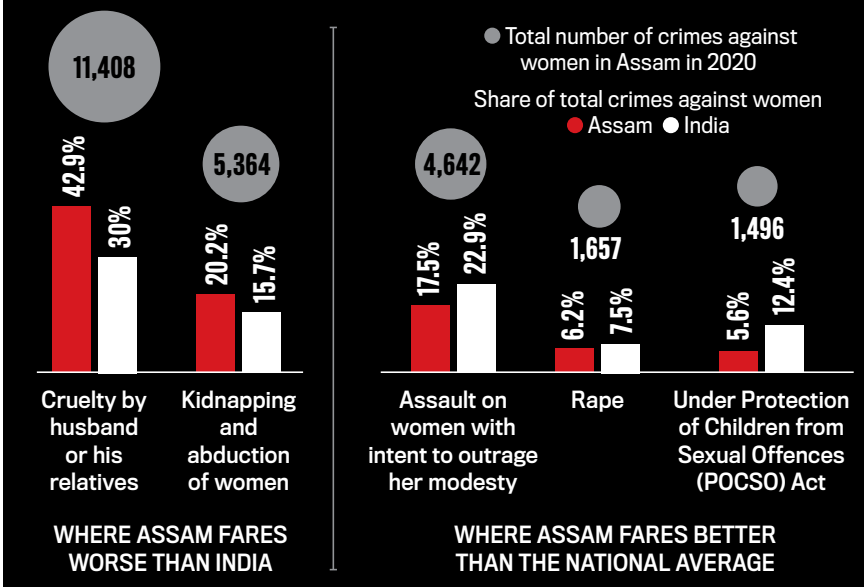
In terms of the *rate of crime against women, Assam has by far outstripped the national average for four years running





DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VS SEXUAL ASSAULT

There is a preponderance of domestic violence and abduction cases in Assam's record of crimes against women



Source: National Crime Records Bureau Crime in India report, 2020

In July this year, a celebrated author living in Guwahati reported a sexual assault attempt by her domestic help. She'd suffered multiple injuries before managing to break free and reporting the alleged assault to the police. The suspect was promptly arrested, and the police honoured her request to keep the incident away from the media glare, though it made its way to an unwanted statistic in the state.

Assam, which many believe to be relatively safe for women, has surprisingly reported the highest crime rate against women for a fourth consecutive year, according to the NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau). The state accounts for 2.6 per cent of India's population but its share in total crimes against women in the country was 7 per cent, says the NCRB's Crime in India report, 2020.

The surging crime rate against women cuts across social and economic strata and regions in the state. At the same time, anecdotal evidence and public perception suggest a higher willingness among women to report such crimes and to seek legal recourse.

Assam is India's third most rural state. Nearly 86 per cent of the population is rural, according to Census 2011. About 33 per cent of rural women reported spousal violence as against 27 per cent in the urban areas, suggests the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), 2019-20. About 8 per cent of rural women reported sexual crimes, marginally higher than their urban counterparts (7 per cent).

Assam DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta would have us think this demonstrates public trust in the police. "It's much easier for a woman in Assam to approach the police. There is also not much social hesitancy in reporting cases, unlike in [some] other parts of India," says Mahanta. Chikimiki Talukdar, chairperson of the Assam State Commission for Women, believes there hasn't been any significant rise in crime against women in the state; rather more cases are being reported. "The Assam police have provided a conducive environment for registering cases," says Talukdar, explaining the

Graphic by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY / *Illustration by* SIDDHANT JUMDE

surge seen in the NCRB data.

While women's rights activists agree that more cases are being reported, they also believe crimes against women are rising. Rakhee Kalita Moral, head of the Centre for Women's Studies, Cotton University, Guwahati, links the rise in sexual violence and crimes against women to "drugs, pornography and the pandemic itself", which, she explains, gave people too much leisure.

In the incident involving the author mentioned earlier, the accused was believed to be under the influence of drugs at the time of the alleged attack. Assam registered 26 cases of gangrape–cum-murder in 2020—the third highest after Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. All perpetrators in these cases, according to police sources, either have a criminal record or are drug addicts.

However, sexual crimes are not behind the massive spike in crime rate. Domestic violence had the highest share in crimes against women in Assam (see *Domestic Violence vs Sexual Assault*). In the 2020 NCRB report, 'cruelty by husband or relatives' accounted for 43 per cent of all crimes against women, up from 40 per cent in 2017. The crime rate under this category is 66.8 per cent; the national average is 17 per cent.

ASSAM ACCOUNTS FOR 2.6 PER CENT OF INDIA'S POPULATION BUT ITS SHARE IN TOTAL CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY IN 2020 WAS 7 PER CENT

Some social scientists link the higher numbers of domestic violence cases to Assam's relatively liberal social structure and its assertive womenfolk, who, they say, won't quietly suffer atrocities, and are, by that token, more likely to report abuse. But, they also point out, the growing economic and social empowerment of women in the state has invited a backlash. "Women now have greater independence and economic stability, but the men have not given up trying to control them," says Moral. The family structures, she points out, are still highly patriarchal.

Assam also recorded the fourth highest cases of kidnapping and abduction of women in India. Gender rights activists and police sources say elopements account for a big share of these cases. "Parents in Assam tend to approach the police, rather than taking the law into their hands if children elope to get married," says Talukdar.

In a 2019 report, Unicef estimated that 33 per cent of women in Assam got married before they were 18 years old, the highest in the northeast and higher than the national average. When the girl's parents approach the police to press for an abduction case against the boy, the police are legally bound to register a kidnapping case for underage brides. "In 98 per cent of the cases, the girl, after turning adult, gives a statement in court that she had eloped with consent," says Mahanta. ■

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DEBAJYOTI CHAKRABORTY

WEST BENGAL

THE POWER OF A *PADA* CLUB

By Romita Datta

If the BJP set the rules of micro-targeting voters during elections—through its much-analysed booth-management strategies and the well-oiled system of appointing *panna pramukh*s (people in charge of shepherding/ managing voters whose names appear on a single page of the voter list)—the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal is showing some inventiveness in microtargeting government welfare schemes and more.

Thanks largely to its enthusiasm for community festivals like Durga Puja but also the famed evening *adda* in all neighbourhoods, West Bengal has quite a proliferation of local clubs—there is one in virtually every *pada* (neighbourhood). The *pada* club is an informal power centre of sorts.

When the Left Front ruled the state (1977-2011), club activities were restricted to organising blood donation camps, hoisting the party flag on May Day (May 1) and holding political processions. The TMC gauged the sway of these clubs early, and ever since it first came to power in 2011, the party has used these *pada* clubs to build local networks and to sense the public mood ahead of elections. The Mamata government has promoted them heavily, with an estimated Rs 1,300 crore in grants between 2012 and 2020.

Club members are the new foot soldiers of the state government's welfare programmes. "Clubs [now] help prepare beneficiary lists for government schemes, such as 'Duare Sarkar' (government at your doorstep) and Swasthya Sathi (free health insurance). They also assist the government's fair-price ration outlets—a.k.a. the PDS (public distribution system)—with doorstep delivery of rations," says Baban Das, a member of the Nabajatri Sangha, a club in south Kolkata.

Rathin Saha of Malay Sangha, a club in Jadavpur, adds: "Our boys work day and night, managing crowds at government camps and helping people fill up forms. Keeping *pada* men out of relief work after the cyclone last year had led to complaints of nepotism."

Club politics is not new to Bengal. The Left Front, during its 34-year rule in the state, used 'area committees' and



PARTY BASTION The 'Mamata Banerjee Fans Club' at Baghbazar in north Kolkata. There are an estimated 40,000 registered *pada* clubs in West Bengal

'local committees' to woo voters. The *pada* network was found to be effective in the early years, but over time it also created a culture of entitlement at that level—leading to charges of corruption and too much meddling in everyday affairs, and then public disenchantment. "At one point, the area and local committees wanted to have a say in everything, even family discords," says Rana Dutta, a former CPI(M) member.

Under TMC rule, it has been a similar story of area domination through clubs. "Our club politics is on the lines of the Left's 'club *samanway* (coordination) committees, which worked for the welfare of the area and also helped maintain peace. It's like empowering a committed band of youth who can be used for the betterment of society," says TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendu Sekhar Ray.

However, many clubs enjoying TMC patronage have been accused of misusing their political clout. "Club members are part of syndicates supplying construction material at exorbitant rates. They are also into real estate brokerage," alleges Vikas Gupta, a resident of Paikpara in north Kolkata, where clubs are mushrooming in every second lane.

The *pada* clubs are also helping local youth make an earning by renting out spaces for weddings and social functions. Some clubs have expanded to function as community centres, which can be booked for as much as Rs 25,000 to Rs 1 lakh for a day. For the legions of unemployed youth, this unmonitored source of income is like a godsend. For the party, the payoff is their goodwill and a committed unofficial cadre. Rationalising the system, a TMC leader from Kolkata says: "We (TMC) are criticised for not being able to attract industry and create jobs whereas our government has been creating opportunities so that young people are not forced to migrate for economic reasons."

The clubs assumed an active political role in the recent assembly election, coming out in full strength to take on the BJP. On February 25, local clubs were allegedly called into action by the TMC to counter a BJP rally in the city. Several BJP heavyweights, including then state chief Dilip Ghosh and Suvendu Adhikari, were taking part in the march. A clash between the two sides left many vehicles damaged. Among those named in the FIR was a local TMC leader, Priyal Chowdhury.

In the run-up to elections, the clubs turn into extensions of local TMC offices. Their members not only help with booth management and rectifying errors in voters' lists but also organise street meetings and roadshows.

The Mamata government has continued funding the clubs even though the state's finances look far from healthy. Bengal's accumulated debt burden in 2021-22 is pegged at Rs 5.35 lakh crore. In 2012, the government announced a yearly grant of Rs 5 lakh for the 25,000 registered clubs. "Clubs only needed to be registered to claim the dole. Later, they were asked to prove involvement in sports to qualify for the grant. It was a mere formality," says an official in the youth services and sports department, requesting anonymity.

SINCE COMING TO POWER IN 2011, THE MAMATA GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED LOCAL CLUBS GRANTS WORTH Rs 1,300 CRORE

In 2017-18, the government introduced a Rs 10,000 yearly grant for community Durga pujas. Since then, the dole has increased to Rs 50,000 (in 2020-21) and the number of beneficiary clubs to 40,000. "This year, the public works department has been asked to take a huge budget cut, affecting road widening, upgrade of district roads to state highways and construction of 15 bridges. But there's no stopping incentivising the clubs," says a senior finance official, also requesting anonymity.

Of late, the government has introduced some checks and balances. "Utilisation certificates and audit reports are now mandatory. Some 27,000 clubs will not qualify for fresh grants as they failed to submit audit reports," says Subrata Biswas, principal secretary, youth and sports.

Despite the funds crunch, Mamata has promised *pada* clubs their Durga Puja grants this year as well. This will cost the exchequer Rs 200 crore. She also announced on 'Khela Hobe Divas' (August 16) a support of Rs 15,000 each for 28,000 clubs to promote football—a questionable additional expense of Rs 42 crore when the slide in tax revenues during the pandemic has slowed down even Swasthya Sathi reimbursements, prompting some private hospitals to dishonour beneficiaries' health cards issued under the scheme.

For a leader-based party like the Trinamool, which does not have card-carrying full-timers like the Left or a committed cadre base like the BJP, the *pada* clubs are a priority investment in the party's booth-level foot soldiers to stay on top of their game in the state. ■

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

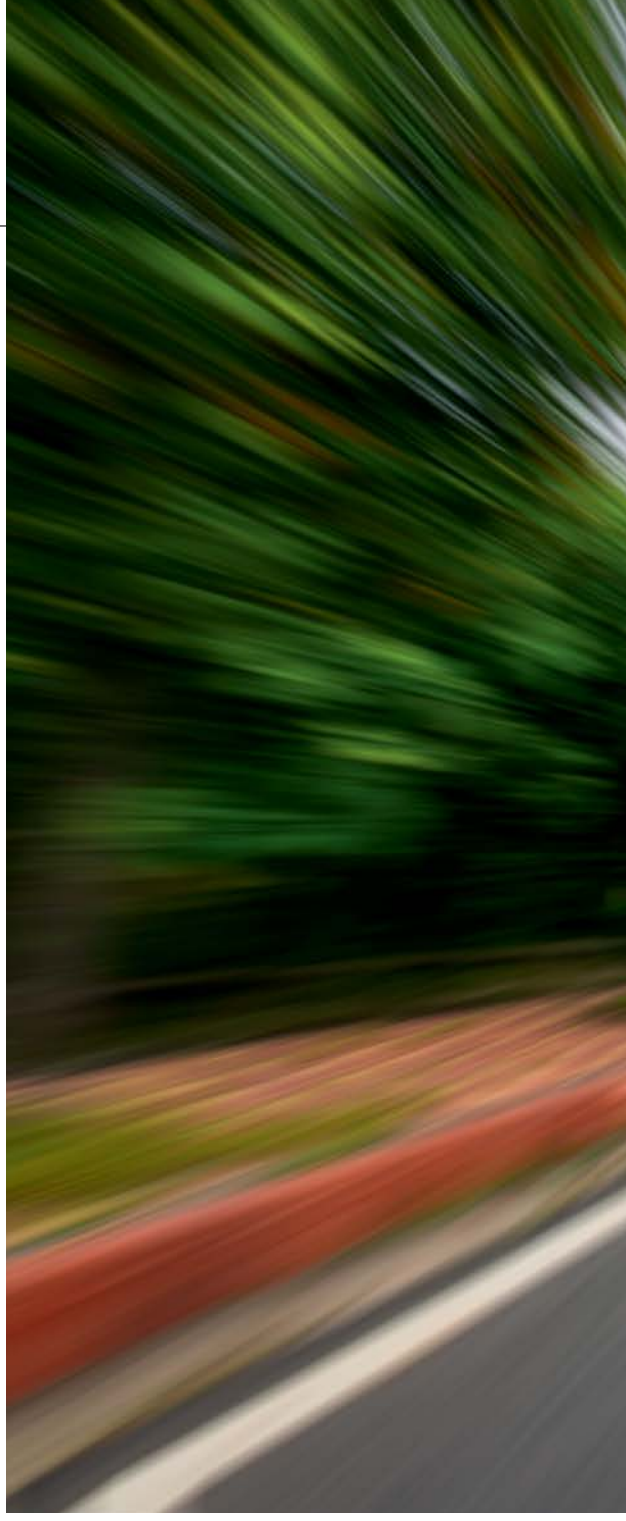
COVER STORY

The Secret to *Happiness*

Far from being any one thing, it defies definition, is ephemeral, and its pursuit is eternal. All the money can't buy it, yet a simple thing can trigger it

By **RAJ CHENGAPPA**

Photograph by **BANDEEP SINGH**



Nilesh Shah always thought he had the good life. As managing director of Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company, one of India's largest financial services group, money was never an issue. Initially, material pursuits like getting a good job, a new car, a swank house made him happy. But, as he soon discovered, "it followed a law of diminishing returns." When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country, Shah joined a group of citizens in Mumbai to help find hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and transport for the seriously afflicted. It made him realise that true happiness "was to bring smiles to other people's faces". He then sings a few lines from an old Mukesh song to sum up his feelings: *Kisi ki muskurahaton pe ho nisaar/ kisi ka dard mil sake toh le udhaar* (Give yourself up to bring a smile to someone's face, offer a shoulder to share someone's pain).

For Shah, it was a cathartic experience, one that transformed his life and quest for happiness. But, he adds with a smile, "Eating Gujju food is still bliss for me." Others have different definitions of what brings them joy. Among the things that make author Chetan Bhagat happy are "a good night's sleep, a walk in nice, breezy weather and being with people I love". For actor Pankaj Tripathi, seeing "nature in its pristine form" gives him immense pleasure. But lyricist and filmmaker Gulzar regards any attempt at defining the feeling as futile. "Is it possible to find a universal definition of happiness or even define it?" he asks. "It is the feeling that holds the meaning, not the fact of its existence."

Gulzar is right: happiness is somewhat of a universal quest and yet its definition cannot be pinned down to a few words. Even scientific experts who have spent years studying the phenomenon can't agree on what constitutes happiness. The concepts



Model: Kuhoo Bhargava

Money is only one of the many servants of happiness because having plenty of it does not guarantee bliss to its possessors

vary from country to country and even among cultures—the West is often characterised as being materialist and focused on consumerism as a means of attaining bliss while the East, particularly Indian philosophy, dismisses worldly pleasures as *maya* (illusion) and preaches *sat-chit-anand* (truth-consciousness-bliss) to attain *moksha* (release from the cycle of birth and death that brings suffering and pain). The iconoclastic author Henry Miller joked, "Sex is one of the nine reasons for reincarnation. The other eight are unimportant." It didn't stop him

from mocking western ideals too, when he began his book *Tropic of Cancer* with, "I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive."

Money, in fact, is only one of the many servants of happiness because having plenty of it does not guarantee bliss to its possessors. The pleasure it brings is often mistaken for happiness, and is usually momentary. Psychologists say that after the dopamine it produces in the brain wears off, the person is compelled to seek new experiences to derive pleasure. But like money, the pursuit of happiness and wellness has spawned an estimated $4 trillion business. Management experts across the world run expensive courses for companies on how to make their employees happy. Happiest Minds Technologies, a Bengaluru-based software company, even has a Happiness Evangelist and Mindfulness Officer as one of its vice presidents. Universities like Oxford and Harvard have experts that research the deeper aspects of happiness. The quest for inner peace through solitude and communion with nature has seen a boom in demand for exotic tourist experiences. Politicians too have joined the fray with the promise of better days and wellbeing instead of just the lure of development. Our neighbour Bhutan has pioneered the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to monitor its economy's progress by introducing such metrics as psychological wellbeing, community vitality, cultural resilience, and time use.

Bhutan even persuaded the UN General Assembly to pass a resolution in June 2011 to invite national governments "to give more importance to happiness and wellbeing in determining how to achieve and measure social and economic development". It resulted in the launching of the World Happiness Report in collaboration with the Gallup World Poll to provide annual happiness rankings for countries. The ranking uses subjective wellbeing assessments. Respondents from various countries are asked to evaluate their current life on a ladder where the best possible life is 10 and the worst possible 0. Respondents were quizzed on whether they smiled or laughed a lot the previous day and whether they experienced any specific negative emotions like worry, sadness or anger. In 2021, Finland topped the list while the US was ranked 19. Of the 149 countries surveyed, India was ranked at 139. Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka were way ahead of us. That should make us Indians sit up, especially as many thought we had a civilisational head start over understanding what happiness is about.

India was 139th out of 149 countries in the 2021 world happiness rankings. And we thought we had a civilisational head start in understanding happiness

So why is happiness more than just an individual quest? Because research is showing that unhappiness among citizens can cost companies and governments billions of dollars. That the binary between pain and pleasure is what heightens inequities and creates instability in many countries. Psychologists like Shyam Bhat, chairman of the Mumbai-based LiveLaughLove Foundation, talk of the need for nations to enable their citizens to experience the full blossoming of their freedoms, to shed their anxiety and fears, and to live a life with a sense of purpose committed to a goal larger than oneself to attain happiness. It is especially important when the ravages of the pandemic are being felt across the world by millions of families, both rich and poor. Professor Kamlesh Singh, who teaches psychology at IIT Delhi, warns that the increased use of screen time has begun to affect sleep rhythms and work from home is resulting in imbalances and growing unhappiness. She advises remaining "psychologically connected" even if physically distant from loved ones and to practise "mindful living" to stay positive.

So, what are the mantras for happiness? In the following pages, we feature a range of inspirational individuals and institutions who have through their actions brought happiness not just to themselves but joy to plenty of their fellow beings. We have also asked five religious and spiritual leaders to tell us what constitutes happiness according to their traditions. Four experts, who have scientifically studied the process and changes the brain and body undergo, help us understand the phenomenon of happiness better. Professor Nimesh G. Desai, director of the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences in Delhi, makes an important point when he says it is "abnormal" for anyone to be constantly happy without any basis. Instead, he says, "The desirable goal is to try and achieve a state of mind with more positive elements than negative in all aspects, including emotions, thoughts and attitude." The US-based happiness researcher Dr Robert Biswas-Diener has five mantras for happiness: It is natural to occasionally feel negative, work on appreciating what you have, invest in other people, take some time off to enjoy life and find something you can improve and work on it. You will find many more such tips in the articles that follow. Happy reading. ■

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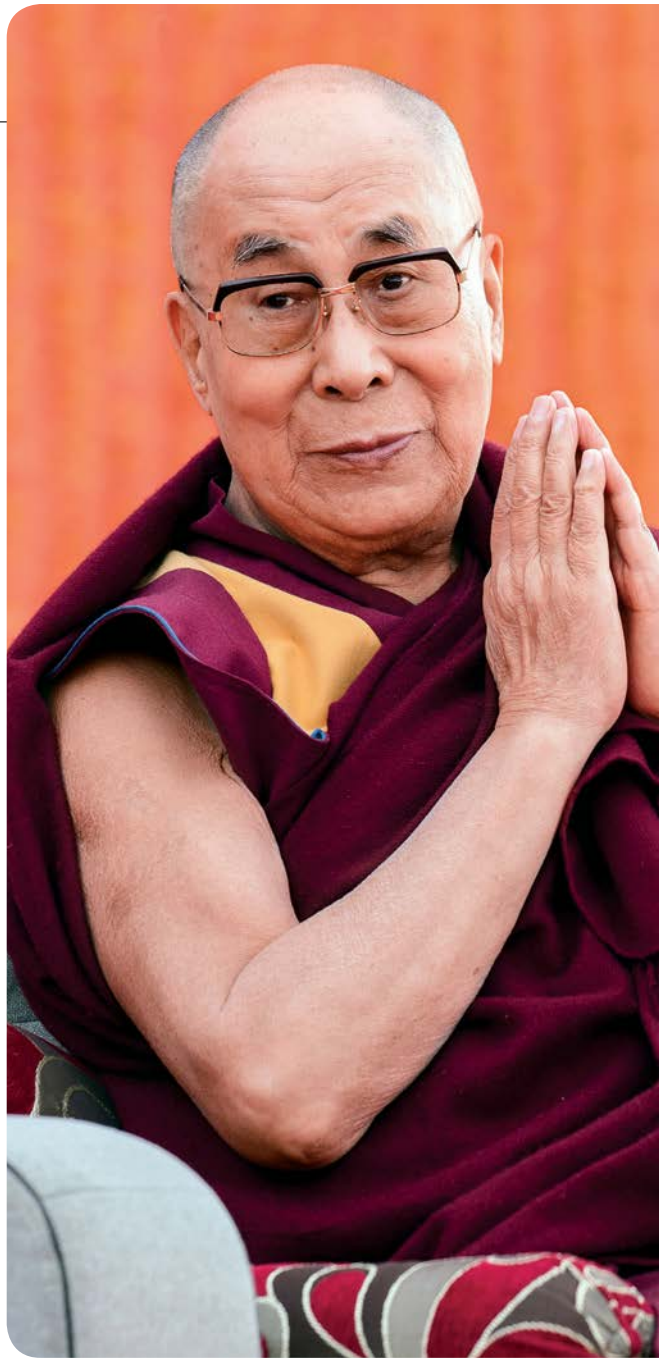
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The *Spiritual* Guides

Religion and spiritual practice may not be the most intuitive associations with happiness—and there's no denying that human beings continue to use religious identity of every stripe as a rallying call for violence and the oppression of others. And yet, throughout the long, diverse history of spiritual endeavour, this has been an enduring path that has inspired people across the world to find and share happiness and even ecstasy. The five smiling men of the cloth featured on these pages offer glimpses of the common quest and distinct insights that make them a source of inspiration—and happiness—to thousands of others.

For the Dalai Lama of Tibet, the purpose of life is to be happy and he holds *karuna* or the path of compassion as the surest path to this goal. The Grand Mufti of India says true happiness lies in dedicating one's life to the cause of the less fortunate and not in material wealth. Oswald Cardinal Gracias likewise says the path to true happiness lies in "other-centred behaviour" and that "material things do not bring happiness". For Sri Sri Ravishankar of the Art of Living Foundation, happiness manifests "when you feel free from within". Sadhguru, the maverick spiritual head of the Isha Foundation, offers another non-materialist vision of happiness by focusing on bringing the various *koshas* of the self into alignment. On the other hand, the *koshas* are all associated with the human body, so perhaps this is an acknowledgment of material form after all. And for all the wise men in these pages, the quest for spiritual contentment seems replete with metaphors of both an inner and an outward journey through meditation and prayer.



TENZIN CHOEJOR

The purpose of life *is to be happy*

By **THE DALAI LAMA**



The basic source of all happiness is a sense of kindness and warm-heartedness towards others. We are all the same as human beings. We are born the same way, we die the same way, and we all want to lead happy lives.

The key to happiness is peace of mind. This is not something that can be bought. Inner peace has to be cultivated by each of us from within. All our religious traditions, despite whatever philosophical differences there may be among them, carry the same message of love and warm-heartedness that is the foundation of such peace of mind.

I sometimes wish that we were more like children, who are naturally open and accepting of others. Instead, as we grow up, we fail to nurture our natural potential and our sense of fundamental human values. We get caught up in secondary differences and tend to think in terms of 'us' and 'them'. Education can change this. We need to learn to distinguish the destructive nature of emotions like anger, fear and attachment, which disturb our peace of mind, from the positive qualities of compassion that are genuine sources of happiness.

I often ask myself what the purpose of life is. I conclude that it is to be happy. We have no guarantee of what will happen in the future, but we live in hope, which is what keeps us going. There is sometimes insufficient understanding of the difference between sensory consciousness and mental consciousness. The ultimate source of happiness is a mental feeling of joy, and not a wealth of material goods. The sensory pleasure material things provide is generally short-lived. Such satisfaction does little to allay anxiety and fear. On the other hand, mental joy sustains itself.

Nowadays, scientists, too, agree that our basic human nature is compassionate and warm-hearted because that is the way our lives begin. Without our mother's love and affection, we would not have survived. Since we depend on other human beings for our own happiness, it is natural to feel warm-hearted towards them. Human beings are responsive. No matter how beautiful a flower may be, it won't react to my smile. But if I smile at another human being, she or he generally smiles in return, and even animals react positively.

Today, the world is mostly focused on external development. However, ancient Indian traditions emphasise looking within to find the real source of joy. To be happy, it is our minds we must transform. This is the basis of the longstanding traditions of *ahimsa*, doing no harm, and *karuna*, wishing others to be free from suffering.

Compassion, an active concern for others' well-being, is not only part of religion, it also belongs to our lives as human beings. From compassion, we develop self-confidence; that brings inner strength, allowing us to act with transparency and candour. If a person is happier, his or her family is happier; if families are happy, neighbourhoods and nations will be happy. By each of us working to transform ourselves, we can change our human way of life and make this a century of compassion.

We must continually consider the oneness of humanity, remembering that we all want to be happy. And, indeed, everyone has a right to a happy life. Along the way, we may be faced with problems, but we must not lose hope. We must keep up our determination without being impatient to achieve quick results.

If you agree with anything I have written here, I hope you will follow it in your day to day lives. As I have said before, if you want others to be happy, practise compassion; if you want to be happy, practise compassion. ■

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Material joy does little to alleviate anxiety and fear. Mental joy sustains itself"

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists and a Nobel laureate. Since 1959, he has been living in Dharamsala, India

Happiness is an attitude to *practise, a rule to follow*

By **GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR**



Happiness is just an idea when you don't know it and you *are* it when you know it! The most natural state for a human being, it manifests when you feel free from within. When we move away from our Self, our nature, we become unhappy. It is ironic, though, that being the very source of happiness, we keep looking for it everywhere, like a fish in the ocean searching for water.

We must attend to the factors that impact our happiness. The first is health, the second is the environment and the third is finance. The fourth is ambition. Suppose we have the first three but are overambitious, it will agitate our state of being. Desire means projecting happiness through fulfilling desires in the future. Even if you say you will be happy when you get rid of all the desires, that is also not going to happen!

The challenge is to stay happy without abandoning your pursuits. It is a skill that is learnt. There is no better teacher than little children for this. They have aspirations, yet they stay happy in the moment. They do what is needed to get their desires fulfilled, but are not hung up on them. Their minds can be easily diverted from one thing to another, from toys to toffees to something else. We need to cultivate this ability to redirect the mind at will and not get stuck on anything.

Happiness is an attitude to be cultivated, a rule to be followed. Maharishi Patanjali enunciated *santosha* or happiness, as a *niyama*, a personal ethic. You have to attune yourself to the happiness mode. It's not just a physical or psychological phenomenon. Life has ups and downs. In all circumstances, one has to try and abide in one's nature, that of happiness. Develop the determination to not let anything in the world disrupt your happiness. This is the purpose of wisdom.

This is the main theme of Vedanta. The names of many sanyasis end with "*ananda*". Their very name reminds them that they are bliss, they want nothing for themselves and are here to spread happiness around them.

No man is an island entire of itself. If one person in a family is unhappy, it affects every other member. We are all interdependent on, and interconnected with, one another. Though happiness is an individual attitude, it is also linked to our environment. No one can claim to be happy when there are riots in the next street. That's why we need to take the responsibility of spreading wisdom and care for the happiness of others. Like we are taught about dental hygiene, so should we look after our mental hygiene. People must be taught how to manage negative thoughts and circumstances and move on with a positive mindset.

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"You have to attune yourself to happiness. It's not a physical or psychological phenomenon"

The prime goal of the government, NGOs and religious bodies should to create a happy and healthy society. This cannot happen merely by providing *roti, kapda aur makaan*. The mindset has to change and an ecosystem created for this. Madhya Pradesh has taken the right step by creating a ministry for happiness. I think all other states in India should act along this line. Abiding in one's true nature is the only path to lasting happiness. ■

Sri Sri Ravishankar is the founder of the Art of Living Foundation, which offers a Happiness Programme, among others



VINCENZO PINTO

Love, and not material things, *brings true joy*

By **OSWALD CARDINAL GRACIAS**

Everyone seeks happiness. We seek it for others, for ourselves and for those we love. But can the world ever be fully happy? I always expected that as we got more advanced and made progress in philosophy, science, technology and communication, there would be greater peace, joy and happiness in the world. But one look at the world reveals that this just didn't happen.

Compare the world today with what it was a decade or two ago. There are still as many, if not more, conflicts—big and small. Wars continue, so do terrorism and hunger, and now we are in the midst of a pandemic. How, then, does one search for happiness? And can we ever achieve happiness in entirety?

Besides, what *is* happiness? We could break it up into components: truth, justice, unity, and a harmony of all this. This should result in peace—a deep peace that only comes when there is total harmony among all these elements. Is this truly achievable?

This peace that one seeks depends much on our relationships—with God, with others and with our own self. I have faith in a personal God; if I pray to God, listen to his voice and follow his commands, it will give me greater peace. If I have a healthy relationship with others—both those dear to me and those not so dear—and maintain justice in my relationships, I would be at peace with my own self.

Essential to happiness is other-centred behaviour. I could acquire as many material things as possible, but if my priority is materialism, there will be no limit to my wants. Material things do not bring happiness. Love and other-centredness do. We experience this.

Can one ever be perfectly happy? I do my best to be truthful, just and other-centered. I would be deceiving myself if I expect everyone to have good feelings about me. Should that affect me? No, but we know that it does.

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Prayer gives us a feeling of peace. So do meditation and contemplation. We feel we are in the presence of God"

There is no formula for perfect happiness. It's not workable. Jesus Christ gave us eight Beatitudes: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are those who mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart; blessed are the peacemakers; blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.' Can anyone say they are able to fully put this into practice? It's a goal we should strive for but will achieve only after death—when we enjoy eternal bliss.

Prayer gives us a feeling of peace. So do meditation and contemplation. We feel we are in the presence of God. Some mystics have even experienced sensory feelings of God's presence. But this is all temporary as one has to come back to Earth.

Perfect happiness is only possible in union with God. While on Earth, one tries to be as happy as possible, removing obstacles and working on relationships with others. Now, we have added another element to it: our relationship with nature. This will automatically result in a better relationship with the self and ultimately with God.

What is happiness and how one achieves it are questions that we will seek to find answers to throughout our lives. They will certainly occupy my mind after these reflections! ■

Oswald Cardinal Gracias is Bombay Archbishop, and President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India



Happiness in Oneness

Happiness is the universal quest and pursuit of every human being. We are born happy as a child, but somehow struggle to hold on to this blissful state while growing up. We do everything possible for attaining happiness in our life, right from eating good food to wearing expensive clothes, from education to travelling across the world, from owning a dream home to buying a comfortable car and much more. Happiness still remains an elusive aspiration. Happiness has a different meaning for different people, based on their desire and its fulfilment.

Happiness that comes from fruition of desires is temporary and ephemeral. One desire leads to a second and the second leads to the third and so on, eventually becoming an endless chain of expectations. But happiness continues to be a distant dream. The reason lies in the fact that we don't comprehend the substance and profoundness of true happiness.

True happiness is a blissful state of mind which is characterized by stability *(Sthirta)* and equanimity *(Sehejta)*. The utopian state where there are no attachments, enemies, illusions or fears; a state where expectations are replaced with gratitude; animosity with love; fear and illusion with awareness. This, though it may seem a task, is actually a very simple process which begins by connecting with an entity that is eternally stable. The material world is ever-changing and **the changeless in this changing world is the one and only all-pervading, eternal, permanent and formless One *(Nirankar)*.** Till the time we identify ourselves with our body, mind and possessions, we are bound to be caught in the web of fear, illusion, attachment and ego. We need to realize our true self by knowing the Truth, which is a process of seeking and finding the vivid distinction between the creator and the creation; eventually witnessing the creator in creation and the creation in creator. This knowledge has been passed down the ages by various saints and sages, who experienced the presence of the formless One, thereby attaining eternal happiness and bliss. This realization and experience can be achieved even today. Once we realize this most noble and highest Truth of life, that **we as souls are an essential part of the over-soul, the omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent formless One**, we start moving on the path of eternal happiness. Let us talk about this journey.

To begin with, we tend to take things for granted in our lives, expecting more and more, which becomes a reason for our misery. Oxygen, for instance, was never taken as serious a blessing as it was during its shortage during Covid-19. Meeting friends and family, going to school for education, eating in a restaurant, all of this became a distant possibility during the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead of expecting more from life, we actually need to be thankful for the infinite gifts we already have.

Gratitude bestows immense happiness, both to the giver and the receiver when offered with purity of heart. A simple 'Thank You' can transform a situation or relationship diametrically. Service of mankind, when done with selflessness is a natural outcome of gratitude. Gratitude should also not be with an expectation of the greeting or gesture to be returned. Even if we offer a glass of water to someone with gratitude and selflessness, seeing the essence of *Nirankar* in them, it becomes a reason for bliss and joy. Gifting, sharing and caring are extremely sublime and delightful acts. This kind of offering becomes Sewa (selfless service) rather than invoking a feeling of ego or arrogance.

Just remind yourself about the last time you gave something to anybody and the very thought will bring a smile on your face. Giving away is an inherent trait of every part of nature, including humans.

The sun, rivers, trees, earth and air, all have been continuously providing us with their resources, without any expectation. But we humans become selfish and enforce conditions while giving away even a little bit of what we have and expecting much more in return. This is the reason for our sorrow. This does not necessarily mean that we should not desire to grow in life. It only means that after having performed a specific action, we should leave its outcome to the divine verdict, stay content and be thankful for what we are receiving. It means that growth is mutual and universal. **We can't expect to save our home if our neighbour's house is on fire.**

The second aspect that disturbs our happiness is hatred and animosity with others. The cause may lie in our judgements, assumptions or criticism; all of which arise from our ego, a false sense of pride that is attached to ignorance of our true self.

When we become aware of our true identity, which is beyond our caste, color, race, religion or nationality etc., all of the above vices vanish, giving way to pure love and compassion. Judgements and assumptions are replaced with 'The benefit of the doubt' outlook. We see ourselves in others, celebrating diversity instead of creating walls and wars. A single ray of enlightenment can transform a vagarious mind, which is habitually attached to the ephemeral world; rendering it to become stable and aware, very much like a drop of rose essence that can transform the fragrance of an entire pot of water. What seems huge and unsolvable becomes tiny and irrelevant. Those who seem alien and opposite become lovable.

The perpetual mindful remembrance *(Simran)* of our eternal source is the only way to stay in this blissful state. *Simran* paves the way of being happy by feeding our mind with positive and happy thoughts. It does not necessarily mean sitting in a meditative posture and chanting a name or a mantra. Do we remind ourselves of our loved ones by sitting in a definite posture? As a matter of fact, we simply don't forget the ones we love. Likewise, once we come to know and experience the formless One, we don't need to remember it. Rather, we would never ever forget it. **Our walking, talking, eating and sleeping would all turn meditative in essence**.

A conscientious soul further seeks the company of other enlightened souls *(Satsang)*, sharing and learning from each other's divine experiences and strengthening mutual faith and understanding. This three-fold formula of *Sewa, Simran and Satsang*, after receiving enlightenment is a sure way to happiness and bliss.

Happiness does not lie in the outer world, achievements or circumstances; it lies in our own vision and choice. If anyone can get us happiness, then that is our own self. Herein lies the concept of self-love; of loving ourselves not with selfishness, but with true understanding of the 'self'. The 'self' that has its source in the formless omnipresent God, the 'self' that is beyond mind, body and materialistic possessions. Once this realization is established, we can nurture our mind, body and possessions without getting attached to them. **This magical vision of detached attachment is the way to true happiness**, also enunciated explicitly by various saints and sages. We, as children remain in this state for most of the time, but as we grow up, the conditioning *(Samskaras)* by the world around us traps us, leaving little room for the survival of our 'inner-child'. Thus, if we want to remain happy, we need to forget and forgive like a child. We need to sing and dance like a child.

Another reason for human worry and anxiety is fear and illusion. The fear of disease, death, failure or penury etc. and the illusions of our identity, our life and its objective. Once again, these can be overcome with the light of knowledge. When one realizes that death, disease and ageing etc. are inevitable parts of human life and that our life is just a drop in the ocean of our eternal existence then, fear disappears. A rope can induce fear in darkness, because its shadow might appear to be a snake to someone, causing illusion. But, as soon as there is light and the truth is evident; there is no fear or illusion. **Fear is a result of ignorance. Awareness and enlightenment dispel all kinds of fear.**

When the boat of our mind is wavering in the ocean called life, it can be provided stability by anchoring it to the Truth. This stability translates into Happiness.

Greed and selfishness can give us only superficial happiness, that too only for a little time. Rather, the final outcome on this path is always regressive and baneful. Lasting happiness can be achieved by realizing and following the path of Truth, which can be prolonged and challenging, but most certainly, blissful and rewarding.

The object of happiness can be achieved through Practical Spirituality. Spirituality essentially means to 'Know One, Believe in One and Become One'. Practical Spirituality means to live Oneness, by humbly surrendering every action to *Nirankar* and establishing Oneness in the world through selfless service of all. We saw how humanity came together during the Covid crisis and people across the world came in support of each other surpassing all differences, be it caste, creed, color, religion or nationality. It was a sort of reminder, that we might metaphorically have our individual identities as leaves, fruits, branches or flowers of a tree called humanity, but our fundamental identity is that of a tree; with our root being *Nirankar.* None of us can survive in isolation. We might be different, but are essentially One. **Being One is the gateway to Happiness. Let's hope, pray and work to ensure that it does not take another pandemic to make us realize that there is Happiness in Oneness.**

To summarize, realization of the Truth makes our mind stable and equipoised, leading to eternal happiness. Happiness is not to regret, rather learn from our past and not worry, instead work for our future. Happiness is to stay in the present moment with awareness, acceptance and gratitude.

Happiness is to be free, yet in control; to reach for the sky, yet be grounded. Happiness is to float instead of swimming in the ocean of life. Happiness is to be One with One.

Satguru Mata Sudiksha Ji Maharaj
(Spiritual Head - Sant Nirankari Mission)

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

GURUSPEAK

Where the *heart is rich*

By **SHEIKH ABUBAKR AHMAD**



A believer is one who dedicates his soul and body completely to the will and wish of the Almighty who created him through processes unknown to him, sustains him through ways unexpected of him and calls back to Him, at a time that too is not in his knowledge. Accordingly, whatever fate delivers to a Muslim, he accepts it with a full heart and contentment. This quality of *iman* (belief) is called *tawakkul* (trust) or authorisation.

Contentment is an inner feeling that is a state of richness, happiness, self-sufficiency and tranquility. It is the core of joy, the source of a happy life on Earth that brings peace of mind to the true believer. The Holy Quran teaches us that happiness is submission to God. So, to find happiness, one should believe and lead a righteous life, adhering to the principles of religion while also serving society.

Prophet Muhammad (S) said: 'Look at those lower to you (less fortunate than you), and don't look at those higher to you....' For looking at those beneath you will make you feel better and happier, while looking up to the fortunes of the higher classes will only cause you worries and concerns.

For a Muslim, real happiness lies when he dedicates his life for the cause of others—wiping the tears of orphans, widows and the poor, feeding the hungry, nursing the sick, supplying drinking water to the thirsty, arranging shelter for the homeless...and such like. Giving the right education and moral teachings to the children is above all this, because, when a child receives a proper education supplemented by spiritual wisdom, not only is he happy and content, he can bring happiness to a thousand others as well. And that is a virtue for which a Muslim is rewarded in this life and the life after.

Happiness, of course, is a state of mind and also relative. Compared to those who are starving, people with a little food are wealthy. They are happy and satisfied within. Their response, on asked about their lives, is always, '*Alhamdulillah*', which means 'Praise be to Allah (SWT) for his blessings'. This is an expression of their contentment and gratitude to the Creator: 'And whatever blessings and good things you have, it is from Allah (Holy Quran 16:53).' Similarly, it is obligatory for a Muslim to believe that all virtues and viciousness that happen to him are due to the will and intention of Allah (SWT). "Whenever He loves a devotee, He subjects him to ordeals. Should he endure patiently, Allah (SWT) singles him out; should he be content, He purifies him." This hadith reveals that Allah (SWT) purifies the believers—those that are patient, content and rich within—of their sins, which paves the way for them to go to Paradise.

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Contentment is the core of joy, the source of a happy life on Earth..."

Muslims who are rich within are self-satisfied and characterised by a high self-esteem, which stops them from asking for anything. The result is that the moment you see them, you take them to be rich. In reality, contentment or happiness is the source of the wealth of these good Muslims. 'True wealth is to be content with what one has, and when to use it to strive for the ever-lasting reward of the hereafter'; 'Richness is not in the quantity of possessions (that one has); rather, true richness is the richness of one's inner self (or contentment).'"—Prophet Muhammad (S).

These two hadiths delineate that happiness comprises true wealth, which the content ones can utilise to please Allah (SWT) who cleanses them of their sins and awards Paradise to them.

As long as contentment is related to the heart and can be equated with richness, a better conclusion is that for a Muslim to be satisfied in any situation, readiness to share what he has, and richness of the heart will be the real sources of his happiness! He does not need anything more. ■

Sheikh Abubakr Ahmad is the Grand Mufti of India

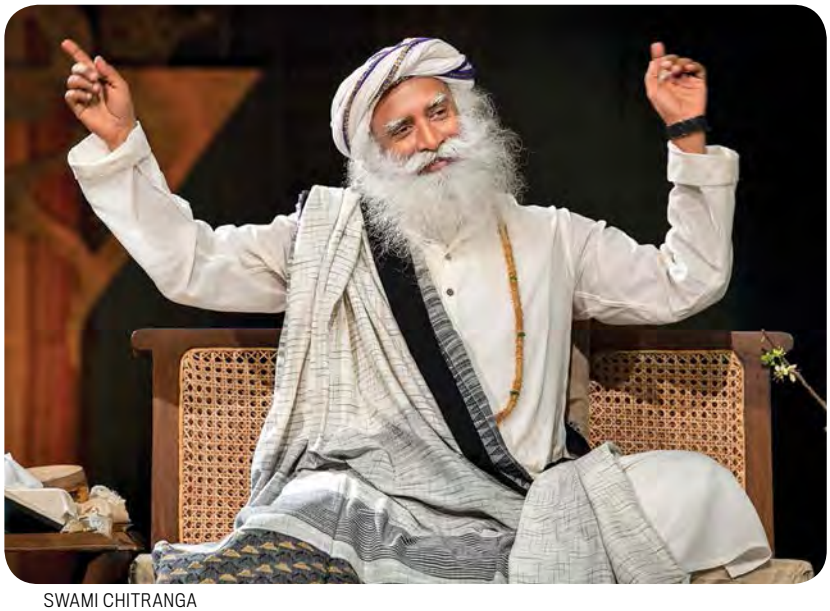
Decoding *Bliss*

By **SADHGURU JAGGI VASUDEV**

A lot of people, even so-called spiritual leaders in the world, are going about propagating that peace of mind is the ultimate goal in life. Being peaceful and joyful is not the goal, it is the basic requirement. Tonight, if you want to enjoy your dinner, even if you are not ecstatic, shouldn't you at least be peaceful and joyful?

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Being peaceful and joyful is not the goal, it is the basic requirement"



SWAMI CHITRANGA

There is substantial medical and scientific data to show that only when you are pleasant within do your body and brain work at their best. Some studies show that if you spend 24 hours without a moment of irritation, agitation, anger or anxiety, if you are just joyful, your ability to use your intelligence may go up by a 100 per cent.

But, for most people, their own thoughts and emotions are a huge issue. The psychological drama takes such a big toll. People are capable of suffering over what happened 10 years ago and also over what might or will happen day after tomorrow. They think they are suffering their past and future, but they are only putting their two faculties through suffering—memory and imagination.

Does what happened yesterday or 10 years ago exist right now? No. Does what may happen day after tomorrow exist right now? No. So, in other words, you are suffering for that which does not exist. That's called insanity. People say, "This is human nature." No, this is the nature of people who have not taken charge of human nature.

The human mechanism is the most complex piece of machinery on the planet. It is a super-supercomputer, but have you read the user's manual? Right now, you are *somehow* using it. If you do things 'somehow', life will happen accidentally. Yoga means learning to read the user's manual.

In Yoga, we see the human body as made up of five *koshas*, or five layers. The first sheath or the first layer of the body is called *annamaya kosha*, or the food body, because what you call physical is just a heap of food. The second is called *manomaya kosha*, or the mental body. Today, doctors are talking about psychosomatic diseases. If you have tension in the head, you can get an ulcer in the stomach. So, whatever is happening to the mind is happening to the body because what you call 'mind' is not in any one place. Every cell in the body has its own intelligence. The third layer of the body is the energy body, or the *pranamaya kosha;* the fourth is the *vignanamaya kosha* or the etheric body; and the fifth is the *anandamaya kosha* or the bliss body. *Anandamaya kosha* does not mean there is a bubble of bliss in you. We call it the bliss body because in our experience, whenever we touch it, we become blissful. Bliss is not its nature; bliss is what it causes for us. *Anandamaya kosha* is a nonphysical dimension which is the source of everything physical. Only if you bring the first three layers of the body into alignment will there be a passage and a possibility of touching *anandamaya kosha*, where blissfulness becomes a natural state of being.

India is probably the only culture which describes God, or the source of creation, as blissfulness. And the moment you come in touch with it, you do become blissful. What we call 'Isha Yoga' is just a ladder to that divinity within you. ■

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev is a spiritual leader, bestselling author and a Padma Vibhushan awardee (2017)

EKAM WORLD PEACE FESTIVAL 2021



Millions from 100 Nations joined World's Biggest Online Meditation Event celebrated on September 17-19, 2021.

As nearly 7 billion of us go about life as usual - there is a glaring picture of truth we are either ignoring or are unconscious. It is code Red for life on earth because of climate change. The fate of economies of nations hangs in uncertainty because of COVID. Depression, unemployment and homeless people are on the rise all over the world. Forests continue to burn threatening wildlife and ocean life is precariously imbalanced because of reckless killing by humans for their greed.

What is the problem?

Human irresponsibility and greed.
What is the solution?
An awakening in human consciousness to peace.

It is in response to this looming global crisis and individual emotional crisis - Ekam World Peace Festival was celebrated globally by Sri Preethaji & Sri Krishnaji- the co-creators of Ekam. In this 4th annual Ekam World Peace Festival nearly 30 million people from all religions, all nationalities and cultures came together online to meditate for world peace.

Peace and Oneness for All

This Peace Festival is unique in that it is not angry protesters marching on the street demanding peace legislations. It is millions of peaceful human beings coming together and meditating for peace. To shift human consciousness away from stress and violence towards peace is our dharma towards humanity and the planet.

Over 100 nations, 30 million participants, 19 languages, and 3 days. That in a nutshell is the scale, reach and vision of 'Ekam World Peace Festival 2021', the world's biggest online meditation festival attended by who's who from the world of politics, science, sports, and culture for one noble cause: nurturing world peace. Thousands of Schools and colleges, organisation and groups, meditation studios, towns and villages and scores of individuals participated in the Ekam World Peace Festival on the 3 evenings of September 17, 18 & 19.

Sri Preethaji & Sri Krishnaji, Co-creators, Ekam

Inaugurating the event Sri Preethaji & Sri Krishnaji, the co-creators of Ekam, the visionaries of the peace festival said: " Peace is either for all of us or for none of us."

They maintain that we cannot be at peace while our neighbours or our neighbouring nations burn in violence. Humanity cannot be at peace while every other creature on land and earth is tortured by us. It is time to change. And change can only begin with each of us awakening to peace and influencing the collective human consciousness towards peace with our meditations.

The 3 Peace Meditations

17th September was peace meditation for healing economic unrest. This became particularly significant in the context of COVID.

18th September was peace meditations for healing division- division caused by class, religion, nationality, race, colour and gender.

19th September was peace meditation for healing the earth- The climate crisis threatening the survival of life itself on earth - this was the culminating day's meditation.

Some of the notable names attending the event this 4th annual Ekam World Peace Festival include- New York Times best-selling author, physicist and neuroscientist Dr. Joe Dispenza,, the first ever refugee to be elected to New Zealand parliament, Ms. Golriz Ghahraman and Secretary General of Global Alliance for A Sustainable Planet Mr. Satya S Tripathi.

Conceived by the enlightened sages Sri Preethaji & Sri Krishnaji, the three-day event started with "Peace for Healing Economic Unrest" The meditation focussed on alleviating the economic inequality and suffering ushered in by the pandemic, around the world. This is fourth edition of the festival, and with each edition its legion of peace meditators & peacemakers is only growing by leaps and bounds.

Dr. Joe Dispenza

Dr Joe Dispenza, author, physicist and neuroscientist said knowledge is for the mind and experience for the body. When asked how to create a glorious state of peace, Dr. Joe explained, "If we focus on this consciously that we are all connected, that there's a oneness or there is an indivisibility about us, then that experience is peace."

The 2nd day programme is titled 'Peace for Healing Division.' The sessions have been well grounded in Ekam's philosophy of "Peace and oneness for all", including the planet we inhabit. To end every form of discrimination of religious, cultural, racial, national, sex, and class-based



Dr. Joe Dispenza, Researcher of Epigenetics, Quantum Physics & Neuroscience.



Ms. Golriz Ghahraman,
Member of the New Zealand Parliament.

division, we need to live with a consciousness that is free of boundaries

Ms. Golriz Ghahraman, MP of New Zealand

"Division grows between genders, races, ideologists, religious groups because of the injustice perpetrated. If we can listen to the sadness of these people and address their realities and uplift them, we will create a peaceful world." said Ms. Golriz Ghahraman, MP of New Zealand, the guest speaker of that day. She is the first-ever refugee to be sworn in as a member of parliament in New Zealand. She held governments accountable for enforcing human rights and worked extensively on empowering women and minorities.

On the third day of the Ekam World Peace Festival, Humanity cannot find peace while other living beings suffer because every living being is interconnected in the single fabric called life. Sri Krishnaji, co-creator of Ekam.

The guest of the day, Satya S Tripathi, Secretary General – Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet, speaking on peace for healing Mother Earth commended Sri Preethaji & Sri Krishnaji for their massive initiative. He said, human species evolved and are sustained around the abundance of Mother Nature. Our peace is connected to hers. She was there even before us, and she will continue even after we are gone. Whether we think in an enlightened way or think selfishly, we need to heal and bring peace to Mother Earth.

Sri Preethaji led the 3rd day festival to its finale guiding 30 million peace meditators from 100 countries into a powerful peace meditation to heal Mother Earth.

In the past years Nobel Prize winners, international celebrities and sports people have come to the Peace Festival to share their views on the importance of peace during Ekam World Peace Festival.

About Sri Preethaji & Sri Krishnaji

Sri Preethaji & Sri Krishnaji, co-creators of Ekam are enlightened sages, philosophers and transformational leaders who have led millions across the globe on a profound spiritual journey. They tour across the U.S., Asia, and Europe, helping millions of people across the world find healing, joy, purpose and connection. They are on a mission to elevate humanity's global consciousness, and bring peace, prosperity, and joy to people all around the world.

About Ekam

Ekam is a mystic powerhouse that has been created with a vision to lead humanity into enlightened states. Ekam has been built on the sacred and ancient principles of Surya Yantra, or the Sun's mystical form. This sacred structure is one of India's architectural wonders that can seat more than 8000 seekers at its sanctum. It towers majestically at the foothills and on the vast open plains of the Vellikonda range on the eastern coast of South India, 80km north of the city of Chennai.

Website: www.ekam.org



Mr. Satya S Tripati, Secretary General,
Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet.



INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

EXPERTSPEAK

DR ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER

Psychologist and Managing Director, Positive Acorn, Portland, USA



DR NIMESH DESAI

Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, Delhi





PROF. KAMLESH SINGH

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-Delhi

DR SHYAM BHAT

Director, LiveLaughLove Foundation, Mumbai



The Science of *Happiness*

Four experts outline the psychological and physiological dimensions of the happy state of being

Q. How would you define happiness?

NIMESH DESAI

Happiness is often seen as a state of mind without worries or negative emotions. Strictly speaking, it is one of the many emotional states of mind, that include sadness, anxiety, fear, etc. Over time, with the increasing occurrence of negative states of mind such as sadness and distress, the use of the term happiness, in public discourse, has become broad-based and all-encompassing to denote an overall positive state of mind. However, it is important to understand the contextualisation of the use of the term happiness to avoid the error of seeing it literally. It would be fairly abnormal for anyone to be constantly happy, specially without basis. The desirable goal should be to achieve a state of mind with more positive than negative elements. There are historical and cultural aspects to this evolving concept of happiness. For example, in the western world, individuals are encouraged to aspire for and work towards being happy. However, there are concerns whether people who were well provided for are happy. Conversely, many eastern cultures encourage persons towards satisfaction or contentment, with usefulness or meaningfulness in existence.

KAMLESH SINGH

Till date, we do not have a universal definition of happiness. Theoretically, there are different explanations. The hedonic and eudemonic perspectives, for instance, offer one way of conceptualising it. In the hedonic perspective, happiness is equated with pleasure, comfort, enjoyment, etc. The eudemonic perspective equates happiness with a meaningful life, it is a theory of self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations, environmental mastery and autonomy. In some eastern models, happiness/well-being is associated with peace of mind and inner harmony. Similarly, we also have Indian perspectives on happiness such as *sat-chit-anand* (truth-consciousness-bliss) which lead to *anandmay*—a state of mind. Besides theoretical perspectives, another way of conceptualising it is to understand the views of the general public. Our research shows that there are different components to people's view of happiness, be it positive emotions (joy, inner peace etc.), life satisfaction, healthy family ties, work and accomplishment, or leisure engagement.

> **"One cannot be constantly happy, especially without basis. The goal must be to achieve a state of mind with more positive than negative elements"**
>
> **DR NIMESH DESAI**

ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER

Happiness is a general term for a wide range of psychological phenomena. It is, in part, the experience of pleasant feelings such as joy. It is not solely, feelings, however. Happiness also includes a favorable outlook (optimism) and a sense that life is going relatively well (satisfaction). People from various cultures place differing weights on one or another aspect of happiness. Some cultures prize feelings of peace, while others might prize exuberance or enthusiasm. It is not that one group has a monopoly on the truth, there are benefits to each distinct cultural leaning.

DR SHYAM BHAT

There is no universal definition for happiness, but one can think of it as an emotional state most people desire, a state where they feel positive and relaxed. Western culture, particularly American culture, sees the pursuit of happiness as the most important goal of life; in the east, including in ancient Indian culture, the goal was not happiness but *Moksha*, a state where the cycle of suffering stops. As the philosopher John Stuart Mill observed, "Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so." Ironically, as societies embrace the American ideal and start to pursue individual happiness, the rates of depression, anxiety and suicide increase. The consumerist culture is fuelled by the quest for happiness. Happiness is often confused with pleasure, which, from an evolutionary and biological perspective, is felt when an activity or substance causes the brain to release neurochemicals such as dopamine. But science and lived experience tell us that pleasure doesn't last. The novelty wears off, the brain does not produce the same surge of dopamine, and the person is compelled to seek new experiences. Pleasure by its very nature is fleeting, while happiness is a more subtle and lasting state of mind. Those who seek pleasure find only momentary joy, before feeling dissatisfaction again.

Q. What key factors contribute to, or affect, our happiness?

NIMESH DESAI

The first fundamental factor is about a few basic needs being met, as essential for being happy in life or satisfied with life, for individuals or groups or communities. The fact that a few persons or groups of communities may have the ability to achieve happiness or contentment, even in adverse situations, or despite circumstances of gross deprivation, cannot take away from this truism. It is necessary for this to be realised and accepted at all levels that happiness can be based only on the plank of basic comforts. Further, the absence of any significant health or social problem can help in achieving happiness. Positive developments in any area of life can lead to the same goal but are not essential. Indeed, it has also been found that the ability to maintain a positive state of mind or happiness, not only in the absence of concrete reasons of positive nature but even in difficult situations or adverse circumstances is characteristic of many persons and cultures—also known as resilience. Besides cultural subgroups being variable in this ability to withstand adverse circumstances and maintain a positive state of mind so as to find appropriate solutions, individuals also differ in their resilience. In addition to resilience, the other factors that contribute to degrees of happiness in life or satisfaction with life are basic attitude, the synchrony between aspirations and reality, self-awareness, social and family support systems, and emotional connect with relevant groups and persons, besides the absence of mental health problems. The contribution of diagnosable mental illnesses like depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders and substance use disorders like alcohol dependence, which are by now known to be genetic and biological in origin, is often unrecognised and definitely underestimated. Further, individual and interpersonal behaviour problems also cause significant distress and become impediments in the pursuit of happiness. The political and economic situation also plays a very important part as do religious and spiritual practices.



“Our thoughts and actions influence happiness, as do external factors like work or study pressure, injustice or unhealthy relations”

KAMLESH SINGH

KAMLESH SINGH

Firstly, I would say our thoughts are extremely important—they shape our subjective world and can trigger negative and positive emotional reactions as per their nature. Secondly, our actions are equally important. For instance, gratitude expression, forgiveness and helping others may make you feel happy. So, our thoughts, emotions and actions are important, as are external factors, like work or study pressure, injustice, unhealthy relations or other happenings around us. Thus, self-related factors as well as external factors play a role in happiness.

ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER

If there is a single “secret” of happiness, it is to be found in social relationships. Regardless of where in the world people live, their relationships are one of the most robust influences on their happiness. Enjoying time together, receiving support, and making a social contribution are all important predictors of well-being.

DR SHYAM BHAT

Happiness cannot be acquired directly. Neither is happiness the absence of sadness or pain, since, inevitably, life will have its share of sorrow. Rather, happiness is the full blossoming and freedom of an individual, who, having shed anxieties and unnecessary fears, lives with a sense of purpose, committed to a goal larger than oneself, feeling a sense of purpose, meaning and connection, with moments of joy and awe.

Q. Is happiness a mind game? Can we train our brain to be happy?

NIMESH DESAI

Although the term "mind game" may have a different connotation, the role of the mind and brain in our state of mental wellness or psychological well-being is certainly critical, not only in terms of the fundamental propensity of different individuals to be prone to various mood states, but also in as much as that persons can surely improve upon their natural tendencies and proclivities. The fact that all psychological and mental processes, including emotional wellness, operate through brain mechanisms and that these can be modulated through one's own effort is encouraging. Any sense of helplessness would be inappropriate because while happiness (or as I prefer to see it, satisfaction with life) is contingent upon the MACRO environment of the economic milieu and socio-technological development, as well as the MESO situation of professional or social success and material luxuries, besides the crucial MICRO element of individual adaptation.

KAMLESH SINGH

Over the years, we have seen that happiness interventions do indeed increase our levels of happiness. Such studies show that it is possible to increase your happiness level. So, I will say, yes, to a certain extent, we can train our brain to be happy.



> **"People can learn to enjoy what is going well in life but still work to improve their lot, find greater security and address injustice"**
>
> **ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER**

ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER

Some people say that "happiness is a state of mind". This may be an over-simplification because favourable life circumstances are helpful for happiness. Even in the face of tough life conditions, however, people can be happy. Research from people living in *bastis*, for example, reveals that although they worry, they are also satisfied with many (but not all) aspects of their lives. People can learn to appreciate and enjoy what is going well in life. Even so, we should work to improve our lot, find greater security and address injustice.

DR SHYAM BHAT

A person's level of happiness is determined by several factors. A person's temperament, which is influenced by their genes, plays an important role in the level of happiness. While we cannot change our genes, we can change several other variables that can profoundly increase the level of happiness. Evidence points to the following: 1) Physical health has been correlated with happiness; the healthier someone is, the happier they are, and the happier they are, the healthier they are; 2) Relationships—having social ties and feeling connected to others increases happiness; 3) Nutrition—a healthy balanced diet helps maintain a healthy gut and this has been proven to boost happiness; 4) Physical exercise—plenty of evidence shows that regular physical exercise increases happiness; 5) Meditation—meditation has been shown to decrease stress and anxiety and boost happiness; 6) Good circadian rhythms—a healthy body clock helps maintain one's mood. Regularity of sleep and meals as well as exposure to some sunshine during the day boosts happiness; 7) Realistic optimism. To be real about the world but not get into negative or catastrophic thinking helps increase happiness.

Q. What role do work and money play in attaining happiness?

NIMESH DESAI

Since the issues of money and work are intertwined for many populations, the common misconception is about work-related success being an integral part of being happy. Indeed, the importance of work-related success for being happy or satisfied with life in recent times has, as a natural reaction, led to the oft repeated emphasis on work-life balance. This dichotomy or dualism may suggest that work is antithetical to life or being happy in life, thereby exhorting people to strike a more appropriate balance between work on the one hand, and other aspects of life on the other.

However, the role of work in achieving happiness is irrefutable, not only for the money that is often earned through work and the success it brings, but also for the less tangible benefits of how work provides a purpose in life and also keeps the mind meaningfully occupied. The reference to work here is not only in relation to a job or profession but all kinds of work and at all levels, including being a home-maker or a care-giver to those in need.

On the other hand, the role of money as an isolated concept, and whether that is essential for basic needs and optimal material comforts, can also be debated, but in the current human condition, this would be by and large generally agreed upon. The debate or the point at issue is if money should be considered as central or essential to happiness, and to what extent? Individuals, families and communities decide for themselves how far money is permitted to become the centre point for happiness.

Q. What five happiness mantras/ tips would you give, and why?

NIMESH DESAI

One of the most useful tips for happiness is to increase awareness about mental health disorders, and to get appropriate treatment for persons affected by these problems. Secondly, accept reality. The reality of the Covid-19 pandemic, for instance, is surely harsh and unpleasant, and yet one of the essential processes is to develop acceptance of the reality. It helps us deal with the situation, find appropriate solutions while retaining our ability to do so. Thirdly, neutralise negative influences, as they can lead to distress and depressive disorders. Fourthly, take life in your stride. The ability to make the best of what life has to offer at various points of time is part of the characteristic of resilience. And last but not the least, reduce your needs. Adverse and limiting situations such as lockdowns and the consequent economic effects lead to not only hardships but also the psychological feeling of deprivation and negativity. A meaningful way to avoid this effect is to reduce your material needs, and follow the principle of simple living. Additionally, be aware of oneself and your strengths and weaknesses.

KAMLESH SINGH

Firstly, learn to be mindful of your thoughts. Generally your thoughts trigger your emotions, i.e., happy thoughts=happy emotions. Most of us have to encounter stressors on a daily basis. We need to have some time to be away from such environment to get a relaxed mind. We should spend some time daily to engage in activities that help us experience positive emotions. It could be reading, yoga, sports, exercise, dancing, singing, painting or gardening. Globally, research has shown the importance of positive relations for our happiness. Hence, my next happiness tip would be to stay in touch with friends and family who make you happy, and to nurture these relations. 'Counting someone at the time of adversity' leads to happiness. Try to keep the key of your happiness with you and make conscious efforts every day to make yourself



> **Money does boost happiness, but only up to a point, beyond which additional wealth does not affect the level of happiness**
>
> **DR SHYAM BHAT**

KAMLESH SINGH

The truth is we all need a certain amount of money to survive, don't we? However, beyond a certain point, money does not necessarily increase your happiness—this is what some studies have shown. When it comes to work, what matters is whether it is meaningful to you and you feel purposeful while doing it. There is a concept called 'flow' in Psychology. It is a cognitive state in which an individual becomes fully engaged/ immersed in a particular activity. It includes intense focus, loss of awareness of time and self, and creative engagement. Flow has been found to be related to happiness. So, if you feel at flow during any activity or work, it is likely that the work influences your happiness levels. Conversely, your work may also hinder your happiness, especially if it is not well-suited to your level of skill and expertise or perhaps due to external factors such as a poor work environment or culture.

ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER

Some people may be uncomfortable with the idea that money does, indeed, buy some happiness. Money is simply a means of exchange. Having it allows people to do more things they value: contribute to others, pursue an education, take a holiday or enjoy a meal. Placing too much emphasis on money, though, is associated with lower levels of happiness. It's helpful to remember that it's not the money itself but the ends it's used for that's important.

DR SHYAM BHAT

Work can be a vital ingredient of a happy life, especially if it is meaningful and reasonably challenging. Poverty causes stress and there decreases happiness. In a sense, money does boost happiness, but only up to a certain point, beyond which additional wealth does not affect the level of happiness. A balance between work and the rest of life is usually helpful for happiness.



> **Take life in your stride. The ability to make the best of what life has to offer helps build the characteristic of resilience**
>
> **DR NIMESH DESAI**

happy—remember, even small measures matter, and a little effort is better than none at all. Identifying your character strengths and using them in a better manner also promote happiness. And don't forget to count your blessings. A popular technique of doing so is to maintain a gratitude journal and write down three things you are grateful for every night before going to sleep.

ROBERT BISWAS-DIENER

It is natural and acceptable to occasionally feel down or negative. Work on appreciating what you have. Invest in other people. Take some time to enjoy life. Find something at which you can improve and work at it.

DR SHYAM BHAT

First, cultivate gratitude and contentment. The world we live in amplifies dissatisfaction; many people compare their lives with their friends or people on social media, leading to a constant feeling that life could be better. Being thankful and happy with what one has counteracts this. Second, ensure good physical health to have good mental health. Stay physically healthy and the mind will be happier. Third, stay connected with others. The pandemic has increased the isolation of modern life. Connecting with others in an authentic way increases happiness. Fourth, do something for others. Focusing on helping others makes life more meaningful and happier. Finally, manage your mind. Learn meditation to do so. Staying in the present rather than worrying about the future or regretting the past boosts happiness.

HAPPINESS : THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON OF ALL

"Our present education system is entirely marks-centric, with no focus on teaching children to be good human beings. The Happiness Curriculum in Delhi Government Schools is a revolutionary step towards improving children's self-confidence, and helping them become better human beings."

Mr. Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of Govt. of NCT of Delhi



The primary goal of the Govt. of NCT of Delhi's focus on Education is to transform the very core of the school system towards a humanistic approach. The world-class infrastructure, global exposure, and training for teachers and empowering parents are all but means to this end. On July 2nd 2018, with the blessings of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Delhi Government launched the Happiness Curriculum, perhaps the most ambitious initiative of its kind anywhere in the world. The Happiness class is experienced by 8 lakh students daily through a dedicated period in the school time-table. The curriculum, based on the science of emotions, was the product of months of hard work by a team of over 40 experts that comprised of psychologists, non-profits specialising in adolescent well-being, and mentor teachers from Delhi Government schools.



"India is the only country that can bring together modern education and ancient Indian knowledge. This is needed to deal with the destructive emotions in the world. So, what is being started in Delhi schools can have an impact on the whole world."

— His Holiness The Dalai Lama

WHY ALL SCHOOLS SHOULD TEACH HAPPINESS

Our current education system subjects young people to severe stress and judgement as a result of which they go on to become members of an increasingly unhappy society.

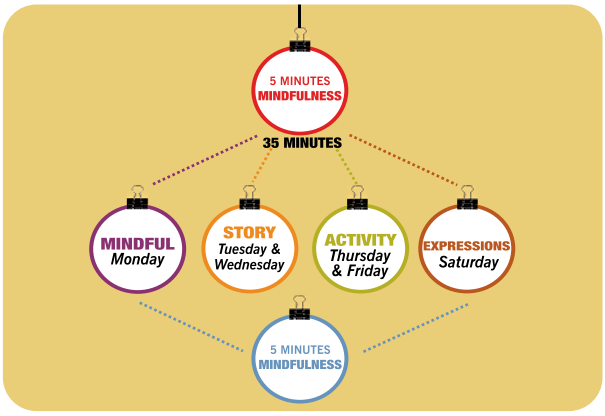
- One in four Indian children in 13-15 age group suffers from depression: WHO 2017
- India ranks 139 out of 149 countries in the World Happiness Report 2021

It is an urgent and indisputable need to radically alter the school experience for children so as to enable them to live harmoniously with family and society, whilst developing a holistic perspective on life.

INSIDE A HAPPINESS CLASS

The Happiness class encompasses a range of ideas, values, stories, and activities that encourage students to discuss their views, share experiences, and reflect on their actions. It aims to ensure that the classroom is an open and non-judgmental safe space for students to deeply engage with themselves and others. Students are guided to be more aware of their feelings, identify their emotional needs, and be cognizant of their responses to life's circumstances.

These classes are a platform for teachers and students to gain a better understanding of each other. A unique feature about the curriculum is that it has no books for students, no homework, and no examinations. Instead, there is a Teacher's Handbook for each grade whose major components are mindfulness, stories, activities, and expressions to help the teacher effectively facilitate the Happiness class.



RELIEF DURING THE PANDEMIC

During the unprecedented time of pandemic when students, parents, and teachers were processing varied emotions of grief, anxiety and stress, Happiness classes became an important source of strength and hope. Family Happiness classes that were live streamed on YouTube by the Delhi Government motivated students to practice mindfulness and other activities from the curriculum with their parents and siblings at home. Interactive voice responses (IVRs) and audio recordings on Happiness stories and activities that were sent to all students of Grade 1-8 during and post the lockdown were particularly effective in providing solace in difficult times.



TESTIMONIALS & IMPACT

The Brookings Institution, a leading research organization based in Washington DC, conducted a pilot study in 2019 which validated positive effects on students and teachers that had been anecdotally observed right from the time the curriculum was introduced in schools.



No more scared of Maths

My mind was a mess. I could barely concentrate on what was being taught in class. After the Happiness class where I learn meditation, I am not only able to focus without feeling restless but also understand the concepts being taught. I am no more scared of studies, not even Maths!

— Yuvraj, Class VIII, Delhi Govt. School Student

I feel more connected to my students

After the Happiness class has been introduced in our schools, I feel a noticeable change in my personal and professional life too. The mindfulness component, which is a well-balanced combination of focus and breathing, makes me calm, feel relaxed and more ready for the day. The stories and various activities have strengthened my bonding and understanding with students. It is such a new but awesome experience for me!

— Mr. Pankaj Kumar, Delhi Govt. School Teacher





My daughter spends time with me now

I am noticing a lot of change in my daughter since she started attending the Happiness class. Earlier she rarely spent time with me and was glued to the phone and TV. But now she not only spends time with me but also helps me with housework. She shares all the stories that are told to her in the Happiness class. And she shares many anecdotes from school. It feels good to connect with her and share her happiness.

— Geeta, Delhi Govt. School Parent

GLOBAL RECOGNITION

Upon its launch, the Happiness curriculum was praised by several national and international media outlets such as BBC, CNN, Le Monde, NPR and was also featured in Harvard International Education Week and the World Economic Forum. The curriculum was universally hailed as a major reform in school education in India.

In the last few years, the Happiness class has received accolades from several dignitaries including King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands and the former First Lady of the United States, Ms. Melania Trump. The curriculum also drew special praise from Former Chief Justice of India, Mr. Ranjan Gogoi who said the problem of litigation will be over if we have a lot of happy people in our country.



"I spent time in a classroom and observed the happiness curriculum that is being followed by the school. It is very inspiring that the students begin each day by practicing mindfulness, by reading stories, listening to stories shared by other classmates and connecting with nature, I cannot think of a better way for all of us to start our day,"

— Melania Trump, Former First Lady of the United States of America

The Happiness Curriculum is a crucial first step in the direction of ensuring that our education systems create individuals who are not only professionally capable in their chosen fields, but are also compassionate and responsible human beings.

"I wish for a day when upon seeing acts of violence and hatred in society, the leader of a city, state or country directs the police commissioner to resolve the issue in the next few days but simultaneously asks the Education Minister to solve the underlying problem in 10 years through education. The Happiness Curriculum offers that hope to each and every policy maker committed to seeing this change in society."

— Mr. Manish Sisodia

Deputy Chief Minister & Minister of Education of Delhi

What Makes *Me*

From long walks on the beach and a good book to the sound of their children's laughter and hanging out with friends, people from across fields share what happiness means to them

BANDEEP SINGH



"Happiness for me is a state of equanimity and contentment with one's situation. What makes me happy is a relaxed state of mind—which happens when I am with my family, spending time with them. Or when I am looking at a blue sky or am on a beach, watching and listening to the waves or just walking, when I am having a relaxed evening with friends or colleagues. I think we as humans naturally yearn and seek happiness—that is our state of equilibrium. Our happiness gets disturbed when our mind gets stressed and hence being happy requires doing things needed to relax one's mind. And it is the seemingly small things which usually make us most relaxed and happy"

ROHAN VERMA

CEO & Executive Director, MapmyIndia



"The greatest happiness, in my experience, comes from bringing positivity into the lives of others. As an MP, I am confronted daily by the problems of my constituents, many of which have weighed them down to the point of despair—a mother needing help for a sick child, a parent seeking to get her paramilitary son transferred to a post nearer home...a bereaved widow who has lost her family's only breadwinner and needs employment for her son, a scholar knocking vainly on the doors of the bureaucracy to get her fellowship funds released. Whatever I can do for them that brings a smile to their faces gives me more satisfaction and happiness than seeing my book climbing up the bestseller charts or India winning a cricket Test match!"

SHASHI THAROOR

Congress Lok Sabha MP, Author

Happy



MARTAND KHOSLA

Architect and Artist

"Happiness for me is moments.
It is the unexpected moment in a chance encounter with a person, a touching story and an artwork or building that instantly affects your core. And it is the unexpected chuckle or reaction of my children to new situations; though that is more like a burst of happiness!
Or it is the series of moments in the creative process between expectation and realisation. It's the moment before the completion of a building or a sculpture as it is almost realised. Happiness becomes the approach to creation, where the imagination is not yet fully realised or still holds surprises"



ARUSHI MUDGAL

Odissi dancer

"Simple things in life bring me joy and happiness. A long, solitary walk close to nature with the wind blowing on my face, a silent conversation with a confidante, watching a nonsensical movie and laughing with family, an unexpected smile from a stranger, floating in water, a beautiful song, a sign from the universe when everything seems to be falling apart, the sun, moon, stars in their glory, precious moments of abandon and bliss while dancing, the satisfaction of creativity...and each time I remind myself, happiness is but a state of mind. When I find it within, I find it without"



SANJEEV VERMA/ GETTY IMAGES

"I feel happy when I solve something complex. It gives me huge happiness and lights up my mind"

ASHWINI VAISHNAW

Union Minister of Railways, Communications, and Electronics and Information Technology

ARUN SANKAR/ GETTY IMAGES

"Happiness is a mindset. A mindset we all have to cultivate. This pandemic has taught me that happiness is not a destination. It is an ongoing work in progress, a state of mind that we need to work at every day. To appreciate and value all that we have in life, which we often overlook and take for granted. To be kind and generous, not in terms of merely practising charity, but the kindness and generosity that comes with the spirit of doing and giving without expectation. I find happiness in creating joy around me—be it through creating an enabling environment, social outreach programmes, services that empower and enable others, or even through kind words and simple encouraging conversations. It is the joy of giving back to the community. Happiness to me is also the freedom to choose. For each of us to live a life without fear, based on our personal choices and, most importantly, in harmony and acceptance of others. Happiness is celebrating and encouraging differences. It is building a collective society where people are unafraid of innovation and open to potential change and endless possibilities. Practised every day, happiness is addictive and has a way of sustaining itself. All we need to do is embrace the right mindset with open hearts"

HARSH GOENKA
Chairman, RPG Enterprises





RAJWANT RAWAT

C.P. GURNANI

Managing Director & CEO, Tech Mahindra Ltd

"Right now, happiness for me is this cute bundle of unbridled joy that dominates and dictates our lives—my nine-month-old grandson. My family is my safe harbour, always backing me with their unconditional love and unquestioned support. They allowed me to dream big, fly high with all those million miles and challenge conventional thinking. As a leader, happiness to me is also about creating more leaders who are a combination of dreamers and doers than followers. It is about impacting people, living a life of purpose and leaving the planet better than we found it"

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA

Chief Minister, Assam

"There are two dimensions to happiness—professional and personal. At the professional front, when I'm assigned a task or take up a mission for public good, accomplishment of the objective brings me happiness. The tougher the challenge, the higher the happiness quotient because it demands more effort and commitment. The joy and excitement lie in the process of being up to the challenge. Once the goal is achieved, I take a break and enjoy solitude and quietness for a few days. Those are my moments of happiness too. On the personal front, my daughter is my biggest source of happiness. After a hectic day at work, when I return home and see my daughter, it brings me unparalleled happiness. As I spend time talking to her, understanding her world, doing little things together, I feel emotionally content and blissful"



BANDEEP SINGH



PRAJAKTA KOLI

YouTuber, Creator and Actor

"I think, for me, my people always make me happy. I have completely lucked out in the people department. I have the most amazing people around me at all times—at work, at home, everywhere. My work also makes me happy. I absolutely love my job. No one day is similar to another. I get to travel and meet new people and try different things. It is challenging, nerve-wracking and absolutely wonderful and I am grateful that it is a major source of happiness for me. I also have the most amazing audience. I feel I lucked out there too. They support me through thick and thin. They have held my hand through the ups and downs and overall been a solid system for whatever I do. Another source of happiness for me is food. I love food, I love travel. These are things that are guaranteed sources of happiness for me"

"What makes me happy are the many sad things happening around me, because of which I am getting so many stories"

RAM GOPAL VARMA

Filmmaker



ARUN SANKAR/ GETTY IMAGES

NILESH SHAH

Managing Director, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management

"To me, happiness is a state of mind. No matter what happens, one should always be happy. Unfortunately, I haven't reached that state. During the second wave of the pandemic, I was part of the volunteer group at Kotak Bank. When we were able to get medicine, hospital admissions, oxygen cylinder etc. for our colleagues, friends and relatives, it gave me the maximum happiness"



RACHIT GOSWAMI



SANDEEP SAHDEV

USTAD SHUJAAT HUSAIN KHAN

Sitar player

"Happiness is so many different things to so many people. After the last two years of the pandemic, I have realised that happiness for me is family, friends and being able to be outdoors. So, if I have good health, family, friends and can be outside in the open, that is my greatest happiness today"

"My sense of happiness has always been in the greater good of the people of Bihar. So, seeing Bihar's girls riding bicycles to schools, a confident policewoman doing her duty, or a Jeevika didi (Bihar women self-help group member) supporting her family financially...all these give me a sense of fulfillment. The progress made because of our initiatives...and our efforts for the protection of our rich cultural heritage give me a moment of contentment. And, to top it all, the empowerment of women because of 50 per cent reservation in Panchayat and urban local bodies makes me happy"

NITISH KUMAR

Chief Minister, Bihar



HARDIK CHHABRA

MILIND SHELTE



"Bother! You ask: 'What is happiness, according to you?' Is that any kind of question? Tell me: is it possible to find a universal definition of happiness? Or even to define happiness? It is futile to try and coax meaning out of everything—it is the feeling that holds meaning, not the fact of its existence"

GULZAR

Lyricist, Filmmaker



BANDEEP SINGH

JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA

Union Minister of Civil Aviation

"Happiness comes from people and relationships that truly matter. It thrives in safe spaces. It is in knowing that I have my family, friends and loved ones as a cushion to fall back on. It is in the small everyday things; in the simplicity—like the warmth of the sun or the sound of water and among nature. Nature makes me feel more rooted, connected, humble and centred. Happiness, for me, also lies in feeling a sense of achievement that one derives from inching closer to one's goals of service before self with each passing day. It is both in the measurable and in the intangible"

BANDEEP SINGH



AYESHA SINGH

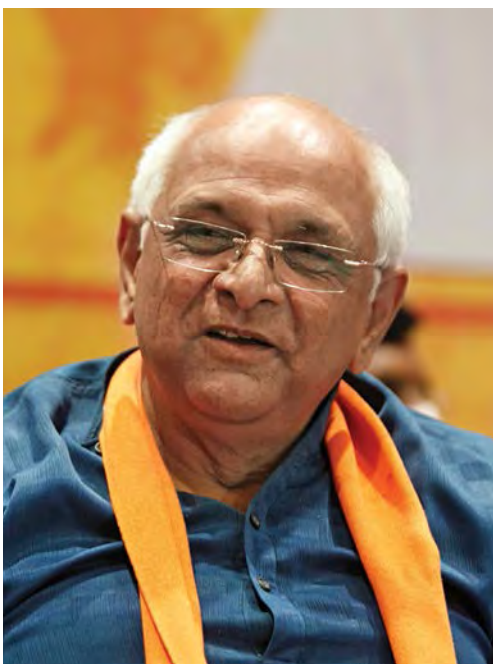
Artist

"FAMILY, FOOD, FRIENDS, FREE TIME and unexpected encounters–meeting people for the first time and feeling like you have known them forever–agency, recognising the potential that parallel autonomies hold in relation to existing structures and exercising it, or learning from others who do; and after months of struggle with a new project, to watch the potential of an idea get realised or to evolve, whether as an artwork or as the world comes together to create, converse and collaborate, brings happiness to me"

"There are many things in the world that may give us momentary happiness and joy, but true and lasting happiness is felt only in helping others. In my many years of public service, I have always lived by the motto: 'service before self'. While working for the welfare of my fellow citizens, I have realised that, for me, the source of true happiness lies in the service of others. Now, as I have started discharging my new responsibility as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, I am eager to dedicate all my energy and abilities to the wellbeing and happiness of my 6.5 crore Gujarati brothers and sisters"

BHUPENDRA PATEL

Chief Minister, Gujarat



NANDAN DAVE

ANI



TRISHA

Actor

"To live in a city like Chennai gives me lot of joy. I am a 100 per cent Chennai girl. I was born and raised here. Though it is a big, global city, Chennai gives space and scope for a peaceful life for middle-class people too. Visiting places like the Birla Planetarium, Kapaleeshwarar Temple and Parthasarathi Temple in the city gives me happiness. As does driving slowly on the beautiful East Coast Road (ECR) by the sea. Sometimes I stop my car and take a small walk towards the water. And standing in front of the sea—it feels so surreal"

CHETAN BHAGAT

Author

"Things that make me happy come in three categories. One, simple things like a good night's sleep, a walk in nice, breezy weather, a day where I felt I was productive. Two, setting and accomplishing goals that matter to me is another way I generate happiness. Writing a new book, releasing it properly, starting my YouTube channel, adding a regular running routine to my lifestyle—these are all goals I recently added to my life, not so much for success but for the feeling of happiness that comes when I can accomplish them. Three, being with the people I love makes me happy. Family, friends and colleagues I like working with—all these people add a lot to the happiness in my life, and are ultimately the people who matter"



SHEKHAR GHOSH

PAUL P. JOHN

Chairman, John Distilleries

"During the early days in my alcohol business, I wasn't happy. It was all run-of-the-mill, lower end, volume-based stuff. Things changed when I got into the wine and single malt market. To be able to give people something that's out-of-the-world brings me both great pleasure and joy. In India, we have been very used to blended whiskies and lots of soda water. I feel very happy when I am able to educate people about how to take small sips and enjoy their undiluted single malt. I'm also in the hospitality business and I love picking up art for my hotels. But I'm happiest when I make people around me smile"



TOONUSPHOTOGRAPHY



BANDEEP SINGH

CONRAD K. SANGMA

Chief Minister, Meghalaya

"The field of public service is very demanding and, at times, unforgiving. It's very difficult to make everyone, including oneself, happy. To be able to give 100 per cent in the service of people and remain committed to their welfare, one must enjoy what he/ she does even if it's a path fraught with challenges. But the fact that I can make a positive and productive difference in the lives of many makes me happy. That doesn't mean I don't seek happiness from life's small pleasures. It could be a long drive, a fun lunch with friends or a quiet dinner with family. In fact, any moment spent with family or friends brings me joy since I don't have the luxury to spend much time with them. It could also be a moment with myself–listening to music or on a morning walk. Even better would be going to a live musical performance with my loved ones"

SUSHMITA DEV

TMC leader

"Happiness comes from within, though most of us look for it outside, from other people and situations. My personal happiness is intrinsically connected to me being content with my life and knowing that the people I love are happy, or at least not unhappy. Professionally, my happiness is connected directly to my achievements for the people I represent. A position and status without achievements would be futile to me. Knowing that I have been instrumental in delivering on something my people wanted makes me happy"



ROHIT CHAWLA

SONU NIGAM

Singer

"Happiness and its attainment are generally misunderstood in the world. It is joy that truly fulfils a life. Few understand the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is dependent on something or someone, but joy emanates from within. I have seen two kinds of joyous people–the first, those born with clarity and gratitude, like my son Nevaan, and second, who through the journey of their lives, imbibe gratitude and appreciation. I feel I belong to the second category. Joy is felt in the soul and is calm, tranquil and soothing"

SUJIT JAISWAL / AFP



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The India Today Conclave
Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi

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SUBIR HALDER



"Work gives me happiness. I have rooted myself in my work in such a way that I feel I'm happiest when I am working for my people, my constituency. Today, whatever I am and have achieved is because of my work. Everything is superficial, it all comes and goes, but one's work is the legacy one leaves behind"

MIMI CHAKRABORTY
Actor, Singer & TMC MP

"My daughter and my son give me the happiest moments. I was very attached to my father, who was a prison officer and his death was a great loss to me. I have named my son Guhan Doss after my father and feel like my father is reborn in my son. Hence the presence of and proximity to my kids give me a lot of joy. I forget the whole world when I roam around in my garden with my kids"

SIVAKARTHIKEYAN
Actor





QAMAR SIBTAIN

"At a personal level, what makes me happy is spending time with family and friends, walking around a favourite city, playing with my dogs, reading P.G. Wodehouse and listening to great music"

NAUSHAD FORBES
Co-Chairman, Forbes Marshall Pvt. Ltd

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NUSRAT JAHAN

Actor & TMC MP

"Happiness is a frame of mind. I always try to stay happy with a positive mindset. However, small things, like being able to do something which brings a difference in the lives of others, make me happy, for instance, sending ration to a needy family, helping out someone in getting an education or a job.

On a personal level, good food makes me happy. It is a quick mood uplifter. I love to cook and bake in my free time, too. I like simple home-cooked food and am crazy about anything sweet. Desserts are my weakness"



"I feel happiness at multiple times and in so many dimensions–certainly when patients with complex medical conditions recover, especially children. When I witness telemedicine becoming pervasive, drones delivering organs and glucometers....
I also feel invigorated when I see a sunrise, a rainbow, majestic mountains and waves hitting the shore. Or when I perfect a yoga posture, complete 10,000 steps in a day and most certainly when the wicked weighing scale shows half a kilogram of weight loss. At the top of the list is being with my parents, family and friends. They complete my life and make every day so blessed and special"

SANGITA REDDY

Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group

RAJWANT RAWAT

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VOX POP



NAVONIL DAS

Fashion Designer

"The pandemic has taught us the importance of staying connected with our family and friends and taking care of them. I believe happiness is something that needs to be lived and experienced in the present. We have started designing spaces and homes since the latter has become the dominant part of human life. So, along with clothes, we are designing home furnishing, upholstery and textiles. We are trying to make home spaces a little more cosy, comfortable and happy zones"



ARUNA SAIRAM

Carnatic singer and composer

"My happiness is related to relationships. First, as a singer, I share the joy of music with my audience when I sing. When I see smiles in the audience or the listener in a meditative mood, or a '*wah wah*' from them, that gives me happiness. Second, good relationships and forgiving each other are the bedrock of happiness"



RANJAN GOGOI

Former Chief Justice of India

"Happiness is an uncompromising journey towards self-realisation. It's a quest for finding the true meaning and worth of living one's life. There is no negotiation in this journey as living life on one's own terms is the real essence of happiness. It comes from doing things that one perceives to be appropriate. It's not a moral endeavour but a relentless process to make one's life meaningful for others. Whether I could achieve this objective or not is not of the highest importance. My happiness comes from being in this journey with unadulterated integrity. If it has been an honest journey, it must have spread joy to anyone who has been touched by my work and life"

BANDEEP SINGH

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BANDEEP SINGH



"When all else is done, all that matters is family, dearest friends and magical memories—this is my WhatsApp intro. And here's what my Twitter status reads: 'Happy doing what I am doing'. Yes. 2021. I am in the happiest space of my life. Personally. Professionally. Politically. Don't sweat the small stuff. Don't look over your shoulder to see who is bitching to infinity. Don't forget to hit Ctrl-Alt-Del for all the pettiness baked during the day. Then stretch out to switch off the reading lamp for the night. Thank you to the person up there for another day well spent. Happy to be here. Just so happy"

DEREK O'BRIEN

Parliamentary leader of the TMC in Rajya Sabha

R.C. BHARGAVA

Chairman, Maruti Suzuki

"Happiness is a state of mind where one feels that God is in his place and all is well with the world. My source of long-term happiness is probably the knowledge that through Maruti Suzuki I was substantially responsible for changing the lives and futures of tens of thousands of people. Seeing India changing and finally adopting the correct route to high economic growth gives me great satisfaction and I feel happy whenever I am able to contribute a little bit. My family, including my children and especially grandchildren, are a huge source of happiness for me. Seeing my grandchildren grow is indeed something"



BANDEEP SINGH

HRISHITAA BHATT

Actor

"My life's mantra is to always be happy and spread vibrance and happiness around. I am most happy when there's positivity around me, which happens with my friends and family. I feel happy when I am working and when people appreciate it. The wonders of nature have always intrigued me, which is why I thoroughly enjoy travelling close to nature. I am also a foodie, so all my favourite foods bring me happiness. But most importantly, I feel that when you're happy from within, happiness from the outside world finds you"



AZHAR KHAN/GETTY IMAGES

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REUBEN SINGH

TEJASHWI YADAV

Leader of the Opposition, Bihar Assembly, RJD leader

"Happiness is not just a state of mind, it is a holistic idea. The most important thing for happiness is 360-degree wellbeing. So, my idea of happiness is to be a part of and drive an inclusive process that ensures wellbeing for all. An illusion of happiness can be created with glitzy events, media narratives and showing just a part of the reality, but real happiness is when people can afford basic necessities and can live with dignity. This is something I learnt from my father, Laluji, who not only remains happy himself but also makes everyone around him happy by empowering them"



SUSHANT SINHA

"When most of us were stuck at home and going through a hard time, I realised what makes me happy is making people laugh. That's how I decided to do shows for Covid survivors. It made people forget their problems at least for those 30 minutes. Even with my wife, I try to make her happy by staying away from her often. Like right now, I'm out for this project which has kept me away for 40 days only because she was fed up of looking at my face in the pandemic.... I keep my kids happy by asking them very few questions about who they are talking to and what they are talking about. That's largely been my criteria for happiness"

AMIT TANDON

Stand-up Comedian

"Reading gives me ecstasy, excitement and happiness. Reading is a unique experience. People say we read books. I believe the books also read us. They help us know ourselves better. Books enable us to have experiences that we otherwise wouldn't. They kindle our thoughts. I am not particular about any genre. I love all kinds. I like writing but reading is a lot more exciting"

K.R. MEERA

Author



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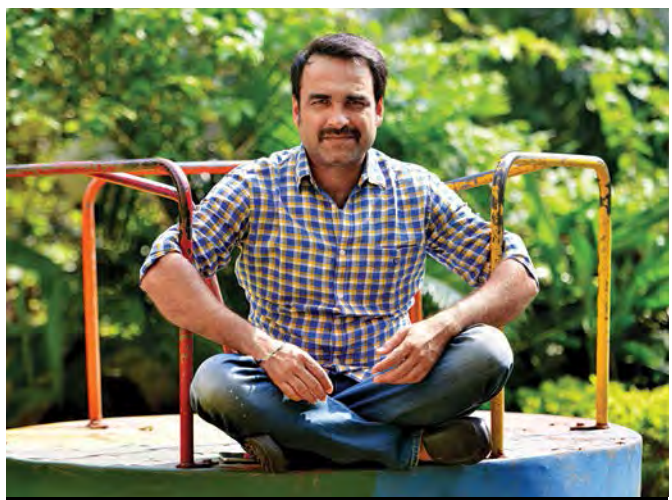
"Happiness is experienced in multiple forms. Just seeing my daughters happy brings me joy. When they achieve something, it makes me happier than if I would have achieved the same thing. It is a joy to experience a space well designed and even more if it has been designed by me. There is happiness in simply sitting on a pavement outside an Italian cafe with a good espresso. Happiness is equally experienced in the little things as well as the big ones"

SANJAY PURI
Principal Architect, Sanjay Puri Architects, Mumbai

MILIND SHELTE



MILIND SHELTE



"When I see nature in its pristine form, it gives me immense pleasure and happiness–dense forests, waterfalls, flowing unpolluted water. I feel very happy when I see a smile on someone's face. Acting, though, is my profession and when a particular scene is executed beautifully, it gives me happiness. But to be in the midst of wild untamed nature is my ultimate idea of happiness"

PANKAJ TRIPATHI
Actor



KARTHI
Actor

"Being with Mother Nature gives me happiness. Many think that nature means scenic locations like the sea, forest, beautiful mountains with snow or gigantic waterfalls, but for me it is not only places like Ooty or the Alps mountain, I like the Sahara desert too. I want to enjoy its heat as well"

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DANESH JASSAWALA

"The food that makes me really happy is that which is cooked with heart, where the intent is to satiate someone. Rather than eat in a fancy restaurant, I would be much happier being fed as a guest in someone's home. Also, the food cooked in my Kochi home brings me instant joy.

Whether I'm in a restaurant kitchen or travelling across India discovering new food, I just want to surround myself with positive people and experiences. I want to be in a state of continuous growth, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Making some sort of tangible impact on the world is what makes me happy in the end"

THOMAS ZACHARIAS

Chef



SUBIR HALDER

BICKRAM GHOSH

Tabla player

"Happiness is balancing life, my music, which is my passion and profession, my wife Jaya, two kids, my mother, my friends for decades. All of them have been a huge part of my growth as a person as well.

Trying to be happy is like a trapeze act. If we have faith and belief in the cosmos, that there's something good out there, then you begin to see that. I love having fun with my buddies and we often go to the movies and shout a bit like in the old days. Hanging out with friends is always a pleasure because they don't see who you are professionally, but who you are as a person"

"For me, happiness is when you look at your life and people around you and feel a strong sense of gratitude.... I derive my happiness from my work, spending quality time with my sons, parents and friends and from my non-work-related interests, like reading, writing, travel, golf, horticulture, yoga/ meditation and spiritual explorations"

SANDEEP AGGARWAL

Founder & CEO, Droom Technology



VIVAN MEHRA

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GUEST COLUMN

Why *Gross National Happiness* Matters More

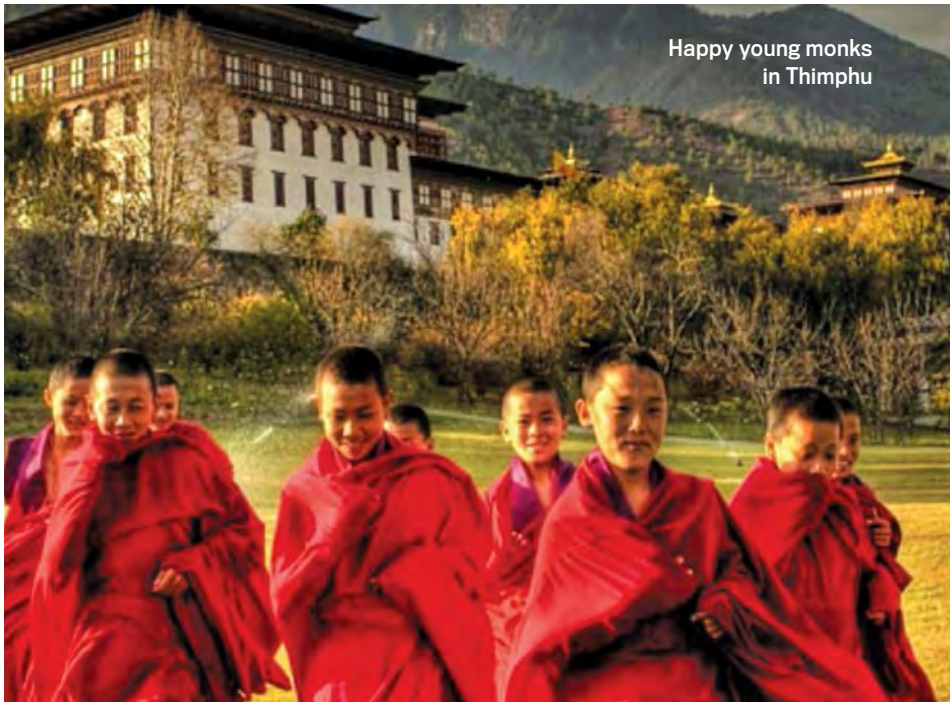


By **DASHO KARMA URA**

A nation can be thought of as an enduring stage where human beings strive to experience transformation and reach a calm and peaceful state. Bhutan has dreamt itself to be in such a cherished stage. But such unfolding dreams are tested when faced with sudden adversity, such as the current pandemic. Taking care of the people means protecting the happiness of all. His Majesty, King Jigme Khesar, has shown us how to take care during this pandemic through an impressive and wholesome resilience programme. Neither lives nor hopes have been ravaged in the country, and this is a result of a collective consciousness of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Founded by his revered father, the fourth king, it remains a prescient agenda reflecting his social intelligence.

GNH represents the holistic potential of our mind and body, and its path towards a deeper peace, calmness and happiness. It also reminds us of the multiple sources of suffering and pain, such as material deprivations, breakdowns of intimate relationships, personal traumas, and of the confusion between choosing means and ends.

A universal aspiration of all children is to grow up happily, then to live long and happily, and at the end, to face our mortality in peace. This is also part of GNH, but it is informed by the fact that we are living in an age where we are facing many larger-than-the-individual issues. From all probabilistic forecasts, the Earth as we know it is dying, having been crushed by the weight of human consumption, with its effects depleting the hitherto life-supporting biosphere. Thus, GNH is a tool for balancing—on the part of individuals and the government—between the extremes of materialistic maximisation of income or GDP (which is probably coming to an end of its unexpectedly long life anyway) and the intangible constituents of human wellbeing that go far beyond any metrics of market economics.



Happy young monks in Thimphu

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"GNH sets out additional parameters such as psychological well-being, community vitality, balanced time use, environmental and cultural preservation"

As a framework for thinking about public expenditure, GNH sets out additional areas that are normally neglected in development thinking such as psychological well-being, community vitality, balanced time use, environmental and cultural preservation, which are important in their own right. The happiness of human beings draws on vitalising relationships in flourishing communities, families and sentient beings with whom they reciprocate non-transactionally or non-commercially. People strive to transform their mental states towards generosity, trustworthiness, compassion and radiant lightness. At the same time, people are cultural and historical beings, perpetuating values, dialects, artisanal skills and identities that give them their dignity and esteem, and that moor and anchor them in a horizonless sea of change.

Cyclical rhythm is crucial for the wellbeing of human beings. People endeavour to balance their time use over a 24-hour cycle with voluntarism, with maintenance of physical activity and mental vitality, with meaningful work and, finally, at the end of a fulfilling day, with rejuvenating, sufficient hours of sleep. All of these and many more are acknowledged in GNH measurements, acting like a clear compass for society.

GNH METRICS AND USES

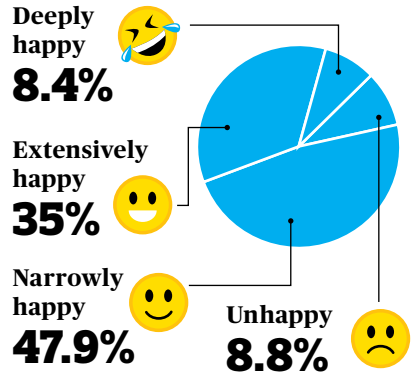
The concept of the nine domains is central to GNH and its metrics. The nine domains are: psychological wellbeing, community vitality, time use, ecological diversity, cultural resilience, good governance, education, health and living standards. Obviously, there is interdependence and non-linear relationships between and among these domains. The GNH survey, which takes place every five years, collects information from a sample size of 8,000 households and is synchronised with Bhutan's five-year plan. After crunching some 277 variables from the nine domains, the GNH index and indicators are updated. The family of GNH metrics is officially applied in five ways. It is used for: benchmarking targets in five-year plans, spatial budget allocation, policy screening, sectoral goal setting and evaluating corporate performance.

First, every index of progress is a national mirror to view how our own reflection has improved or deteriorated over time. Between 2010 and 2015, performance in 12 GNH indicators improved and so the overall 2015 GNH index improved. Indicators that showed positive change included the number of healthy days per month, sleep time, mental health, literacy rate, ecological diversity, electrification and road connectivity, housing and assets. Nevertheless, some indicators in psychological wellbeing domains dropped because negative emotions increased and positive emotions decreased. Likewise, the community vitality domain score showed a decline as the relationship of reciprocity through donation of money and time reported a decrease over those five years.

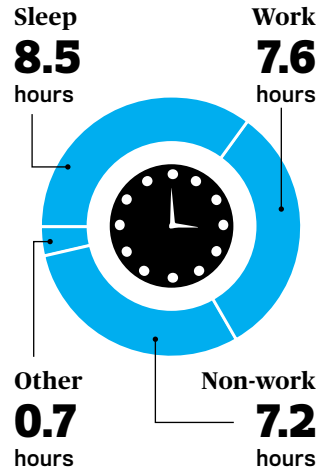
Second, the GNH index is used as a weighted criterion in the allocation of budgets to local governments. It influences the allocation of 40 per cent of the capital budget. More resources go to local governments where GNH constituents show poorer scores.

How *happy* is Bhutan?

The GNH survey uses a sample size of 8,000 households of the hill kingdom



How the Bhutanese use *time*



Some *surprise* findings

- **Educated people are happier than uneducated ones**
- **People living in urban areas are happier than those living in rural areas**
- **Farmers are less happy than those in other professions**
- **Men are happier than women**

Source: 2015 GNH Survey

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

GUEST COLUMN

The ninefold path to *contentment*



Bhutan's happiness index was created by considering multiple indicators across nine domains which were structured around four pillars—political, economic, cultural and environmental

INDICATORS AND WEIGHTAGE

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING
Life satisfaction **1/3**
Positive emotion **1/6**
Negative emotion **1/6**
Spirituality **1/3**

HEALTH
Self-reported health status **1/10**
Number of healthy days **3/10**
Disability **3/10**
Mental health **3/10**



TIME USE
Work **1/2**
Sleep **1/2**

EDUCATION
Literacy **3/10**
Schooling **3/10**
Knowledge **1/5**
Value **1/5**



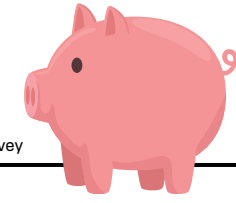
CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE
Zorig chusum skills (artisan skills) **3/10**
Cultural participation **3/10**
Speak native language **1/5**
Driglam namzha (Code of conduct) **1/5**

GOOD GOVERNANCE
Political participation **2/5**
Services **2/5**
Governance performance **1/10**
Fundamental rights **1/10**

COMMUNITY VITALITY
Donation (time and money) **3/10**
Safety **3/10**
Community relationship **1/5**
Family **1/5**

ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY & RESILIENCE
Wildlife damage **2/5**
Urban issues **2/5**
Responsibility to environment **1/10**
Ecological issues **1/10**

LIVING STANDARDS
Income **1/3**
Assets **1/3**
Housing **1/3**



Source: 2015 GNH Survey

Third, central government policies are formulated after vetting with GNH policy screening tools, which have 22 criteria fulfilled through a well-defined process. Examples of these criteria are social support, leisure time, time for spiritual activities, cultural participation, values, gender equality, income equality, protection of rights, and stress. While screening a proposed policy, its likely impact on criteria is evaluated.

Fourth, the GNH index is used to evaluate big projects after implementation by comparing the impact of the project on beneficiaries versus non-beneficiaries in all nine domains of GNH. For example, the impact of a certain project was found the highest and statistically significant for living standards (i.e. income and assets) and community vitality. Community vitality increased amongst beneficiaries because the project design encouraged a village-wide cooperative approach. However, the project tended to reduce sleep time, thus affecting time use negatively. All over the world, time for sleep, time for friends, time for reflection, and time for helping others has tended to shrink. This is also an important concern measured by GNH.

Fifth, GNH certification for business is used to assess business corporations. Many state enterprises and a few leading private companies have undergone GNH certification for business. A few foreign companies, from Brazil to Italy, have applied for GNH certification, given its comprehensive approach.

But Bhutan also faces difficult choices. On the one hand, it embraces technology (mostly imported from India), which we can call the technology to improve living standards. On the other hand, Bhutan is deeply interested in the technology of happiness, which is largely a relational matter, between the person and his/ her inner self, and between a person and others, including other sentient beings and their habitat. There is a growing belief that the technology for living standards will bring ever-improved solutions to the problems humanity faces, including the happiness deficit. This might be another illusion. Bhutan's GNH framework discerns and encourages both technologies—for living standards and for happiness. ■

***Dasho Karma Ura is president, The Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies, Thimphu, and author of* GNH and its Aims**

Graphics by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

IndiaContent

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(From left) IAmGurgaon's Anjali Khatri, Namrita Choudhari, Gayatri Singh, Swanzal Kak Kapoor, Priti Sanwalka and Latika Thukral

The *Smile* Multipliers

Inspiring individuals and institutions from all over the country who have found special ways to open hearts and spread cheer

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

EXEMPLAR

A green *thumbs up*

***Happiness delivery:** Saving the lungs of the city by creating city forests amid Gurugram's concrete maze*

By **SONALI ACHARJEE**

IAMGURGAON

Founded in 2009

Gurugram, Haryana

Standing under the shade of an Indian babool tree at Gurugram's Badshahpur forest corridor, banker-turned-environmentalist Latika Thukral, 55, says that giving the city green habitats goes beyond flora and fauna for her. "Why should people have to walk through garbage and sewage to get to work? This corridor links housing societies together and, now, when your help walks through it for work, they are walking through lush forest. They have the dignity of space; this fact makes me happy every day," she says.

The three-kilometre Badshahpur corridor (soon to be extended to 5 km) is the third major reforestation project undertaken by the charity that Thukral co-founded 12 years ago—IAmGurgaon. The area was once an open stormwater drain overflowing with waste and construction debris. It took workers six months to just dig through the waste and clear the drainage. Another six months were invested in creating a pavement over the drain, and then planting around 17,000 saplings on both sides. The space was further beautified using recycled crates and

construction material. Using recycled material has also helped the team keep their costs low.

"Every few weeks I go to local government offices and dig out discarded objects which we then use to make public art installations, public sitting areas, and even recycle bins," Thukral says with a smile. Behind her, a White Orange Tip butterfly flits around on blades of tall grass, and a handful of centipedes make a long, slow journey up the bark of a kikar tree. The plants in this corridor are just over a year old, yet the flora and fauna have expanded with surprising speed. "A naturalist came to this space last week and identified 14 species of butterflies," she says.

The success was largely due to the fact that all the planting done was local. "We did a lot of research to come up with trees that are native to the Aravalli hills. Then a massive project to source their seeds was undertaken. Our team visited wild and semi-wild areas to collect seeds during the fruiting season. These were then grown as saplings in our own nursery and then planted in the corridor," says Thukral. She adds that when the planting is done right, using suitable and sustainable plants, the birds, butterflies and bees follow on their own. "All these plants need to be watered once a week. After three years, they don't even need that, they can sustain themselves on their own."

Much of the team's experience comes from their most extensive project till date—the Aravalli Biodiversity Park, a 380-acre city forest where IAmGurgaon planted about 145,000 saplings together with the help of local residents, schoolchildren and corporate volunteers. "The Aravalli hills are over 3 billion years old. When we set out to create a city forest, we wanted to respect the heritage of the rocks," reflects Swanzal Kak Kapoor. In 2009, Kapoor and Thukral jointly co-founded IAmGurgaon, fuelled by the realisation that the quality of life in the city was declining due to rampant and unplanned urbanisation, destruction of natural habitats, water logging and lack of civic responsibility. "Change can happen when citizens become aware and take action. We have seen a lot of interest from residents willing to help and volunteer with us. People really love the green spaces we have created," adds Kapoor.

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"For me, happiness is when I see the community come together, with people helping one another and nature to flourish"

— LATIKA THUKRAL

The biodiversity park is a result of such citizen action. Today, the park is home to grasslands, rocky outcrops, a groundwater recharge zone, a research station for naturalists and an educational space to teach the next generation the importance of nature. There are 106 species of trees, 60 varieties of climbers, 96 species of grasses. In addition,, 200 species of birds have been spotted, as also eight types of frogs and close to 50 types of butterflies.

Last year, the charity worked to create channels that would divert rainwater into the forests and grounds. It's had an instant impact; this year, the usually flooded Golf Course Road did not go under water at all. "The Golf Course Road lies at the bottom of a hill, and so naturally water will collect there," explains Thukral. She adds that the team has received support from several corporates and government officials. Genpact, MakeMyTrip, IndusInd Bank and American Express are some of their donors. "We have another green corridor in the city that is completed—the Wazirabad Bandh," she says.

Located close to Gurgaon's famous Galleria market, this 5 km tract has been a welcome reprieve for city dwellers. "I return from my job after an hour in traffic and immediately go and sit on a bench in the park to meditate," says 36-year-old engineer Amrita Nanda, a resident of nearby Hamilton Court Apartments. "I used to have high blood pressure due to stress, it caused me insomnia and panic attacks. My doctor has been asking me to meditate but it is difficult to find such internal stillness inside your own house. In the green corridor, it is easy to switch off. Every second there gives me joy."

For the past 12 years, Thukral has devoted all her time to this work. There have been many challenges, but she says she has also received a tremendous outpouring of gratitude and appreciation from residents. "I have had legal cases filed against me by people who didn't want us to clear up spaces since they were used to dumping their garbage there. But I have stood my ground and fought back. I don't look at this work as what I have lost, but what I have gained. For example, I have learnt a lot about plants and birds by being on the ground every day. My energy, awareness and stamina have increased over the past decade. What makes me happiest is the interactions I have had with local Haryanvis; these are experiences I wouldn't have had if I hadn't done this work."

There are two major projects in the pipeline now, one involving 200 acres and another, 80. Thukral says that with each project, it isn't just nature which is catching up, but also the sense of community and civic responsibility. ■

Harbinger of *good cheer*

***Happiness delivery:** Jaswinder Pal Singh has counselled close to 17,000 people suffering from depression. He also runs the 'Institute of Happiness'*

By **KIRAN D. TARE**



JASWINDER PAL SINGH 55

Institute of Happiness

Vadodara, Gujarat

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Happiness is the byproduct of doing good in this world. One must take responsibility for one's deeds to be happy"

A distress call from a friend in 1998 eventually turned mechanical engineer Jaswinder Pal Singh into a professional happiness trainer. The Delhi-based friend was depressed and bent on taking his life after several personal and professional setbacks. "I told him to postpone his 'suicide plans' for a month and focus on three Gs—gratitude, goodness and giving," says Singh. The idea was to change the mindset, get his friend to realise that whatever he had achieved till then was because of his good work. Singh also asked his friend to thank everyone who was nice to him. His friend took his advice to heart and, after 32 days, was a changed man. "My friend is the one who suggested that I think seriously about counselling as an alternative calling. That changed my life too," says Singh. Two years later, he printed stickers with the slogan, 'If you are feeling low, call Jassi', with his home number printed below. That was the beginning of the 'Institute of Happiness' which now runs from the office of Encon Thermal Engineers Pvt Ltd, where he is director, marketing. Singh has given tips on achieving happiness to around 17,000 people till date. "There hasn't been a single complaint so far," says the bespectacled Singh with a smile.

Singh's first client was a disheartened shopkeeper whose 'confusion' he helped clear. Singh's ability to simplify complicated issues and lucidly explain research findings on various subjects made things easy for him. He often resorts to jokes and real-life incidents and stories to get his point across. He has also conducted 'happiness' training workshops for some 147 corporate houses in India and abroad.

Singh believes there are only two emotions, fear and love. "Our mind has hundreds of negative thoughts. If you want to be positive, you have to change the setting from fear to love," says the Doon School alumnus. "A person is unhappy because he doesn't want to take charge of his life. He blames others for things not working out for him."

Singh tells clients that life is not happening to us but is responding to us depending on what we are offering it. "If something is missing in your life, it is because you are not giving that particular thing to others. People want to harvest the fruit before they sow the seeds. That's where the problem lies," he says.

Singh believes money, fame and physical beauty are misconceptions that deprive us of happiness. "Removing these misconceptions and developing happiness habits will make you naturally positive," he advises. ■

Photograph by MANDAR DEODHAR

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

EXEMPLAR

Labour of *love*

Happiness delivery: Giving specially-abled children a home and education

By **KAUSHIK DEKA**

On a September afternoon, sitting on her wheelchair, 15-year-old Kamakshi waits patiently. She is looking forward to feeding lunch, a frugal meal of lentil and rice, to her adoptive father Kumud Kalita with her own hand. What makes this little domestic display of love sweeter is that Kamakshi, a cerebral palsy patient, can barely move her hands and yet attempts to make small morsels of food with her left hand to feed Kalita. Mostly, though, she just keeps him company while he eats. Kamakshi was three when Kalita had rescued her from a temple compound, where she had been abandoned by her biological parents. This daily lunch-time ritual is the happiest moment of Kamakshi's day.

She is not the only one who looks up to Kalita. For the past 16 years, Kalita, a lecturer in a junior college in Assam's Pathsala town, has been the source of happiness for 30 differently-abled and orphaned children aged six to 17. Having found them in various locations across Assam, Kalita has not only given these children a home but also taken care of their education, running a special school for them. He has built a shelter home, Tapoban, for them on a two-bigha plot he bought at a throwaway price in 1988.

At this school, the children are taught music and other skills apart from academics. In fact, it was a performance by two of Tapoban's visually-impaired girls on a local TV show that first brought Kalita's silent efforts into the limelight. "I never asked for any publicity or recognition because I was doing something I wanted to.... It's my passion. This is what gives me unadulterated happiness," says Kalita.

Son of a marginal farmer, Kalita, a brilliant student, grew up in abject poverty. When he was working as a server at a tea stall to fund his university education, he came in touch with the NGO SOS Children's Village, which helped him find his purpose in life—to support children abandoned by society. "I was poor, but I had parents. The orphaned children have it worse, they don't even have emotional support. Plus, there are many who are keen to adopt healthy children, but nobody comes forward to embrace specially-abled kids. So, I decided to work for them" says Kalita.

KUMUD KALITA 57

Founder, Tapoban

Pathsala, Assam

For most of this over a decade-long journey, which has not been without its obstacles, Kalita has funded these children's welfare using his own earnings and savings. In 2005, when he brought home three children for the first time, he faced ridicule. He was branded a lunatic for going from village to village collecting orphaned, specially-abled children. Even his wife Luki Patgiri, now 50, threatened to leave him. "She used to get upset as these children needed help all the time, but now she is a mother to all of them," says Kalita.

Over the years, though, as more people came to know of Kalita's work, several individuals and organisations stepped up to help, including doctors. As external funds began flowing, Kalita formed a trust, Students' Welfare Mission, and donated even his land and home to this trust.

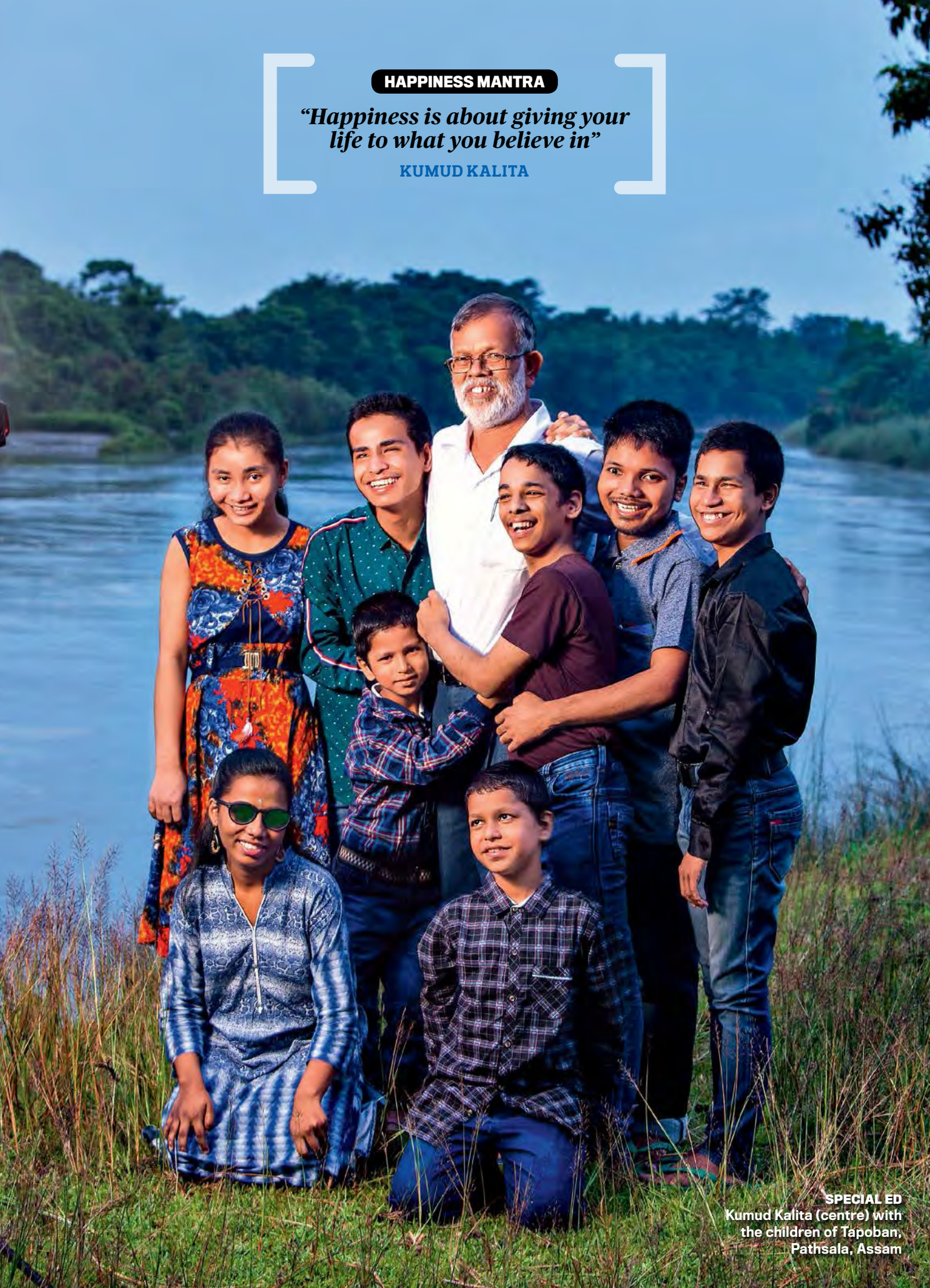
The biggest challenge, though, has been setting up a school for these children who need a special curriculum and trained teachers. In Pathsala, a small town, he had to move from pillar to post to find braille kits. He did not even have enough money to pay trained teachers a respectable salary. "Those teaching here are not doing a job, they are living their passion," Kalita says. But his efforts have paid off. This year, three Tapoban children became the first in the home to pass their class 10 board exams. Two of them have taken admission at a blind school in Guwahati for further education while the third accompanies Kalita to his college. He is now worried about managing children with other disabilities once they pass their class 10 exams since there are hardly any special schools for them. "My ambition now is to add two more classes to Tapoban. I'm hopeful all the stakeholders in society, including the state government, will come forward to ensure a brighter future for these children," says Kalita. ■

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Happiness is about giving your life to what you believe in"

KUMUD KALITA



SPECIAL ED
Kumud Kalita (centre) with the children of Tapoban, Pathsala, Assam

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

EXEMPLAR

A boxful of *goodness*

***Happiness delivery:** When the second wave hit livelihoods of Mumbai's dabbawalas, Amlani's restaurant chain began recruiting some of them to home deliver food from his restaurants*

By **M.G. ARUN**



HAPPINESS MANTRA

"We are really glad we could be of help to the dabbawalas when they needed it the most. This collaboration has put a smile on a lot of faces"

— RIYAAZ AMLANI

MILIND SHELTE



BACK IN BIZ Dabbawalas with Social's brand head Mayank Bhatt (left) at their Khar outlet, Mumbai

RIYAAZ AMLANI 46

CEO & MD, Impresario Handmade Restaurants

Mumbai

For 19 years, 38-year-old Ram Kadam has loaded lunchboxes on his handcart by 9 am sharp and transported them from Mumbai's Girgaon to Lower Parel, partly by road, partly by train. Kadam and the nearly 5,000 of his ilk—the city's dabbawalas—are synonymous with the city, with case studies of their near-zero error delivery methods taught in top management schools. The pandemic, however, rendered the dabbawalas, known for their intimate knowledge of Mumbai's streets, jobless with the city going into lockdown and offices shutting down. Many returned to their villages, while some eked out a living doing odd jobs. Kadam, too, struggled to run his household and pay for the education of his four children. But, earlier this year, just as he was about to give up on the city, he was picked for a new job—this time with a high-end hospitality firm.

Kadam is now back in the food delivery business as part of a team of around 60 delivery boys—all dabbawalas—for Impresario Handmade Restaurants, which boasts of chains of cafes and restaurants, such as Social, Smoke House Deli, Salt Water Café, Mocha and Prithvi Café.

Wielding his smartphone, with a waterproof delivery pouch hung over his shoulders, he swishes through the suburbs on his bicycle, deftly beating the city's traffic to meet stiff deadlines. For Riyaaz Amlani, Impresario's CEO, while the move meant reaching out to dabbawalas when they needed it the most, it also made perfect business sense. "The dabbawalas are iconic and represent the true spirit of Mumbai," he says. "Come rain or shine, they will bring you food on time." The decision also helped him escape "the high-handed policies of the food aggregators". Almost 21 of the firm's outlets in Mumbai use dabbawalas for delivery.

While no dabbawalas needed a lesson on delivering on time, they did need some training in dealing with customers and using the delivery software that tracks orders. Mayank Bhatt, business head, Social, who sealed the deal on employing dabbawalas after several rounds of talks with the Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Charity Trust, the apex body of the dabbawalas, says the dabbawalas learned quick and the feedback from customers has been excellent.

The restaurant chain hopes to employ 90-100 dabbawalas over the next few months. They are, at present, employed to cater to orders coming in directly to the restaurant, but these make up just 25 per cent of the total delivery orders (the rest come in from food aggregators). Amlani hopes to sensitise more customers about ordering food directly from restaurants, which will open up more avenues for the dabbawalas. ■

KARTICK SATYANARAYAN 47

Wildlife conservationist and co-founder, Wildlife SOS

New Delhi



Animal *spirit*

Happiness delivery: Rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife

By **SONALI ACHARJEE**

Once a source of endless joy, few were aware of what the 'dancing bear' went through. Baby bears would be forcibly taken from their mothers, a rope put through their nose, pulling which would cause pain and force them to obey the owner's command. It took Kartick Satyanarayan and his team at Wildlife SOS 20 years to completely eradicate the practice.

Seeing their plight, Kartick founded Wildlife SOS in 1995 with Geeta Seshamani, who had a long association with animal shelter Friendicoes. Today, it runs several projects to support bear conservation in India, including the world's largest rehabilitation centre for sloth bears in Agra. "The 'dancing bear' trade," says Kartick, "happened in the Kalandar community. The work was largely out of compulsion, ignorance about laws and lack of opportunities. They had no other means of living."

Wildlife SOS's approach, therefore, was to include the community to end the practice. "When we began to crack down on bear poaching," says Kartick, "we also worked with the community to improve their social status. We helped them with women's empowerment, skill training, alternative employment and also sent over 7,600 children to school." Today, almost 40 per cent of the staff at Wildlife SOS are members of the community.

The success of their effort can be gauged from the fact that no Kalandar child born after 2009 has seen a bear in his or her home. The 4,000-odd Kalandar families no longer depend on this illegal trade for sustenance. The 'Kalandar Rehabilitation Project' has ended the 400-year-old tradition.

Rehabilitating both man and beast, Wildlife SOS has also taken on the responsibility of providing a home to the bears they have rescued. Close to a thousand bears are now looked after at their centres in Agra, Bengaluru, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal.

Motivated by their success with bears, Kartick expanded his conservation efforts to include other animals. The organisation now works with elephants, leopards and reptiles, protecting them from illegal poaching and providing them vital medical care. "Each one of our 12 animal rescue centres in India gives me happiness," says Kartick. "I just have to sit and watch an elephant play in the river or receive treatment at the elephant hospital, a leopard peek out of his den, or a bear climbing a tree at the rescue centre, and I am at peace knowing I have brought these animals dignity and freedom."

Looking after thousands of rescued animals or protecting those living in the wild is by no means an easy task. But Kartick firmly believes animals and people can live together in harmony and balance. "In educating people on wildlife, including teaching them avoidance behaviour and how to cope with man-animal conflict, I believe we are building the bridge to coexistence and respect for nature," he says. ■

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Nature is everything, and my happiness comes from the fact that I have been able to work so closely with conservation"

KARTICK SATYANARAYAN

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

EXEMPLAR

Handmade in India

***Happiness delivery:** Has brought cheer to the lives of 6,000 traditional handloom weavers since 2019 by training them on new developments in the business, helping their product volumes improve by 42 per cent and revenue by 75 per cent*

By **M.G. ARUN**

On a bright September morning, scores of men and women from in and around Surendranagar, some 120 kilometres from Ahmedabad, gather at a handloom training centre run by the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), an autonomous body set up in 1983 by a clutch of Indian banks and financial institutions. Most of them are from traditional weaving families that are now struggling to catch up with the big changes in design, marketing and technology. Some of them are young, with waning interest in the slow-paced, presumably



ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE OF INDIA, FOUNDED: 1983

Ahmedabad, Gujarat

low income-generating handloom business, and are at the centre to learn from the experts the global prospects of the business and how it can be run more professionally.

What started as an initiative by the EDII and consulting firm EY, supported by HSBC in 2019, has grown into a large project with far-reaching impact despite two waves of the pandemic, with the centres at Surendranagar and five other clusters training over 6,000 handloom weavers so far. The other clusters where training is imparted are Bhuj in Gujarat, Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh, Kamrup in Assam, Bargarh in Odisha and Salem in Tamil Nadu. "Our primary concern is how to offer customised help to develop new designs, help weavers access credit and find new markets, and leverage the new technologies for doing so," says Dr Sunil Shukla, director general, EDII. Since most of the weavers belong to the informal sector, the training centres also help them do business in a structured fashion, and enrol as enterprises for better visibility and viability.

The Indian handloom sector has a variety of products categorised under 'wearables' such as the thin cotton towels, sarees, shirts, pants and shawls, and 'non-wearables', such as bags, purses, mats, caps, towels, bed linen, carpets and curtains. The Third Handloom Census (2009-10), recorded nearly 2.8 million households engaged in weaving and allied activities, 87 per cent in rural areas. The northeast accounted for nearly 65.2 per cent of the total handlooms operational in the country. The sector provides employment to 4.3 million weavers, mostly women, most of them illiterate or semi-literate. There is lack of credit, awareness of customer preferences, proper marketing and promotions, as well as technological backwardness, paucity in new designs and weaver numbers.

The biggest challenge, Shukla says, is the next-gen's disinterest in traditional business. To overcome their hesitation and apprehension towards the new ways of doing business, several confidence-building measures had to be taken. Besides training weavers to run their businesses as enterprises, EDII also helps organise exhibitions (virtual due to the pandemic), online buyer-seller meets and market development. A virtual exhibition in 2020 saw interest from buyers in the UAE, US and the UK. Weavers also need assistance in credit management since their past defaults have made banks wary of giving loans. Following these interventions, overall sales volume for these weavers' products has increased by 42 per cent, and revenues were up 75 per cent, claims Shukla. "This is something that has brought us immense joy," says Shukla. Since 2019, as many as 290 new handloom designs have been developed.

Rameshbhai Chauhan, 38, a weaver based in Ahmedabad, joined his father's family occupation after failing his class 10 exam. Their joint family was earning Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 a month. However, two years ago, Chauhan joined EDII's centre and learnt new designs, and digital marketing. His family now makes around Rs 50,000 a month, reaching out to clients even outside the state, using WhatsApp to communicate with clients and share their designs. "At a recent exhibition in Ahmedabad, I made Rs 1.2 lakh in just two hours," says Chauhan. Anand Rathod, 23, another weaver who benefitted from EDII, is helping two younger people set up their looms right from scratch, and also training other weavers in his village use digital marketing. Nothing, it seems, brings more happiness than paying it forward. ■

NANDAN DAVE



LOOMING LARGE EDII's Dr Sunil Shukla (right) with Tangaliya weaver couple Chandubhai and Gitaben at Dedadara village in Gujarat

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"It gives me and my team great happiness to see weavers escalate their business and the younger generation take interest in carrying forward the family legacy"

— DR SUNIL SHUKLA, DIRECTOR GENERAL, EDII

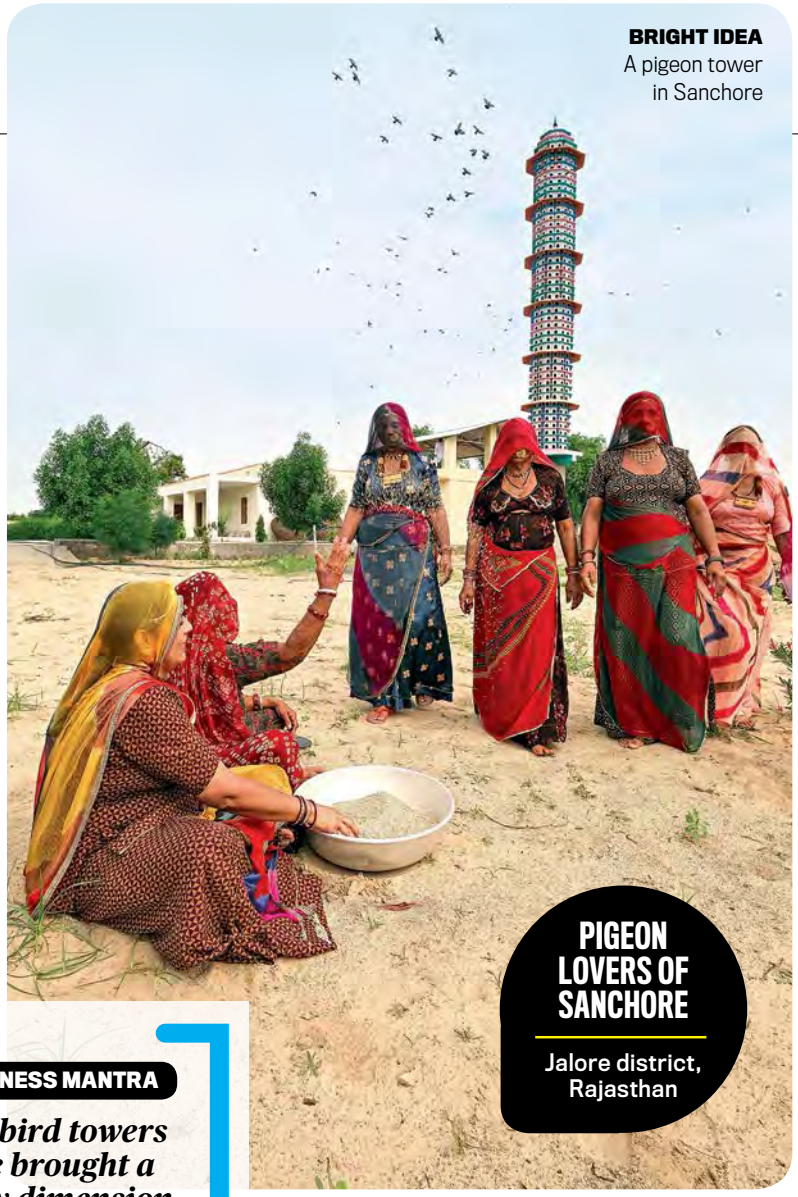
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EXEMPLAR

Towering *devotion*

Happiness delivery: Building 60 ft high, multi-storeyed towers to provide a safe home to pigeons

By **ROHIT PARIHAR**



BRIGHT IDEA
A pigeon tower in Sanchore

PIGEON LOVERS OF SANCHORE
Jalore district, Rajasthan

PURUSHOTTAM DIWAKAR

Colourful towers, as high as 60 feet and dotting fields and temple complexes, invariably catch the eyes of visitors to Sanchore, a tehsil block in Rajasthan bordering Gujarat. Look closer and you will find locals gathered over there to offer feed—mostly millet seeds—to pigeons. Tiny compartments in the towers serve as home to hundreds of birds. "Sanchore's 600,000 residents have built some 200 bird towers," informs Satyendra Bishnoi, a chartered accountant.

One such tower is in Choura Dhani, a hamlet of 3,000 people located a 15-minute drive away from Sanchore town. Each of its 672-odd compartments, made of ceramic, can house a pair of pigeons. Locals say the iron-and-cement structures, inside which the ceramic chambers are fitted, keep the birds safe from rain and predators. They are well-ventilated to guard against the summer heat, when temperatures can touch 45°C. There are three more towers within Choura Dhani panchayat limits.

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"The bird towers have brought a happy dimension to life in Sanchore. People contributed with both their time and money"

— SUKHRAM BISHNOI, ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

In big cities, pigeons may be despised as potential disease-spreaders, but the people of Sanchore consider them as symbols of peace and find happiness in providing them a place to rest and feed. "The towers are inspired by similar structures residents saw in the grain markets of nearby Palanpur and Unjha in Gujarat," says Rajasthan environment minister and Sanchore MLA Sukhram Bishnoi.

The multi-storeyed towers have come up in the past three-four years. Earlier, the pigeons lived in wells and borewells. With the Narmada canal bringing piped water to homes, locals sealed many wells. The birds shifted to people's homes and trees, but were exposed to rain and cats. Their declining numbers got the environment-friendly Bishnoi community into the act. "The idea of tower homes caught on as they were safer than trees for the pigeons," says Rana Ram Bishnoi, a retired block officer from Sanchore.

The towers, built on a 10x10 sq. ft foundation 12 ft deep, can host as many as 1,500 birds. They cost about Rs 5 lakh and 30 days to build. The ceramic compartments are procured from Morvi in Gujarat. Residents have also built grain storehouses near towers to make it easier to feed the pigeons. The towers have either been funded by the community or individual donors. Dinesh Purohit, the sarpanch of Hareter village, says a visitor from Mumbai donated Rs 5 lakh for the tower in his village. Ansi Devi Devasi, who lives nearby, regularly spreads millet seed feed for the pigeons. In Choura Dhani, this responsibility has been taken up by villagers Parmeshwari and Jumko Devi. It's a task that demands time and dedication, but nobody's complaining. ■

SANTANU MISHRA, 56

Co-founder and Executive Trustee, Smile Foundation

Noida, Uttar Pradesh

BANDEEP SINGH



The joy of *giving*

Happiness delivery: The foundation focuses on the education and nutrition of underprivileged children

By **SONALI ACHARJEE**

Eight-year-old Sarita Kumari (*name changed*) stands patiently in line to get her homework checked. She has taken special care to ensure the numbers she has written stay within the lines of the notebook. "I love coming here because the teachers are kind. In the school my cousin goes to, the teacher has no time to speak to them. It makes me very happy when I'm given attention in class," she says. Sarita is a student of the Nithari centre of Smile Foundation. Supported by R1 RCM, a provider of revenue cycle management solutions and physician advisory services to healthcare providers, the centre has been running for the past seven years.

The residents of Noida's Nithari village send their children to study here. "It is a safe space for children. Girls are respected, there are clean toilets and drinking water and the teaching is good quality. When my children come home, they come with smiles," says Meena Bhoi, 39, mother of two class 2 children.

The Smile Foundation has many centres like the one in Nithari to provide quality education to underprivileged children. At present, Smile is catering to under-served communities in over 2,200 villages and urban slums across 25 states through more than 400 welfare projects, directly benefitting 1.5 million children. They also have projects focused on nutrition, healthcare and women's empowerment. Much of their funding comes through corporate social responsibility initiatives. PepsiCo, for instance, funds Smile's nutrition programme.

For the past 16 years, Santanu Mishra, co-founder and executive trustee of Smile Foundation, has been the driving force behind the organisation. During the pandemic, Smile's work went beyond traditional classroom-based projects. "We served around 27.7 million meals in 23 states to migrant workers. We set up 45 mobile hospitals to provide healthcare services to over a million people, particularly in rural areas. Through our livelihood programme, more than 28,000 underprivileged youth have secured employment, with nearly 10,000 young men and women getting trained and employed during the pandemic alone," he says.

For Mishra, it is peace of mind that is more important than happiness. "Some say the only way to get real peace is to give up all worldly attachments and go to the mountains. According to me, though, the simplest way to achieve peace of mind is to help someone.... By serving the vulnerable, we are doing a little bit to bring some change in the world, but it is equally true that if we want to bring real, long-lasting change, it is important to sensitise people, inspire them to practise kindness and humanity in the real sense. And in this way, maybe also help these people attain happiness and peace of mind," he says. This is the foundation's big dream—societal change that is driven by citizens themselves. ■



HAPPINESS MANTRA

"I feel it is peace of mind that we should aspire for. Because happiness is not a goal, it is more like a journey"

SANTANU MISHRA

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

EXEMPLAR

Tickling the *funny bone*

***Happiness delivery:** Two young YouTubers are bringing a smile to the faces of millions of Indians with their funny and inane videos*

By **SUHANI SINGH**



ASHISH CHANCHLANI 28

Ashish Chanchlani Vines

Ulhasnagar, Maharashtra

Not every person inclined towards a performing art needs a film or a web series to showcase their talent. Some like Ashish Chanchlani and Yashraj Mukhate simply start YouTube channels where they let their work speak for themselves. The two twentysomethings from Maharashtra have amassed a huge following with their funny, viral videos.

Chanchlani started Ashish Chanchlani Vines seven years back (26.4 million followers) with the intention of taking his "class clown" act to a larger audience. His approach was simple: be himself as he brought forth his experiences as a student, son, brother, friend, boyfriend, gamer and many other avatars. "We take a subject that's relatable and then exaggerate the hell out of it," says Chanchlani about his artistic process. It fits with the kind of humour, he feels, that Indians lean towards which is "loud, over the top, emotional and sarcastic". The approach has paid dividends with parents writing in about how their children are addicted to his videos and women complimenting Chanchlani for being "chubby and cute".

Son of a single-screen cinema owner in Ulhasnagar, Chanchlani grew up watching films, both good and bad, and dreaming of being an actor. After completing his engineering, he was going to take over his father's business when his YouTube videos began to get clicks and likes. "I realised I didn't need to go and audition in Mumbai. I was already accumulating an audience," says

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"You can't do meta humour with the Indian public. I can't give them a burger. I try to give them something desi and delicious like butter chicken"

—ASHISH CHANCHLANI





YASHRAJ MUKHATE 25

Yashraj Mukhate

Aurangabad, Maharashtra

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Doing something creative makes me happy. When I am not making music, I like clicking pictures and I am learning digital sketching"

— YASHRAJ MUKHATE

Chanchlani. "The difference is that it comes from a small screen [mobile] and is better, given that it reaches everywhere."

Bollywood now comes to him with makers of Rohit Shetty's *Sooryavanshi* having him host the trailer launch of the action drama. That's primarily because Chanchlani's reach is strongest among the youth. The 28-year-old ensures he maintains the connection by having Gen Z members on his team. "I ensure there's relatability while changing the jokes, the perspective and the trends," he says. Another variation is cutting down on the offensive language. "I'd stop cussing if the world stops," says Chanchlani. "But in real life, everybody does. That frustration comes in our content."

Meanwhile, in Mukhate's videos (4.8 million subscribers), audiences find humour as well as a catchy tune that they can't help but share with friends and family. A YouTuber since 2011, it was in September last year that Mukhate, while working from a parking space-turned-studio, played around with a melodramatic scene from a Hindi saas-bahu show to create '*Rasode Mein Kon Tha*'. It instantly broke the internet. Since then, he has made it a quarterly habit with videos such as '*Biggini Shoot*', '*Twada Kutta Kutta*' and '*Pawri Hori Hai*' which have garnered millions of views and have had Taapsee Pannu, Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh dancing to his tunes.

Having initially done covers, Mukhate realised it was the fun, lighter content that was getting him more attention and subscribers in a year when people were dealing with the pandemic blues. "The video should be musically good, well produced and edited, and if it makes people happy then even better," says Mukhate about his tunes. So successful has he been that he has begun to feel the pressure about being a provider of laughs. But the self-taught musician from Aurangabad is conscious about not disappointing his audience. "It's very easy to take a dialogue, tweak it and make some beats," he says. "I can do it every week, but it doesn't work that way. If it isn't fresh, then people will get irritated."

Unlike Chanchlani, Mukhate doesn't see himself as an innately funny person. "You can call me nerdy," says. "I am really interested in gadgets and the technical part of music—the production style, the beats." What he also likes doing is going through his Instagram feed. "I don't seek words," he says when asked about how he manages to deliver a viral phrase-tune so consistently. "I never find anything good if I am seeking it." Like most artists, instinct is what gets Mukhate's creativity going. And it's getting the youngster work from leading brands and also compliments from music icons including A.R. Rahman. "You are making a lot of people happy, and they are all smiling. I think it is a very good thing to do," Rahman said to Mukhate recently. Thankfully for audiences, Mukhate has no plans to stop. ■

INDIA TODAY RPG Happiness Quest

EXEMPLAR

Forest *guardian*

***Happiness delivery:** Inspiring individuals, celebrities and corporates to plant saplings and adopt forests*

By **AMARNATH K. MENON**



MOHAMMED ALEEMUDDIN

JOGINAPALLY SANTOSH KUMAR 44

Rajya Sabha MP

Hyderabad

IN GREEN COMPANY
J. Santosh Kumar (right) with actor Prabhas at the Kazipally reserve forest, Telangana

His passion is to persuade people to plant saplings. His goal, to incrementally expand green cover to fight climate change. To this end, Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) Rajya Sabha member Joginapally Santosh Kumar prods every individual and organisation coming his way. "Community participation to bring about change can be ensured only by striving to convince people," says the 44-year-old politician.

Kumar launched a citizens' initiative, Green India Challenge, on July 17, 2018, with the slogan '*Hara hai toh bhara hai* (if it's green, it's bountiful)'. Through this network, he has inspired celebrities, film actors, sportspersons and politicians to plant saplings and donate generously for the green cause. Many celebrities, in turn, have launched their own planting chains.

For the third year in a row, actor Pudipeddi Sai Kumar rallied fans to plant saplings on his birthday (July 27). "On my 61st birthday, I gave medicinal plants as a return gift to my relatives," he says. Sai Kumar isn't the only one. On July 4—his 58th birthday—TRS MLA and former Telangana environment minister Jogu Ramanna arranged for planting a million saplings in his native Adilabad district.

Kumar set the trend by adopting the 2,042-acre Keesara Gutta reserve forest near Hyderabad in 2019. He has spent Rs 3 crore from his MP local area development funds and family resources to plant 60,000 saplings there. Last year, actor Prabhas came forward to develop the 1,650-acre Kazipally reserve forest on the outskirts of Hyderabad. "I believe developing greenery creates additional lung space, and that gives me joy," says the *Baahubali* actor, who made an initial contribution of Rs 2 crore.

B. Parthasaradhi Reddy, chairman & MD of the Hyderabad-based Hetero Drugs Limited, has adopted the 2,543-acre Mumbapur-Nallavelli reserve forest in Sangareddy district and provided Rs 5 crore as the initial grant. Megha Engineering, Hyderabad, is bracing to adopt the 5,500-acre Rachakonda reserve forest. Individuals and companies are making a beeline for adopting 88 green patches in the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority limits.

While the plantation drives in forests are done in consultation with the forest department, individuals who are greening their homes and neighbourhoods are growing common tree varieties such as neem, gulmohar, peepal and mango. Then there are those who have started using social events to gift others saplings. How does Kumar inspire so many people? "Nature talk is a bright way to start a conversation with a new acquaintance. It brings cheer, satisfaction and happiness to both," he says. ■

HAPPINESS MANTRA

"Everyone should plant at least three saplings to mitigate global warming. It's a never-ending exercise to ensure the happiness of our and the future generations"

— JOGINAPALLY SANTOSH KUMAR

NOT THE WHITE WOMAN'S BURDEN PG 87

LEISURE

VIJAY SETHUPATHI: MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT PG 88

RESTAURANT BIZ: AGAINST ALL ODDS PG 90

Q&A WITH MALAIKA ARORA PG 92

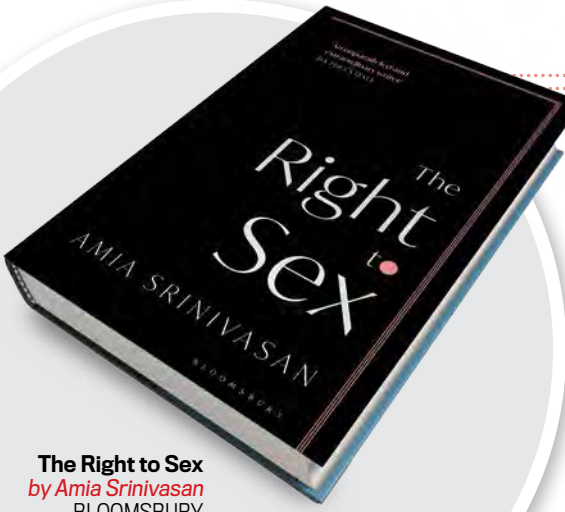


At 36, Oxford professor **AMIA SRINIVASAN** is being hailed as "a star" who is changing the way we think about sexual consent

BOOKS

CAN MEN LOVE WOMEN?

Amia Srinivasan's much-feted new book, *The Right to Sex*, forces readers to think about freedom and desire, asking if it might be possible for us to have both



The Right to Sex
by Amia Srinivasan
BLOOMSBURY
₹599;
304 pages

What kind of men do feminist women want to have sex with? In 2004, the African-American feminist bell hooks came up with one response: women want to be with men who can love. In *The Will to Change: On Men, Masculinity and Love*, hooks argued that the women's liberation movement had failed to get women the sex that they wanted. Even when sex became socially permissible for women, satisfying sex remained elusive because the family and the world produced men who had a deficit in their capacity for love as a part of sex.

In 2021, Amia Srinivasan's *The Right to Sex* reminds us that the dream of sexual freedom remains a distant aspiration for feminists. Srinivasan caught my attention in 2017 with her captivating essay on the Octopus; last year, I assigned her essay 'Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?' as reading for my undergraduate class on gender and sexuality. Today, she has the attention of the international feminist community: she is perhaps one of the youngest women to earn a seat at the table of the celebrity intellectual—a table historically reluctant to open seats for women.

Like hooks, Srinivasan believes the internalised idea of male sexual entitlement—'he's gotta have it'—makes our discussions of consent circumspect. The set of essays—which would be more fairly titled *Men's* Right to Sex—cuts through the idea that sex is 'natural' and underscores its socialised nature. Men and women arrive at the private act of sex laden with cultural scripts—written with the sexually-entitled male as protagonist—packed with instructions on whom to desire, how to feel about them, what sounds to make.

Srinivasan offers at least two solid political culprits for sex scripts: the first is carcerality—the culture of justice and the law that punishes the sexually entitled male; the second is f***ability—the way that patriarchy and capitalism constructs sexual status.

Since #Metoo, carceral politics has diverted the plot from women's sexual pleasure. We have no time to reflect upon the kind of men we want to have sex with, we have devoted our time to hunting down and punishing the badly behaved ones. Add to carcerality the f***ability factor, the sexual value that society holds for each person's unique mix of physical attributes/ education/ financial-social status/ age, which also zaps up our time to reflect.

Going carceral allows the state to prioritise gender difference over other categories of difference, but it creates more injustice in those other categories—poor men and lower-caste women suffer more under the carceral state. The problem with producing and consuming f***ability, is that the Internet porn industry and capitalist advertising decide who, what and how we desire, building algorithms of our sexual taste and rendering our imaginations "weak, dependent and codified".

THE RIGHT TO SEX IS LESS A REVELATORY TREATISE AND MORE A CRUCIAL CONVERSATION PIECE

In an understated essay, 'The Politics of Desire', Srinivasan tells us what might make us desire better: a discipline of quieting the voices telling us which bodies are worthy and which are not; stepping back from mainstream heterosexual compulsions; admitting to woman-to-woman desire and attraction, looking for it, past the envy and competition behind which it so often masquerades. Here, Srinivasan appears (wisely) irked—at times—by her own idealism. She punctuates her own conviction with self-doubt. She asks, self-reflexively, endearingly: *Am I moralising?*

If, holding volumes of evidence in her hands, Srinivasan still has self-doubt, it is because she

knows that there are no easy answers. *The Right to Sex* is a crucial contribution to feminism worldwide, but in presenting freedom as a 'highly desirable category', it seems to implicitly create another low status category: the *unfree*. I felt a tad *unfree* as I read this book, not just productively uncomfortable, but self-critical, feeling I should subject the pleasures of my sexual history to the scrutiny of knowing if I had traded—or been tricked into—pleasure when I could have had freedom.

When I asked Srinivasan—over email—about whether sexual freedom and sexual pleasure were synonymous, she said: "Even if pleasure has a role to play in sexual freedom, and I think it does, it (pleasure) is not itself sexual freedom."

Overriding the pleasure principle to choose an experience of freedom (does the word imply transcendence?) sounds full of potential, but I wished she had added: "Men should go first.. For, given how women in India have barely, recently, won the right to sexual pleasure, ceding it in favour of a not-quite-clearly-defined "freedom" sounds not free, but expensive. So women, I recommend you read this book curiously, but hold on to your pleasures. *The Right to Sex* is less a revelatory treatise and more a crucial conversation piece. See if you can talk about the book with a man you love. See where your dialogue with him falls apart—if it does. And after, see if you can (still) look at yourself in the mirror and say: "I *chose* him." ■

–Amrita Narayanan

(The reviewer is a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in practice)

NOT THE WHITE WOMAN'S BURDEN

In her new book, Rafia Zakaria argues that white feminists must revise their notions of equality

Among the statement clothing on display at this year's Met Gala was a gown worn by US Representative Carolyn Maloney, in suffragette colours, festooned with sashes proclaiming "Equal Rights for Women". Maloney tweeted that she had "long used fashion as a force 4 change". As some commentators pointed out, 20 years ago, she wore a burqa to a House session to lend 'feminist' support for the invasion of Afghanistan, while praising America for "balancing war with compassion" and "dropping food as well as bombs".

This is what Rafia Zakaria might call a prime example of white feminism, the damaging effects of which can be seen in Afghanistan's current disarray. She calls the 'War on Terror' the US's first "feminist" war in her third book, an argument against white feminism, which "accepts the benefits conferred by white supremacy at the expense of people of colour, while claiming to support gender equality and solidarity with 'all' women". Instead, Zakaria advocates for a political movement rooted in the personal, lived experiences of non-white women and collective action over the "cult of individualism".

With clarity and conviction, Zakaria traces the evolution of white feminism, from Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett to the emergence of 'choice feminism'—today's depoliticised but dominant ideology highly susceptible to corporate interests. She outlines in simple language how the colonial underpinnings of white feminism (including the suffragette movement) are perpetuated through a white saviour industrial complex with many arms: journalism, geopolitics, global aid and sexual politics that first imposed Victorian ideas of virtue, before demanding western-style sexual liberation.

Zakaria provides a wealth of specific examples, from the egregious to the seemingly innocuous, touching on everything from *Zero Dark Thirty* to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the semantic difference between honour killing and domestic violence. She also cites extensively from the work of non-white global feminists, describing how their efforts can often be subverted by even well-meaning white feminism.

Drawing from the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw and others, Zakaria addresses how feminism intersects with race and class. The latter particularly counts in a highly stratified society like India, where elite feminists may find themselves perpetuating 'white' feminist violence. Calling on white feminists to "see beyond their own actions as individuals and recognise the power and privilege of the category they inhabit", Zakaria also asks feminists of colour to "reject the temptation to pathologise every flawed interaction". The book is ultimately a call to "unite behind specific political claims", namely "that the dominance of capitalism is bad for all women".

Against White Feminism is a timely reminder that global feminists cannot afford to stay within the realm of recognition, where it is easily subsumed into the 'white feminist' celebration of individual accomplishment, but must demand redistribution through collective, politically-charged action. ■

–Sonal Shah





AGAINST WHITE FEMINISM
Notes on Disruption
by Rafia Zakaria
HAMISH HAMILTON
₹899; 208 pages



SUMANTH KUMAR



CINEMA

More than Entertainment

Having seen three of his films released this month, actor* Vijay Sethupathi *is putting his faith in the power of cinema

After Karthik Subbaraj's *Pizza* (2012), horror briefly became the breakout genre in Tamil cinema. Though Vijay Sethupathi kickstarted the wave, he staunchly refused to be part of it. Many similar roles came his way, and he refused them all. "They weren't scary enough," he says. Nine years later, a horror comedy by another debutant Deepak Sundarrajan has found him—*Annabelle Sethupathi* (now streaming on Disney+ Hotstar). He might have refused offers then, but now we see him everywhere—partly due to release delays attributed to the pandemic—but also because he is ready to work with anyone he finds interesting and shares his vibe.

He looks for that one hook that pulled them into cinema. He quotes the late director S.P. Jananathan—"cinema is not entertainment"—and says, "A Kannadasan line pulled Ilaiyaraaja into music. Such momentary things bring people into this world of cinema, how can it just be entertainment? When we look at it as mere entertainment, some films don't reach the audience in the intended form." Sethupathi feels this way about some of his films, "They come and tell me—'Sir, when it released, I thought it was boring but two years later I watched it again, I liked it a lot!'." I mention *Seethakaathi* (2018), Balaji Tharaneetharan's film that had wonderful ideas but couldn't find an audience. "Yeah, *Seethakaathi* says art is immortal. Someday people might warm up to it. There is *Kadhalum Kadandhu Pogum*, lot of people didn't like it initially but now I get messages saying people watch it on loop," he says.

The failure of S.P. Jananathan's *Laabam* (2021), which released in theatres two weeks ago (he has had two releases—*Tughlaq Durbar* on Netflix and *Annabelle Sethupathi*—since), has clearly shaken him (Jananathan passed away during post-production). He says he continues to put his trust in the next generation. He was on a Zoom call with a Hindi film director who happened to mention Rohena Gera's *Sir* (2018). He hadn't watched it, but his daughter told him about the film and Tillotama Shome's excellent performance. That he wasn't aware and his teenage daughter was able to talk at length about it fascinates him. "I think they are more sensible, [they] assimilate new things faster than the generation before, so they build the nuances to appreciate art from a very young age. So down the line,





Vijay Sethupathi (left); the actor with Taapsee Pannu in Annabelle Sethupathi; and in Tughlaq Durbar

good films will find their audience," he says.

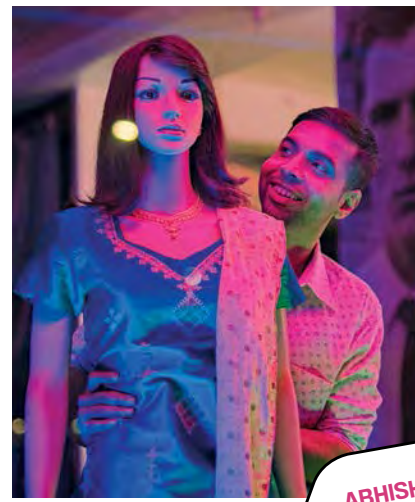
Is that why he is forever ready to work with debutants? He doesn't care. If something interests him, he is there, the face or name doesn't matter. But when does he know it is interesting or that it'll work? "Sometimes I feel it during the narration, I know they'll do a good job. I have been wrong. There are cases where I have misjudged, after deeper discussions with them." But that debate is important to him. According to Sethupathi, it is not paramount that one must film the script as it exists. "There could be changes during shoot, a moment or scene won't work, I give suggestions, talk to co-actors and take it from there."

What have been his observations on the impact of the pandemic, from the spot boys all the way up to the director/producer? "They just want to work. We shot *Tughlaq Durbar* in the premises of an export company—they had no choice but to pivot this way—for loans, rents and expenses. When filming resumed, everyone was thankful—'Sir, this is our first shoot in the last 1.5 years'. The industry is functioning now, but it will take some time to restore balance." ■

–Aditya Shrikrishna

CASTING THE NET WIDE

Working as casting director and an actor, ***Abhishek Banerjee*** *is imagining characters anew all the time*



ABHISHEK BANERJEE in Ankahi Kahaniya, an anthology that premiered on Netflix on Sept. 17, 2021

Things didn't end well the last time Abhishek Banerjee acted alongside a mannequin. Playing a rapist in the independent drama *Ajji* (2017), Banerjee's character unleashed considerable horror. In *Ankahi Kahaniya*, an anthology that premiered on Netflix last week, the actor got to showcase his more human side. For her short, director Ashwiny Iyer Tiwary had him play a lonely salesman who finds himself drawn to a mannequin. "My biggest challenge was to make the audience forget the character [in *Ajji*]," says Banerjee. Another was to ensure his attraction to a plastic figurine doesn't appear disturbing. Having a woman director helped. "Initially, I picked up the mannequin like an object, but she [Iyer] told me you need to give her the respect a woman deserves."

Ankahi Kahaniya is Banerjee's third anthology. He has featured in *Unpaused* (2020) on Amazon Prime and on Netflix's *Ajeeb Daastaans* (2021). The format, he says, enables him to do parts he wouldn't get in mainstream films and helps him build his showreel. Strangely, sifting through showreels is also part of his job as co-founder of the leading casting agency Casting Bay. Shuttling between the two jobs now comes naturally to him. As someone who has been casting for over a decade, he says, "It has become almost an instinct. You are looking for characters day in and day out. Your mind is never at rest." But given his commitments as an actor, WhatsApp, he adds, has become a de facto office. "I see shortlisted auditions and tell my associates what is and isn't working for me."

Having acted in *Stree* (2018), *Bala* (2019), *Dream Girl* (2019) and the recent Zee5 release *Helmet* (2021), Banerjee, one feels, is an almost ubiquitous presence in social comedies set in small towns. "I know the audience has accepted me in a certain way, so it is a safe zone for me," says Banerjee. But it was when he took the biggest gamble of his career—playing a menacing, mostly silent killer in Amazon Prime series *Paatal Lok* (2020)—did he make the biggest impression. "I'm trying to play with the audience's mind. I don't want them to think '*ye toh ye hi karega* [This is what he does]'. That puts me off. Instead, they should be like '*ye kaise kiya* [How did he do that]?'."

Streaming fulfils that need. "Films revolve around the main hero and the grounding of other characters is shaky," he says. OTT platforms, he adds, have eliminated this practice of 'shadow casting'. "Writers don't have a choice but to etch other characters.... One hero can't pull off nine episodes." With Banerjee on board, we think that the hero's burden can only lighten. ■

–Suhani Singh

RESTAURANTS

AGAINST ALL ODDS

It might be its white marble *haveli* interior, or the *laal maans* shanks on the menu, or maybe even the delectably plated *ghevar* in the end, but something about Bandra's Joshi House fools you into thinking that the worst of the pandemic is over. Having come up where the iconic Pali Village Café once stood, Joshi House seems proof that perseverance can, perhaps, defeat all peril. Restaurateur Suren Joshi says, "The pandemic took me back to square one, the position I was in a decade ago. I had to shut down Su Casa, a bar I owned in Bandra. All I had was goodwill and a name of sorts."

After swapping his luxury cars for a Suzuki Burgman—"a scooty is a blessing in Mumbai traffic"—Joshi put aside the doubts of well-wishers and invested all the energy, time and funds he had into realising his Joshi House dream. "I'm the kind of guy who is either all in or all out," he says. One feels certain Manju Datta would find in Joshi a counterpart. When the ex-Air India employee told family and friends that she would like to convert her house in Kolkata into a restaurant, approval only ever came in murmurs.

A novice in the food industry, Datta sought help from Vikram Malhotra, whose family had owned Sky Room and Blue Fox, Park Street restaurants that were once culinary institutions. When Datta opened The Olde House Eatery on Valentine's Day this year, she hadn't anticipated the response: "To be quite honest, it was a bit overwhelming. The publicity was only word-of-mouth, but the food just took off."

As Covid made things tough for the food industry, some tough entrepreneurs opened new restaurants

As customers again lined up for Sky Room's chicken tetrazzini, its





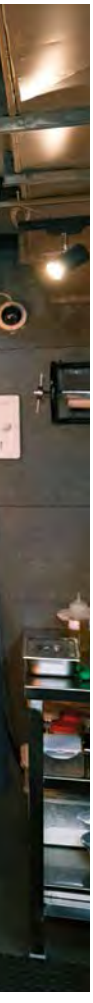








COLSTON JULIAN



GOING GOURMET
(clockwise from top, left) Joshi House, Mumbai; The Olde House Eatery, Kolkata; a *ghevar* dessert at Joshi House; a steak at Olde House Eatery; and Gurmehar Sethi at his restaurant Klap, Delhi

succulent steaks and pork chops, Datta knew that nostalgia and her fresh ingredients were both doing their work. "Maybe it was short-sightedness, but I didn't anticipate the second wave coming," she says. With Kolkata again locking down in April, Datta quickly switched models and went online. "We were only thinking sustenance for over two months, but things are picking up again. The upside is I know I can get up when I'm down."

Much like Datta, the pandemic has been a lesson in resilience for chef Gurmehar Sethi, too. Klap, his Khan Market restaurant in Delhi, had just started its food trials when the second wave took him by surprise. "We tried the delivery model, but soon realised our menu wasn't designed for that." Klap's 98-dish menu was, as a matter of fact, designed to give diners a feeling of abundance, while its roomy, naturally lit interiors were intentioned to give customers relief. "After being homebound for months, one looks for a bright restaurant with a brighter, inviting menu, a place with something for everyone."

Sethi, like every restaurateur, is certain his establishment has what it takes to beat Covid, but not once will he let himself be deluded by complacency. "Though I know this pandemic will last at least another six or seven years, I'm hoping that the restaurant will be a place of positivity for those coming in." Joshi, for his part, adds, "It's a new world we live in. Whatever happens, we will take it one day at a time." ■

–Shreevatsa Nevatia

ON THE MENU

New Asian eateries that defied the pandemic



KHMER KITCHEN
(Bengaluru)
What is today a chic Cambodian restaurant was once the home of Girish Karnad. Though entrepreneur Naveen Reddy has retained the playwright's library, the wafting aroma of Nom Banh Chok is all new.



KIKO-BA
(Delhi)
Not only did Covid delay Kiko-Ba's opening, it also threatened to shrink its menu. Today, however, with imports from Japan, Vietnam and Korea all in place again, you can relish its shiso lobster and yuzu tart.



PLURAL
(Mumbai)
After having travelled across Southeast Asia, Vedant Shah badly wanted to bring to Mumbai its food. With Plural, he has created a restaurant where the ingredients are all local but the pizza is Vietnamese.

Malaika Means BUSINESS

A seat at the judge's table on *MTV Supermodel of the Year* has brought **Malaika Arora** back to our screens, but it is her several business ventures that are keeping her busy when she's off camera



Q. *The theme of this year's* MTV Supermodel of the Year *is 'unapologetically you'. Has the Indian fashion industry embraced inclusivity?*

We have tried to be as inclusive as possible. We have a cross-section of girls—married, short, slightly plump and a transgender. Internationally, the fashion world has become very inclusive and I feel India is moving in the right direction, too. At the last few fashion weeks here, we have seen small steps in the right direction.

Q. *You have multiple businesses in the lifestyle, health and wellness space. Are there things you have learnt as a businesswoman that your life in the entertainment business hadn't prepared you for?*

When I started with The Label Life, an online start-up, I didn't even know what a start-up meant or what online shopping was like. I am very passionate about everything I do, so I'm involved in picking everything—the wall colours for my yoga studio, the kind of packing my food bowls go out in, the fabric for the outfits on The Label Life. I have learnt to understand numbers and terminology.

Q. *How are you dealing with the empty nest syndrome, now that Arhaan has gone off to college?*

Oh well. Every day is a new day and it gets a little lonely sometimes. Just the way my son is getting used to a new part of life, it's a new beginning of sorts for me, too. I do feel the emptiness and loneliness once in a while, but I guess everyone is just a video call away. Unfortunately, I can't travel to go see him, which makes it harder, but I'm coping well. Work is keeping me busy, which is a good thing.

Q. *Yoga is an integral part of your life. We have recently seen various iterations of yoga—goat yoga and rave yoga. Have you tried any?*

I've done paddle-board yoga and pool yoga. It's a lot of fun. We live in a fast-paced world and you want something different but the core essence of yoga and the benefits still stay the same. Whatever you may be doing, you still have to do your yoga right, which means your breathing, your asanas, your *pranayama*.

—with Karishma Upadhyay

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INDIA TODAY

SPICE

THE GOOD LIFE

SEPTEMBER 2021



DRIVE
THE NEW HARLEY DAVIDSON PAN AMERICA

FASHION
INDIA'S COOLEST SHOEMAKERS

TRAVEL SPECIAL

INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEYS

OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST NEERAJ CHOPRA AND HIS TRAVELS ON THE ROAD TO VICTORY

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

NOTHING SUMMONS THE WARM TINGLE OF COLLECTIVE national pride and excitement quite like a sporting victory on the international stage. So, it's a great honour to have champion athlete and Olympic gold medalist Neeraj Chopra as our cover star for *India Today Spice*—his first magazine cover since that magnificent win on August 8, 2021. We celebrate his win to commemorate a glory moment for the nation and to tell a truly inspiring story. As journeys go, the path he traversed—from a hardworking 13-year-old who would travel by bus from Khandra village in Haryana to the Sports Authority of India facility in Panipat, 15 km away, to star sportsman courted by big-ticket brands for endorsements—merits dramatisation.

Today, Chopra can afford the luxury of spontaneous indulgence, from a life dependent on erratic bus schedules, whether it's shopping for luxury brands or travel. Since proving himself on the world circuit, the 23-year-old has made it a point to pencil in a break while competing and training abroad. Just before the Olympic Games, a recent trip took him to Lausanne, Switzerland, where Chopra actually skipped a competition to take two days off to discover the city with his coach and physiotherapist.

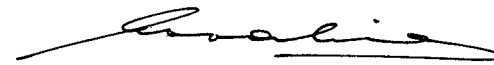
That's the beauty of travel, I guess. It offers a pleasurable distraction from the daily grind. So as we hesitantly emerge from the tyranny of a global pandemic, *Spice's* travel special takes us on a whirlwind tour of what we have missed in the past 17 months and how to make up for it.

To make the ride more spirited, we have distilled travel through the prism of a glass. *Spice* begins its heady tour from Scotland. The ultimate ode to Scotch whisky and whisky tourism, the Johnnie Walker Experience Centre, has just opened this month on Edinburgh's Princess Street. A labour of love that comes after four and a half years in the making, and a £185-million investment, it offers more than 800 flavour combinations. A person could visit the experience centre every day for more than two years without having the same experience twice.

If whisky is not your poison, there's also the picturesque vineyards of the New and Old World, where *Spice* swirls, sniffs and sips the finest from Australia's Barossa Valley, Brancott Estate in Marlborough, New Zealand and the Campo Viejo wineries in Spain.

We have created exclusive itineraries for our special bucket list of outbound destinations—all Covid-adjusted, of course. Starting with the 12th century, UNESCO-stamped medieval towns in Montenegro, which combine the allure of the French Riviera with the rich heritage of the Venetian empire. They say Montenegro starts with the sea and ends with the sky. But you can also rappel down Europe's deepest and largest canyon, the UNESCO-listed Tara Canyon. From fabulous Montenegro to the scrub-speckled desert north of AlUla (a city of the Medina region) in Saudi Arabia, *Spice's* tryst with history and heritage continues at the archaeological site of Hegra that has been left practically undisturbed for almost 2,000 years. But now, for the first time, Saudi Arabia has opened the site to tourists.

Our exhilarating jaunt would be incomplete without a road trip and here's where *Spice* rides into the sunset—or the monsoon rains in this case—on the new Pan America: Harley-Davidson's first bonafide ADV (Adventure Motorcycle). Replete with the thrills and spills, travel may not be at pre-Covid levels just yet, but we've surely come a long way.



(Aroon Purie)

CONTRIBUTORS

1. VISHAL SURI
An engineering graduate, Vishal Suri has over 30 years of experience across consumer-centric industries and has spent the last 15 years in the travel industry. Prior to his current assignment as Managing Director, SOTC Travel (formerly Kuoni India), he was the CEO, Tour Operating at SOTC Travel. Suri joined Kuoni-Tour Operating in August 2012 from Thomas Cook India where he was the COO, Leisure Travel.

2. RAMPRASAD SRIDHARAN
Ramprasad Sridharan is the CEO & Managing Director at Benetton India Pvt. Ltd. Prior to joining Benetton, Sridharan held executive level positions at Clarks, Reebok India and Lerros Fashions India. He holds a business degree from Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and is based out of Gurgaon, India.

3. MERAJ SHAH
Shah fancies himself as a cultural commentator, freely dispensing unsolicited views on automobiles, history, golf, travel and life, to all and sundry. A guidebook author and columnist, he runs Blue Autumn Films, a production house that produces shows on travel and lifestyle.

4. JENNY YAP
With her qualifications from Cidesco and Cibtec, Yap joined the company as a beauty trainer and is currently the Regional Education Training Manager for L'Occitane. As a professional educator, she is currently training to be a professional certified coach with the International Coaching Federation.

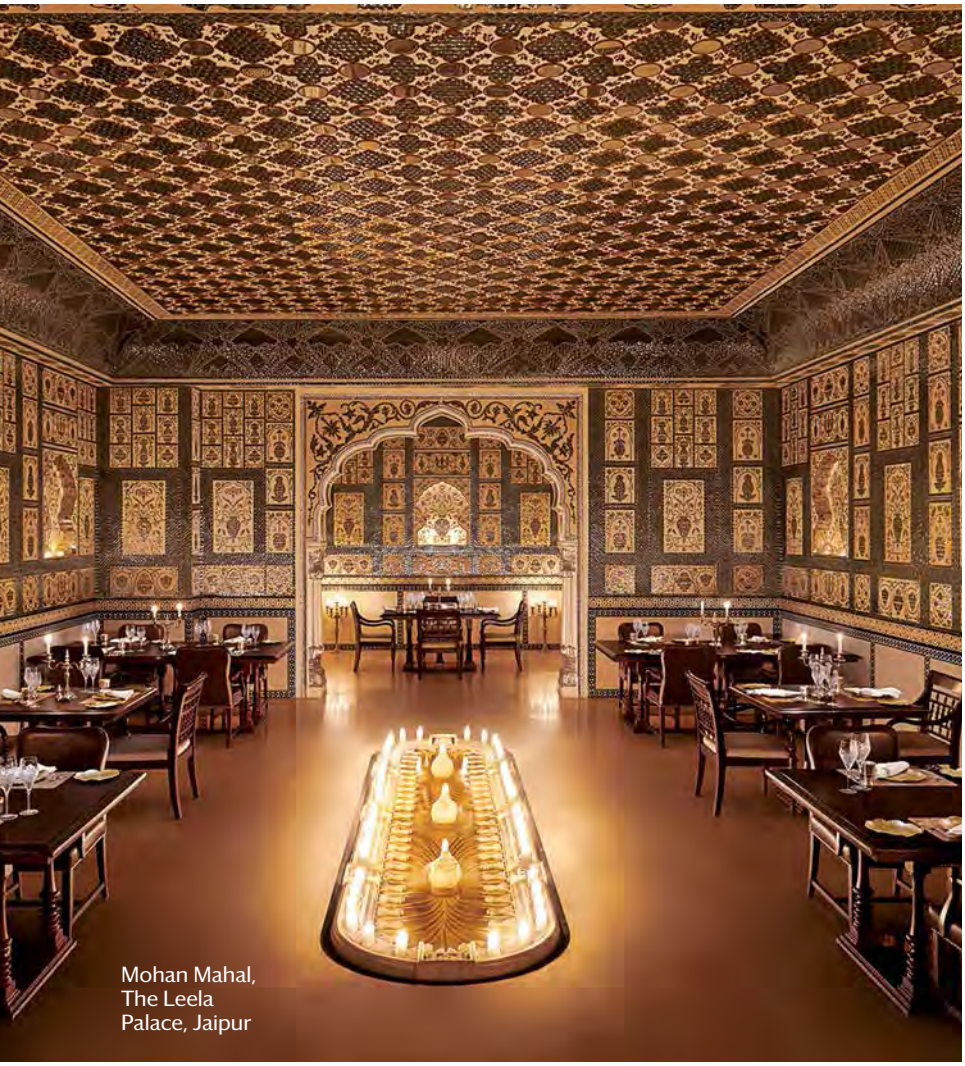
5. RIAAN JACOB GEORGE
A Mumbai and Colombo-based journalist and luxury blogger; when he is not contributing to some of India's leading publications and creating content on his Instagram (@riaangeorge), George teaches French.

6. GAGAN SHARMA
A certified sommelier and mixologist by qualification, Sharma holds the prestigious WSET Diploma. With over a decade and a half of work experience in India and abroad, he is currently the creator and curator at Indulge India, offering experiential and edu-taining beverage journeys to discerning aesthetes. In his free time, he romanticises Urdu, and loves to read about Mughal history. He's also a certified mountaineer and holds the Limca Book of records for his travels.



CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER 2021



Mohan Mahal, The Leela Palace, Jaipur

20

LUXURY'S NEW ADDRESS

Top hotel openings for this year

15

CELLAR TALES

Traipsing through the finest vineyards in Australia, New Zealand and Spain



10

— COVER STORY —

THE GOLD STANDARD

JOURNEYING WITH THE STAR ATHLETE OF THE TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES, NEERAJ CHOPRA

On the cover NEERAJ CHOPRA; Photograph BANDEEP SINGH; Location THE LODHI, NEW DELHI; OUTFIT Louis Vuitton: Monogram Jacquard Sweatshirt; Slim Stretch Denim Pants; SHOES LV Trainer Sneaker; WATCH Tambour Street Diver; STYLIST Edward Lalrempuia; FASHION ASSISTANT Ustat Kharbanda; HAIR & MAKE UP PARTNER Tweak Salon, India



32

POWER HORSE

The new Pan America Special from Harley Davidson makes a great travelling companion on a road trip

2
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

9
FETISH

44
BEAUTY

42
JEWELLERY

50
LASTLOOK

26

BUCKET LIST

Top outbound Covid-adjusted destinations that are exciting too

37

THE COOLEST SHOEMAKERS

Hand-stitched, hand-welted shoes are all the rage for the well-heeled

48

HEADY TRAILS

The new eight-floor Johnny Walker Experience Centre opens this month in Edinburgh, Scotland



Eternal Love

Despite the transient allure of matinee moments, the magic of Marilyn Monroe's sensuality wrapped in pink tafetta silk and dripping in diamonds, singing 'Diamonds are a girl's best friend' in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is pretty unforgettable. Unfortunately, so is the past year and a half, although for entirely different reasons. Challenging and unrelenting, the COVID-19 pandemic has spent almost everyone's everyday in a cloud of anxiety and uncertainty. As we gingerly step out of homes and reconnect with friends and families over smaller get together; it's time to create new memories and strengthen old connections. What better way to infuse the old with the new and cherish every facet of life and its fleeting nature than by tokens that spell pure, eternal and timeless? Monroe was right, nothing evokes emotions more than natural diamonds. The Natural Diamond Council's (NDC's) latest campaign highlights the allure of natural diamonds. The campaign impresses upon the stone's ability to seal deeper connections that are handed down generations as totems of affection and loyalty. Celebrating the return of positivity and optimism, the campaign is an ode to cherishing the role of natural diamonds in fostering fresh moments that patiently wait in the wings to a post-pandemic world.

–By Chumki Bharadwaj



Casual Chic

Inimitable spirit that says vibrant and iconic defines Chopard's Happy Sport Golf Edition watch. It captures the mesmerising energy of free-spirited women with five legendary Happy Diamonds, a dancing golf club and a golf ball in white ethical gold twirl on its frosted dial. Sophisticated, yet convincingly sporty. Now that's a whole in one.
Availability Timekeepers, Mumbai; Johnson, Delhi

Matinee Magic

Aligned with the July release of *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, Fossil has introduced its limited edition collections: The All Stars Collection, The Slam Dunk collections and the Tune Squad Box Set, which include tune squad watches, bags and collectibles inspired by the iconic characters of Bugs Bunny, Lola Bunny, Tweety, Marvin and Daffy. Who says life can't be fairytale?
Price on request;
Availability Brand Stores



Time to Strut

The Compliquée Peacock Timepiece from iconic brand Faberge features a dial set with diamonds, Paraiba tourmalines and tsavorites, and a hand-engraved peacock in 18 carat white gold and diamonds. With al the majesty and mystique of a peacock, it's the perfect accessory to help you preen.
Price on request;
Availability Brand Stores



In Great Shape

Curves are definitely in, especially when it comes to the Longines Evidenza. Borrowing from the formal language of the Art Deco style of its 1925 muse, it reinterprets the taut curve of the "tonneau" shape. It constitutes the true essence of the collection and it's timeless aesthetic.
Price on request;
Availability Brand Stores



HOTSHEET

PICK OF THE MONTH



Bubble Wrap

Nothing celebrates happy times as evocatively as chattering bubbles in a crystal flute. Set your sights on the G.H.Mumm champagne, the iconic cuvee with its bold red sash. Not only does it signal the start of a memorable moment, but it's a delicious proposition even on its own.

Price ₹5,000 (Delhi);
Availability Retail Stores



Rekindle the Glow

Nothing sets the mood or soothes jangled nerves like an aromatic candle. Reconnect with your inner self or simply set the rendezvous ambience with handcrafted organic soy wax candles from Firefly Décor & Fragrances.

Price on request;
Availability www.fireflydecors.com



Sonic Boom

If you're the audiophile in search of the ultimate sound trail, Sonos Move spells perfection on the move. The portable Sonos speaker comes with built-in batteries to rock the outdoors or glamourise indoor listening. What's more, it's weatherproof and drop-resistant and can be controlled with voice: Sonos app and Apple AirPlay 2 at home, and stream via Bluetooth when WiFi isn't available. Need we spell out more?

Price ₹43,999;
Availability www.trysonos.com



Sneak Peek

Fashion, movies and sport forge the holy trinity with Japanese fashion brand, Onitsuka Tiger's limited-edition sneaker. To be released this September, the shoes are born from a collaborationbetween Amazon Prime Video Movie, *Cinderella* and the brand.The P-TRAINER PRZM sneaker is the sporty, ingenious equivalent of the glass slipper. Anyone can be the protagonist of their own fairytale.

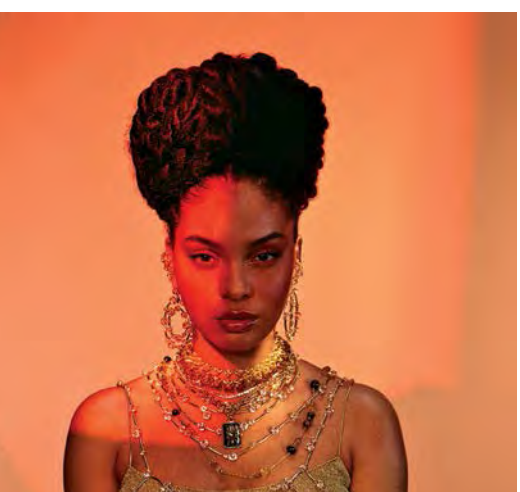
Price ₹16,999 **Availability** Onitsuka Tiger DLF Promenade store

Sparkle Fest









Think Swarovski and the imagination leaps across pristine and coloured jewellery and Objet d'art. Wonderous shapes find expression at Swarovski's Wonderlab, where magic and science marry in bright technicolour, or at least with Collection II. As with its predecessor, Collection II is imbued with symbolism, simultaneously retelling Swarovski's brand story whilst cavorting with colours, textures, and cuts. The pantheon of self-expression curates and caters to classic, punk, sweet and striking with verve and nuance captured with equal ease and grace. If Abunda marries architectural adornment and mathemagical expression, with Dextera, the brand plays on an intermix of metal features and precision-cut pave in uniquely unisex designs. Imber mixes metals, rich textures, and crystals that fall like rain, adding a soft sensory experience to any ensemble. Each piece in the Imber Family is a delicate combination of a chain-link base with dripping crystal accents. Like light in the dark, Stella's designs are dreamy and distinct where star-shaped pieces play with proportion to create striking units for starlets and stargazers alike. Geometry, magic, and heritage recreate a constellation of craftsmanship that is unique and translates into a striking statement for those that dare to claim their swagger.

Price on Request; **Availability** in-stores and online at swarovski.com.

THE GOLD RUSH

Olympic gold medalist Neeraj Chopra's dizzying success at Tokyo is only the first stop in his sporting journey. For* Spice*, the champion athlete retraces his steps through tough times to the present, where he lists shopping indulgences and shares his travel bucket list.

By **SUHANI SINGH**

Photographs by Bandeep Singh

They say, "Life is a journey that must be travelled no matter how bad the roads and accomodations." Neeraj Chopra's journey to the top of the Olympic podium may have involved many a bumpy road and diverse accomodations, but it has always been an inspired one. It all began at the age of 13, when as a pudgy boy he'd take the bus from Khandra, a village in Haryana, to the Sports Authority of India facility in Panipat, located about 15 km away. "I'd return from school and immediately change into my exercise gear and head to the bus stand," he says. Chopra recalls waiting for long spells for the bus since it was an hourly service. The return would be more complicated. With frequency reduced at night, he'd either hitch a ride on a bike or with a tractor driver. The arduous lifestyle—that also included a 1.5 km walk from the bus stand to the SAI

FAVOURITE ATHLETICS STADIUM

Hercules stadium in Monaco has been a favourite, but now Tokyo's Olympic Stadium has overtaken, given that my life's dream was fulfilled there.





OUTFIT Louis Vuitton: Striped Monogram Workwear Denim Shirt; Neon Man Sleeveless Sweatshirt; WATCH Tambour Street Diver

centre, reaching home sometimes as late as midnight—didn't vex him. "I am glad I never questioned why I needed to put myself through all of this? I just happily went about this daily routine," he explains.

He learned a lot in the process too. Patience is necessary, as is self-belief. "You should love the work that you are doing and do it with all your heart," says Chopra, who moved to Panipat later to focus on sports. "It automatically becomes easier to do."

GOING PLACES

At SAI, Chopra had plenty of disciplines to pick, but it was throwing the javelin the farthest which gave him instant joy. Less than two years after choosing the field event, the teenager was flying high. He represented India in the World Youth Championships in 2013, held in Donetsk, Ukraine. "I remember our coaches asking the contingent where we were all headed for? I put my hand up and said 'Dont-task'," said Chopra with a laugh. "It was my first flight and I had a window seat. I spent more than half the journey just looking at the clouds and trying to see the ground below." Since then, he has found his place in the stars and travel has become a virtual staple. Even though he enjoyed travelling, back then young Chopra didn't have the luxury to explore places on his own while competing abroad. That's not the case anymore though.

Although the rigour and discipline of his practice remains unchanged,



OUTFIT Louis Vuitton: Damier Denim Trucker Jacket; End Goal LV Crewneck; ACCESSORY LV Plane Necklace

FAVOURITE CUISINE

I love all Indian food. Going by the rush at the Indian restaurants abroad, I think everyone does. Recently I tried Japanese food in Mumbai and it was delicious.

DREAM DESTINATIONS
Grindelwald in Switzerland, Paris (below left) and Kerala (below) are some of the places oh Chopra's bucket list





Photos: SHUTTERSTOCK

PLACES TO TRAVEL

I'd love to visit Interlaken and Grindelwald villages in Switzerland. I also want to see more of London and visit Paris.

FAVOURITE DESTINATION IN INDIA

I haven't explored India much. I have lived in different places. I trained for nearly five years in Panchkula and enjoyed my stay there. You can see the mountains from the stadium and the city is also accessible.

LAZY BEACH HOLIDAY OR A TREK IN THE HILLS

I'd rather be lazy in the hills. I just want to gaze at the mountains.



Chopra has learnt to let his hair down, balancing a demanding schedule with the unhurried luxury of shopping. He is particularly fond of beautiful clothes and shoes. On a recent visit to Delhi's Emporio mall, he headed to the Louis Vuitton store to get one of his favourites: an LV belt. But instead, ended up buying the pricier ankle-length shoes. Chopra has a soft spot for the brand's bags too. His modest background—the son of a farmer—does make him reluctant to purchase something expensive, he adds. But then life has not been the same since the evening of August 8, 2021 when he became India's first medal winner in athletics and only its second individual gold medallist. From state governments to top companies, everyone has been rewarding Chopra for his incredible feat. Money is no longer the deterrent it once was. His new-found fame has enabled him to fulfil some of his dreams, such as taking his mother on her first flight—a chartered one no less—to Vidyanagar Airport in Karnataka, to see him being honoured at the Inspire Institute of Sport.



OUTFIT Louis Vuitton: Everyday LV Crewneck; Archive Pocket Blouson; Slim Stretch Denim Pants; SHOES LV Trainer Sneaker

THREE TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

Headphones. Camera. I always end up taking more clothes and shoes than necessary even if it's for a few days.

TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

Those who have followed Chopra's career since its early days knew he was a serious contender all along. Chopra had started making waves on the junior circuit becoming the first Indian to be a world junior champion in athletics, setting a new junior world record in the process. Since proving himself on the world circuit, the 23-year-old athlete has made it a point to pencil-in a break while competing and training abroad. "As athletes, we have to squeeze in our holidays in the recovery period we get amidst the heavy training," he says. He made a recent trip, just prior to the Olympic Games, to Lausanne, Switzerland, where Chopra skipped a competition and got two days to discover the city with his coach and physiotherapist.

A new companion on his travels is a Sony A7 mirrorless camera. Passionate about photography, he estimates he has over 10,000 photographs on his phone alone. "There are few photos of mine and more of the places I have visited," he says. Much as he enjoys being trigger happy, he believes that it's important to register the moment and savour the memory rather than simply shooting away to store for the future, overlooking the present by default.

Despite his new-found love for photography, back in Tokyo he had no time to use the camera. "In the Games village I was completely focussed on the competition," he says. Ever since he returned with a gold, Chopra has been hopping from one felicitation ceremony, VIP get-together and promotional activity to another. He can scarcely remember the last time he went on a holiday. "I want to plan a week-long break with friends," he says. There are plenty of places within India he is keen to discover. He has not been to the Taj Mahal yet. He's drawn to the hills. Also on the bucket-list is a trip to God's own country, Kerala. Having decided to skip all competitions for the rest of the year, Chopra hopes to take some time out for himself. He has definitely earned it. Here's hoping the next part of his journey is just as eventful.

Stylist: EDWARD LALREMPUIA; Fashion Assistant: USTAT KHARBANDA; Hair & Makeup Partner: TWEAK SALON, INDIA; Location: THE LODHI, NEW DELHI



WINE-SOME TRAILS



Distilling travel through the prism of a wine glass across three of the most picturesque wine estates in Australia, New Zealand and Spain

By **GAGAN SHARMA**
Sommelier

If there was ever a time to break down walls, blur borders and be one with nature's vastness, it is now. To enjoy the interplay with the elements, away from the concrete chaos of everyday life, just how it was supposed to be. And a bit of vanity and indulgence can't hurt, right? It's the perfect time to bring out the sneakers, hit the tarmac, get a tan while stirring a triple latte. Or rather swirling and sipping a delectable glass of liquid poetry. Why? There's something incredibly therapeutic and soothing about perfectly aligned rows of vines, running endless as far as the eye can see, with a hauntingly aromatic smell of fresh casks, and petrichor. May I request some jazz melodies as well please?

Wines undoubtedly count among some of nature's finest bounty, kindling a unique sense of pleasure, tranquillity, and civility, wineries represent as the ultimate Mecca of sensory bliss. A glass of wine becomes more than just a tipple with all its stories—the flight of imagination, confluence of history, tradition, and culture reflect on a journey of human grit and patience striking a fine balance between the past and the future. And to rekindle that glorious bridge between the grape and the glass, I had to travel to three different parts of the world to where the romance first began.

Back to the beginning: Barossa Valley

My first stop has to be my second home--Australia. Adelaide's gastronomy is unparalleled, but an hour's journey out, through the route bracketed with vines will condition you for gluttony. Barossa Valley is home to some of the world's best-hand-crafted wines and farm-to-table meals. In 1847, a Bavarian immigrant, Johann Gramp, began an affair by planting the region's first vines. The iconic Orlando House houses the region's first cellar, which went on to create the marvels of Jacob's Creek, a namesake water feature that flows besides,



Jacob's Creek Vineyards , Barossa Valley



Brancott Estate Cellar Doors







and makes for a deserving first stop. Jacob's Creek Visiting Centre, not far from the house, is arresting at first blush with its effortless glamour. Take a tour through the winery, treat yourself with sensitively paired local dishes, and relish their famed Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, decades-old Twany Port—some only available at the Centre. What makes the visit special is a stroll to the restored creek, imbibing its fauna and hush, while sipping on the fine nectars from their St Hugo & Johann labels with some regional charcuterie. If you're being adventurous, grab a bottle of their German-styled Steingarten Riesling, drive up to the neighbouring Eden Valley, make a journey up the vineyards, which are as picturesque as the default wallpaper of Windows desktops, and enjoy it amidst the untouched natural majesty of the place. Another way to enjoy Barossa is by cycling through it. Wherever you stop, there is a glass of discerning vino waiting for you to savour.

Brimming with character: Brancott Estate

New Zealand is the world's adventure capital. Minus Hobbit, *Lord of the Rings*, and incredibly clean air, it's the unofficial champion of crisp Sauvignon Blancs and ethereal Pinot Noirs. Marlborough, at the northern tip of South Island, was considered too cold to do anything but sheep gazing, until a Croatian immigrant family changed its face by planting the region's first commercial vines in 1973. The move ignited new fortunes for the region, and just two years on, it got its first blocks of the two varieties. This very site is home to Brancott Estate, which then put Marlborough on the world map with their fantastic wines. And it's not just an expression.

Their wines were so highly praised that in 1987, Queen Elizabeth II took a long journey to visit the plots. In 1989, they won the coveted title of the Best Sauvignon Blanc in the World, only to be followed by the Best International Wine of the Year award in 1996 for their Chardonnay. Getting there is easy, just follow the Brancott Road from Blenheim, and you'll be at the doorstep of these heritage vineyards in 10 minutes. Visit the site and their cellar for a fabulous experience, with equally fantastic views to share. Stand at the porch and soak in the plush views. You'll find yourself nestled in the valley, walled in by mountains that play protector for as far as you see in any direction. You might just miss spotting the cellar doors that are curiously hidden amid the rolling creeks, just like the vines' roots.

Try and spot some falcons around too, NZ's most endangered bird of prey that the winery cares for and supports through a housing and breeding space allocated on site. If you're a bird enthusiast, you can even pet them and have them sit on your forearm. If not, enjoy from afar and make friends with a few glasses of wine instead. Don't miss the installations in the vineyards commemorating their journey, which are really interesting. More than anything, treat yourself to a food fiesta at their restaurant, best paired with their cellar door exclusive wines brandishing the artistic pieces parked in the vineyards. By the way, the queen planted her own vines on her visit, ask nicely and maybe they will let you plant yours too!

Happy Camper: Campo Viejo

Even before you visit Rioja, you're sure to fall in love with it. There's history and architecture, tapas and pintxos, Basque



Brancott Estate
Sauvignon Blanc



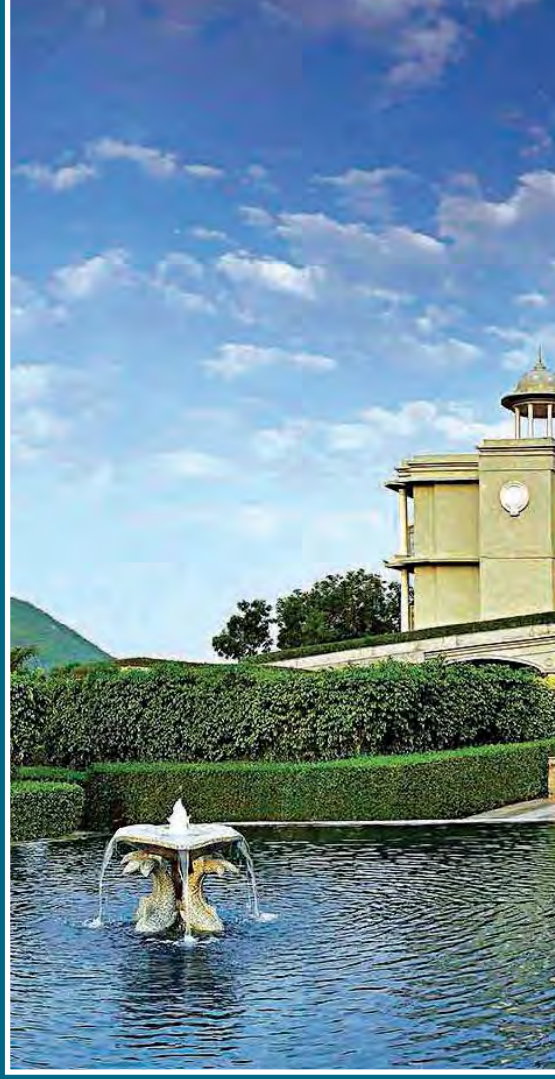
Campo Viejo Tempranillo

Country's sweeping views, and family-styled hospitality to be enamoured with. A stone's throw away from the city of Logrono is the biggest winery in the region, the famed Campo Viejo. Standing tall for over 60 years now, it's a marvel on its own. Drive up the hillock, and at one end you'll find gorgeous 360 views of the city and on the other the snow-capped mountains. Soon you realise there's no structure on site, and only then will it dawn on you that the winery is beneath your feet.

The parallelly arranged lines of Tempranillo & Garnacha vines on the turf are only replaced by glittering rows of 300+ giant tanks underneath. It's a breathtaking experience to walk over them, which gets further accentuated at the next lair. Behind the massive wooden doors is an ocean of barrels, in which the wines sleep; these are the glories that you will relish over the next decade.

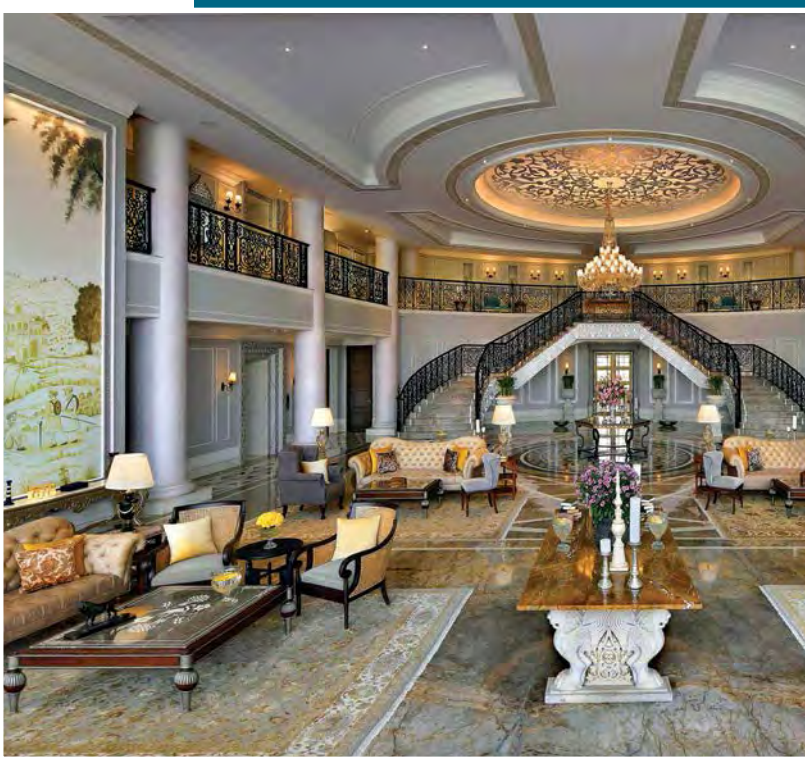
Famed for their blended, age-worthy wines, Rioja are amongst the most regarded reds on the plant. And it's at the barrel room, though time and patience, occasion-worthy rewards are created. Return to sunlight and cavort amid the vineyards with a savoury spread of grilled octopus, green-roasted peppers, garlic mushrooms, paella, and steaks with their personality-driven wines. Starting from Joven and Crianzas, make your way up to their Gran Reserva; the most regarded qualification in the region, one that needs wisdom to decode in a glass. After dusk, walk down Calle del Laurel street for the tapas walk which you wish never ends. Start from the legendary Bar Soriano, through Blanco y Negro & Torrecilla's commendable selection of wines, all the way to Taberna del Tío Blas for a treat worth a lifetime. Don't forget to replenish with a fresh glass of luscious vino at every stop. For a local treat, try the piercingly tart white wine from Txakoli grapes with garlic shrimps. Indeed, the true measure of travel is in the memories that you trap in your tastebuds and the film you capture on the lens of your mind.

Rule the Roost



Emerging from our collective house arrest, revenge travel has slowly morphed into roaring travel; Spice brings you the low-down on the newest luxury hotel openings this year.

By **CHUMKI BHARADWAJ**



From the permanently harried to the always hurried, dreaming of the great escape has been a favourite Covid pastime. But most big-ticket travel had been on hold for most of last year, delaying many planned hotel openings. The silver lining: This year is chock-a-block with high-end hospitality debuts. What's more, there is an added allure to new hotels right now since they have that air of being fresh and clean, and therefore admittedly Covid-compliant. We bring you four standouts that have already started welcoming guests for the first time, plus three that will open next month. For those who simply can't wait, we've got it all covered so you're not short on options—from Kashmir in the north to Rajasthan and Gujarat in the west and Coorg in the south. All of these offer private villas, cottages, or tents that cater to the current yen for exclusive, outdoorsy experiences where social distancing is the default setting.





ISLAND FANTASY, RAFFLES, Udaipur

The ultimate Mecca for private-island luxury is the Raffles, Udaipur. Sitting on a 21-acre island on the unexplored Udai Sagar lake, it is the perfect place to do a Robinson Crusoe. What's more, the ride from the real to the surreal is only a 20-minute one. The scenic drive from the Maharana Pratap Airport is followed by a gentle boat ride that transports you to the Raffles Udaipur (the first property of the legendary Raffles Group in India). The 101 rooms and suites offer undisturbed views of the lake; choose sunrises or sunsets to conjoin with on leisurely romantic walks or will yourself to vegetate in your room and test the peerless Raffles service.

TARIFF: Starting at ₹ **35,000*** plus taxes, inclusive of breakfast until 30th September, 2021; ₹**45,000*** plus taxes from 1st October, 2021

CONTACT: www.allaccor.com or www.raffles.com/ +91 294 2779000







PALACE WALK

THE LEELA PALACE, Jaipur



Although not strictly a new property, since it existed as the JW Mariott until last year. But all those familiar with the Leela brand of hospitality know that its aesthetic, sensibility and service is so distinct that there's little room of a past association overshadowing its individualistic character. Unmistakable and equally unmissable, the new Leela Palace—that opened to guests in February this year—is imposing in pristine white, set against the stunning contrast of the dense green ascent of the Nahargarh forest reserve hemming its southern perimeter like a verdant wall. With an electrified fence and more than 450 cameras on the property, safety is the last thing on your mind. If the monsoon grey gives the all-white affair the luminescence of a pearl in the day, evenings transform its paler reflection in more than 200 scattered water bodies, that dot the property, to impart a surreal ivory glow. Sprawled across eight acres of landscaped gardens, royal Rajputana heritage and lifestyle come alive with its 400-year-old heritage craft of Thikri—inlaid mirrors—that transforms walls and ceilings to glimmering beacons. Timeless tradition meets lavish grandeur in each of the 200 stylishly appointed rooms, suites and villas on offer. Word to the wise: Villas that come with private plunge pools are the best. Also, splashing about before meals will help do justice to the extraordinary food on offer.

TARIFF: Royal Villa Courtyard ₹**25,000 +++**; Royal Villa Plunge Pool ₹**35,000**
(Rates are dynamic)

CONTACT: www.theleela.com







SANDS OF TIME

KARMA GOLDEN CAMP, Jaisalmer

Nothing quite beats the romance of the dunes; the Thar resonates to the desert song with its own unique notes. This is the magic you capture from the selection of 30 safari tents and bungalows, available at the Karma Golden Camp. The taupe spread inches across 3.5 acres to include 22 luxury safari tents, 10 tent cottages featuring a private pool, along with a restaurant, spa, children's club, and an outdoor amphitheatre. For those who like to venture out, there are exciting adventure activities on offer as well as less taxing ones. Camel safaris, dune buggy rides, sand surfing, private dining under the full moon and star gazing at the cloudless desert sky are just some of the parts that make this property memorable.

TARIFF: USD $300 per tent (sleeps two) plus taxes

CONTACT: 1800-572-3577 (in India only); Officially opens in October 15

PICTURE PERFECT

THE POSTCARD, Gir, Gujarat

Solitary pursuits usually demand a detachment that can be isolating. But there is no reason why a unity of opposites can't be the expression of your holiday at The Postcard Gir. Sixteen acres of mango orchards hemmed by the untamed wild of the Gir forest swaddle 15 luxurious rooms that offer the ultimate in privacy, punctuated only by sounds of migrating birds, or of course, the unmistakable roar of the Asiatic lion. Vegetate over your salad or go hedonistic with the Salli Boti, a nod to the region's wider Parsi influence, or even the fresh, local pomfret from Veraval. Time is at your disposal at this modernist refuge. The rooms are large, airy and allow the interplay of natural light with complimenting interiors that are neither over fussy nor utilitarian. Spend all day, if you will, ruminating over the dappled light peeking in through the mango orchards. Or opt for the safari if you prefer the company of the 674 lions at the Gir National Sanctuary. A picnic? Check. Leisurely nature trail? Of course. Or a beach to yourself at Diu perhaps?

TARIFF: Premier room ₹**25,000** per night (Off season); ₹**35,000** per night (high season)

CONTACT: book@postcardresorts.com / +91 79995 55222







REGAL REPAST

KARAN MAHAL, Kashmir

Royalty in India has been part and parcel of the Indian luxury narrative. Karan Mahal, part of the RARE India Community, is no different with a provenance that harks back to the erstwhile royal family of Jammu & Kashmir. This charming European-style villa is perched on Srinagar's Shankaracharya Hill overlooking the Dal Lake, and surrounded by private orchards of peach and almonds. Do we need more reasons to extol? Built in the early 20th century, it served as the residence of Dr Karan Singh, and has hosted historical figures such as Edwina Mountbatten, Pandit Nehru, Nikita Khrushchev, Rajendra Prasad, Indira Gandhi and Joseph Campbell. These hallowed corridors

WALK IN THE CLOUDS

COORG WILDERNESS RESORT, Kodagu

If yearning for a clear sky on a starry night seems like poor ambition, you haven't been introduced to the full fanfare of nature's charm and intrigue. Here's where the hill town of Kodagu inspires not just the senses but sensations; the landscape is wildly unpredictable and whimsical as it bares in equal glory matted green Thekkady-style rain forests, the swell and troughs similar to the Yorkshire Dales, interspersed with lakes that flow into paddy fields at a moment's whim. It's no wonder they call it "Scotland of India". The Coorg Wilderness Resort, fourth in the line of succession at Paul John Resorts and Hotels is a luxury experience that captures nature and reimagines hospitality. The spacious resort is just a two-hour-drive from Kannur Airport, and boasts a 40-acres to frolic in. Fifty stately rooms and 54 palatial suites, caters this slice of heaven to every preference. Victorian-inspired décor and large bay windows with private balconies allow you to flirt wantonly with the elements. While the crisp cool air obviates the need for air conditioning, each room comes with traditionally designed electric fireplaces and heated bathroom floors to keep you cosy. It's fabulous for a destination wedding too if 'Alice in Wonderland' is your theme. For Coorg is all wonder and amazement.

TARIFF: ₹**15,500** plus taxes

CONTACT: www.coorgwildernessresort.in.



of history are yours for the exploring since April this year, when it opened doors as a luxury address on hire. As with most of Kashmir, robust Chinar trees are in abundance in the tree-lined driveway, which puts some distance between the generous lawns and the bungalow. The gardens with the Chinars and the flowers are colourful companions for the lounge-inclined by the poolside or even for those who prefer to take in a few laps before meals. The idea is to offer guests an exclusive residence all to themselves (seven guest rooms), with the luxury of personal and attentive service by a well-trained staff. Did we mention the fabulous Kashmiri carpets, art deco furniture, silver ware, crystals and rich furnishings? Most suites have a private balcony and the large wraparound verandah looks out to the Zabarwan and Pir Panjal ranges, orchards and the Dal Lake. Needless to say, heaven is a place on earth.

TARIFF: ₹ **25,000** per night

CONTACT https://www.karanmahalsrinagar.com





SENSORIAL DELIGHT

SIX SENSES FORT BARWARA, Ranthambore

Rajasthan probably holds the tourism trump card when it comes to royal playground turned jet-set destination. Much of the 14th century Fort Barwara, belongs to this category, except that this will only be the second heritage property that the international chain Six Senses will manage. The fort belongs to the noble family of Barwara and its design reinterprets the gracious ambience of a regal time dating back 700 years. Significant conservation efforts have transformed the property into a 48-suite luxury resort, while retaining two temples within the walled site. With two restaurants serving modern cuisine, a bar and lounge and a 30,000 square foot Six Senses Spa and fitness centre, this is how tradition side steps a template. The Ranthambore National Park only a thirty-minute drive and the wild safaris only complement true Rajput royal pastimes.

Hold on to your horses just yet, because reservations will only open starting October 15.

TARIFF: ₹**65000 ++** per night (including breakfast lunch & dinner for two): Introductory offer during the launch phase

CONTACT: https://www.sixsenses.com/en/resorts/fort-barwara

MEDITERRANEAN REVERIE
The five colourful villages of Cinque Terre in Italy; Lake Como beckons (below left) so also the Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia (below right)



"Traveling—it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller" —Ibn Battuta

When COVID-19 hit and borders across the globe shut down for the better part of 2020, like most travel enthusiasts, I went through a gamut of emotions. Travel, for me, has always been therapeutic. Immersing myself in different cultures, learning about the history and heritage of different countries, meeting new people and making lifelong memories—be it physical visual or social, travel is as stimulating as it is healing. So this year, with many countries cautiously opening its doors to tourists, I chalked out a new Covid-adjusted bucket list for myself. If you're all rested and recharged to kick start your travel in this New Normal Covid-era, here are some recommendations to help make informed choices along with Covid appropriate behaviour and travel precautions put in place by countries across the globe.

Taking the familiar by surprise Comfort is a big factor in anxious times but here is how to enjoy your favourite safe havens, albeit differently



IT'S TIME TO FLY

As countries around the world slowly open borders, Spice offers a fresh bucket list with a plethora of options for both the familiar and novel.

By **VISHAL SURI**
Managing Director, SOTC Travel Ltd



SPAIN AND ITALY

No Italian escape is complete without a food tour in Palermo or the Godfather Tour in Catania. Luxuriate in the celebrity-famous Lake Como and visit Cinque Terre—five stunning villages guaranteed to make you feel like a star. What's not to fall in love with in spain? From food to architecture, locales and adventure, this is where Pedro Almodóvar gets creative; need we over sell? Travel further east of Madrid to the Mediterranean city of Barcelona, home to Catalonia's most famous architect and go on an artistic private bike journey through the city of Gaudi. Ride on a horse carriage in Seville and sample authentic tapas, visit private palaces, and watch Flamenco dancers and singers perform. Let your hair down in Ibiza, the Balearic island off the southern coast of Spain famous for its appeal to celebrities, millennials et al. Your itinerary must include the beautiful city-resort of Marbella, popular for its Sierra Blanca Mountains as the backdrop to sandy Mediterranean beaches, villas, hotels, and golf courses. To the west of the town is the Golden Mile of prestigious nightclubs. Stay at Puente Romano Marbella—a lifestyle resort with direct access to the beach, a paradise for lovers of sport and leisure (www.puenteromano.com).

CROATIA

Visit the Croatian coasts and islands to explore Plitvice Lakes National Park, known for a chain of 16-terraced lakes, joined by waterfalls that extend into a limestone canyon. Walkways and hiking trails wind around and across the water. Sample oysters in Ston, plan a visit to Zagreb and experience some epic *Game of Thrones* fan moments.





SWITZERLAND

There's nothing quite like the stunning Swiss Alps in the winters. The panoramic Golden Pass from Montreux vis Saanen to Gstaad is one of the most scenic train routes in the world. Gstaad is the Mecca of fashion, a car-free picturesque village with restored Swiss chalets. It is also a special summer destination for global celebrities. Channel your inner Bollywood vibe when you are there and go on a luxe-shopping spree. Stay at The Gstaad Palace (www.palace.ch) located high up on a hill—it has the best views of this gorgeous town. If Switzerland and cheese are a fine pair, or Yash Raj films make you swoon, wellness is another synonym well-used here. A picturesque hour-long train ride from Zurich takes you to the gorgeous Bad Ragaz, known for its Thermal Water from Tamina Gorge. Stay at The Grand Resort Bad Ragaz and indulge in a luxurious 365° Wellbeing & Thermal Spa area (www.resortragaz.ch).



Aerial view of Hotel Bad Ragaz—natural spring and spa & health resort (above); Celebrity-favoured resort town of Gstaad

Monaco's glitzy marina; Côte d'Azur's stylish and scenic coastline (below)



FRANCE & MONACO

Courchevel, the French ski resort is part of Les Trois Vallées—the largest linked ski areas in the world and a renowned playground for professional skiers. Do include the 2km-Moriond racing Toboggan run with family and friends. Although, the choicest of luxury hotels are on offer, relish a gourmet meal at the world's first starred dessert-only restaurant Le Sarkara (www.lek2palace.com). The exceptional chalet-style Hôtel Barrière Les Neiges offers ski enthusiasts direct access to the ski slopes, ski room, the spa, pool and private cinema (www.hotelsbarriere.com). If the snow leaves you cold, soak up the sun in Cote d'Azur, which makes for an extraordinary beach holiday with its exotic cuisine, casinos, festivals, sporting events and more. Take a helicopter ride and visit neighbouring Monaco—home to royals and patronised by billionaires—that spells opulence right from your arrival, to stay and shopping. Luxuriate at the iconic Hotel de Paris Monte-Carlo, situated right at the heart of the action on Place du Casino (www.montecarlosbm.com). From Michelin-starred restaurants to the Jewellers' Courtyard, Opéra Garnier, Casino de Monte-Carlo, Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo, you're spoilt for choice. Cause a stir and sign up for a Super car experience in Monaco or from exclusive start points on the French Riviera (www.colcorsa.com/tour/1-day-supercar-experience-monaco).



Skiers paradise in Austria; German Christmas (below); Chase the Aurora Borealis in Russia (below right)



THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East usually hints at a cliched smorgasboard of shopping and gastronomy, but heritage is the new find. A new to-be explored destination is AlUla, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. One of the oldest cities in the Arabian Peninsula and home to Hegra, a UNESCO World Heritage site, AlUla beckons with a trail of adventure activities. A year-round destination, curious travellers can opt for a helicopter ride to experience breathtaking views of stunning vistas and rich geological heritage including iconic landmarks such as Elephant Rock, Maraya and Alula Old Town. You can also fly over the Hegra and take pictures of the famous sandstone tombs. Partake in the nighttime RockArt Trail within the Hegra heritage site. This unique experience includes torches to highlight the hidden details in the rocks not visible in the day. Enjoy a traditional Saudi dinner under the stars during tours of stargazing and moonlit nights or go for the Hidden Valley Hiking Tour.

The world is reopening to travel again, albeit with safety and health measures in place. Most travel intermediaries now offer 360 degree health and safety solutions. There is no better time to explore the unexplored, revive your travel journeys or write a new story with your loved ones. Bon Voyage!

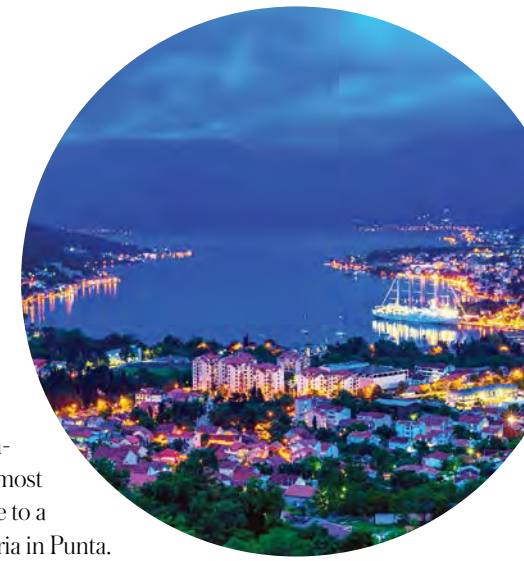
AUSTRIA AND GERMANY

Pencil in a visit to the Christmas markets in Germany and Austria as Christmas fervour reaches a crescendo around mid-December. Apart from seasonal specialties that come with the complete festive experience, visit medieval-era cathedrals as well and the famous fairy-tale castle, Neuschwanstein, in the Bavarian Alps. Austria also offers some of the best alpine drives in the world in addition to renowned Wellness Resorts in the Austrian Alps. The newly opened Thurnher's Residences, with its five serviced apartments, is a wonderful alternative during covid times with perfect ski-in and ski-out conditions, in Zurs Am Arleberg (www.thurnhers-residences.com). While in Tyrol, plan to visit the Swarovski Crystal World and Stams Monastery.





MONTENEGRO



Situated on the Balkan Peninsula on South-eastern Europe, is famous for its unparalleled natural beauty. For an unforgettable experience explore this diverse state by a helicopter ride over Boka Bay. Challenge the adrenaline rush rafting on Tara River—the deepest in Europe and second deepest canyon in the world after the Grand Canyon. Explore Budva, often called 'Montenegrin Miami'. Beyond the Venetian medieval old town Stari Grad, Budva's promenade is lined with restaurants and has the most lively night life. This historic district is home to a seaside citadel and the Church of Santa Maria in Punta. Kotor, a fortified town on the Adriatic coast, in a bay near the limestone cliffs of Mt. Lovćen is characterised by winding streets and squares; its medieval town has several Romanesque churches, including Kotor Cathedral. Perast, minutes further along the Bay of Kotor oozes charm with sixteen ancient churches. Stay at the opulent The Chedi Luštica Bay (www.chedilusticabay.com) for private beach access to explore Montenegro's hidden secrets.



RUSSIA

If you are looking for adventure, a visit to arctic Murmansk—the Russian Lapland—is a must. Witness the phenomenal Northern Lights, hunt the Aurora Borealis, enjoy the spectacular scenery and wildlife of the Kola Peninsula, ride a snowmobile, experience the thrill of speed in a husky sled or explore the Sami village—an ancient village of Kola Peninsula, interacting with the natives and visiting their reindeer farms. Schedule an excursion to Teriberka to witness the midnight sun (white nights)—an astronomical phenomenon that occurs in the sub-Arctic, in particular in the north of Russia. Your itinerary should include the Russian Riviera. Visit Sochi—the largest resort city along the Black Sea for its host of historical sites, including Stalin's Summer Residence, Loo Temple, Godlik Fortress and the city's Empire Style Stalin Era grand building.

Motorcycle DIARIES



POWER HORSE
The Pan America Special is the real deal, capable of tackling any terrain you throw at it.

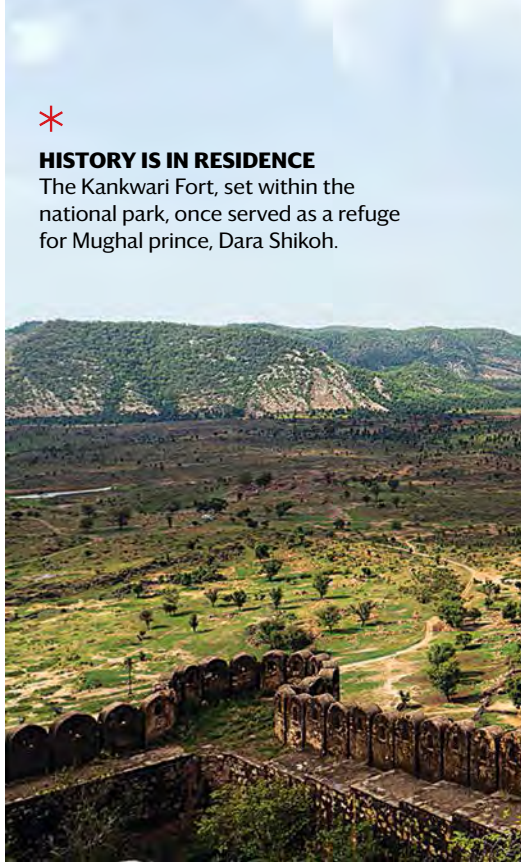
A MONSOON WEEKEND RIDE TO SARISKA CAN GET PRETTY ACTION PACKED ON ***THE HARLEY-DAVIDSON PAN AMERICA SPECIAL***



By **MERAJ SHAH**

"You rode in this rain?" pinged a friend after I posted a picture on the road on Instagram. It had not, admittedly, been a prudent decision to ride out this September morning. Gingerly standing on the footpegs and guiding the motorcycle through hip-high water under a flyover, I felt the flow of water tug the bike sideways. Delhi during the rains; a river flows through it.

Had this been a disastrous error of judgement? I wondered, as car after car sputtered to a stop ahead of me. The spanking new motorcycle I was riding had emboldened this bravado: towering over pretty much anyone else on the road it somehow managed to ferry me out from the deep waters I had wantonly waded into. The Harley-Davidson Pan America Special, as I would discover as we got better acquainted, is rather special.



*
HISTORY IS IN RESIDENCE
The Kankwari Fort, set within the national park, once served as a refuge for Mughal prince, Dara Shikoh.

An hour later, with both—motorcycle and rider—in one piece, and safely zipping down NH48 out of the NCR, I felt pretty smug. What kind of quest would it be, I asked myself—with the typical nonchalance that hindsight brings when things turn out well—without its share of travails? This was my first stab at Revenge Travel—a term being bandied about to describe reckless roving by people frustrated by the coronavirus lockdowns. Was I going to let a spot of unseasonal rain douse my enthusiastic ill-conceived plans? No way.

My way–not the highway

Expressways aren't fun for motorcyclists, and it was only when I took the exit at Bhiwadi that leads to the town of Alwar, and began riding on the narrower, but infinitely more picturesque, state highways, that this ride finally became what I'd been hoping for: Fun.

This would be an appropriate time to talk about the Pan America—Harley-Davidson's first bonafide ADV—Adventure Motorcycle. Considering the long history of the brand, and exemplified by the fact that its name is synonymous with big American cruiser motorcycles; the Pan America is a paradigm shift for Harley Davidson. After that first trial by water, followed by three hours of riding through incessant rain, slush, on slippery and smooth tarmac, the Pan America made its point: calibre, not pedigree. It purred, or roared, along, depending on which riding mode (road, rain, off-road, or custom) it was engaged in with its big heart: the 1250 cc Revolution Max engine, pulsating through me like only V-Twins can. This motorcycle even has an electronic suspension that conveniently lowers as you pull to a halt. Incredulous? Doesn't even begin to describe this new, believe it or not, Harley-Davidson.

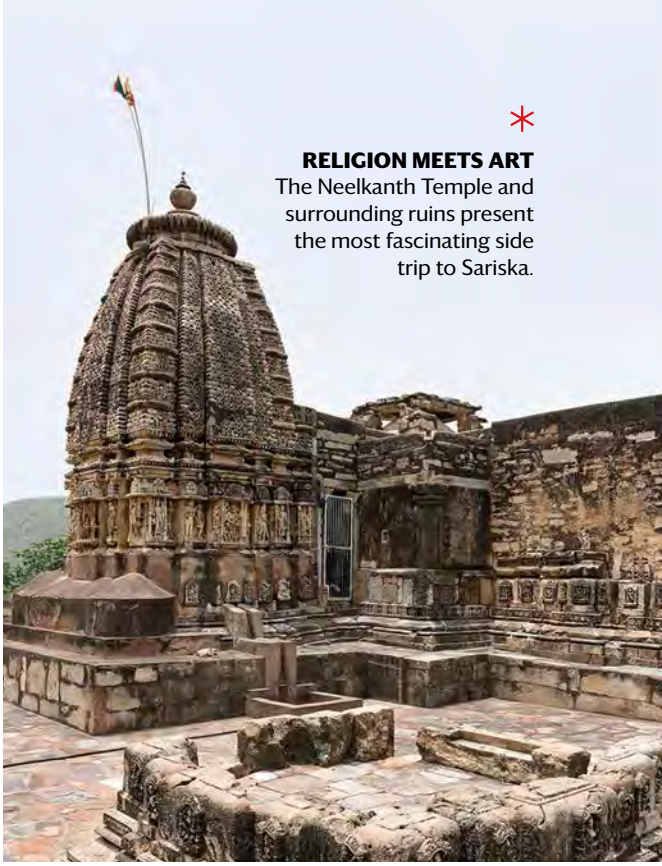












RELIGION MEETS ART
The Neelkanth Temple and surrounding ruins present the most fascinating side trip to Sariska.

Bird in hand and bush for company

My destination was the quieter, less visited, southern edge of the Sariska National Park, about 220 kilometres from the NCR. The route I had been advised to take goes past Alwar, and then circumvents the Sariska National Park via Rajgarh, to eventually reach Tehla Village. I didn't heed the well-meaning advice, deciding instead to drive through the park, on the pretext of visiting a temple that is open to pilgrims on certain days. Please note: Do not repeat this mistake unless you'd like to stand in line for a couple of hours with Covid protocols thrown to the wind.

Sariska Tiger Reserve has a happy lockdown story. In 2019, the ratio of male tigers to females had dropped to 1:8; not ideal odds for procreation (you'd think). And yet six cubs have been born in Sariska since 2020, of which four have definitely survived. I didn't spot a tiger on the ride, only pilgrims and expectant herbivores. I was reminded of Paul Theroux's observations about the apes of Gibraltar and the tourists on the



HARLEY-DAVIDSON PAN AMERICA SPECIAL
ENGINE 1250cc; 152 PS; 127 NM;
PRICE ₹16.90 lac–₹19.99 lac
(ex-showroom Delhi)

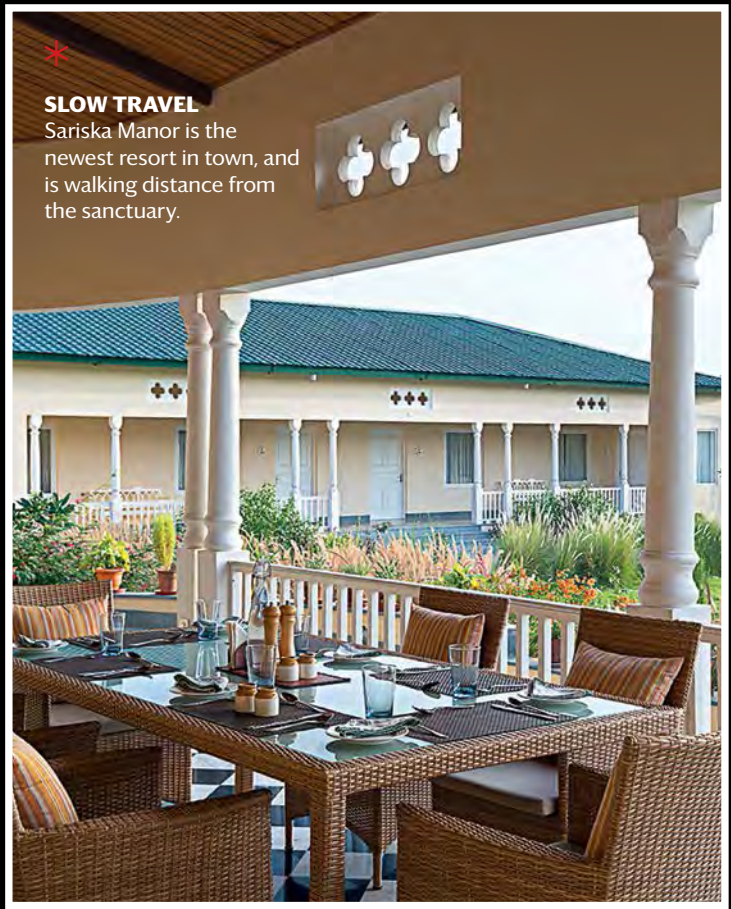
island. No elaboration required here. Suffice to say, that the assortment of monkeys, langurs, and various antelope in attendance on the sides of the road look forward to this bi-weekly treat from the human visitors. Presumably the 21 tigers in the Park don't have a sweet tooth, and aren't attracted by fruity treats. Once upon a time the tiger corridor stretched from Sariska to Sawai Madhopur and Karauli—a range that's now been claimed by farmland. Still, contrary to the short shrift most people give this sanctuary, Sariska is one of the largest and densest tiger reserves in the country.

Complementing the expanse of the National Park that it shares a wall with, Sariska Manor, a luxury resort, spreads laterally over the rocky landscape. Very neo-colonial, awash in pastels, with sepia-tinted pictures on the walls of its roomy cottages, this is a slow-living kind of place. Its old-world charm harks back to a time when vacations were long, languorous affairs, bereft of television screens, and afternoons were devoted to siestas, unhurried high tea, and evening dips in the pool, sipping sundowners to seep it all in. It's possible, I suppose, to land up at the resort and make a party of it, but, given its character and proximity to the park, this resort lends itself better to Vivaldi than EDM. Thankfully the other guests at the hotel appear to be so inclined. My day passes in a reverie of

SARISKA MANOR

Tehla Forest Gate, Sariska; 26 rooms; check in 11 am; check out 2 pm; **Cost** ₹ 18,500 per day per room; pet friendly (twin occupancy; includes three meals, snacks and high tea; +91 91 97174 82225, +91 98180 64813; reservations@sariskamanor.com; sariskamanor.com)





SLOW TRAVEL
Sariska Manor is the newest resort in town, and is walking distance from the sanctuary.



indulgent repasts and a laidback reading session on the porch.

The next morning, on my way back, I end up exploring a series of indeterminate-origin ruins with priceless relics, lying strewn about at the base of the derelict Rajoragarh Fort. The ruins, comprising 300 odd temples, stepwells and other structures are believed to date back to the sixth century. One structure—the Neelkanth Temple—is intact, but the rest of the structures, replete with a smorgasbord of influences—from Khajuraho's erotic sculptures to dark granite pillars akin to those found in temples of the Chola period in South India—are crumbling. I sigh silently at the losses we sustain. Only in India folks! But hope fires eternal, at least astride the Harley-Davidson Pan America Special.

SARISKA SAFARI TIMINGS: 6.30 am–10 am / 2 pm–5.30 pm; **₹7500** per gypsy (six people; includes entrance fee, gypsy, guide charges).

Gentlemen Prefer Bespoke

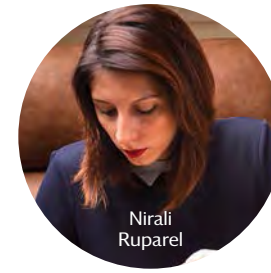
Few things spell luxury like a pair of custom-made shoes. Spice caught up with some of India's coolest shoemakers to see what's on offer for the well-heeled.

By **RIAAN JACOB GEORGE**

The reality is: Indian men love their shoes. Whether bargain seeker or big spender, men in India now have a panoply of footwear options with a small but distinctive crop of homegrown shoemakers that are truly pushing the envelope. Many inspired by the bespoke traditions of Savile Row, others passionate about Florentine craftsmanship and united by a desire to carve a niche and offer a truly luxurious pair of shoes in every sense of the term. We travel across the India to catch up with some of these oft-hidden names who are doing phenomenal work in the customised shoe space. Looking around for a sole mate with an interesting backstory? Read on to fall head over heels in love.






Nirali Ruparel

The Princess of Patina

On our radar is a dynamic young woman in Mumbai, who has become a household name among Mumbai's swish set. Nirali Ruparel's aptly named Achilles' Heel boasts customers that range from the aware to the aesthete, counting among them Aaditya Thackeray, Ian Thorpe, Rana Daggubati and even the late Sushant Singh Rajput. Ruparel's offering is visibly fashion forward, but with a strong DNA of a bespoke philosophy. Customers can visit her studio for 'fittings' by appointment only; tassel loafers and slip-ons are currently trending she affirms. "I love a good patina," says the stylish shoemaker, "customers do have to undergo 6 to 8 measurements for each foot as part of the bespoke shoe process followed by an exhaustive patina customisation process." The leather on each shoe is then nourished with essential oils (how luxe!). They are then finished with the French polish, Saphir. Ruparel affirms that her offering "is ideal for those with half sizes or irregular shaped feet, wide feet or even custom sizes."



Achilles' Heel

USP Entirely bespoke experience with shoes created from scratch and lots of patina options.

PRICE Upwards of ₹20,000

CONTACT
achillesheel.co
+91 9920327059




Tarun Oblum

Interesting Tales

Hyderabad-based Tarun Oblum comes from a family of engineers but was always an avid collector of sneakers, going as far as customising and painting his kicks. No surprise then, that Oblum—and his eponymous brand—now dresses the feet of South India's rich and famous. "I was always interested in shoes," the shoemaker says, "and that made me enrol for a leather technology course in Milan. Then I went to London to study product design in footwear to acquire an in-depth understanding of the practical aspect of shoemaking tools and leather. This was capped with a short stint at London's hallowed Jermyn Street." Oblum came back to India to start his niche label and now works with a small team of third-generation leather craftsmen from Agra, specialising in hand-welted shoes, for which he personally does the finishing. "There's an emerging trend of really high quality Indian footwear as well," says the shoemaker, whose hand-welted *mojris*, and embroidered *zardozdi* on calfskin loafers are all the rage. The shoemaker relies strongly on the philosophy of less machinery and more craftsmanship, resulting in a small batch production of 50-70 pairs a month, all of which have an Argentinian crust for the uppers of every shoe. "Hand-welted shoes, as an art form, is dying and we cannot let that happen," rues Oblum, who has designed his showroom in such a way that it opens out into the workshop so that the crafting process is constantly at the core of the experience.



Oblum

USP Hand-welted shoes and bespoke Indian footwear options with Italian craftsmanship traditions.

PRICE Upwards of ₹15,000

CONTACT +91 9052982528

Runs in the Family

While Tarun Oblum may be a new entrant in the shoemaking milieu, at the other end of the country, in Mumbai, bespoke shoemaker Rishi Hankare tells another story. Hankare hails from three generations of traditional shoemakers. He did a three-year design course in Italy, followed by a shoemaking apprenticeship in Florence. Today, Hankare does bespoke shoes for some of Mumbai's most well-heeled gentlemen (literally), through his brand Sarteco. "I specialise in Goodyear construction shoes, which are fully hand-welted, hand-lasted and hand-stitched. There are more than 200 individual operations to make one pair of shoes," Hankare says. Patina (the art of hand colouring shoes) is something he specialises in, where leather is sourced from Italy and France, while the patina colours come from Germany and Italy. "I have over 40 patina colours to choose from and nothing is done by machine," Hankare insists, drawing strong parallels with the Italian *su misura* or bespoke tradition.


Rishi Hankare

Sarteco

USP Hand-stitched shoes; each taking more than 200 individual operations to complete with leather sourced from Italy.

PRICE Upwards of ₹25,000

CONTACT sarteco.in / +91 8668991532









Southern Comfort

South of the Vindhyas, Chennai boasts many hidden gems, although Osman Abdul Razak is a well-known name in ultra-luxe bespoke clothing. Catering to the top echelons of South Indian cinema, politics and business, Razak's suits and travel jackets need no introduction, he recently furthered his passion for fine craftsmanship with an offshoot footwear brand Southside, a name dedicated to his home state of Tamil Nadu. He did this in partnership with Bengaluru-based menswear specialist Yunus Ahmed. We absolutely love when creative specialists take one iconic piece and perfect it to the tee and that's just what Razak and Ahmed have done with the Belgian loafer—revived it and given it a platform in India. "We have taken just one style, that is the Belgian loafer, which is very popular in Europe and made different variations of it. In India, suede shoes are far less popular. However, in Italy and Japan, men wear suede loafers quite often with casual suits. The idea was to create a pair of perfect all-day loafers for Indian men," Razak explains, evoking many evenings spent people-spotting at Florence's Pitti Uomo, where he noticed the rising popularity of Belgian loafers among European men. Interestingly named, Numans, using syllables from their names—Osman and Yunus—are entirely crafted in India. "The natural lined inners add that extra level of comfort. But the idea is to showcase the culture of shoemaking and exquisite craftsmanship," says Razak. No surprise then, that these loafers have found a perfect fit in the southern market, where the demand for high quality materials fit and elegant style is high.


Osman Abdul Razak

Southside

USP All-day classic Belgian loafers with suede and calfskin options entirely hand-crafted in India

PRICE: Upwards of ₹11,000

CONTACT southside.in; +91 9841731333



Customising preferences

At the very core of the luxury shoe market is one concept: Personalisation. From bespoke shoemakers like Oblum, Sarteco and Achilles' Heel to the quirky motifs that Yashwardhan Lath's clientele demands, the scope is endless. Lath's affordable luxury shoe brand Asteri is hugely popular among Mumbai's footwear fans and offers a variety of personalisation options on their shoes. Lath's signature offering are velvet Jaipur loafers using a luxurious blend of velvet and cotton, with as little leather as possible. "Taking the ubiquitous Jaipur loafer and adding a touch of personalisation is such a luxury. The most obvious options are, as you would expect, monograms, motifs and even family crests. The most outrageous requests I have received, though, would have to be from a client who asked me to place their dog's picture on the shoe, or a groom who asked for 'she's mine' to be embroidered on his loafer," Lath shares. Another way of personalising shoes is to reflect one's hobbies or interests. Lath talks about a customer who loved cigars and fitness, and requested to have cigars and dumbbell motifs on his suede loafers. Clearly, as long as you're not on a shoestring budget, any foot fetish can be furnished.


Yashwardhan Lath



Asteri

USP Customised monograms and motifs on Jaipur suede loafers at affordable prices

PRICE Upwards of ₹4,499

CONTACT +91 9920376956







Rising Star

Louis Vuitton's Star Blossom jewellery collection is an ode to the Maison's monogram flower that indulges the mystique and myriad moods of a woman

By **CHUMKI BHARADWAJ**



ALL THAT GLITTERS
The Star Blossom jewellery collection pays tribute to the Maison's star-shaped monogram.

There is a joyful iridescence to jewellery that steals the shine from all else. It is this explosion of resplendent novelty that defines the unexpected talismans of gold and shimmering diamonds that are worshipped in the Star Blossom jewellery collection from Louis Vuitton. The collection embodies the monogram flower, which is an emblem of Maison Louis Vuitton, which became a symbol of femininity in the Star Blossom collection created in 2018. The collection reimagined the iconic star-shaped flower designed by Georges Vuitton in 1896. The collection is a glittering tribute to the star-shaped Monogram.

The bold audacity of its pointed contours, this quatrefoil, is the perfect complement to confident femininity—a delicate blossoming with a fiery star that seeks to carve out the untold tale of a new narrative. The flower with its characteristic pointed petals is showcased in six exquisite jewellery creations: Pendants, ear studs, bracelet and a ring. They can be worn as solitary adornment or combined or layered as modern talismans of varying moods.

A nail fashioned out of white gold, evoking the Maison's trunk-making heritage, lies at the centre of each motif. The collection now includes a vibrant, modern ornamental ear cuff (in picture on the left) crafted from diamonds and pink gold, that sensually cocoons the ear contour. The elegance, vitality and versatility of the collection enshrines the brand's intuitive ingenuity when it comes to jewellery expertise.





Flower Power

Distilling beauty in a bottle using potent ingredients from nature is a concept as old as the hills. Here are five flowers that should find shelf space on your dresser.

By **JENNY YAP**
South East Asia Training Manager,
L'Occitane en Provence

It's no surprise that the skin care worldview is experiencing a mind shift towards a more transparent, ingredient-based approach. With increasing awareness, there is a clear demand for simpler, nature-based formulations that use responsibly-sourced ingredients.

The impetus for clean beauty doesn't just come from an evolved customer, but also in their response to the changes that we see in our world today. Pollution, high stress levels, endless Netflix and phone addictions have had us crave skincare that makes us look less tired than we are.

Nature's Powerhouse

One of the most iconic ingredients that we use is the Immortelle flower extract. This botanical powerhouse has amazing age-reversing effects. Just last year, we discovered the new potential of the Immortelle flower with the New Immortelle Super Extract: a 100 per cent natural-origin alternative to synthetic retinol, free from synthetic solvent eco extractions. There is a reason we call this the 'genius flower'. With its extraordinarily high anti-aging properties, it restores the skin's natural renewal cycle and improving its density.



GENIUS FLOWER
The Immortelle flower extract has amazing age-reversing effects, and is a 100 per cent natural-origin alternative to synthetic retinol.





Many of the star ingredients we work with also come with a lot of benefits (like anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, anti-ultraviolet radiation functions to name a few), such as the Scutellaria Baicalensis, or the Skullcap flower. The Skullcap extract is extremely soothing for the skin and has been propagated as a clean beauty champion given its viability in being used as environmentally-friendly option.

The skullcap extract features in our reformulated Reine Blanche range, in sleeping masks, toners and moisturisers. This has been our most on-demand range for users with an active late-night lifestyle.

Another magical flower—Acmella Oleracea—is nature's alternative to Botox. Used in topical formulas, it can easily penetrate the skin, inhibiting contractions in your subcutaneous muscles. It relaxes the facial muscles and lessens muscle tension by softening the appearance of lines and wrinkles. You can kiss goodbye to the invasiveness of botox and fillers with this natural ingredient.

While a lot of the floral ingredients are used for their anti-oxidants and soothing qualities, the Meadowsweet flower extract is used for problem solving. Containing salicylic acid, this flower acts as a natural exfoliator in our Reine Blanche Bright revealing serum for acne-prone skin. It makes your skin less troublesome and helps to tone and tighten it. Meadowsweet contains tannins which have astringent properties, that help remove oil from clogged pores and cleanse the skin.

Among all the flowers, the marigold is perhaps the only flower which is familiar to many. Calendula or marigold has long been reaping benefits that help to hydrate and nourish dry skin and also works wonders in body butters and lotions.

In most skincare formulations, experts have summarised that nature isn't replicable. Naturally-occurring ingredients also come with a giant warning: They will cease to exist if companies don't play the long game. Respecting biodiversity is just one of L'Occitane's six commitments. We are devoted to developing sustainable supply chains to help maintain our unique biodiversity of where our ingredients grow, both cultivated and in the wild. In 2016, we set a goal to protect 1,000 plant varieties and species by 2025. Since then, we have already exceeded our goal in protecting and promoting 1.1K varieties and 513 different species of plants, thanks to our long-term partnerships with our producers.

With nature is at the centre of it all, committing to protecting biodiversity and the people around it is an obvious choice. A choice that starts with us as consumers.

United in Effort, Sustainable in Commitment

Accountability, responsibility and action are the three-pronged strategy to re-build the reputation of an industry long reviled for over indulgence.

By **RAMPRASAD SRIDHARAN**
MD & CEO, Benetton India



They say'we reap as we sow'. I wonder how us humans--just one out of the many thousands of species that constitute the planet--have single-handedly managed to trigger irrevocable loss to this only known habitable planet. Our constant up gradation in lifestyle choices, exhaustive and compulsive consumption patterns, craving for retreats in the very lap of nature that we have been compromising with constant careless behaviour, have wreaked havoc. And the brunt of which is very prominent with the current global crisis.

Hindsight the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to commit to a lifestyle overhaul and gear up to a more environmentally conscious way of living is more than ever before now! While we can't undo the irreparable damage that has already been done, the good news is that people are now becoming more cognizant about the need to embrace a sustainable lifestyle, especially the millennials and Gen-Z. They are seeking brands that openly champion ethics similar to their own, expecting brands to state socially responsible objectives and are adopting brands who have a powerful sustainability narrative that is not just limited to products, materials and packaging but also throughout supply chains and business operations.





CHOICE EQUALS CHANGE
The shift to cleaner products is more visible now with more people opting for natural cosmetic resources and materials

Chain Reaction

Sustainability is no longer a mere choice or luxury, but rather the only option that will preserve the planet and keep it habitable for a longer time. As an industry, it is time to come forward to unite and do whatever it takes to minimize the harm.

It is imperative to pause and rethink, revisit the game plan and our larger objectives beyond profits and numbers. We have to be more mindful about what and how we do things; it is important to raise awareness on the current crisis and encourage our consumers to make the most conscious choices. Today, sustainability is way more than just good PR, it is our moral responsibility as an overall industry, and I am happy that most brands globally have realizedthe importance of eco-conscious practices. Using sustainably-procured fibres and materials, introducing products and packaging from up cycled materials, efficient manufacturing and shipping ways, and digitizing the shopping processes are some common steps that we have seen many brands embrace as permanent practices. That is also something that has earned them a loyal fan base of young, conscious consumers.

At United Colors of Benetton, we have always been committed towards sustainability and community development. Respect for the environment has been at the centre of our core principles. And they are reflected in all our processes, starting from sourcing organic cotton to ensuring energy efficacy in each stage of production and supply.

Being an Indian, I can totally relate to these values. Eco-friendly practices such as reusing and recycling old clothes, sharing them with our siblings, have been intrinsic to our lifestyle and upbringing. I feel it's a similar culture that resonates in all our endeavors at Benetton.

As yet another extension of our core values, we had recently come up with the Green B project, an initiative to begin conversations and awareness about the sustainable value chain that we maintain. We collaborated with a vibrant panel of individuals from different walks of life, from bloggers to environmentalists and even coral reef divers, who further helped us convey this message to the world.

While the maximum damage is done, we still have time to take responsibility in making this world a better place for our coming generations. So, we must get together to drive awareness towards environmental-friendly processes and make edits to our daily way of life. There cannot be a more relevant time than now to initiate this change. After all, change is the only catalyst to a better future.

Bamboozled

The world's best-selling Scotch whisky, Johnnie Walker, offers a spirited tour across its spanking new eight-floor experience centre in Edinburgh, Scotland.

By **SANDEEP ARORA**
Consulting Editor, Whisky Magazine (UK)





LABOUR OF LOVE
The Johnnie Walker Experience Centre on Edinburgh's Princess Street is the centrepiece of Diageo's £185million pound investment in Scotch whisky tourism in Scotland





It is perhaps the ultimate ode to Scotch whisky and whisky tourism—the Johnnie Walker Experience Centre on Edinburgh's Princess Street is a labour of love that comes after four and a half years in the making. This is the centrepiece of Diageo's £185million pound investment in Scotch whisky tourism in Scotland—the largest single investment programme of its kind ever seen in Scotch whisky tourism.

A sensory explosion that reimagines whisky across a languorous sprawl of 71,500 sq. feet area, this eight-floor new visitor experience officially opened on September 6, 2021. Prepare to be whisked away on a personalised journey of flavour and discovery that identifies unique tastes and aromas. Journey through the brand's fascinating 200-year-old passage brought to life by actors. According to Ivan Menezes, Chief Executive, Diageo, "Johnnie Walker Princes Street is a landmark investment in Scotch whisky and into Scotland and it sets a new standard for immersive visitor attractions. It celebrates Scotland's remarkable heritage, our incredible skilled whisky-makers, and looks to the future by engaging new generations of consumers from around the world in the magic of Scotch whisky."

Walk the Talk

With more than 800 flavour combinations available in innovative dispensation systems, a person could visit Johnnie Walker Princes Street every day for more than two years and not have the same experience twice. On the Johnnie Walker Journey of Flavour tour, visitors will have their personal flavour preferences mapped with drinks tailored to their palate.

The cellar has become a true whisky treasury with







some of the most unique whisky casks in the world gently maturing and waiting to be sampled by guests. The building—formerly a traditional department store for almost 100 years—offers a state-of-the-art experiential retail space where shoppers can select from unique and exclusive whiskies, fill bottles directly from the casks and have them engraved. The building also boasts roof terrace planters, which provide herbs for garnishes and infusions for drinks, a sedum roof covering and bird boxes to encourage bio-diversity.

Johnnie Walker Princes Street is crowned by two world-class rooftop bars and a terrace with breath-taking views of the Edinburgh skyline, including the Explorers' Bothy whisky bar stocked with 150 different whiskies, and the 1820 cocktail bar where drinks are paired with a carefully curated menu sourced from, and representing in culinary form, the four corners of Scotland.

Over 150 employees, speaking 23 languages between them, bring to life this 200-year-old story that will distil Scotland through the prism of its most popular export. Undoubtedly, this centre is destined to become a must-do for every traveller desirous of a Highland fling.
Tickets for tours start from £25 per person, including a 90-minute tour that includes three personalised Scotch whisky drinks. (all samples are provided with carefully controlled measures and non-alcoholic alternatives available to all guests)

Glory of Tradition



Shining bright comes naturally to the House of Breguet, but the brand created quite the conversation starter with its Tradition line: Timepieces from this collection were the first to feature the entire movement on the dial. The models from this peerless line are contemporary interpretations of the subscription watches designed by Abraham-Louis Breguet, and particularly impressive for the architecture of their fully symmetrical calibre. Today, Breguet completes this iconic line with a limited edition of 88 timepieces. The new Tradition 7035 bears all the hallmarks of the collection, including the offset dial, housed here at 12 o'clock. The 18-carat gold chosen for the dial, plate and bridges are all set with different-sized diamonds in order to keep the visible material to a minimum. The result: brilliance. Illuminating the bezel, brilliant-cut diamonds adorn the Tradition 7035. For the retrograde seconds indicator, the Maison opted for a gradient of rubies and pink sapphires,which recall both the rubies on the movement and the one housed upon the crown. A leather strap in the same colour complements the look and feel. The gold dial is paved with 74 brilliant-cut diamonds, offset at 12 o'clock with a white mother-of-pearl hours chapter. Each watch is individually numbered and signed Breguet with open-tipped Breguet hands in 18 caratrose gold. Indeed, a glittering tribute to tradition.

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SEPTEMBER 2021

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HIDDEN DECOR SECRETS REVEALED

TRENDS
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Photograph by: MANDAR DEODHAR; Styling: CHANYA KAUR, THE PURE CONCEPT HOME

4
COVER STORY
Festivities are round the corner and we are here to help. From what to buy to how to drape, find that and more in this issue.

20
products
SHOPPERS' PARADISE
Our expert shares decor and design's best kept secrets

28
this&that
GRANNY CHIC
Find out why grand-millennial design style is trending

30
gadgets
TECH TIME
The latest gadgets for your space

COVER PHOTO COURTESY: COORDONNÉ AVAILABLE AT NIRMALS FURNISHINGS

GLITZ MEETS GLAMOUR

Glittering aesthetics are the golden rule of design these days, especially before the festive season kicks in. Take a tip or two from design experts as they share real residences from across the country.

By **RIDHI KALE**



LIVE LARGE

Project Nandini Sankar's Home
Design reD - Research and Enquiry into Design
Partners Ekta Parekh, Maithili Raut, Rajiv Parekh and Apoorva Shroff
Location Mumbai
Area 3,000 sq ft

Designed for friends who were well known to the architects, this double storey home in Mumbai's Goregaon can't help but be glamourous. "The owner has an eclectic taste and collects memorabilia which became an interesting backdrop for the home. Further since the space is on a high floor, it gets lots of natural light, so we knew we could experiment with slightly darker hues," says Raut. The flooring is black granite with different finishes, patterns, and sizes. "Other interesting features include a bench one single piece of wood that extends throughout the window and a dark flower-based wallpaper," adds the architect. Her top tip is not to be afraid to experiment.



Photographs by: JIGNESH JHAVERI



DESIGNER DEN
Maithili Raut, Rajiv Parekh, Ekta Parekh and Apoorva Shroff (left to right); the double height dining moves into the living (below)



TWICE AS NICE
Designers Disha Bhavsar and Shivani Ajmera (left); blue accent elements stand out in this living space (right)



Photograph by: KUBER SHAH

MINIMAL AND MAGICAL

Project The Jardin Home
Design Quirk Studio
Principal Designers Disha Bhavsar and Shivani Ajmera
Location Mumbai
Area 2000 sq ft

Taking a minimalistic approach was the key to design this large home in the lush Juhu suburb of Mumbai. Designed as a getaway home for a Gujarat-based family, it is permanently inhabited by their son. A pleasant and modish place, fit for a bachelor, the home doubles up as a warm retreat for the entire family as and when they visit. In fact, the living-cum-dining area in the perfect example of understated luxe. So, how can you nail this unfussy glamourous look? "Colour blocking, essentially pairing a few solid hues to create a single bold look, is a great decor tactic that acts as a mood elevator," shares Bhavsar. Ajmera adds, "Accessorise with statement furniture pieces and decor in bold colours to add vibrancy and liveliness within the home, imbibing dynamism and vigour."

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WARM AND WELCOMING

Project Stepped House
Design Studio Lotus
Principal Architect Ankur Choksi
Location Coonoor
Area 1.5 acres (site), 10,000 sq ft (built-up)

"Our concept for the Stepped House, a holiday home in the hills of Coonoor, evolved from its context, integrating the site, weather conditions, and the panoramic views of the valley with indigenous building materials and techniques," says Choksi. So, he and his team leveraged the slope of the site to create a stepped profile that would blend with its surroundings, opening-up the south and east faces to views of the coffee plantations around the valley. "The southwest orientation maximises views and exposes the house to the sun, given Coonoor's cool climate. Working with existing contours, we placed the structure on the flattest section of the site and then staggered requirements to minimise damage to the ecology while reducing the construction duration," he adds. Against this backdrop is the clients' eclectic art and furniture collection. Another prominent design element are the stone retaining walls demarcating spaces.



Photographs by RAVI ASRANI



Photographs by ANDRE J FANTHOME



SMART DESIGN
Architect Ankur Choksi (left); images of the living areas in the holiday home



Photographs by VIVEK DAS



SPACE CRAFTED
Architect Pooja Bihani (left); the living room opens into the stunning bar (top)

RAISING THE BAR

Project Concrete Dwelling
Design Spaces & Design
Principal Architect Pooja Bihani
Location Kolkata **Area** 3,000 sq ft

Celebrating the raw appeal of materials by giving them a rich and elegant look, this home is a visual feast. "Whether it is the archiconcrete finish by Asian paints, open pore wood furniture by Casa International and Arte brotto or handmade black metal handles of the doors we underplayed everything that one sees, touches and feels. The result is a space that offers stillness and peace of mind that cannot be described but only experienced," explains Bihani. However, if she had to pick one stand out feature, hands down it is the bar. "Not only in the placement overlooking the garden but also in its raw appeal. Casted out of pure concrete and kept raw, the touch of the saw cut oak strips over it moves one close to nature. The polished cement does not give an unfinished feel. The anthropetric iron installation by Janarthan R in the backdrop looks stunning," she says.

BUILDING MILESTONES

Meet the Indian architect who is changing the blueprint of the game in the UK

Over 125 projects in just 7 years since the inception of his architecture firm. With the likelihood of being the first man from the homeland to achieve such an impeccable record in the UK, the story of this exceptional Indian who built himself on British soil, is an interesting one.



Ninad Patil, an architecture graduate from Rachna Sansad in Mumbai, completed his Masters in Urban Design from New Castle University in the UK. In 2014, his brainchild Bryonn Architecture Limited was born, quickly gaining recognition for specialization across a broad range of sectors, within a span of just 7 years. Their spectrum includes master planning, bespoke architecture, mixed-use developments, Grade II heritage buildings, developments in conservation areas, retail and hospitality. Bryonn Architecture has managed to stand out amongst the competition by trending across everything from residential to commercial, urban development to highly sensitive heritage and conservation area projects.

At the forefront, Ninad also planted the idea of combining research and design which led to CRD (Collaboration-Research-Design), the firm's self-funded initiative that conducts research in urban design and community projects with the aim to bridge the gap between industry practices and research to ensure that his designs and proposals identify and relate to aspirations of the community and context.

When asked what the next 20 years might bring, he says "I have never imagined any benchmark or market position for my firm. For me, architecture is a continuum that evolves with us to meet our current and future needs. I have plans to extend the capabilities of the firm in urban design while making sure we deliver inspiring and responsible projects across all sectors. I am grateful for all the support I have received in India and the UK."







UNDERSTATED LUXE
(clockwise from above) Designers Shamila Meeran and Faisal Vohra; the curves of the sofa soften the space; a swing adds drama

BROWN AND BEAUTIFUL

Project The Cinnamon Home
Design F+S Designs, Hyderabad
Principal Designers Faisal Vohra and Shamila Meeran
Location Hyderabad
Area 3,000 sq ft (carpet area)

When the clients have a penchant for different shades of browns and the house is in the hands of F+S Designs you get The Cinnamon Home. "The overarching motif of the project is largely monotone, with punctuations of brilliant colour, along with a play of distinct materiality that stands out while also unifying around a common theme. Walls in the main area have been treated with European brown wallpapers that evoke a tactile feel on touch and go elegantly well blanc veneer treated in a nude polish," says Vohra. "The angled architecture of the two gorgeous armchairs flank the luxurious curves of the sofa, designed by Jean-Marie Massaud for Poliform. At the centre, we have the elegantly finished bronze coffee table adding the visual weight and breaking the monotony with the circular form," adds Meeran.



TIME *to* SHINE

We all know that lighting can make or mar the look of a room. So ahead of the seasonal celebrations we got five light designers to share tips and their latest designs.

By **RIDHI KALE**





CRAFTED WITH CARE

A designer that has grabbed everyone's eyeballs is Shailesh Rajput, whose eponymous studio creates such imaginative pieces that you can't help but take notice. Rajput is craft driven, who infuses soul into his pieces. Take for instance the Yog Surya Namaskar wall clock that features handcrafted hard clay figurines in the 12 yoga asanas. His designs borrow from the old and mould it for contemporary spaces.

Get This Shown here are the Arma-ter lights (previous page) crafted in cast glass, brass representing duality in nature. A ripple effect piece of glass is placed carefully inside a rigid and stiff form of the shell. Seepi (left) is the first from the Jal series that explores life below water. **PRICE** ₹25,000 per piece (Arma-ter); ₹22,000 (Seepi)

TOP TIP FOR CORNERS

"With the festive season around the corner I would recommend investing in a sculpture-like wall light with character of its own, placed at the eye level to make the interaction easy. Light has a far-reaching impact on your mood and emotions. So, putting the light on the right canvas is equally important to get the correct emotion," says Rajput.



FRILLS AND THRILLS

Avni Sejpal dons many hats (she is an architect as well as a product and environmental designer), however, her favourite hat happens to be making brilliant, illuminating devices under the label Studio Avni. She creates these pieces for public spaces, corporates, exhibitions, as well as private homes.

Get This The latest offering from the studio is the Fluted series (above and right), an extension of the Fold series. The collection focuses on surface manipulation and tactile spatial interventions in metal. It borrows from the studio's extensive textile experimentations and transfers them to metal, to achieve a fluted effect.
PRICE on request



TOP TIP FOR DINING ROOMS
"Recessed or track lighting help focus on any artworks on the wall or you can use wall sconces. A table lamp on the dining console or a floor lamp adds mood lighting. During festivities, layer the dining area with fairy lights in a bowl and festive diyas. A dimmer will reduce glare and create a warm glow. Use lights above the dining table to demarcate the space either by using a large pendant light or multiple small pendants in odd numbers. Lastly, use statement chandeliers to scale with the table," says Sejpal.



WORLD OF STYLE

Nikita Bansal has been designing lights for the past 15 years, when she met Gaurav Jain from Basant (a global design export house), who wanted to start a new vertical Orange Tree in 2014 she was happy to head the lighting design. The result, all the designs are global, created for contemporary homes with a craft-driven base.

Get This Her designs are coated with high glass powder coating, electrophoretic lacquer, and plating to make them rust and dust free. A good example is the Mallawi wall lamp (left).
PRICE ₹4,199 wall lamp

TOP TIP FOR THE BATH

"Use a pair of sconces mounted at eye level on either side of the mirror to provide shadowless illumination. Avoid adding a light above the mirror this includes recessed lighting in the ceiling. Pendant lights can also be used in a bathroom if they're not too close to water sources. Candles offer wonderful sparkle and set a distinctly relaxing, romantic tone. Play with ambient light whether natural or from ceiling fixtures," says Bansal.







LIVE, LOVE, LIGHT

One of the best-known designer lighting brands is Klove Studio, the brainchild of Prateek Jain and Gautam Seth. They have consistently been creating exquisite lighting devices. Their pieces blur the lines between form, function, and fantasy.

Get This Featured here is a piece from The Goa Collection (left). The new range is inspired by the exotic fruits, animals and foliage of the tropical paradises of the world. It is also a tribute to the wonders and mysteries of the iconic 1970s era of Goa, once a place of salvation for hippies around the world. Crafted from handblown glass the sculptural pieces can't help but stand out.
PRICE on request

TOP TIP FOR LIVING ROOMS
"Keep it warm and cheerful," says Seth. Adds Jain, "Layering the space with votives and candle stands always adds to the ambience."

STILL LEAVING A PAPER TRAIL

The name Jenny Pinto is synonymous with making sustainable, stylish. When she realised paper can be endlessly recycled, she started creating magic. Lights became a happy by-product. Using natural fibres such as banana and lokta as materials, this passion then grew into a brand called Oorjaa.

Get This Check out Vineyard Bloom pendant lamps, inspired by wildflowers and crafted from handmade paper (right).
PRICE ₹11,556 pendant lamp



TOP TIP FOR BEDROOMS
"In the bedroom choose warm lighting to for that hygge element. Mix up lighting textures to add interest to your space. Choose sustainable lighting options to do your part for the environment. Warm lighting is always more welcoming than white glaring lights, it also hides imperfections in the space. You can also use hanging pendant lights on either side of the bed instead of table lamps to switch it up," says Pinto.



FABULOUS FABRICS

Be it the bedroom, living or dining, dress and drape your space with the latest materials, motifs and patterns to usher in the upcoming revelries in style

By **RIDHI KALE**





MEALTIME MAGIC

Before you begin to eat, drink and make merry, ensure that all your furnishings are in order. We have two wonderful completely different table settings in pretty textiles for you to choose from. One's by Ritu Kumar Home and the other The Pure Concept Home. Ritu Kumar's style is all about luxury viewed through a vintage lens. Featured here is a dining (left) dressed in the new Flora Collection, crafted with intricate details with playful botanical floral print on its linens. (PRICE on request).

Chanya Kaur is about restrained luxe, she likes to use one bold hue and make that pop. In this setting (inset) styled by Kaur for The Pure Concept Home the hue of the crockery is complemented by the napkins and table mats. (PRICE on request).

Photograph by: MANDAR DEODHAR



DREAM ON

Beautiful bed linen, soft to touch yet glamourous, ready for the festivities ahead, sweet dreams are made of these. For your bedroom you can explore a play of dark and light shades. Take inspiration from this bedroom (right) where glimmering embroidered bed linen in sunset orange is enhanced by fur furnishings from Kanchi by Shobhna and Kunal Mehta. (PRICE ₹8,500 bed sheets + 2 pillows; ₹4,500 king size duvet cover; ₹16,500 king size bedcover, 2 pillow covers; ₹38,000 fur throw).





LIVE IN LUXE

Your living room is the centre of attraction for the celebrations. For this room nothing less than rich, luxe materials will do. No one spells luxury better than designer JJ Valaya. Featured here is a comfortable living room corner draped in the Tabriz collection, designed by Valaya for furnishings brand Tapestry. It's decadent and dramatic. (PRICE ₹2,900 to ₹6,500 cushions; ₹10,800 per meter upholstery fabric).

THINKING AHEAD



From cutlery and crockery to planters and affordable art, invest in these 10 products to make your home festive ready in no time

By **RIDHI KALE**

DINER'S CLUB

Be it a sit-down dinner or a buffet style one, a good dining table that adds equal parts drama and style is what you will need to standout from the crowd. Get a hold on this in inlay stone top with solid crafted wood base and upholstered chairs from Beyond Designs.
PRICE on request
AT www.beyonddesigns.in



IN HIGH SPIRITS

Whether you thank or blame the pandemic, but the celebration has shifted indoors. So, investing in a good bar for your space will make the festivities that much better. Take this one from CPRN Homood available at Ottimo for instance. The glass bar cabinet features the signature zig-zag engraving of the brand.

PRICE on request
AT www.ottimo.in

SHOW THEM OFF

Quirk works. Call them conversation starters or showstoppers, but fun and innovative pieces are trending world over. They will add a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the soirée. These resin showpieces from the Whiteteak Company's new Home Decor Artefact Collection are a good example. Each design depicts a young lady in the in different colours and concepts.

PRICE ₹5,550 to ₹7,950
AT www.whiteteak.com



DRESS THE TABLE

Dinner parties are the norm during the festive season and no table is complete without pretty crockery. One of our favourites happens to be Dasara series by Kaunteya. Inspired by the Indo-Saracenic architecture of Mysore Palace, the turquoise blue tableware with intricate floral motifs will steal the show.

PRICE ₹4,100 to ₹4,400;
AT www.kaunteya.in







PAPER PUSHER

Here's a quick fix to make your walls the talk of the town. If you don't want the time, effort and pain involved in getting the wall painted, get a hold of pretty wallpapers. They come in a multitude of colours and designs. Wallpapers from Coordonné available at Nirmals Furnishings are a good option.
PRICE ₹11,260
AT www.nirmals.com



GROWS ON YOU

Plants are the quickest way to make your home feel warm and welcoming, therefore choosing the right planter makes all the difference. These days planters with added height are in vogue, such as this beauty called Midas Touch from The Decor Remedy. Handcrafted from cane and iron, it will add a touch of class to your space.
PRICE ₹7,990 for the set
AT www. thedecorremedy.com



SLEEP ON THIS

A good night's sleep is so important during this time. Pamper yourself with a wonderful mattress such as the Duroflex Posture Perfect Pocket Spring Orthopedic Mattress. The five zoned orthopedic support layer provides differentiated support to all five zones of the body, while the three zoned pocket spring layer stops motion from traveling across the mattress.
PRICE ₹46,000 (queen size)
AT www.duroflexworld.com



THE ACCOMPANIMENTS

Crockery without cutlery is like a flower without a sweet scent. Be ready for the festivities with pretty cutlery set. This one from Christofle with a high-gloss polished finish is available at Emery Studio.

PRICE on request;
AT @emerystudio.in (Instagram)





HANG OUT

Those looking for inexpensive options to do up their space should opt for wall art from affordable e-stores. One such gem is an e-platform called Bimba. Its aim is to make classical and fine arts easily accessible by bridging the gap between the artist and the end buyers. You can get a hold of pichwais, madhubanis and pattchitras that go well with festive themes and look beautiful.

PRICE ₹1,500 to ₹22,000
AT www.thebimba.com

GUEST APPEARANCE

The festival season sees our home packed with friends and family. Therefore, we suggest you get your guest bedroom ready. Get a sofa-cum-bed so that the space can move from lounge or den to bedroom in a matter of minutes. A great option is this Accrington 2-Piece Sleeper Sectional with Chaise from Ashley Furniture Homestore available at Dash Square.

PRICE ₹2.17 lakh (approx)
AT www.store.ashleyfurniture.in



THE BEST OF THE BEST



Find out about a hidden spot for sourcing antiques, top-of-the-line furniture brands only known to the well-heeled, upcoming product designers and more as our expert reveals design's greatest secrets

By **RIDHI KALE**

Design has to be seen, felt and experienced. Something Esha Gupta, a Mumbai-based interior designer and creative consultant, who is also the founder and editor of Design Pataki, a digital platform on luxury design, knows all to well. This is perhaps why she started an ongoing series called Sourcing Secrets, where design experts share their favourite design and décor brands. With so many years in the industry and having collaborated with a multitude of architects, designers and brands, we turned the tables on her and asked her for her best kept design secrets.

What are the top design trends?
Wicker is a sustainable luxe material and is being experimented with a lot recently. From furniture, lighting to wall



Photograph by NEVILLE SUKHIA

BUYER'S GUIDE
(clockwise from inset) A beautiful bedroom by Sage Living; resin decorative from Yasanche by Yashesh Virkar; Infinito Armchair by Lorenza Bozzoli; designer and influencer Esha Gupta









FURNITURE FIESTA
(clockwise from left) Chest of drawers from Portside Cafe; console from Savana Living; another piece from Savana Living

panelling and installations, the creativity with this material has been boundless. Brands that have caught my attention are Vakr, Wicker Story, and Madras Makers.

Upcoming brands or products designers that you like?
Length, Breadth, Height by Luv Rohra, Shailesh Rajput, Yasanche by Yashesh Virkar and This And That by Ariane Thakore are new and have developed very distinct styles for themselves. Portside Cafe is an all-time favourite.

The best place for buying antiques or reproductions in India?
Ranji Kelekar's store in Goa, their Instagram page has been divine, before I can order anything, it gets sold out.

When it comes to furniture, what do you prefer?
With furniture, I would say I'm automati-







Photograph by NEVILLE SUKHIA

SHOW STOPPERS
Glass Forest creates objects of beauty (left); bench chair from Madras Makers (below)





cally drawn to eccentric, eclectic, one-of-a-kind pieces. One such piece has to be Ashiesh Shah's Naga Chair, which literally says 'talk about me', it's ingenious. Recent furniture brands that have been creating beautiful pieces are Sage Living, Alankaram, Savana Living, Callisto Elements, and Filo, they are really filling the vocal for local void in the country.

Secret for a good night's sleep...
Honestly, Glass Forest's monochrome Juliette bottle sits right next to me on my bedside table. It's uber stylish and removes the mundane from a water bottle. Also, Foam Home because I can't stress enough on the importance of the right kind of mattress. Apart from that my nightly dirty secret is to scour through Chairish and first dibs for pure design joy.

What's your favourite piece at home?
My recent addition to the home is by artist Dr Subodh Kerkar's indigo piece from the Museum of Goa. The other is a custom table light by Arjun Rathi, the original design went through so many revisions before we settled in on the final one.

When it comes to high-end designs, which ones would you pick and for what reason?
My go-to has to be my dear friend Giuseppe's company, Ghidini1961, he has the most incredible designers creating pieces, like, Nika Zupanc to Richard Hutten. My favourite from their recent collection is Lorenza Bozzoli's neotenic pieces. I feel sophisticated curves, especially in furniture, are here to stay.

GRANDMA'S TREASURE TROVE

The pandemic has resulted in the popularity of grand millennial or granny-chic style of design. It's all about embracing the old and the familiar with a modern flair and twist. Here's how.

By **SHIMONA BHANSALI**









LOOK BACK
From frills on sofas to layering old and new pieces, the granny-chic style creates a pretty picture indoors

this & that
Trends

For the new generation, there's a great love for nostalgia, and grandma's closets have been opened with a welcome flourish. Millennials believe that old is new again. The result? The granny-chic or the grandmillennial style. This design style is reminiscent of traditional interior design, but with a twist. Floral prints, retro browns and wedge wood blues lined with frills; using scalloped chairs and table covers; chinoiserie and rooms layered in pattern, yet with a modern, contemporary edge; are classic examples of the grand-millennial style. Here are a few easy hacks to style your home the granny-chic way.

1. Pattern on Pattern Group your favourite patterns together to create a striking contrast. Geometries (like stripes) and floral prints also work very well together. Combine prints in different designs but similar colour tones and don't keep your patterns to your walls and upholstery, let your paintbrushes run even on furniture.

2. Fancy Furnishings Don't limit the use of fabric just to sofas, chairs and curtains. Use them as rugs, bed linens or table runners. Use textiles on table tops. Add the extra fabrics on fringes, frills of curtains as well.

3. Mix, Match, Layer, Old and New Pieces Collect as many retro and classic items that you own which blend with your personality, such as old platters, floral fabrics, chinaware, and old-timey wallpapers or patterns. The idea here is to layer identical vintage pieces to create a robust maximal look that will bring out your personality.



Shimona Bhansali is an interior designer, space stylist and founder of Mumbai-based Design Hex. www.designhex.in

4. Drama of Decoupage The art of decoupage, especially on furniture, works wonders. Repurpose your worn out sideboard and don't shy away from extreme floral experimentation on it.

5. Refashion Old Furniture That old grandad chair by the window; that collection of dinnerware grandma had that you found so boring when you were a child... If you're lucky and your mum saved them, open it all up again. However, don't mix it with industrial elements. Grandma style demands you be chic and classy, and make sure it looks like organised chaos.

6. Balance is Key A word of caution here is knowing when to stop. You can spot good interior design in spaces when you don't feel the need to add anything.

This year minimalism is out as people spend more and more time in their cosy abodes, so homes will start becoming a collection of not only practical things that people need, but also things that give mental solace and peace.

Gizmo GAGA

From the latest tech toys to reviews and views, this is all you need to know about appliances for your home

By **RIDHI KALE**



NEW LAUNCH

Finally, there's something for those who want perfect batters. Usha has launched a Colossal DLX, a wet grinder that has dual flow breakers for finer grinding. A secure arm lock ensures safety, while low temperature grinding helps in retaining taste and nutrition of the ingredients.

PRICE ₹7890



PICK OF THE MONTH

Tune into this. Samsung has launched its 2021 Soundbar line-up, for a surround sound experience. Our favourite are the Q Series soundbars that come with Q-Symphony technology, seamlessly syncing audio from Samsung QLED TV to deliver 3D sound.

PRICE ₹43,990 to ₹1,11,990

TRIED AND TESTED

Bean there, but have you done this? The Finero Next Machine from Coffeeza makes your favourite cuppa at the flick of a switch. Coffee machines are known for their complex procedures, reading manual after manual, in fact, mastering how to use it is akin to completing your PhD for some. So, with some valid trepidation I opened this box. And out came out a small, surprisingly nifty machine. All I needed to do was drop in the capsule (they come in many flavours, but more on that later) and press a button for delicious and aromatic coffee.

The science behind it is that coffee is extracted by the machine by forcing nearly boiling water through the coffee grounds under high pressure. The used capsule automatically ejects into a hidden tray, which can then be collected. Here's where things het even more interesting, for the eco-conscious you can send the used capsules back to the brand for recycling.

Now, for the capsules. While the brand retails six flavours, we got our hands on three of them—classico,intenso and a decaf blend. If you ask us to choose, classico was the best option as its rich and creamy flavour turned the entire coffee drinking experience into a café-like feel. Each capsule contains fresh, roasted, ground coffee.

For the hygiene conscious, there's more good news. Cleaning this apparatus is effortless, the entire thing comes out easily. Furthermore, since the body is slim and light, it's easy to store and move from room to room.

PRICE ₹13,949 (for the machine and 60 assorted coffee capsules); ₹45 to ₹55 per capsule

AT www.coffeeza.com

REVIEW

Design – Good
User Friendly – Excellent
Efficiency – Good
Verdict – This is a great device for coffee purists, who enjoy drinking black coffee



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