

AMORE

LIFE & LEISURE

Spring Issue 2024

GO ECO
WISE
ADVICE
ON
LIVING
GREEN

UP CLOSE
A happy
URBAN
SPACE

INSTAGRAM
INSPIRATION

FOR
DREAMY
DÉCOR
IDEAS

LET'S DO
BRUNCH
A FAB
MID-MORNING
FIESTA

SPRING FLING

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS

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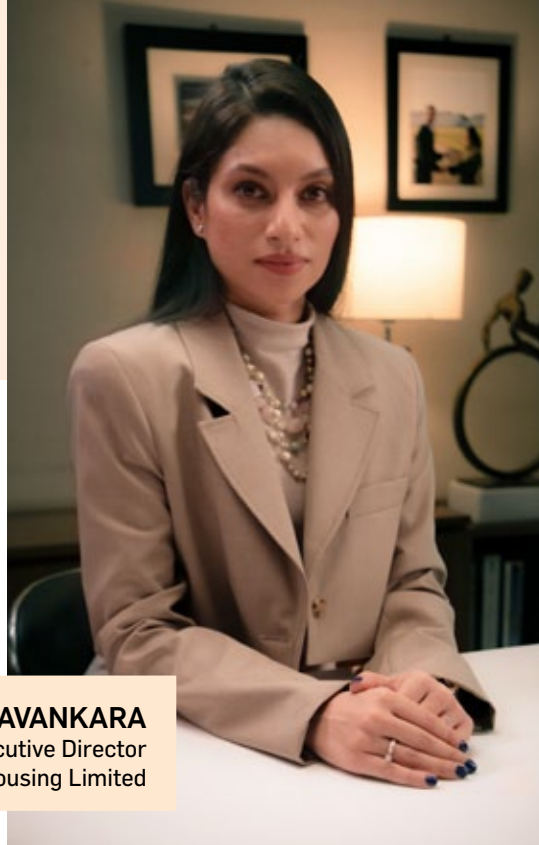
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AMANDA JOY PURAVANKARA
Executive Director
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Dear Readers,

As the gentle caress of Spring unfurls around us, I'm drawn to reflect on the Hebrew word 'Aviv,' that refers to both the season of spring and the Hebrew month corresponding to this time of year. It symbolises renewal, youthfulness, and the promise of a fresh start.

At the heart of our Spring issue, you'll find a bouquet of reads that invite you to hit refresh. Besides dream destinations and delicious stories, discover home decor ideas that breathe life into every corner, and embrace sustainable living as a path to harmony with nature.

As I witness *Amore* grow and touch hearts, my own joy blooms alongside the season's blossoms. Join me in celebrating the essence of Spring, guided by the wisdom of "Aviv," and inspired to cultivate elegance and grace in every aspect of our lives.

Amanda Joy



Sanjeev Shetty

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contents



10



12



20



42



44

The A List - Trending right now 10

Floral Fiesta - Flower-themed festivals across the world..... 12

Inspiration Board - Because you are what you read, watch and think16

DÉCOR

Ooh La Blue 20

Modern Abode 24

COSY CHIC - Decorating Your Apartment with Country Flair 28

Gorgeous Grams - 5 Exceptional Instagram accounts to follow for home design inspiration..... 32

TASTE

TASTE NOTES - Embark on a culinary journey through these lesser-known local dishes, each offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of flavours and traditions across India. 34

Know Your Dough36

Fried egg in Avocado39

Burrata..... 40

BE A BEAN BOSS 42

When Breakfast Meets Lunch - Here's How to Host the Perfect Continental Brunch 44



50



68



84

SELF

GOING GREEN - 21 simple ways to live eco-friendly 68

Health Buzz 70

The Art of Relaxation - A Journey to Wellness and Renewal in Czechia's Spa Culture72

OF PERMANENT LOSS - Amritsar's Partition Museum houses moments that should never have happened..... 74

Nature Nuggets 76

TRAVEL

Birchwood Retreat - Tranquil Escape in Coffee's Charms..... 78

3 Treasures of Qatar 82

Aboard these five Swiss panoramic trains, the journey is as good as the destination!..... 84

Discover Khao Yai - A Slice of Undiscovered Thailand 88

Escape the Haze - Unveiling Earth's Cleanest Destinations 94

LIFE

The Power of Forgiveness..... 48

Playing The Fame Game.....50

The Best Things Anyone Ever Said About Flowers 52

LEISURE

The Henna Start-up54

OLD GOLD - From the Archives of Tarun Thakral 56

ROOTED IN NATURE - This Manipur Artist's Canvas Celebrates His Motherland 60

Night Rain 64



94

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Please Recycle This Paper

editor's note



Dear Readers,

Marching forward with each delightful issue, *Amore* proudly celebrates its one-year milestone with this special edition. Packed with fresh and fabulous content, our Spring release is poised to enchant and inspire.

Explore Instagram accounts brimming with design inspiration, delve into the wisdom of TEDx speakers who have moved millions, and meet a gifted artist from our Northeast.

Craving an escape from the monotonous cityscape? Dive into our curated list of enchanting destinations where the air is crisp, and the skies are a sheer blue.

Literature lovers, immerse yourself in captivating stories by acclaimed writers Andaleeb Wajid and Nandita Bose, guaranteed to tug at your heartstrings.

As always, your feedback is invaluable to us. We invite you to critique, compliment, and contribute—whether it's sharing your photos, features, or personal stories.

Happy reading!

Shubhra

CORRIGENDUM

In the Winter 2023 issue of *Amore*, we erroneously omitted crediting Abhirup Paul, Founder, Eka Experiences, for the piece Mayal Lyang and the Hidden Valley. Our apologies.

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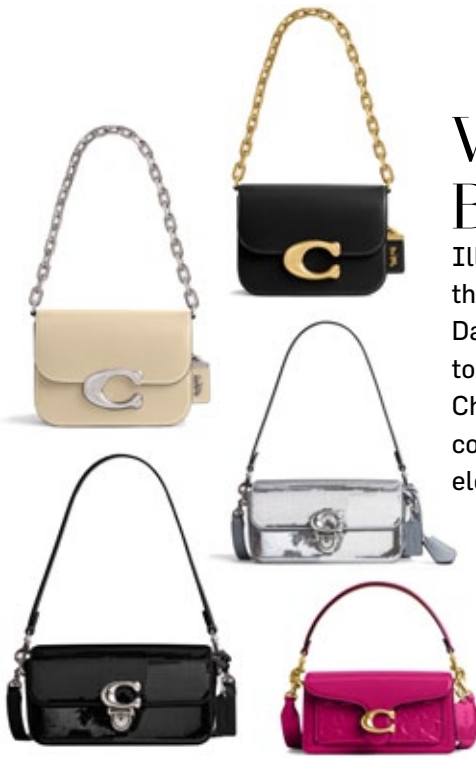
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SCAN TO
KNOW MORE



The **A** List

TRENDING RIGHT NOW



WEDDING EDIT BY COACH

Illuminate your wedding festivities with the enchanting Coach Shine Collection. Dazzle in splendid designs that bring a touch of glamour to your special day. Choose the perfect fit from this Shine collection to ensure a wedding look with elegance and grace.



VIRGIO

Outfits that combine modern glamour with a conscious approach. In the picture, actress Sanjana Sanghi sports a spring-themed floral dress crafted from their earth-friendly collection.



ZOYA GIN

Zoya Special Batch Premium Gin is made from 100% grain and natural spirits, with delicate Juniper and 12 fine botanicals to give it a fresh and unique finish. It's perfect as a sipping drink or a companion for cocktails.



LONGITUDE 77 BY PERNOD RICARD

Longitude77 has been meticulously crafted by Pernod Ricard's master distillers using locally sourced ingredients of the highest quality. Boasting the distinction of being India's first single malt, it is produced in small batches in a distillery in Dindori, Nashik, Maharashtra.

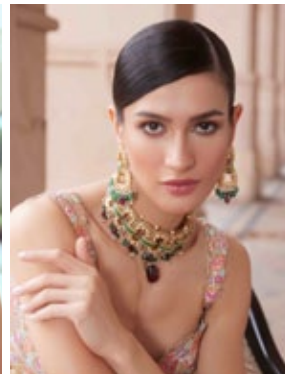
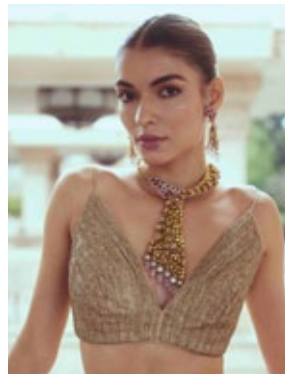
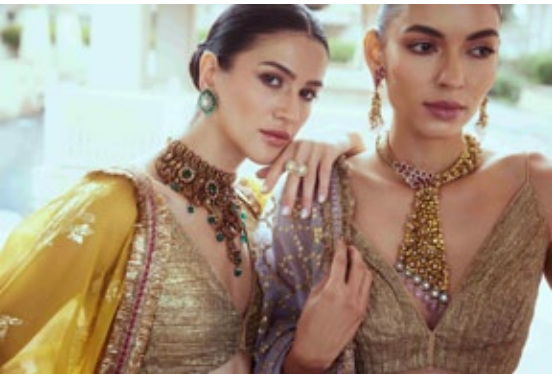


BOSS STATEMENT PIECES

BOSS embraces modern silhouettes that resonate with the contemporary man while capturing the spirit of today's fashion-forward individual. Whether you're eyeing a timeless wallet for your father or a stylish jacket for your partner or friend, BOSS has you covered with an extensive range of distinctive choices.

ZAHRAH COLLECTION FROM KHURANA JEWELLERY HOUSE

The Zahrah Collection is a celebration of intricate artistry, with each piece meticulously crafted and 100% hallmarked. This exquisite collection brings together the rich traditions of South Indian temple jewellery, the allure of beautiful gemstones from Hyderabad, and the detailed Polki pieces curated in the western regions of the country.



GASTON LUGA BACKPACK

Premium Swedish brand Gaston Luga's minimalist yet functional Spläsh backpack is hardwearing and waterproof. Made of eco-friendly waterproof material, this sleek backpack is perfect for daily use or as your travel companion.



FLORAL FIESTA



FLOWER-THEMED FESTIVALS ACROSS THE WORLD

GIRONA FLOWER FESTIVAL - SPAIN

Held annually in the picturesque city of Girona, Catalonia, the Girona Flower Festival, also known as "Temps de Flors," transforms the historic streets, patios, and landmarks into a breathtaking floral wonderland. During this week-long event in May, local residents and businesses adorn their homes and storefronts with elaborate flower arrangements, creating a vibrant tapestry of colours and scents. Visitors can stroll through the city's medieval quarter, marvelling at the creative floral displays while enjoying cultural performances and exhibitions.



FLORIADE - NETHERLANDS

Floriade is a world-renowned horticultural exposition held once every ten years in the Netherlands. This international event showcases the latest innovations in gardening, landscape design, and sustainable practices while celebrating the beauty of flowers and plants from around the globe. Visitors to Floriade can explore themed gardens, attend educational workshops, and engage with experts in the field of horticulture.

CANADIAN TULIP FESTIVAL - CANADA

Originating from a gift of thousands of tulip bulbs from the Dutch Royal Family to Canada in gratitude for sheltering Princess Juliana and her daughters during World War II, the Canadian Tulip Festival has become a beloved annual event in Ottawa, Ontario. Held in May, this festival celebrates the arrival of spring with millions of tulips blooming across the city's parks, gardens, and public spaces. In addition to admiring the colorful floral displays, visitors can enjoy live music performances, cultural activities, and guided tulip tours showcasing the rich history and significance of the tulip in Canadian culture.



SKAGIT VALLEY TULIP FESTIVAL, UNITED STATES

While tulip festivals are commonly associated with the Netherlands, the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival in Washington State offers a spectacular display of blooming tulips in the United States. Each spring, millions of tulips blanket the fields of Skagit Valley in a riot of colours, attracting visitors from near and far. The festival includes guided tours, art shows, and even helicopter rides for a bird's-eye view of the breath-taking floral landscapes.



FÊTE DE LA FLEUR - FRANCE

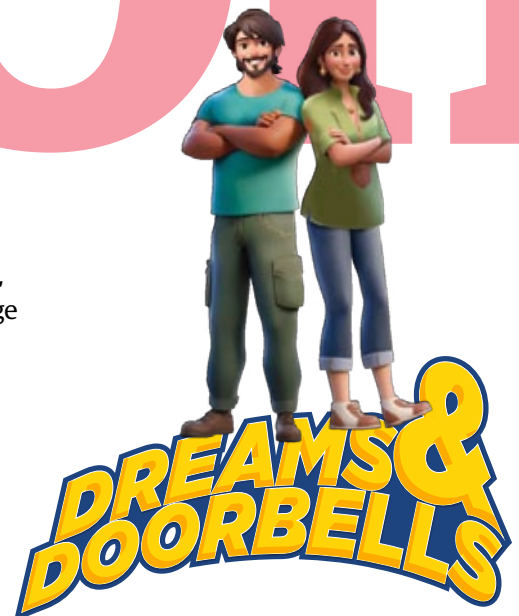
Fête de la Fleur, or the Festival of Flowers, is a prestigious event held annually in Bordeaux, France. This elegant celebration takes place in June, marking the conclusion of the Vinexpo Bordeaux wine fair. The highlight of the festival is the grand gala dinner held at Château Malartic-Lagravière, a renowned wine estate. Guests are treated to exquisite French cuisine paired with fine wines from the region, all amidst enchanting floral decorations adorning the château's gardens and halls. The Fête de la Fleur is a testament to the French art de vivre, combining the pleasures of gastronomy, wine, and floral beauty in a luxurious setting, making it a truly unforgettable experience for attendees.

WHO'S THAT? OH, IT'S OUR VERY OWN PURVA COUPLE, **PURAB** AND **VANI**, KICKING OFF THEIR HILARIOUS AND HEARTWARMING HOUSE HUNTING ADVENTURES IN OUR NEW PRODUCTION – **Dreams & Doorbells**

Ding Dong

Join the adventures of Purab and Vani as they navigate the complexities of life, love, traffic, powercuts, pavements, and language in a city they don't really know but they know they want to make it their home.

Purab, an entrepreneur with a flair for street photography, is a dreamer at heart, while Vani is an IT Engineer, and the embodiment of practicality with a quick wit to match. They're on a quest, much like our clients, with a singular goal of finding the perfect home.



Guiding them through the maze of choices is Hanif, the real estate agent whose zest for closing deals is only outshone by his love for a good commission. His escapades offer a humorous glimpse into the complexities we navigate in the property market.

Then there's Murugan, the community's favorite istriwallah, symbolizing the everyday interactions that breathe life into the neighborhoods we build. He's the thread that weaves together the fabric of

community—a concept we hold dear at Puravankara.

As the creators of spaces that capture the heart's true desire for comfort and belonging, "Dreams and Doorbells" is more than a series- it's a celebration of the stories we help create every day.

So, to our Puravankara family, let's gather around this series, tune into the lives of Purab and Vani, and share their home-bound voyage with friends and clients alike. It's a journey that resonates with the essence of what we do and why we do it. And who knows? And who knows, the next bell they ring could be at one of our properties!



INSPIRATION BOARD

BOARD

Because you are what you read, watch and think.



BOOKS FOR YOUR BEDSIDE

“EVERYTHING IS FIGUREOUTABLE”

BY MARIE FORLEO

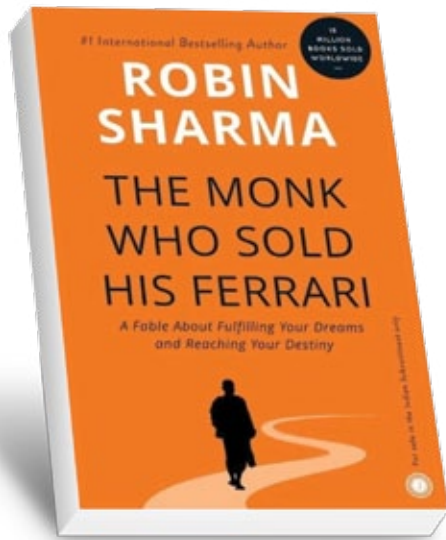
In this empowering book, Marie Forleo shares her philosophy that everything in life is figureoutable, empowering readers to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. Drawing on her own experiences and coaching insights, Forleo offers practical advice and actionable strategies for cultivating a resilient mindset, embracing creativity, and taking bold action. With its inspiring message and actionable tools, “Everything Is Figureoutable” encourages readers to tap into their inner resourcefulness and unleash their full potential.



“TINY HABITS: THE SMALL CHANGES THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING”

BY BJ FOGG

BJ Fogg, a leading expert in behavioral science, presents a groundbreaking approach to habit formation in “Tiny Habits.” Based on his research at Stanford University, Fogg introduces the concept of “tiny habits” — small, easy-to-implement changes that can lead to significant transformations over time. Through practical examples and step-by-step instructions, Fogg demonstrates how to design and anchor tiny habits into daily routines, making behavior change effortless and sustainable. This insightful book offers a fresh perspective on habit formation, helping readers create lasting change and live their best lives.



“THE MONK WHO SOLD HIS FERRARI”

BY ROBIN SHARMA

Written by Indian author Robin Sharma, “The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari” is a captivating fable that imparts life-changing lessons on personal growth and fulfillment. The story follows the journey of a successful lawyer who, after experiencing a life-altering crisis, embarks on a quest for wisdom and enlightenment. Through encounters with a wise Himalayan sage, he learns timeless principles for living a meaningful and balanced life. Blending Eastern spirituality with Western productivity, Sharma’s book inspires readers to prioritize their well-being, pursue their passions, and embrace the journey of self-discovery. With its profound insights and captivating narrative, “The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari” offers a roadmap to living with purpose, passion, and inner peace.



MUST-WATCH MOVIES

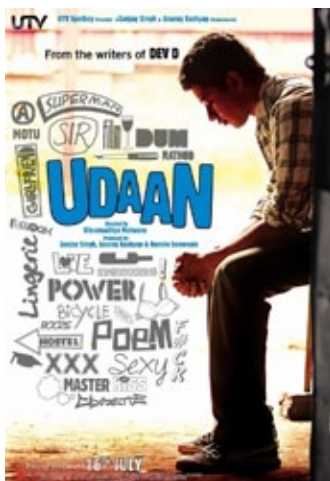


“THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS”

Based on the true story of Chris Gardner, “The Pursuit of Happyness” follows Gardner’s journey from homelessness to success as a stockbroker. Will Smith delivers a powerful performance as Gardner, showcasing resilience, determination, and unwavering optimism in the face of adversity. The film serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of perseverance, hard work, and belief in oneself, inspiring viewers to pursue their dreams relentlessly despite obstacles.

“DEAD POETS SOCIETY”

Starring Robin Williams as an unconventional English teacher, “Dead Poets Society” explores themes of individuality, passion, and the pursuit of authenticity. Through his unorthodox teaching methods, Williams’s character inspires his students to seize the day, challenge societal norms, and pursue their passions fearlessly. The film celebrates the transformative power of education, self-expression, and embracing one’s true identity, encouraging viewers to live boldly and authentically.



“UDAAN”

Directed by Vikramaditya Motwane, “Udaan” tells the story of Rohan, a young man who returns home to Jamshedpur after being expelled from boarding school. Upon his return, Rohan discovers that his authoritarian father has arranged for him to work in his factory, crushing his dreams of pursuing a career in writing. Despite the challenges and oppressive environment, Rohan refuses to give up on his passion and begins secretly working on his writing. The film beautifully portrays Rohan’s journey of self-discovery, rebellion against societal norms, and pursuit of his dreams despite familial pressure and adversity. “Udaan” is a poignant coming-of-age tale that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and inspires viewers to follow their hearts and strive for their dreams, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.



TERRIFIC TEDx SPEAKERS

MEL ROBBINS

Renowned motivational speaker and author, Mel Robbins is famous for her TEDx talk titled “How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over.” In her talk, she introduces the concept of the “5 Second Rule,” which is a simple technique to overcome procrastination and take action in one’s life. Robbins’s energetic and direct speaking style resonates with audiences worldwide, inspiring them to make positive changes and take control of their lives.



SIMON SINEK

A British-American author and motivational speaker, Simon Sinek is best known for his TEDx talk “How Great Leaders Inspire Action.” Sinek’s talk introduces the concept of the “Golden Circle,” which emphasizes the importance of starting with “why” when communicating a message or leading a movement. His profound insights into leadership and human behavior have made him a sought-after speaker, empowering individuals and organizations to find purpose and drive success.

PRIYA PRAKASH

An Indian entrepreneur and motivational speaker, Priya Prakash is known for her TEDx talk “The Power of Mindfulness and How to Practice It.” In her talk, Prakash shares personal anecdotes and practical tips on incorporating mindfulness into daily life to reduce stress, enhance focus, and foster overall well-being. Through her engaging storytelling and relatable experiences, she inspires audiences to prioritize self-care and cultivate a positive mindset for personal and professional growth.



DÉCOR

IDEAS & INSPIRATION ON HOW TO MAKE
YOUR HOME A BEAUTIFUL SANCTUARY



Ooh La Blue

Blue, the colour of the vast sky and calming seas, has long been a popular choice for home decor. Its versatility allows it to create a variety of moods, from serene and spa-like to bold and dramatic.



BRING HOME THE BEAUTIFUL BLUES

The beauty of blue lies in its vast spectrum. From the light and airy sky blues to the deep and dramatic navies, there's a perfect shade for every space and style.

LIGHT AND AIRY

Pale blues and powdery tones evoke a sense of calmness and spaciousness. They work beautifully in living rooms and bedrooms, creating a serene atmosphere. Try painting an accent wall in a soft blue or incorporating light blue throw pillows and artwork.





OCEANIC BLISS

Aqua and turquoise hues bring the refreshing feel of the ocean indoors. They're perfect for bathrooms and kitchens, adding a touch of coastal charm. Use aqua wall tiles in your bathroom or decorate your kitchen with turquoise dishware and sea-themed artwork.



BOLD AND DRAMATIC

Navy blue and cobalt add a touch of drama and sophistication. They can be used as statement pieces in living rooms, dining rooms, or even entry ways. Paint a feature wall in a deep blue or invest in a bold navy blue sofa to create a striking focal point.

BEYOND THE PAINTBRUSH

While painting your walls is a classic way to incorporate blue, there are numerous other ways to bring this versatile color into your home.



TEXTILES

Play with different textures and patterns in blue. Opt for plush blue velvet curtains for a luxurious feel, or add some coastal charm with striped blue and white throw pillows.

FURNITURE

A statement piece, like a cobalt blue armchair or a navy blue accent table, can instantly elevate the look of any room.



ACCESSORIES

Don't underestimate the power of decorative accents. Blue vases, picture frames, and artwork can add pops of colour and personality to your space.

INTRODUCE WARMTH

To prevent your space from feeling too cool, add touches of warmth with wood furniture, woven textures, or metallic accents like gold or brass.

EMBRACE NATURAL LIGHT

Natural light can enhance the beauty of blue hues. If your space lacks natural light, consider using warm-toned lighting fixtures to create a more inviting atmosphere.

modern



abode



A vibrant, comfortable and happy space — that was the only brief from her clients to Inderpreet Kaur. The designer's task was to translate this into a reality.



This 11000-square-foot space in the heart of Gurgaon was a bare shell state when Purplelane Interiors started working on it. Apart from making a few structural changes, Inderpreet continued to build this dream home for two brothers, both having their own duplex unit. The two ladies of the house are sisters who come from the culturally rich city of Benaras and are artists in their own league.

At the heart of the grandeur of this home is comfort and well-being. While designing it, it was important to strike a balance between warmth and style. Rich textures create the sophisticated look and the use of natural resources brings warmth into the home.

FORMAL LIVING ROOMS

The house has two internal staircases connecting the lower floor of the formal living area, kitchen and the guest room to the upper floors that houses a master bedroom lounge and kids rooms.

The master bedroom was created by combining two rooms to make a spacious bedroom-cum-lounge, which enables the couple to spend more quality time together and occasionally entertain close friends and family. This lounge is equipped with a state-of-the-art entertainment system and a private bar.



MASTER BEDROOM LOUNGE

The stair case of the house was a structural flaw and accident prone. So, Inderpreet decided to get rid of the concrete structure. Keeping in mind that no natural sunlight actually comes to this part of the house, she introduced a solid yet light structure with white Michelangelo Italian cladding, providing light under every step and using the walls to create drama. Her client is a huge devotee of Lord Krishna, so she gave her Krishna Leela through customised wallpapers.



For the elder lady of the house, a semi-classical vocalist, Inderpreet created a dedicated area for her Riyaz as well as for teaching students. This area is adorned with arches handcrafted in teak wood, inspired by the heritage forts of India.

The younger lady of the house is an artist and the designer used her art in abundance to adorn the home.

The dining space is visually merged with the kitchen to create an inviting ambience and brings the family together as they bond over cooking.



MEET THE DESIGNER:

Inderpreet Kaur is an explorer at heart. She loves travelling, especially to architectural spaces in India and abroad and then translates that rich culture to her projects. Inderpreet believes that your home is your sanctuary and hence every element in it should be chosen and placed with care. Rich textures, art and relaxing vibes are her design mantra. Inderpreet thrives every day to become a better version of herself and drives her firm towards the same.

COSY CHIC

Decorating
Your Apartment
with Country Flair

Country style decoration brings warmth, cosiness, and a touch of rustic charm to any living space. Here are some tips to help you achieve that inviting country feel in your apartment.



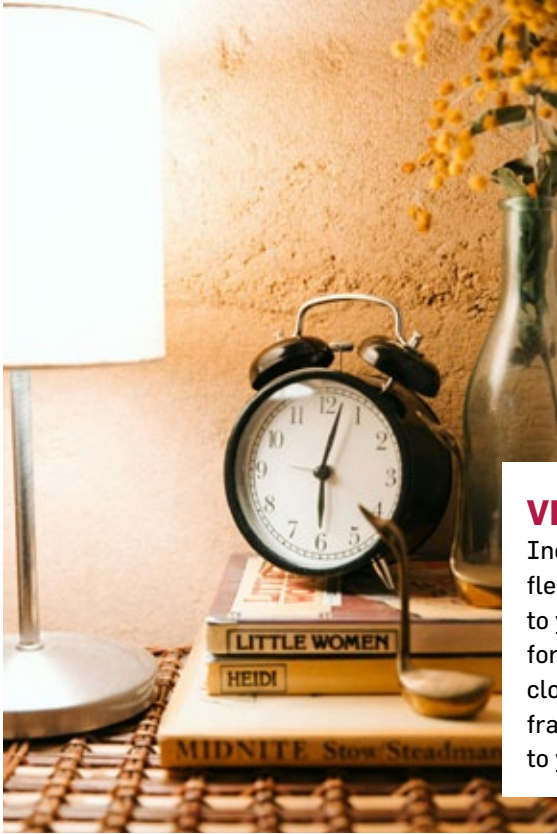
NATURAL MATERIALS

Embrace natural materials like brick, wicker, and wrought iron in your furniture and decor. Wooden tables, chairs, and cabinets with a distressed finish add character and a sense of age. Stone accents, such as a fireplace or exposed brick walls, can further enhance the rustic appeal.



SOFT TEXTILES

Incorporate soft textiles such as cotton, linen, and wool to add warmth and comfort to your space. Consider using plaid or gingham patterned fabrics for curtains, table linen, and blankets to evoke a cosy, country atmosphere.



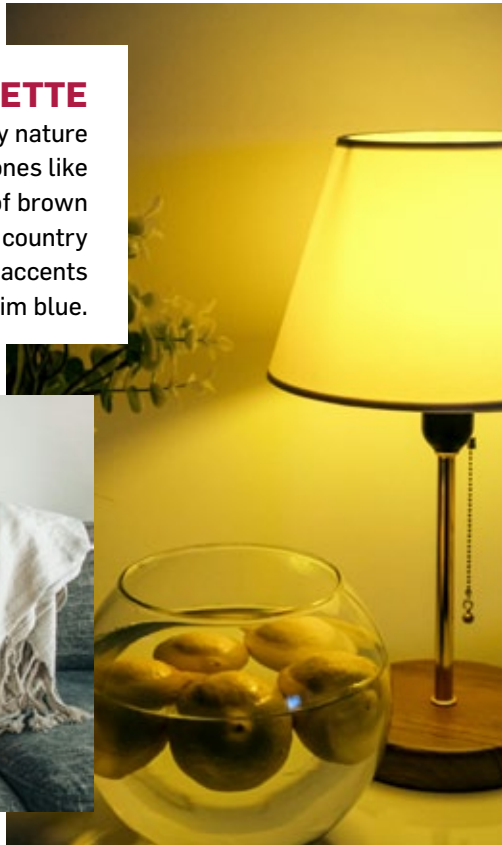
VINTAGE ACCENTS

Incorporate vintage accents and flea market finds to add authenticity to your country-inspired decor. Look for old-fashioned signage, antique clocks, and weathered picture frames to add charm and nostalgia to your space.



WARM COLOUR PALETTE

Choose a warm colour palette inspired by nature for your walls and furnishings. Soft earth tones like beige, cream, sage green, and warm shades of brown can create a soothing backdrop for your country decor. Consider adding pops of colour with accents such as sunflower yellow, barn red, or denim blue.



FARMHOUSE KITCHEN

Create a farmhouse-style kitchen by incorporating rustic elements such as open shelving, farmhouse sinks, and vintage-inspired cabinets. Display Mason jars filled with fresh flowers or kitchen utensils to add a touch of country charm to your space.





COSY SEATING AREAS

Create cosy seating areas with comfortable upholstered furniture and plush cushions. Arrange seating around a fireplace or oversized area rug to encourage relaxation and conversation.



NATURAL ELEMENTS

Bring the outdoors inside by incorporating natural elements such as fresh flowers, potted plants, and rustic wooden accents. Displaying a bouquet of wildflowers in a Mason jar or arranging a collection of driftwood on a mantel can add a touch of nature to your space.



PERSONAL TOUCHES

Add personal touches such as family photos, heirlooms, and handmade art to make your country-style apartment feel like home. Consider displaying cherished items on shelves or creating a gallery wall to showcase your unique personality and style.



M M Javed
Men's Designer

YOUR LUXURY WEAR SPECIALIST

GORGEOUS GRAMS

5 Exceptional Instagram accounts to follow
for home design inspiration.

By Chetna Srinivasan

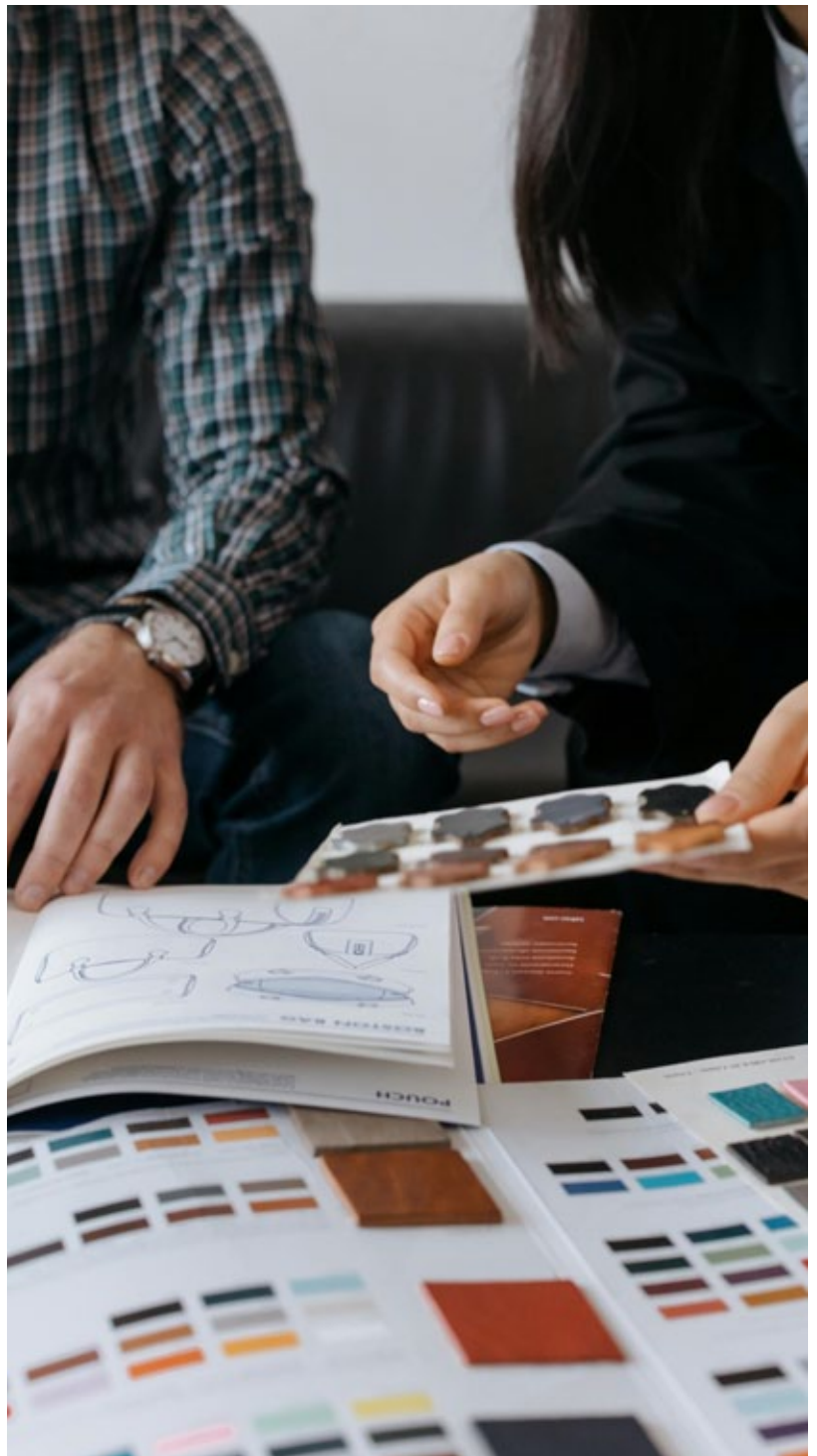
@baptistebohu: This China-based designer's style has been sought after by an A-list clientele for Residential and Commercial projects worldwide. Inspired by Art Deco, Balinese, Moroccan Interiors and contemporary design, he enjoys mixing different eras to produce unique and serene spaces.

@safomasi: Founded by British-Indian duo Sarah Fotheringham and Maninder Singh, Safomasi showcases a fusion of contemporary design with traditional Indian craftsmanship. Their Instagram account features vibrant textiles, whimsical prints, and eclectic interiors inspired by the rich cultural heritage of India. Follow them for a colourful journey through the lens of Indian design.

@myscandinavianhome: My Scandinavian Home, curated by Swedish blogger Niki Brantmark, offers a glimpse into the effortlessly chic world of Scandinavian design. With its clean lines, natural materials, and cosy textures, this Instagram account exudes warmth and simplicity. Follow for a dose of Nordic inspiration that celebrates the beauty of understated elegance.

@studiomcgee: Led by US-based husband-and-wife duo Shea and Syd McGee, offers a masterclass in elegant and timeless design. Their Instagram account features impeccably styled interiors that seamlessly marry classic and contemporary elements. Follow them for a dose of refined inspiration that never goes out of style.

@casachicks: Casa Chicks, based in Brazil, celebrates the vibrant colours, lush tropical landscapes, and eclectic design sensibilities of Brazilian interiors. With its mix of bold patterns, natural textures, and bohemian charm, this Instagram account is a source of inspiration for infusing your home with the spirit of Brazilian style and culture.



TASTE

A CORNUCOPIA OF LIGHT & LOVELY FLAVOURS,
CURATED TO SERENADE YOUR SENSES



TASTE NOTES



EMBARK ON A CULINARY JOURNEY THROUGH THESE LESSER-KNOWN LOCAL DISHES, EACH OFFERING A GLIMPSE INTO THE RICH TAPESTRY OF FLAVOURS AND TRADITIONS ACROSS INDIA.



KOSHUR HAAK IN KASHMIR

Nestled in the valleys of Kashmir lies a culinary gem known as Koshur Haak. This traditional dish features tender, leafy greens called Haak, native to the region, cooked with a myriad of spices to create a flavourful, aromatic curry. Locals often enjoy Koshur Haak with steamed rice, allowing the rich gravy to blend harmoniously with the subtle sweetness of the rice.

GONGURA PACHADI IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Gongura Pachadi is a traditional Andhra condiment made from the leaves of the sorrel plant, known locally as Gongura. These leaves are finely chopped and sautéed with a tempering of mustard seeds, dried red chilies, and curry leaves. Tamarind pulp, garlic, and jaggery are added to balance the tanginess of the Gongura leaves, resulting in a tangy chutney-like relish.





CALDIN IN GOA

Escape to the sunny shores of Goa and indulge in the tantalising flavours of Caldin. This lesser-known dish is a creamy coconut-based curry, subtly infused with tangy tamarind and aromatic spices. Locals often savour Caldin with crusty bread or steamed rice, relishing the delightful contrast of creamy sauce and fluffy grains. Fun fact: Caldin is believed to have been introduced by the Portuguese during their colonial rule in Goa.



SHAHI TUKDA IN BHOPAL

Shahi Tukda, which translates to “royal piece” in Urdu, is a rich and indulgent dessert made from deep-fried bread slices soaked in a luscious syrup infused with saffron, cardamom, and rose water. Once soaked, the bread slices are generously coated with a creamy layer of thickened milk, flavoured with aromatic spices and garnished with slivered nuts such as almonds and pistachios. The result is a heavenly concoction that combines the warmth of spices with the richness of dairy, creating a dessert fit for royalty.

PITHA IN ASSAM

In the lush landscapes of Assam, Pitha reigns supreme as a delightful treat. These rice-based cakes come in various shapes and flavours, from sweet to savoury, and are often steamed or fried. Locals relish Pitha with a dollop of creamy curd or sweet jaggery, elevating the dish with contrasting tastes. Fun fact: Pitha holds cultural significance in Assamese festivals, often prepared during Bihu celebrations as a symbol of prosperity and abundance.



A close-up photograph of a pizza being cooked in a wood-fired oven. The pizza is on a metal peel, and the oven's interior is glowing with a warm, orange-red light. The pizza has a thick, slightly charred crust and is topped with a vibrant red tomato sauce, melted cheese, and fresh green herbs. The oven's interior is made of dark, textured bricks.

Know Your Dough

5 irresistible breads from across the world that look like pizza but boast their own unique personality.

In the vast tapestry of global cuisine, the allure of bread knows no bounds. A universal comfort food, bread takes on myriad forms and flavours, reflecting the diverse cultures that have crafted it with love and care. Whether in the lively markets of Turkey, the quaint villages of Provence, the vibrant streets of Italy, the bustling markets of Lebanon, or the lively lanes of Japan, these breads stand testament to the creativity and ingenuity embedded in each culture's culinary heritage.

Here are five you should know and enjoy:



LAHMACUN - TURKEY: THE TURKISH DELIGHT

Venture into the bustling streets of Turkey, and you'll encounter the tantalizing aroma of Lahmacun wafting through the air. This Turkish flatbread, often referred to as "Turkish pizza," boasts a thin, crispy crust generously adorned with a flavorful topping of spiced minced meat, tomatoes, onions, and parsley. Finished with a squeeze of lemon, Lahmacun captures the essence of Turkish street food, offering a harmonious blend of savory and zesty notes.

PISSALADIÈRE - FRANCE: A PROVENÇAL MASTERPIECE

Transport yourself to the sun-soaked landscapes of Provence, France, where the Pissaladière reigns as a culinary masterpiece. Resembling a pizza in shape and size, this Provençal delight showcases a golden, pillowy crust adorned with caramelized onions, black olives, and anchovies. The marriage of sweet, salty, and umami flavors creates a symphony for the taste buds, making Pissaladière a French delicacy worth savoring.



MANAKISH - LEBANON: A MIDDLE EASTERN FLAIR

Journey to the heart of the Middle East, and you'll encounter the aromatic charm of Manakish. This Lebanese flatbread, akin to a miniature pizza, showcases a thin, doughy base adorned with a rich layer of za'atar—a blend of thyme, sesame seeds, sumac, and olive oil. A sprinkle of crumbled white cheese or a scattering of vegetables adds depth to this Lebanese treasure. Manakish beckons with its fragrant spices and wholesome ingredients, inviting you to savor the exotic flavors of the Levant.

FOCACCIA - ITALY: A PIZZA'S RUSTIC COUSIN

While pizza hails from Italy, its lesser-known cousin, Focaccia, deserves a moment in the spotlight. This rustic flatbread, originating from the shores of the Ligurian Sea, shares the same roots as pizza but diverges in texture and toppings. With a soft, airy interior and a golden, olive oil-infused crust, Focaccia serves as a canvas for an array of toppings such as rosemary, sea salt, cherry tomatoes, or olives. This versatile bread embodies the heart of Italian hospitality, inviting you to savor simplicity at its finest.



OKONOMIYAKI - JAPAN: JAPANESE PIZZA EXTRAVAGANZA

Cross the globe to Japan, where the streets come alive with the sizzle of Okonomiyaki on hot griddles. Often dubbed as “Japanese pizza” or “savory pancake,” Okonomiyaki is a culinary marvel that fuses shredded cabbage, batter, and a medley of ingredients like seafood, meat, or cheese. Topped with okonomiyaki sauce, mayonnaise, and bonito flakes, this delightful creation embodies the art of Japanese street food, capturing a symphony of flavours and textures in each bite.

As we traverse the globe through these five enchanting breads, we discover the universality of the human connection through the joy of breaking bread. So, embark on this flavourful expedition, savouring the unique twist each bread brings to the table, and let the world of global breads enchant your taste buds.



FRIED EGG IN AVOCADO

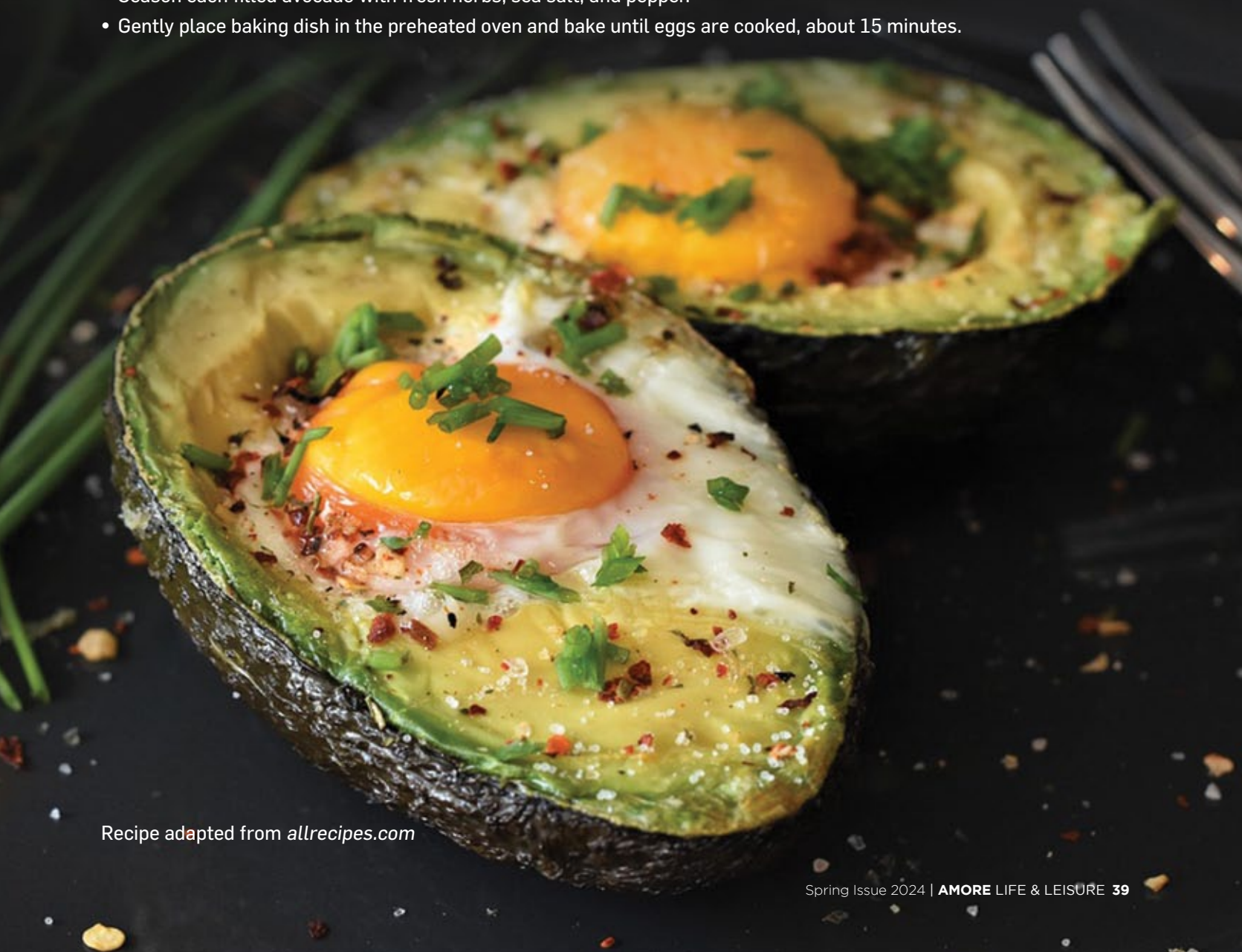
The green softness of avocado. The yellow creaminess of warm egg. Beautiful and so good for you!

SHOPPING LIST

- 2 brown eggs
- 1 avocado, halved and pitted
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh herbs
- 1 pinch sea salt and ground black pepper to taste

TO MAKE

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C).
- Crack the eggs into a bowl, making sure the yolks are intact.
- Arrange avocado halves in a baking dish. Gently spoon 1 egg yolk into each avocado hole, until full.
- Season each filled avocado with fresh herbs, sea salt, and pepper.
- Gently place baking dish in the preheated oven and bake until eggs are cooked, about 15 minutes.



Recipe adapted from [allrecipes.com](https://www.allrecipes.com)



BURRATA

Burrata is an Italian fresh cheese. It is essentially a ball of fresh mozzarella filled with cream. The outside shell is stretchy and curdy like mozzarella while the inside is soft and creamy, and oozes out when you cut into the ball. It's rich and intensely milky in taste, yet somehow fresh and delicate at the same time. The flavour is actually pretty mild, like fresh mozzarella. It's not salty or heavily flavoured like an aged brie or cheddar.

Burrata pairs best with:

- Olive Oil
- French Bread
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Fresh Fruit
- Honey
- Walnuts
- Romaine Lettuce

The rest, of course, is entirely up to your imagination.

Mozzarella and burrata are both Italian cheeses, but they have distinct differences in terms of flavor, texture, and composition.





BE A BEAN BOSS

Coffee, the world's beloved beverage, transcends borders and cultures. But venturing beyond your local cafe can present a unique challenge: navigating the diverse world of coffee ordering. Fear not, intrepid caffeine seeker! This guide equips you with the know-how to confidently order coffee like a local, from the cobbled streets of Paris to the bustling markets of Vietnam.

EMBRACE THE LOCAL LINGO

A friendly "coffee, please" might work in some places, but understanding a few key terms in the local language goes a long way. In Italy, "un espresso" is your go-to, while in France, a "café au lait" delivers a milky breakfast brew. In Austria, a "Melange" offers a frothy cappuccino-like experience, and in Vietnam, requesting "ca phe da" gets you their strong, iced coffee specialty.

BEYOND THE BASICS

While knowing basic coffee names is helpful, understanding cultural nuances is key. In Japan, "obanyaki" refers to a sweet red bean paste filling often enjoyed alongside coffee. Ethiopia's traditional coffee ceremony involves roasting beans over coals and brewing in a "jebena" pot. Knowing these cultural aspects allows you to not only order your coffee but also appreciate the local coffee experience.

SIZE MATTERS

Familiar size options like "small," "medium," and "large" might not be universally applicable. In Australia, a "flat white" is smaller than a latte, while in Greece, a "frappe" is a thick, almost milkshake-like concoction. In Italy, espresso is the standard, and size variations are minimal. Embrace the local serving sizes and savor the unique coffee culture.

MILK MATTERS

In some cultures, milk is not the default addition to coffee. In Italy, milky coffees are traditionally enjoyed only in the morning. In Vietnam, condensed milk is a common sweetener, while Turkey's strong coffee is often enjoyed black. Be prepared to specify your milk preference, or opt for the local way and experience a new flavour profile.

GO BEYOND THE CAFE

Don't limit yourself to cafes. In Spain, "churros" and coffee are a classic pairing enjoyed at "churrerías." In Morocco, explore "kahwas," street vendors serving strong coffee with spices and nuts. Embrace the opportunity to experience coffee as part of the local culture, not just a cafe beverage.



WHEN BREAKFAST MEETS LUNCH

HERE'S HOW TO HOST THE PERFECT
CONTINENTAL BRUNCH

A continental brunch offers a sophisticated fusion of European and American breakfast traditions, featuring an array of savoury and sweet dishes alongside refreshing beverages. Whether it's a cosy gathering of friends or a festive celebration, hosting a home continental brunch can be a memorable experience with the right planning. From delectable dishes to refreshing drinks, tantalising desserts, and charming decor, here's how to create an unforgettable brunch affair.



DISHES

Prepare a mix of classics like:

- Fluffy pancakes
- Crispy bacon
- Shakshuka

Offer creative dishes such as:

- Avocado toast with poached eggs
- Smoked salmon platters
- Savoury quiches

Consider dietary restrictions and offer:

- Vegan or gluten-free alternatives

Tip: Make-ahead dishes like breakfast casseroles or overnight oats can save you time on the day of the brunch, allowing you to spend more time with your guests.



DRINKS

Set up a DIY mimosa bar with:

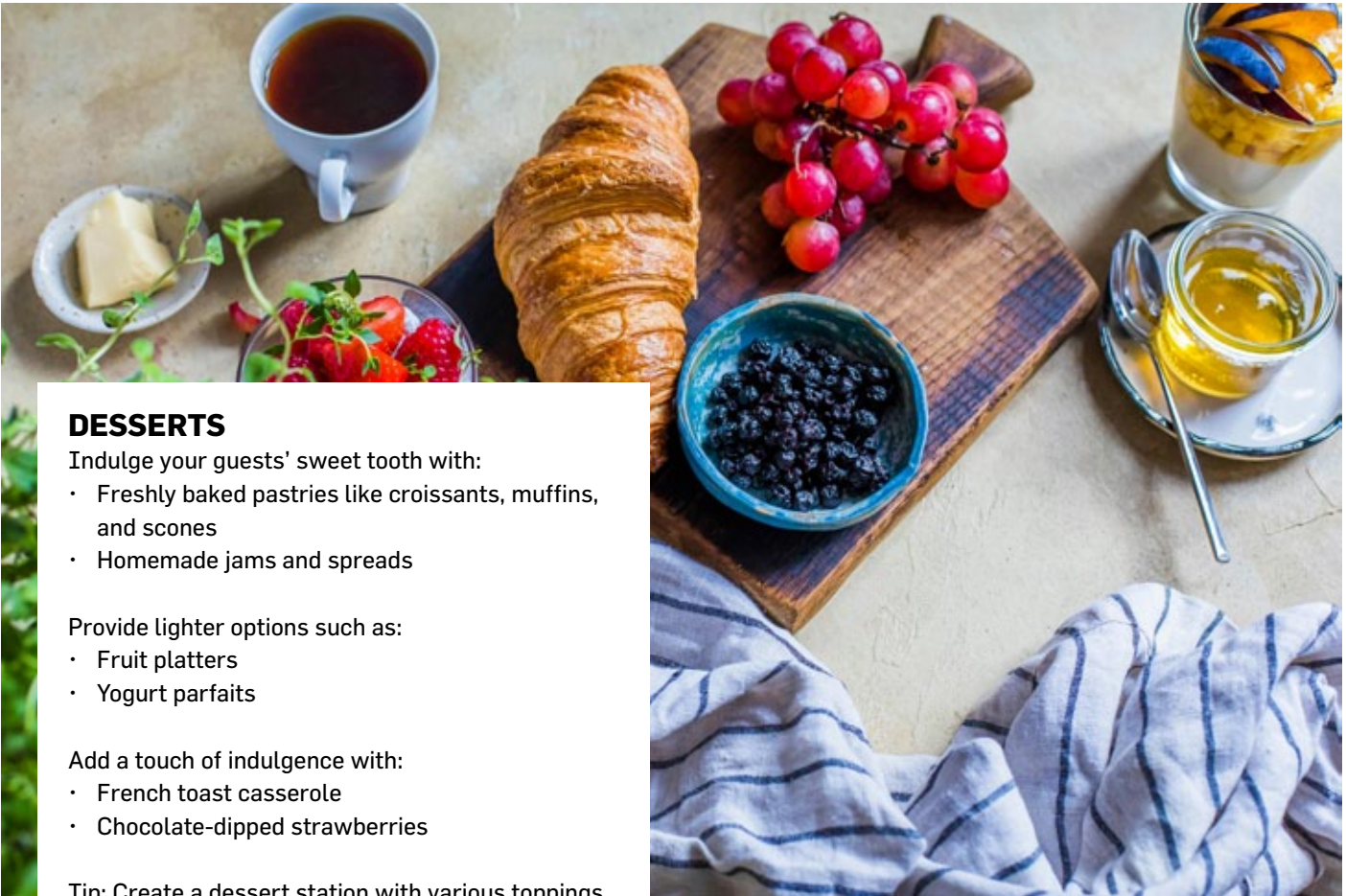
- Chilled champagne
 - Assorted fruit juices
 - Fresh fruit garnishes
- Serve aromatic coffee and tea options

Offer infused water with:

- Citrus or cucumber slices

Tip: Label different wine and juice options and provide recipe cards for guests to try out unique mimosa combinations, adding an interactive element to your brunch.





DESSERTS

Indulge your guests' sweet tooth with:

- Freshly baked pastries like croissants, muffins, and scones
- Homemade jams and spreads

Provide lighter options such as:

- Fruit platters
- Yogurt parfaits

Add a touch of indulgence with:

- French toast casserole
- Chocolate-dipped strawberries

Tip: Create a dessert station with various toppings like whipped cream, chocolate sauce, and nuts, allowing guests to customize their sweet treats according to their preferences.



DECOR

Create an inviting atmosphere with:

- Fresh flowers as a centerpiece
- Elegant tableware

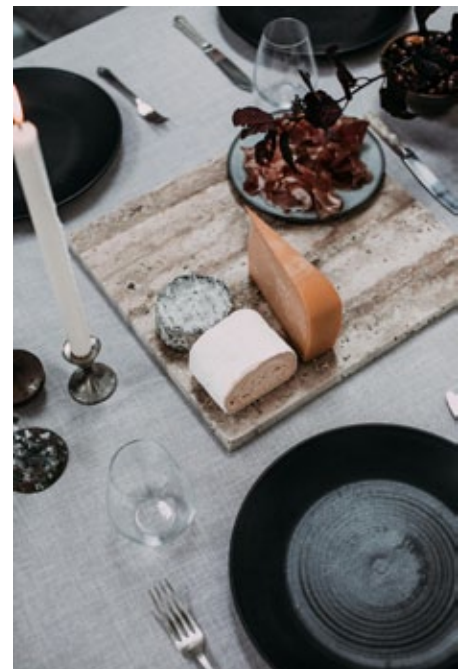
Incorporate rustic elements like:

- Wooden serving boards
- Woven placemats

Add personal touches such as:

- Handwritten place cards
- Customized menu boards

Tip: Utilise natural elements like fruits, herbs, or citrus slices as decorative accents on the table, adding both beauty and fragrance to the ambiance.



Saakshi Tanwar Jain, Co-founder of Animis Global, loves to entertain in her Gurugram home. "I make sure I check my guests' food preferences beforehand. If I've prepared a hearty main course, I keep the snacks light, otherwise people fill themselves up before they get to the food. Light cocktails and summer sangrias are a brunch essential, of course."

LIFE

OUR PICK OF GLEANINGS AND MUSINGS
TO RELISH AND REFLECT UPON



The Power of FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness heals wounds and brings hope, crossing all boundaries to mend relationships.

By Mamta Sharma

THE ANATOMY OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is not about forgetting or condoning hurtful actions; rather, it's a conscious decision to release the negative emotions tethered to those actions. Psychologists define forgiveness as a process involving letting go of the desire for revenge and cultivating empathy and understanding towards the offender. It's an internal journey that can lead to profound personal growth and emotional well-being.

REAL-LIFE STORIES OF FORGIVENESS

One remarkable example of forgiveness comes from the story of Eva Mozes Kor, a Holocaust survivor who endured unspeakable horrors at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Despite suffering unimaginable trauma, Eva chose to forgive the Nazis for their atrocities, famously stating, "Forgiveness is the seed of peace." She dedicated her life to spreading messages of tolerance and reconciliation, demonstrating that forgiveness has the power to transcend even the darkest chapters of history.

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude."

- Martin Luther King Jr.



“The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.”

- Marianne Williamson

In another poignant example, Phoolan Devi, known as the “Bandit Queen” of India, forgave her rapists and tormentors after years of abuse and exploitation. Instead of seeking vengeance, she advocated for social justice and empowerment for marginalized communities, embodying the transformative power of forgiveness to break the cycle of violence and oppression.

EXEMPLARY FORGIVENESS

“The best example of forgiveness is in Jainism,” observed Padma Shri Dr. K.K. Aggarwal, one of India’s most beloved cardiologists. “They observe a ‘Kshama Day’ every year when everyone seeks forgiveness from every other known person on that day.

The Jain way to forgive is to perceive the wholeness of life. To be forgiving is to live in the present and not clinging to the past. To forgive is to have vision of a better future. The basic teaching of Jainism is to “Breathe in Love and breathe out Forgiveness.”

Try this de-stressing exercise: forgive yourself every day in the night before going to sleep. Say “I forgive myself for..., I forgive myself for... I forgive myself for...”. Many imagery exercises are in fact based on this principle. By forgiving, you close the account of a person or a situation you might have opened in the past.

Apart from seeking forgiveness, one should also learn to forgive others. It’s the person who forgives, who gets the most health benefits,” said Dr. Aggarwal.

WISDOM FROM FAMOUS FIGURES

Numerous influential figures throughout history have espoused the virtues of forgiveness. Mahatma Gandhi famously said, “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong,” highlighting forgiveness as a symbol of inner strength rather than weakness. Similarly, Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison during South Africa’s apartheid era, embraced forgiveness as a cornerstone of his leadership philosophy, stating, “Courageous people do not fear forgiving, for the sake of peace.”

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

- Lewis B. Smedes

PLAYING THE FAME GAME

Excerpted from iconic editor, author and journalist Sathya Saran's book "*Me to You*," a compilation of her much-loved editorial notes in *Femina* magazine

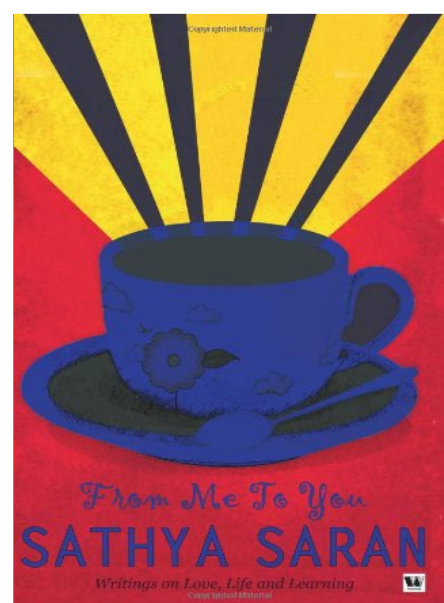
At Fashion Week, fame flits about like a tangible being, clothed in flashbulbs and sound bytes, taking now this garb, now that. It has made me think seriously about what fame is, this oft-used, more often abused word... what does it really mean then? When you study hard, you can grow up and do things that will make you famous... I heard that a lot in my school days. It did not, however, motivate me one bit, I am afraid; fame was a poor relative, down the list from other things I wanted to be... which included talented, beautiful, clever, loved, wonderful, and most of all, able to grow wings and fly!

Well, much of that did not happen either, and the wings definitely did not come up, and were never going to. I think it was at the point when I realised this, that I became a writer. Writing gave me wings of a kind, taking me to where I wanted to go; one step better than a reader, which took me where the writer of the book in my hand wanted me to go.

"You are a writer, you could become famous..." another line that people threw around, and I wondered for a long time whether that could indeed

be true. If fame was something that everybody thought was so important, maybe it was good to chase it after all. And being a writer, I told myself, is not too bad; at least it seemed one of the passports to fame. Well, I have been a writer for more than 30 years, written everything from hack pieces to funny pieces to journalistically brilliant to fiction and poetry... but something seems amiss. Fame flits about overhead, lands on those around me, on those who I write about, and I remain, like an island in a sea, amazingly dry!

After years of expecting something to happen to lure Dame Fame into my parlour, I have settled down to believing that she and I can be friends from afar and don't really need each other. Fame, I have seen, can be quite a curse. Fame takes away so much when she comes to rest on your head; she turns everything inside out. For one, privacy and peace walk quickly out; everyone, in this day of instant sound bytes, wants a piece of you, a bite that they can chew on, and spit out for the public to consider. Then, your own life goes for a spin. Suddenly, the person you see in the mirror is not quite the same person you saw before Fame touched your life. In fact, the very mirror seems incapable of holding



your immense greatness, regardless of how slim you may be; and you are blinded by your own bright light. It makes communication with those around you very difficult; they start wondering if you are the you they once knew. And then, there is the fact that you need to live up to the 'famous' image that Fame builds for you.

Day and night there is a need for posturing and make-believe, and you end up believing in it all yourself. Inside out, see? Read any biography of a truly famous person, and you will



see what I mean. Then there are all the famous people who win and woo their two minutes of fame. On TV, in cinema, on the glamour circuit... writers, actors, stars, painters, businessmen and women, all aim for this, and get there. Politicians too, let's not forget them. And when the seven-day wonder is gone, and gold turns to tinsel, and the five minutes are up, Mephistopheles steps in, and there is nothing but bile and tears left, where fame had been.

I look at the sun, truly, I think. Fame is like the sun. It shines and is bright

and rises and sets regardless of whether you look at it or are sitting in a dark room with dark glasses on. It will make crops grow and flowers shine and be taken for granted, but everyone knows it is completely needed for life as we know it to go on. And the sun, of course, does not care less whether you curse it or string entire slokas in its glory. That, I tell myself, is real fame. Being really famous. And I am waiting for one really famous person to cross my path. I will bow my head in respect.



Sathya Saran



THE BEST THINGS ANYONE EVER SAID ABOUT FLOWERS

"There are always flowers for those who want to see them."

– Henri Matisse

"If we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly our whole life would change."

– Buddha

"Earth laughs in flowers."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

"If I had a single flower for every time I think about you, I could walk forever in my garden."

– Claudia Adrienne Grandi

"Where flowers bloom so does hope."

– Lady Bird Johnson

"Don't wait for someone to bring you flowers. Plant your own garden and decorate your own soul."

– Luther Burbank

"A flower does not think of competing with the flower next to it. It just blooms."

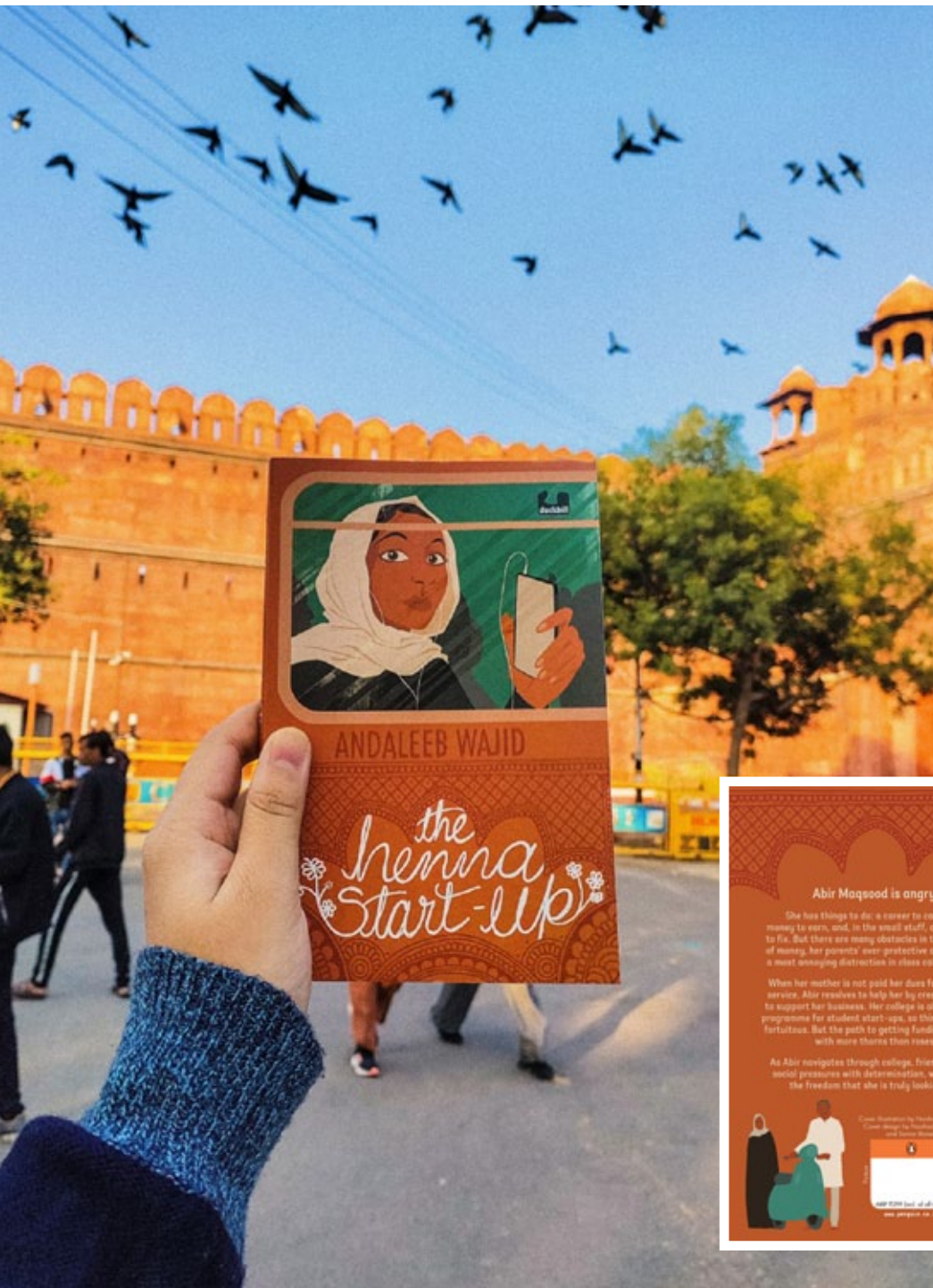
– Zen Shin

LEISURE

TAKE TIME TO NURTURE YOURSELF
IN BODY, MIND & SOUL



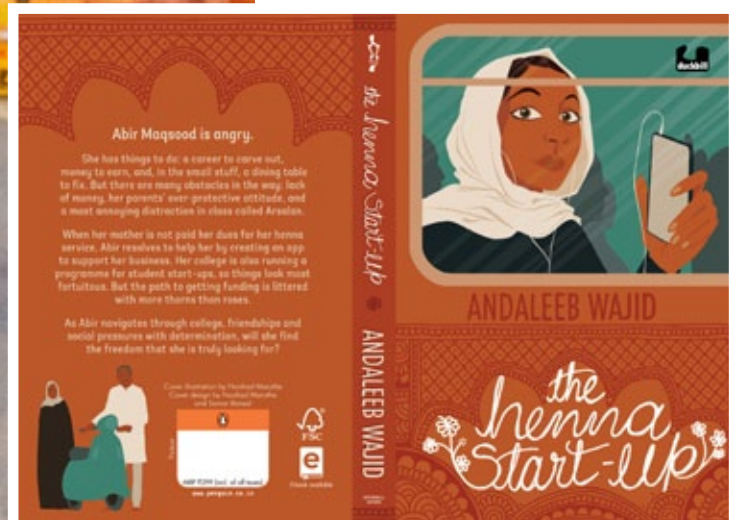
THE HENNA START-UP



I put the phone face down. I'd done it again. But he really asked for it this time. He did. Aargh. I hate him so much! Luke is also often quite rude, especially in the class WhatsApp group, though he mostly ignores us in college. But somehow I don't feel the same kind of hatred for him.

'What happened?' Ammi asks as she places a plate of food in front of me. I breathe out long and hard to let go of my irritation. I will not carry my annoyance with Arsalan back home.

I repeat the mantra in my head, look up at her and smile. 'Nothing. The usual.' 'You study too hard,' Ammi says. 'See how hunched you've become?' 'Ammi, please. I'm fine,' I insist before she can get started on how my bad posture will hinder my chances of getting good proposals.



I look around our small home. I love this time of the day. It's just us women in the house, sipping tea and talking. Even Amal puts away her books until Abbu is back from his shop. Nida Phuppu and Samreen Khala complain about their respective mothers-in-law while Nani listens to them wide-eyed. Since my dadi passed away long ago, Ammi doesn't have a mother-in-law to complain about, and anyway, she never did. Ammi loved Dadi like her own mother, and Nida Phuppu like her own sister, Samreen. So she wouldn't upset Nida Phuppu by talking trash about her mother.

When I was young, I used to think that after we left for school, Ammi had all the time in the world to herself to watch TV, read books or just enjoy life while we struggled with multiplication tables and fractions. But then I discovered that Ammi hardly ever had any time to herself. Especially since she started the henna business about five years ago.

Okay, so here's the thing. No one refers to it as a business because the word is too big and scary, but Ammi, along with Samreen Khala and Nida Phuppu, have been taking on commissions to do henna for a couple of years. It's all through word of mouth. Someone who knows someone asks someone if they know anyone who can apply henna for weddings or functions, and it trickles back to Ammi, who is excellent at it. If she has time, she goes, and if not, she sends either of my aunts, if they're free.

I feel they charge a pittance. Abbu doesn't even know how much Ammi and the aunts get paid for this. I can't understand why.

'Why isn't your time and talent valuable enough to be paid for?' I asked her once. 'It's not that. I do this in my free time. I don't want him to think that he's unable to meet our expenses in any way,' she said, as if it were a perfectly understandable explanation.



MEET THE WRITER:

Andaleeb Wajid is a hybrid author, having published more than 45 novels in the past 14 years. Her romance trilogy *Jasmine Villa Series* (Feb 2023) was published by Westland Publishers and her young adult novel *The Henna Start-up* (December 2023) was published by Duckbill. She has two upcoming YA novels in 2024, a graphic horror novel with Harper Collins and a coming-of-age YA novel with *Speaking Tiger*.

The discussion today is about our dining table. Apparently, Ammi has saved enough money to fix it, but she can't because Abbu will want to know where she got the money.

I mutter, 'Just tell Abbu it's your money!'

'But he thinks all my money is his money. That it comes from him,' she says, shaking her head. Nida Phuppu looks guilty because her children were responsible, after all, for breaking it, but she knows Abbu won't agree to taking money from her to fix it, because she's his younger sister. Then, her face brightens. 'Bhabhi, why don't you tell Bhaiya that you've been saving the money from the monthly expense money he gives you?'

Ammi shakes her head. 'That hardly covers all expenses any month. I always ask him for more before the end of the month.'

I share a look with Amal, my determination to be financially independent growing deeper with every conversation at home. The fact that my mother cannot use the money she earned to fix our dining table because it would hurt Abbu's ego is beyond my understanding. Okay, I understand it well enough, and I get where Ammi is coming from. But it seems like the height of irrationality to me.

And I am determined not to fall into the same pattern. Ammi thinks that once I finish college, I'm going to be sitting around at home, waiting to get married. I'll have to gear up for all the big confrontations coming up.

But now we have to think of fixing the dining table in a way that will not make Ammi feel guilty or Abbu suspicious. Ammi doesn't want to lie to Abbu. She also wants to make sure that he never learns anything unpalatable about what he can and cannot do for us. I am sure that after the initial ego problem, Abbu won't mind. But Ammi is adamant about this.

I'd rather not be bothered about whether this will hurt Abbu's ego. But one lesson I've learnt early on in life is that we have to choose our battles. This one's not worth fighting.

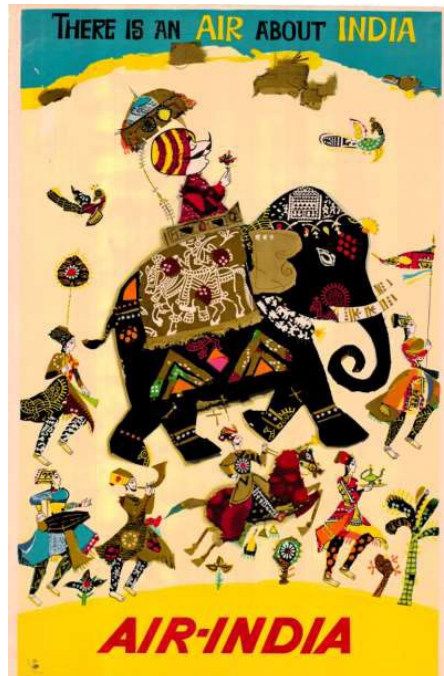
OLD GOLD

From the Archives of Tarun Thakral.

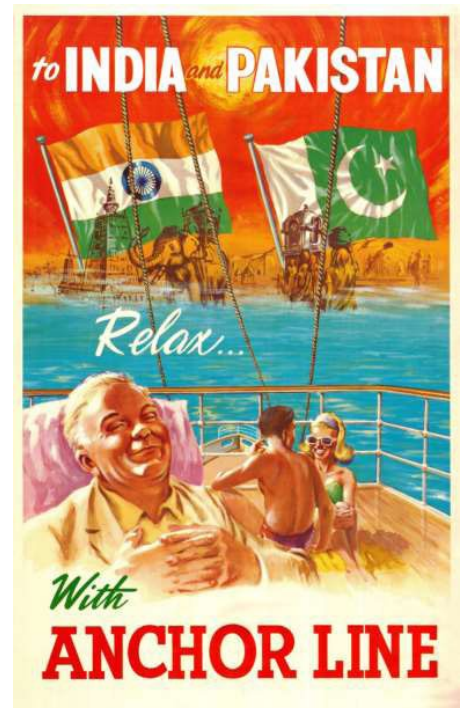
To pursue his hobby and passion in vintage and classic cars, Tarun founded India's first comprehensive Heritage Transport Museum, Taoru, Gurugram. Besides collecting everything from vehicles to lithographs, Tarun is also the Executive Director at Le Meridien Hotel, New Delhi



Air India - London
Year: 1970's
Artist: Anonymous
Publisher: Prasad Process, Madras
Language: English



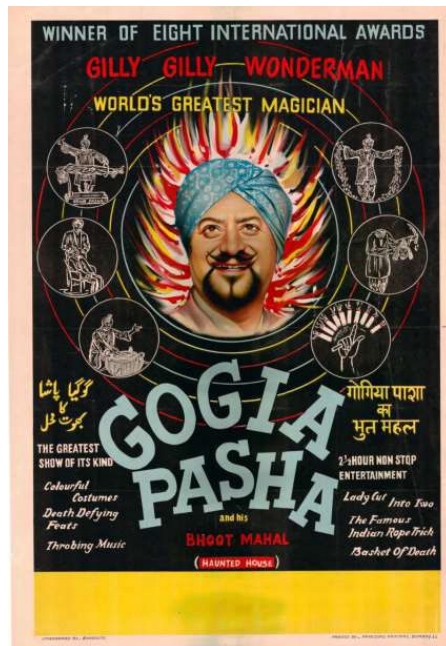
Air India
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Artist: Anonymous
Publisher: Prasad Process, Madras
Language: English



Anchor Line: To India & Pakistan
Year: 1950's
Artist: Anonymous
Publisher: Anonymous
Language: English



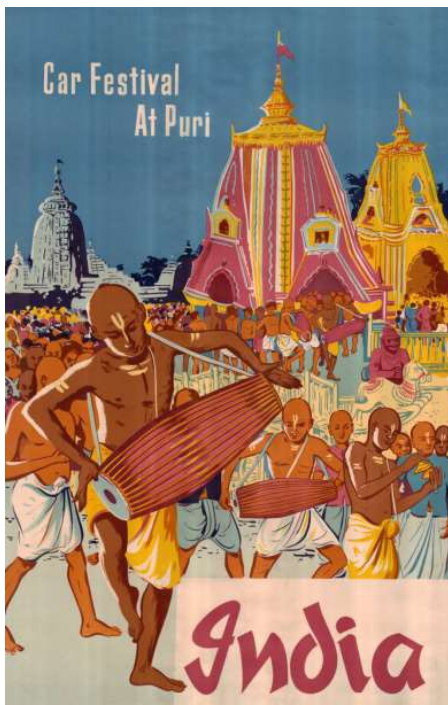
Banaras India
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Bolton Fine Art Litho Works, Bombay
 Language: English



Gogia Pasha
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Bhuskute
 Publisher: Parksons Printers, Bombay
 Language: English



Feasts of Fairs & Festivals: India
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: New Jack Printing Works, Bombay
 Language: English



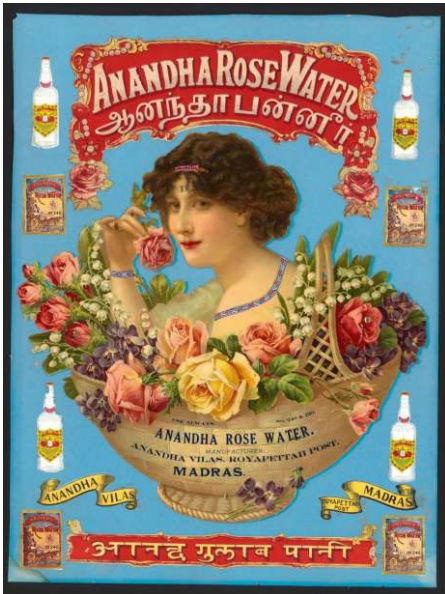
Car Festival at Puri: India
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 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Bombay Fine Art Offset & Litho Works, Bombay
 Language: English



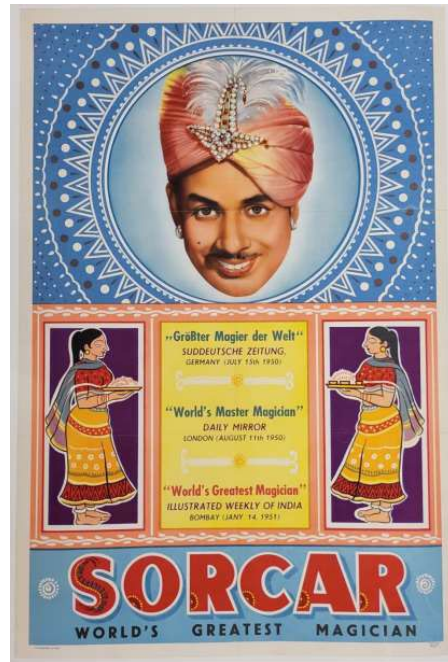
Mobil Oil
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 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Anonymous
 Language: English



Darjeeling: East Bengal Railways
 Year: 1930's
 Artist: V. Veevers
 Publisher: The Calcutta Printing & Publicity Ltd, Calcutta
 Language: English



Anandha Rose Water
 Year: 1930's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Anonymous
 Language: Tamil, Hindi, English



Sorcar
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Anonymous
 Language: English



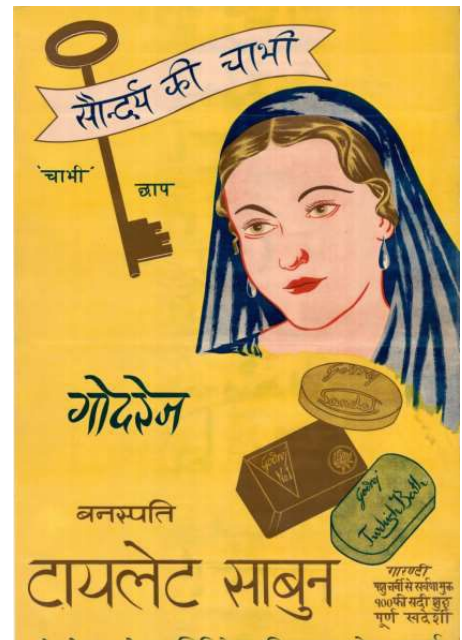
Bharat Scouts & Guides
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Raghubir Mulgaonkar
 Publisher: Sagar Litho Press, Bombay
 Language: English



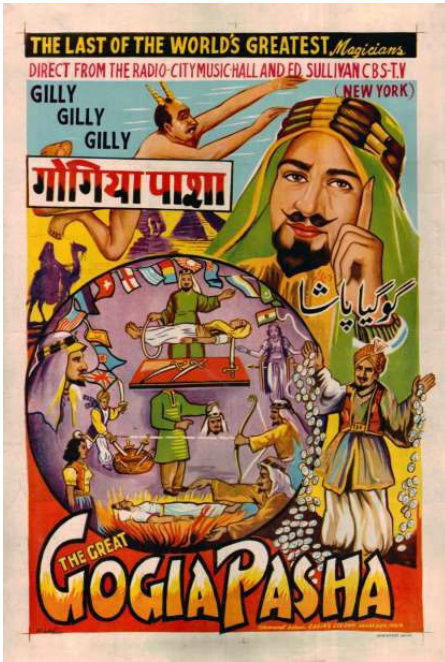
Emperor & Empress Silver Jubilee Fund
 Year: 1930's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Calcutta Chromotype Ltd, Calcutta
 Language: Bengali



Eveready
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Calcutta Chromotype Ltd, Calcutta
 Language: English, Hindi



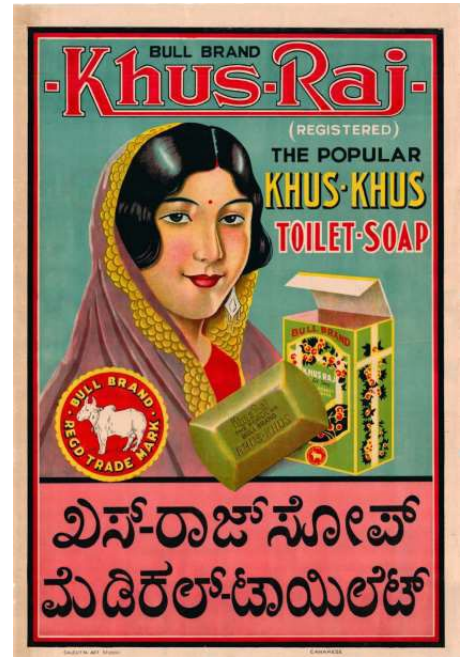
Godrej Soaps
 Year: 1940's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Anonymous
 Language: Hindi



Gogia Pasha
 Year: 1960's
 Artist: B.R. Gulati
 Publisher: J.P. Printers, Delhi
 Language: English, Hindi



Goodyear Tyres
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Caledonian Printing Co. Ltd, Calcutta
 Language: English



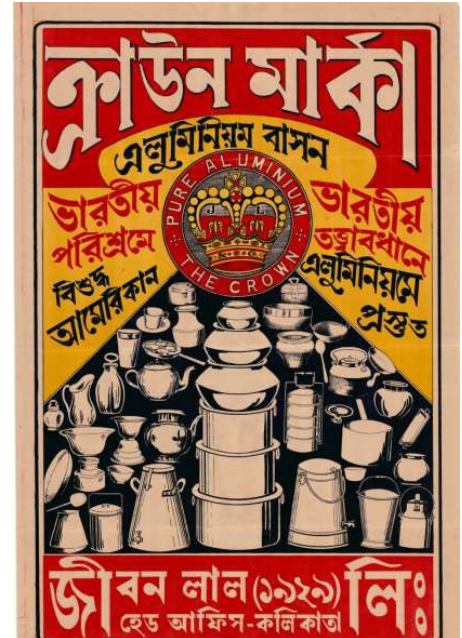
Khus Raj Soap
 Year: 1930's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: Calcutta Art Studio
 Language: English, Kannada



Rajaratnam Fireworks
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: The Sstandard Litho Works, Sivakasi
 Language: English



Sri Kaliswari Fireworks
 Year: 1960's
 Artist: Ravi
 Publisher: The Raja Litho Works, Sivakasi
 Language: English



The Crown Utensils
 Year: 1950's
 Artist: Anonymous
 Publisher: D.C Chunder & Co, Calcutta
 Language: Bengali

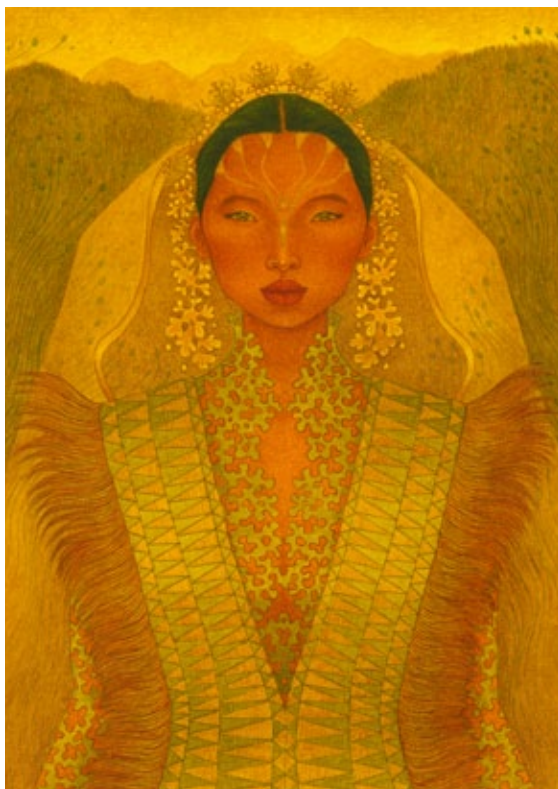
ROOTED IN NATURE

This Manipur Artist's Canvas Celebrates His Motherland.

Thokchom Sony is a New Delhi and Manipur based visual artist. He has a bachelor's degree in Applied Arts from Jamia Milia Islamia University, New Delhi and holds a post graduate diploma in Animation and VFX from AJK Mass Communication and Research Centre, Jamia.

He has exhibited his works in Imphal, New Delhi, Mussoorie, Gurgaon and Mumbai.

His latest series, "Growing Wild" is about his journey back to his roots in a quest for his identity. Key elements of the work include depicting indigenous communities, connecting the geometric designs of the tribal textiles with the geometric designs of nature and learning about symbiotic relationships and biomimicry from nature.

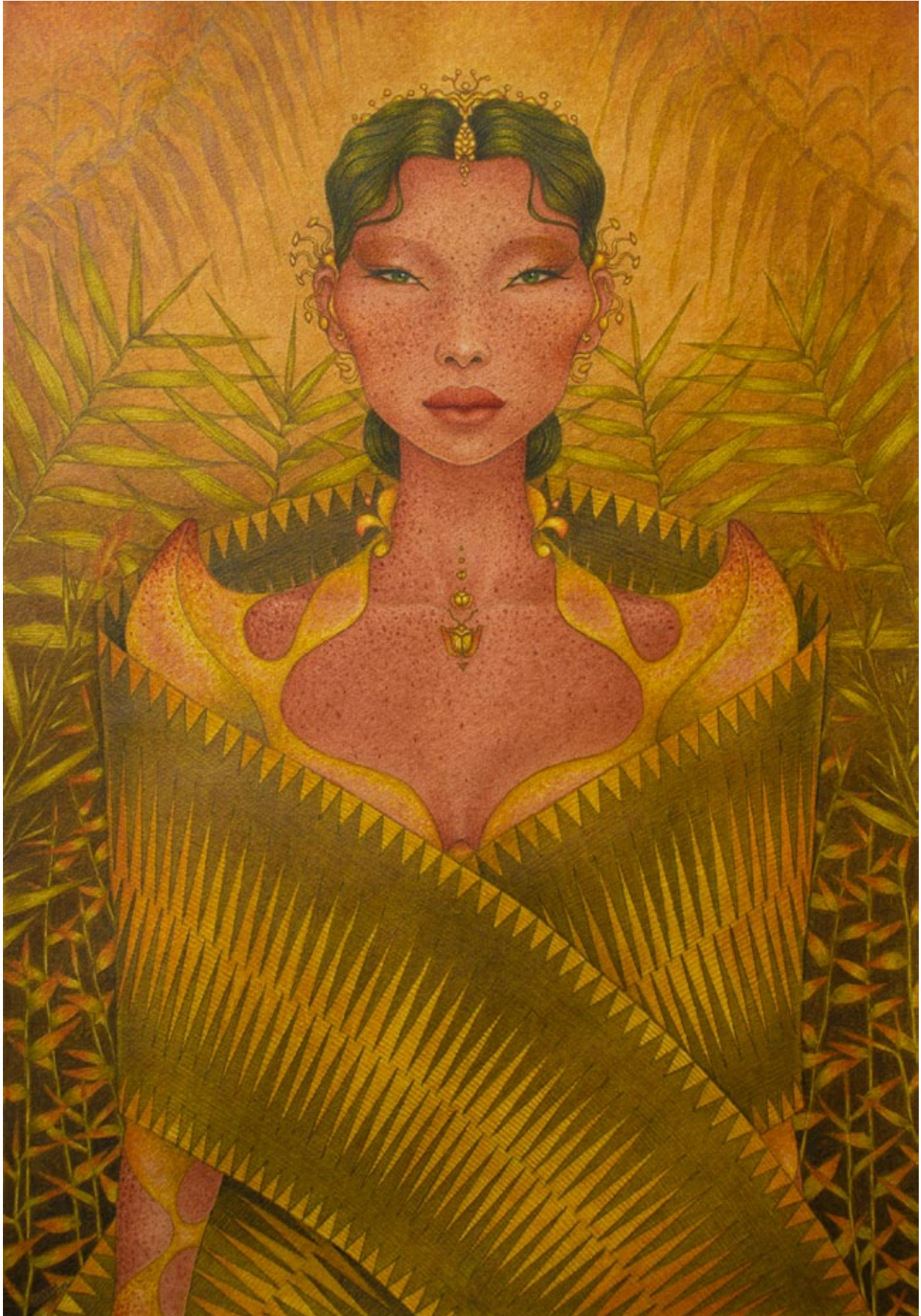


"A New Beginning" is about a utopian world that I imagine in the future where human civilization thrives closely with nature and the other life forms that exist all around us.

"In art I found my voice to express, connect, communicate and heal. As an artist from Manipur, I tell stories stemming from my roots and culture through my watercolour paintings."



The Title "Epam Lamdam" is a meitei language word that translates to a land where you were born and raised and have a strong bonding and connection.



“Evolutionary adaptation” When I observe the wild grasses, the reeds, the bamboos, the insects, the native animals, I see my own reflection, I feel home, I feel I belong here. The shape of my eyes, my nose, the texture of my hair, the colour of my skin have been carefully designed to adapt in this land, tested and refined over thousands of generations.



“Flow” is about our state of mind when we are so completely immersed with our heart and soul in doing some tasks that we lose the track of time and also find healing in the process.



“The Lover” is about the warm feeling when we see the sight of our beloved.

“I find nature to be quite magical and miraculous. I always have this curiosity to observe the designs and the connections of various life forms to one another in nature.”

The green hair color symbolizes the force of life and wisdom in nature. The “Sandrembi” (golden tortoise beetle) symbolizes my childhood curiosity and nostalgic memories. Wild grasses reflect my identity.

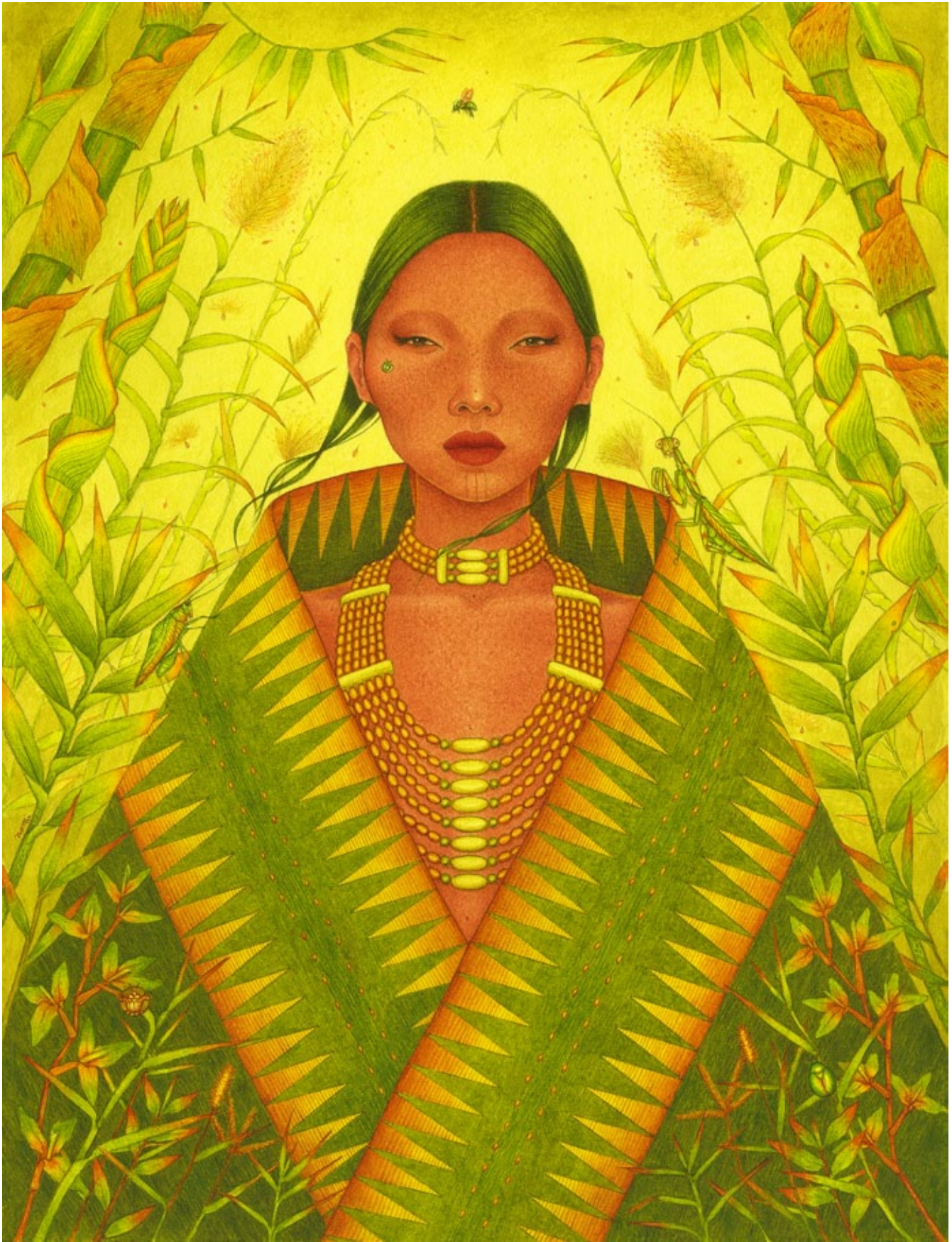
“I strongly feel that art in any form is a channel to express our feelings and release our energies in a positive way that can heal others as well as ourselves.”



“Little Green Umbrella” is a moment from my childhood memory when my mother got me a brand new umbrella in green, which is my favourite colour.



“Pure Soul” is about seeing the world through the eyes of a child with a sense of wonder and excitement.



"Perennial Roots" is about reflecting ourselves with the diverse species of deeply rooted perennial plants growing around us that are home to various species of animals and insects and protecting the topsoil

*Thokchom Sony can be reached through his website
www.thokchomsony.com or on Instagram @thokchom_sony.*

NIGHT RAIN



The rain is feral yet noiseless, mirroring the no man's land between sleep and wakefulness. Relentless it is, this other rain. Why had the threat of parenthood triggered this inadequacy? And in the folds of dark the lashes of dejection that her womb had failed in its most sacred duty. Anand and she could bring the baby home next month the adoption agency had communicated. Why did that thought bring lightning streaks of panic?

By Nandita Bose

Rains alter meaning. Outgrow that desire to bathe in its magic. And now she lies drowning in bitumen torrents.

The call came around eight and it startled her to note how late it was. Would have rushed to get dinner preparations out of the way but Anand had called to say he wasn't coming home. The vicinity of his office has two reclaimed lakes and all egress is so flooded most of his co-workers think it saner to stay on, work late and leave by midday tomorrow. The management has mooted this plan for employee

safety. His call had been brief and bare basic, as all their interchanges are these days. All marriages have their continental drift.

She'd finally got out of bed and walked about the apartment, unsure what next. That dilemma sorted itself. In his study, in reality an ambitiously named bare room that housed his desktop on a foldable table, the help had left a window open. It is as she is unpinning the sodden curtains that the thought strikes her. Has Anand's tone sounded evasive?

Nights, rainy or otherwise, carry wistfulness about them. Mysteries unearth at night and waft away unseen. The dark reveals what light may not. Why would someone not come home after a middling bout of rain? She goes to a window to gauge. It is barely a drizzle. Perhaps Anand is having an affair. A shortcut is chanced upon. Dinner will be scrambled eggs and toast. She opens the fridge, omits to note the number of eggs lined along the door or whether there are any at all, and shuts it again.

Would Anand have an affair? How does one ever know? Is he that type?

Any male is that type, some brutal wisdom she'd gleaned along the way apprises her. Unknown to herself she is on the sofa, hugging her knees, crumpling. What now? People are typically treated at the lowest end of the spectrum they are willing to put up with. In short, never take crap. That would be her resounding message to Anand. Outside, rain falls consistently unconcerned.

The white strained face of her mother flashes before her eyes, her deeply hurt and uncomprehending mother. For last year, out of the blue, Danish had informed her sister that he had filed for divorce, would be moving out and the kids' financial security would be looked after. They had been married eleven years then and had three children. Her mother has never come to terms with the betrayal. Or the stigma that stains her irrevocably.

He'd taken her call on the second ring, but clearly Anand isn't disposed towards conversation. His voice is tight: 'What's the matter? I am a little busy right now.'

She feels apologetic, almost relieved when he cuts the call. Anand fields far too many calls, mainly with his onsite teammates. Most nights he'd request an early dinner and garrison himself in the study. She watches late-night movies on TV. By when he is done, both are too exhausted for the barest conversation. Yet the silences and falling asleep together the moment their heads touch the pillows have a comforting intimacy. Life is gentle and treads a delicate rhythm. She didn't want more. What if he does?

The first time it was her sister who'd said it. 'What would you understand anyway? You don't have children.'

She has forgotten the context, just the sudden ice trail it left like a gash against her skin. It could have been forgotten but everybody wanted to weave that one fact into their conversations. Whether an old friend laughingly declares she is tired of waiting for 'good news' or an older uncle blesses her with an inordinate number of sons; adding that late is fine as long as one buckles down to the serious pursuit of motherhood.

Into their warmer silences, she'd try to introduce this topic. Anand would go quieter.

She should tell him straight up that she would not be the good wife, the wronged goddess who would sacrifice her happiness for his, while shedding dewy tears at the altar of eternal love. She is not that type. And that blasted rain, cold and heartless, pours on.

Fiddling with the TV offers no respite. Night tightens now, a coarse dark blanket of uncertainties. Her energies sink to their lowest ebb. Hunger abandons her. The violence of her thoughts throbs.

She catches a faded reflection of herself on the TV screen. Is that her hair that billows like a bad fog? When had she turned into this shabby, almost unrecognisable housewife? Does she have a sense of humour anymore? When was the last time she made an effort outside the confines of her kitchen? What book has she last read? Does Anand still carry a picture of hers in his wallet...? The one that was sent for his 'approval'.

Abruptly she goes to the small sit-out, aware that it will be soggy in the rain. And it is. The sparse trees in the square below that grew in the absence of space and sunlight look even more mournful all drenched. The garden lights within the compound sneezing in rain sprays.

Talk is cheap. It is very easy to talk about being unbending, and about divorce. Whereas the unknown is so dreadful that any alternative is acceptable. Perhaps she could halve her expenses and give up all her expectations of him in exchange for the privilege of staying on as if nothing is happening. They could keep the charade going and no one need find out. There is comfort in the thought, in continuity at all costs.

Knowing full well the predictable responses, the adoption was revealed only after all the approvals had come through. Her mother had been horrified. She calls each morning since with orders to 'try harder', whatever that means. She brings up that it has been just four years of marriage now and adoption, in any case, ought only be a last recourse. Technically, it is closer to five years of marriage and the decision was kind of sprung on her by Anand.

She often wonders whether it was a response to her desire to bring home one of the kittens the compound cat had birthed on the building terraces. A neighbourhood 10-year-old had taken her to admire the litter where a beautiful green-eyed tortoiseshell had stolen her heart.

Way back she had adopted a blanket policy of mostly agreeing to all of Anand's propositions. This was no different. What has she got in return?

Without warning the rain intensifies into menacing opaque sheets of roaring waters. No longer a spectator she, no longer being misted by the sprays as one is by perfume atomisers. The water cannons into her with ferocity. She is now caught in the storm. The cruel wind stabs, icy cold. The waters ought to have bitten into her skin. Something else does: a dreary misery she has never before faced.

She can't call it betrayal. She can't give it any name. It isn't even as if trust is broken. In all honesty she doesn't know anything for sure; just this enveloping loss of innocence, of being in exile forever. It is the feeling of being the loneliest ever.

Suddenly aware she is shivering wet, turns to go inside to change. Tonight her stack of comforting cotton pyjamas looks frumpy and undesirable. 'Much like myself,' she thinks. In the full length mirror her body loses its sanctity. For the first time as she peers it seems like any of a billion other women, each easily interchangeable. Her unique secrets, scents and hungers can have no meaning but what another may give them. And if another chooses to reject it all completely, turn lifeless.

The phone beeps an incoming message. 'Sorry couldn't take your call. Have dinner.'

She realises she had been rereading the seven words over and over. Each reiteration gives the words completely new meaning. Each version she weaves more miserable than the one before. What dinner? She isn't hungry. Still the cut vegetables and the kneaded dough need to be put away in the fridge and the worktop swabbed. On autopilot she goes about her regular nightly chores. Washes out the dishcloth and sponges, squeezes them out and spreads them to dry.

At the doorway she hesitates. Without Anand all her time in the apartment she spends in the hall. Not that she isn't comfortable in their bedroom. Yet there is always a sense of something missing, an incompleteness in his absence. Like the whiff of his deodorant lingering long after he has left for work.

Darting in, she stays just long enough to get pillows and a sheet to ward off the chills the rain has brought. Yet she stands undecided in the middle of the hall.

That little girl abandoned by her mother—does she too feel this desolate, this bereft? Is she awake in this storm as frightened about what the future holds? She is her baby now. Even though she hasn't seen the child's face yet or thought of a name for her. Anand would make a terrific dad. He has insisted on a girl child and has that stretching patience a child can depend upon.

A key turns in the lock and she almost screams out in fright as the door is slowly pushed open. A very bedraggled Anand drips on their doormat, almost unrecognisable without his laptop bag.

'How did you get here?'

'Don't ask. You can cross that "to hell and back for me" off the list of to-do for your husband. I feel like I have waded through every sewer in the city to come home.'

She hurries across to him swiftly with shining eyes, quipping: 'You smell it too. I thought you weren't making it tonight.'

'It was stupid of me to have attempted. Just that I know the dark upsets you sometimes.'

Puncturing the delicious aroma of the watery instant noodles topped with a soft-boiled egg apiece as they eat, huddled close on the sofa watching an inane OTT serial, she wonders aloud, 'How did you know? About the dark, I mean.'

Outside, the rain intensifies to a full-blown thunderstorm. In their stormless island, neither of them notices.



MEET THE WRITER: Nandita Bose writes relatable relationship stories about people like us against situational, cultural or patriarchal challenges. Her books are: *Something Borrowed*, *Something Blue*, *Everglow*, *Shadow & Soul*, *If Walls Could Weep*, *The Perfume of Promise* and *Tread Softly*. *Dewed* is a book of poems.

SELF

TAKE TIME TO NURTURE THE MOST IMPORTANT
PERSON IN YOUR LIFE—YOU!



GOING GREEN

21 simple ways to live eco-friendly

01 GO VEGGIE ONCE A WEEK

Try having a "Meatless Monday" where you explore delicious vegetarian recipes. It's a fun way to reduce your carbon footprint and discover new culinary delights.

02 DIY NATURAL CLEANERS

Make your own eco-friendly cleaning products using ingredients like vinegar, baking soda, and lemon. Not only are they effective, but they're also safe for the environment and your wallet!

03 GREENIFY YOUR THUMB

Start a small indoor garden with easy-to-grow plants like succulents or herbs. Not only do they purify the air, but they also add a touch of greenery to your home.

04 BYOC - BRING YOUR OWN CUP

Carry a reusable coffee mug or water bottle wherever you go. It's a simple habit that reduces single-use plastic waste and keeps you hydrated on the move.

05 LIGHTS OUT, STARS ON

Have a "lights-out" evening once a week where you switch off all unnecessary lights and electronics. Use the opportunity to stargaze, read by candlelight, or have a cosy movie night.

06 SECONDHAND CHIC

Explore thrift stores or online marketplaces for unique finds and gently used items. Not only is thrifting budget-friendly, but it also reduces waste by giving pre-loved items a new lease on life.

07 ZERO-WASTE PICNICS

Pack eco-friendly picnic essentials like reusable utensils, cloth napkins, and beeswax wraps instead of single-use plastics. Enjoying nature while minimizing waste is a win-win!

08 RETHINK TAKEOUT

Opt for restaurants that use eco-friendly packaging or bring your own containers for takeout. It's a simple switch that reduces waste and supports businesses with sustainable practices.

09 CARPOOL KARAOKE

Coordinate carpooling with friends or neighbours for work, school, or errands. Not only does it save gas and reduce emissions, but it also adds a fun social element to your commute.

10 POWER DOWN PARTIES

Host "unplugged" gatherings where guests are encouraged to disconnect from devices and enjoy each other's company. Board games, music jams, or backyard barbecues are perfect for reconnecting without screens.



11 ZERO-WASTE BATHROOM

Switch to eco-friendly personal care products like shampoo bars, bamboo toothbrushes, and refillable soap dispensers. It's a small change that reduces plastic waste and supports sustainable brands.

12 NATURE WALKS

Take regular walks or hikes in your local park or nature reserve. Not only does it boost your mood and fitness, but it also fosters a deeper appreciation for the natural world and the importance of conservation.

13 DITCH DISPOSABLE RAZORS

Invest in a safety razor or electric trimmer instead of disposable razors. It's a one-time purchase that reduces plastic waste and saves money in the long run.

14 UPCYCLE OLD CLOTHES

Get creative with old clothing by upcycling them into new garments or household items. From turning old jeans into trendy shorts to transforming T-shirts into tote bags, the possibilities are endless!

15 ECO-FRIENDLY GIFTING

Give gifts that promote sustainability, such as reusable shopping bags, stainless steel straws, or potted plants. It's a thoughtful way to spread eco-consciousness and reduce waste during celebrations.

16 VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING

Explore online volunteering opportunities with environmental organizations or community groups. Whether it's participating in virtual clean-up campaigns or sharing eco-friendly tips on social media, you can make a positive impact from the comfort of your home.

17 DIY BIRD FEEDERS

Make homemade bird feeders using recycled materials like pinecones, cardboard tubes, or milk cartons. Hang them in your backyard or balcony to attract feathered friends and support local wildlife.

18 ECO-FRIENDLY CRAFTING

Get crafty with eco-friendly materials like recycled paper, fabric scraps, or natural dyes. From handmade cards to DIY home decor, unleash your creativity while reducing waste.

19 GREEN SCREEN MOVIE NIGHTS

Host eco-themed movie nights featuring documentaries or films that inspire environmental action. Pair it with sustainably sourced snacks and drinks for a guilt-free movie marathon.

20 KITCHEN SCRAP COMPOSTING

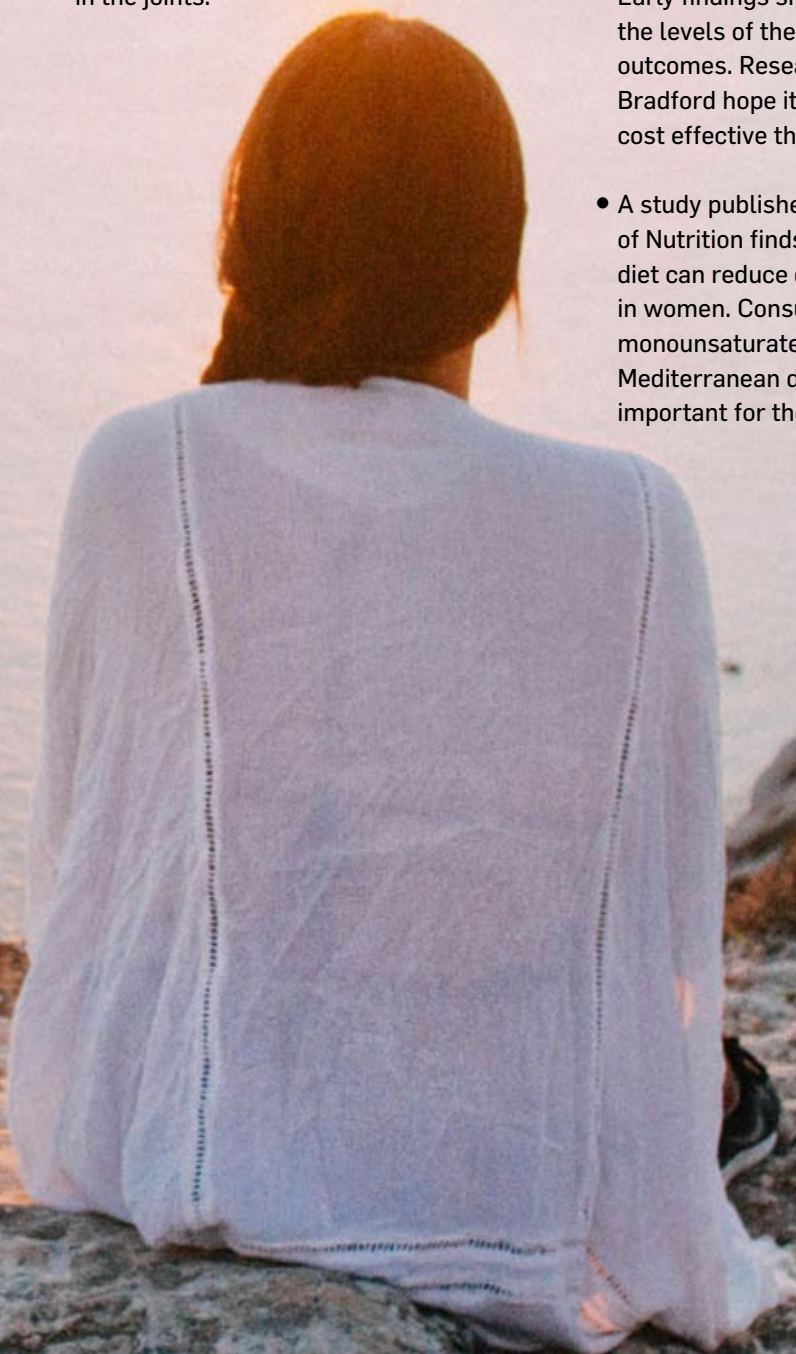
Start a mini compost bin in your kitchen for fruit and vegetable scraps. It's a simple way to turn food waste into nutrient-rich soil for your indoor plants or balcony garden, all while reducing landfill waste and supporting a healthier planet!

21 SHARE THE LOVE

Spread eco-friendly vibes by sharing your green living tips and experiences with friends, family, and social media followers. Together, we can inspire positive change and create a greener, cleaner world for all!

HEALTH BUZZ

- A study released by the Lancet shows that more than 1 billion people in the world are now living with obesity. Worldwide, obesity among adults has more than doubled since 1990, and has quadrupled among children and adolescents (5 to 19 years of age).
- A study published in the journal BMC Medicine has found that consuming caffeine can be helpful in making you more alert, less stressed and a better performer at work. It could also reduce the risk of inflammation and degeneration in the joints.
- A new study shows that boiling your tap water for just five minutes and filtering it may dramatically lower the amount of microplastics you drink. Nano and microplastics (NMPs), which are bits of plastic as tiny as one-thousandth of a millimetre in diameter, have been found in a host of products and even in tap water.
- A new test aiming to predict the risk of breast cancer returning or spreading is being trialled in the UK. The process, called Ran Diagnostics, works by identifying two proteins in the cells of the original cancer. Early findings show a correlation between the levels of these proteins and patient outcomes. Researchers at the University of Bradford hope it could be quicker and more cost effective than existing genetic tests.
- A study published in the British Journal of Nutrition finds that a Mediterranean diet can reduce depressive symptoms in women. Consuming fish and monounsaturated oils, both part of the Mediterranean diet, proved particularly important for the association.

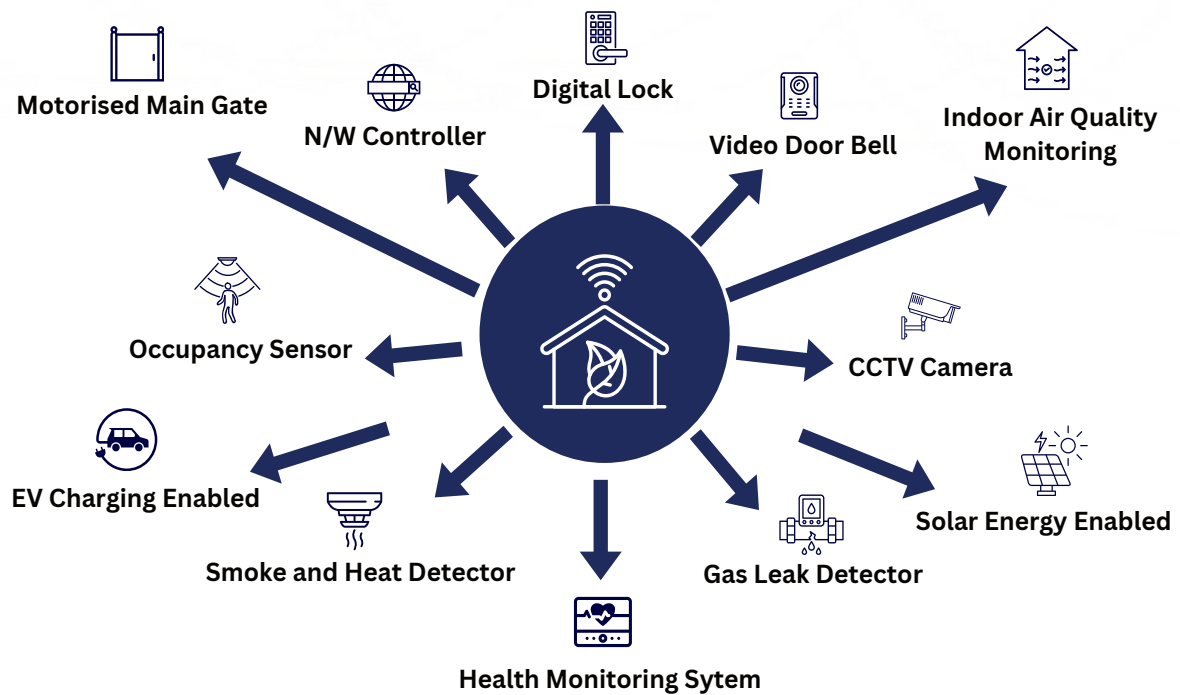




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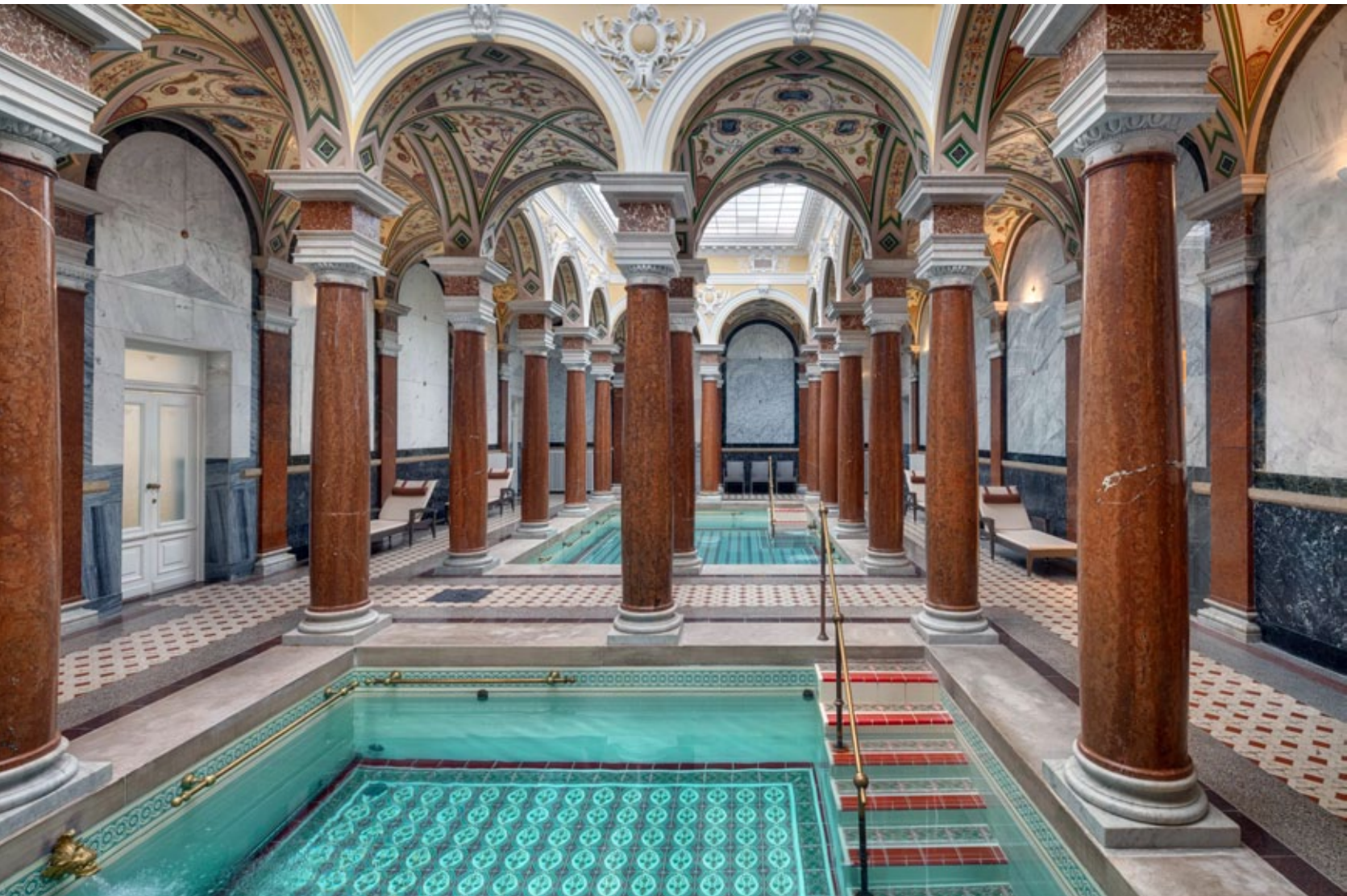
THE ART OF RELAXATION

A Journey to Wellness and Renewal in Czechia's Spa Culture

Nestled amidst the picturesque landscapes of Czechia, a realm of relaxation and rejuvenation awaits those seeking an escape from the hustle and bustle of modern life. The Czech spas are renowned for their therapeutic waters and centuries-old traditions, which calls thousands of visitors into a world where wellness and tranquility converge. Czechia's spas are distinguished by their mineral-rich thermal waters, celebrated for their therapeutic properties. Embark on a journey to historic spa

towns such as Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně, where elegant architecture and serene landscapes provide the backdrop for healing experiences that have drawn visitors for centuries.

Czech spas seamlessly blend ancient healing practices with modern luxury. From time-honored treatments to cutting-edge wellness programs, each spa experience is curated to harmonize the body, mind, and spirit, promising a holistic approach to rejuvenation.





In the West Bohemia, Mariánské Lázně stands as a beacon of relaxation, celebrated for its illustrious spa heritage and therapeutic treatments that seamlessly blend tradition with modern wellness. Here, guests embark on a rejuvenating journey, experiencing a symphony of spa treatments designed to harmonize the body, mind, and spirit. Here, Guests can indulge in mineral baths, immersing themselves in the therapeutic elixirs drawn from the town's natural springs. Mariánské Lázně is renowned for pioneering CO2 dry gas baths, a distinctive treatment harnessing the power of carbon dioxide. This innovative therapy is known for its positive effects on the cardiovascular system, skin rejuvenation, and overall well-being. Guests experience a gentle effervescence that contributes to a sense of vitality and renewal.

Up next, we have Karlovy Vary which has earned its reputation as an international spa destination. Visitors from around the globe seek the therapeutic embrace of its

mineral springs and the timeless allure of its spa traditions. Karlovy Vary boasts a collection of exquisite spa buildings, architectural gems that reflect the town's spa heritage. From the grandeur of the Mill Colonnade to the intricate details of the Market Colonnade, the spa architecture enhances the overall ambiance, creating an atmosphere of refined relaxation.

Beyond spa treatments, visitors can immerse themselves in the cultural richness of Karlovy Vary. Stroll along the Teplá River, explore the town's historic sites, and savor the renowned local delicacies, creating a holistic experience that goes beyond the spa walls.

In the heart of Europe, Czech spas invite guests to unwind, rejuvenate, and rediscover a sense of balance. With healing waters, historic charm, and a commitment to wellness, these spas offer a unique and transformative journey to those seeking a sanctuary of tranquility.

ABOUT CZECHIA:

Czechia in Central Europe is a country that's known for over twelve hundred castles, sixteen UNESCO World Heritage Sites, thermal spa's, crystals, glass and a long history. Apart from Prague, and known for its therapeutic spas not only in Karlovy Vary, Czechia has picturesque places like Český Krumlov, South Moravian region – Brno and the beautiful cultural Landscape the Lednice – Valtice complex. The local currency is Czech Korona. Embrace the magic of the Czechia and explore a realm of cultural wonders and breathtaking beauty.

OF PERMANENT LOSS

Amritsar's Partition Museum houses moments that should never have happened

By Preethy Rao

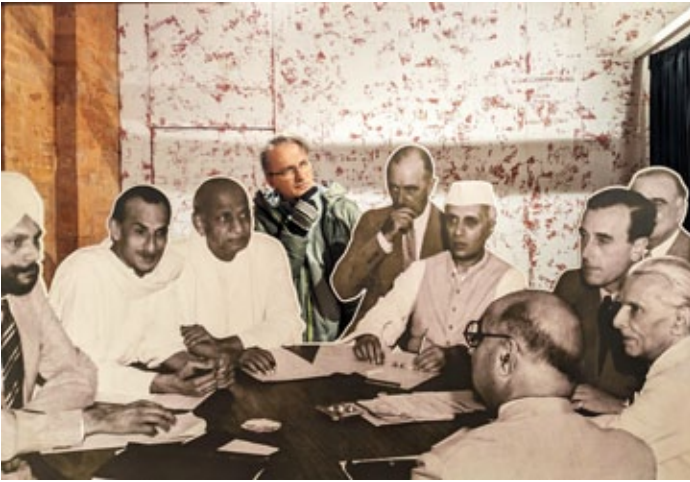


Amere 30 kms from the Pakistan border, Amritsar wears its border status perennially. You get assailed by inviting sales pitches of “Border” “Border” in the busy market area outside the Golden Temple by touts selling tickets to that famously over-the-top, goose-stepping hit show at the Wagah border.

But lest we forget—the history of the border involved bad blood—events and festering politics and very importantly families and lives that were shattered and silenced in history books. The Partition Museum

wrenches those stories out of people’s past pain and places them front and centre for you to make eye contact with the biggest human error in Indian History, with sobriety and empathy.

The Museum is housed in the grand historic red brick Town Hall—itsself crying history as once the office of the British and a jail. In the bustling Katra Ahluwalia market square—a great equaliser with the Golden Temple nearby and shops selling pickles, scarves, Gucci knock-offs and the lovely phulkaris - all providing one hell of a multi-sensory experience that



leaves you alive to the beat of the city. Add to it the hourly ring of the majestic bell, and it's a perfect setting. Choice of location. Tick.

The Museum systematically presents the political backstory to the Partition in 14 gallery sections – tracing the history of Amritsar itself to the Freedom Movement, the call for separate countries to the horrific Partition and after. Clear signages and write ups with clear images draw you in. Interestingly the Museum captures with equal clarity; the other two lesser talked about Partition experiences– of East Bengal and the Sindhi wave.

The geo-political story behind this watershed event is not free from politicians who were flawed human beings. Why and how Sir Radcliffe was coopted to do the rush job of slicing a geography—of how he wished to never talk about it again—journalist Kuldip Nayar talks about his interview with the man.

What happened after the split? How could you possibly cleave art, culture, music, sports? Who goes where? Who stays? Who moves? Singers, poets took sides. One country's loss was another's gain. Sports teams were halved. It is not merely loss of land – as we are made to believe – it's a greater loss of knowledge and wisdom. This is an interesting section on how these fractures were resolved – or not.

The Partition belonged to people who lived it. Recorded oral histories on TV screens line your walk-through—of individuals talking about their own flight out of Lahore and Pakistan–Punjab as children and young adults. Not one that does not involve loss, violence and heinous crimes. Rapes, arson, immolations were routine. But then so were stories of hope and humanity where neighbours guarded lives at the risk of their own. Hooking up to the headphones means the narrator is suddenly confiding in you. The accounts move you to tears.

There's no going back. If you listen to each one of them it will take all day—and listen you must.

With the first-hand voices, displayed are the objects that refugees carried with them as dear or just what they could lay their hands on in a hurry. A doll, a watch without the wearer, a bridal dress, a bowl, a spoon—silent witnesses to who knows what.

For museums to evoke empathy for the times, an experience needs to be re-created. Tick. The rooms have constant background audio that transports you to the experience of being a refugee. One room just has the haunting whistling of the train—that now infamously stands for the brutality of the migration—trains full of dead bodies arrived at Atari station we are told (not far from here – worth visiting too). Another has the announcements in a refugee camp; of lost people seeking their lost family, ration distribution timings, barrack numbers and so on. The mundane indignity of it all.

The Partition Museum will be a gem in your Amritsar itinerary, holding its own in your otherwise hedonistic ride of kulchas and almost-edible lassis. A museum that socks you in the gut and reminds you that when religion and politics mix, all you get is a mess.



MEET THE WRITER:
Preethy Rao runs Gubbachi, a Bengaluru-based NGO that educates and empowers migrant children. She loves observing people and cultures and never says no to a travel opportunity.

nature NUGGETS



The Earth's ozone layer is on track to fully recover within four decades thanks to global efforts to phase out those ozone-depleting chemicals, according to the UN. Not only is this great news for the ozone, it also sets an inspiring precedent for the climate crisis.

Believe it or not, the Sahara Desert is fertilising the Amazon Rainforest from thousands of miles away! Yes, the world's largest desert could be helping the world's largest rainforest — every year, nutrient-rich Saharan dust is lifted off the desert floors and transported by wind across the Atlantic ocean and deposited in the Amazon basin.

African buffalo herds actually use a form of voting when trying to decide which direction to travel in. One

at a time, adult females will stand up and look in a certain direction before sitting down. Whichever direction gets the most amount of looks is typically where the herd travels.

Quick quiz: are there more stars in the sky or trees on earth? You probably guessed wrong. Scientists have determined that the number of stars in the Milky Way ranges from 100 billion to upwards of 400 billion, but there is an estimated amount of 3 trillion trees on Earth.

Scientists have discovered that dogs have their individual music preferences. While these tastes may differ from dog to dog, one of the most commonly preferred genres is reggae.

TRAVEL

WHERE ARE YOUR DREAMS
TAKING YOU THIS SEASON?



BIRCHWOOD RETREAT

Tranquil Escape to Coffee's Charms

By Meenakshi Gupta



A way from the hustle-bustle of city life, I was looking for a getaway to unwind amidst nature. Sometimes it is so therapeutic to slow down and just do nothing but admire nature. Soaking up the aroma of the fresh air and absorbing nature impacts a human being in many ways. Nature has a remarkable ability to calm the mind and soothe the spirit. Whether it's the gentle rustle of leaves or the melodious chirping of birds, spending time in nature can evoke a sense of peace and tranquillity that helps alleviate stress and anxiety. Just 240 km from Bangalore and 4 and a half hour smooth drive, I landed in Birchwood Retreat.

Staying at a resort nestled in the heart of a coffee plantation promises a unique and rejuvenating experience, immersing yourself in the serene beauty of nature while offering luxurious amenities and hospitality.

Nestled amidst lush greenery, the resort sits like a hidden gem amidst the expansive coffee plantations. As you arrive, a sense of tranquillity washes over you, the crisp air carrying the earthy fragrance of freshly brewed coffee beans. The resort's architecture seamlessly blends with the natural landscape, with rustic yet elegant cottages

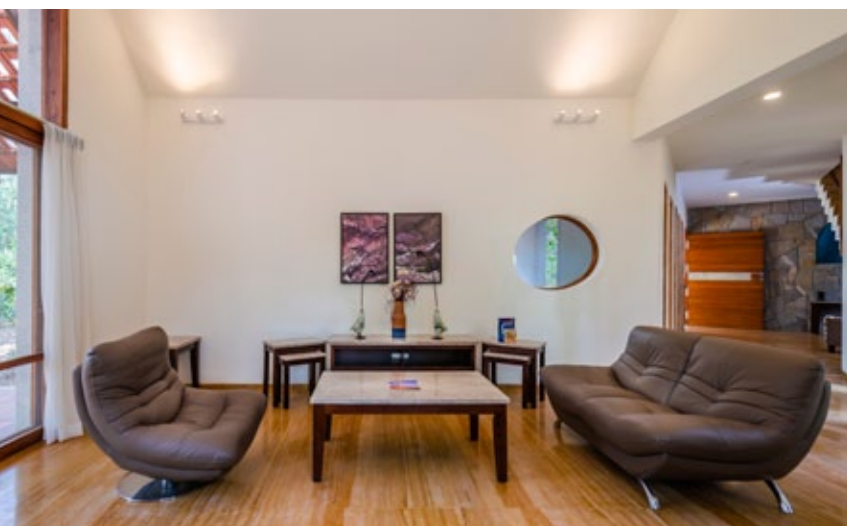
scattered amid the verdant foliage. Each cottage offers panoramic views of the sprawling coffee estate, inviting guests to unwind in the lap of luxury while being enveloped by the sights and sounds of nature.

Outside, meandering pathways beckon you to explore the plantation, where rows of coffee bushes stretch as far as the eye can see. You wander through the verdant landscape, guided by the gentle rustle of leaves and the chirping of birds.

The resort offers a range of experiences tailored to immerse guests in the world of coffee cultivation.

You can embark on guided tours of the plantation, learning about the intricacies of coffee production from bean to cup.

As evening descends, gather around a crackling bonfire under the star-studded sky, swapping stories with fellow travellers as you savour freshly brewed coffee paired with delectable snacks sourced from the region. As the night deepens, you retire to your cosy cottage, lulled to sleep by the gentle symphony of nature outside your window, already dreaming of the adventures that await in the morning light.



THINGS TO DO AT THE BIRCHWOOD RETREAT, COORG

In addition to immersing yourself in the serene beauty of the coffee plantation, a resort nestled in such a location typically offers a variety of activities to enhance your stay and ensure a memorable experience. Here are some activities you might find at a resort amid a coffee plantation:

Nature walks: Guided nature walks through the plantation allow guests to explore the lush surroundings, learn about the local flora and fauna, and appreciate the ecological diversity of the region. Knowledgeable guides may point out unique plant species and provide insights into the coffee cultivation process.

Cycling: Exploring the expansive plantation on two wheels offers a refreshing way to soak in the natural beauty while enjoying a bit of physical activity. Resorts often provide bicycles for guests to explore the scenic trails and winding pathways at their own pace.

Coffee plantation tours: Delve into the world of coffee production with guided tours of the plantation. Guests can learn about the various stages of coffee cultivation, from planting and harvesting to processing and roasting. Interactive sessions may



include demonstrations of traditional harvesting techniques and opportunities to taste freshly brewed coffee.

Swimming: Many resorts feature swimming pools where guests can unwind and cool off after a day of exploration. A refreshing dip in the pool amidst the tranquil surroundings of the plantation is the perfect way to relax and rejuvenate.

Yoga and wellness sessions: Embrace holistic wellness with yoga and meditation sessions set amidst the serene surroundings of the plantation. Experienced instructors lead guests through rejuvenating practices designed to promote relaxation, mindfulness, and inner balance.

Bonfire nights: Gather around a crackling bonfire under the starlit sky for evenings filled with camaraderie, storytelling, and music. Resorts may organize bonfire nights where guests can unwind, mingle with fellow travellers, and create lasting memories against the backdrop of the coffee-scented air.

Kodava Cuisine: Indulge in the authentic culinary delight that reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Kodava people, an indigenous community residing in the Coorg region of Karnataka, India. “Kadambuttu,” steamed rice dumplings typically served with spicy meat or vegetable curries and the popular delicacy “Akki Roti,” a flatbread made from rice flour, often flavoured with herbs and spices. “Pandi Curry,” a spicy pork curry cooked with aromatic spices and fresh coconut, is a quintessential Kodava favourite. “Koli Curry,” a chicken curry infused with flavorful spices and coconut milk, is another beloved dish.

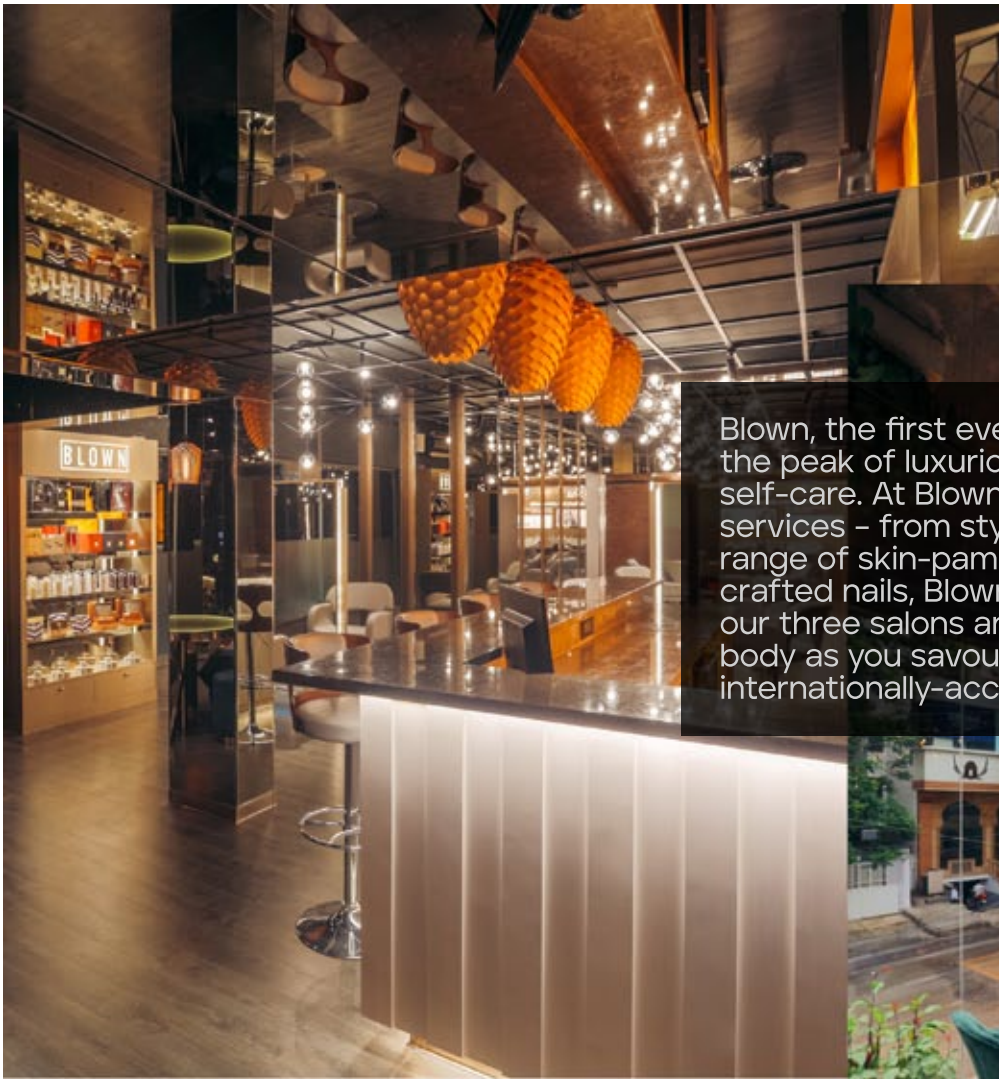
These activities offer guests a diverse range of experiences, blending adventure, relaxation, and cultural immersion to create a truly unforgettable stay amidst the tranquil beauty of the coffee plantation.

You can book your stay at
The Birchwood Retreat, Coorg.
Booking phone number: +91-8147773551.
Website: www.birchwoodretreat.com
Email: reservations@birchwoodretreat.com



MEET THE WRITER:

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GET BLOWN AWAY

Blown is not just a salon, rather, it's like walking into a sleek, classy lounge, making it the perfect place for any sort of gathering, be it a girls' day pampering session, a pre-game party before a stylish night out, or a rejuvenating bachelor or hen party. Blown is not merely a salon, but an experience: you can indulge in self-care, express your unique style, and embrace your true self.

3 TREASURES OF QATAR

QATAR IS AN OUTSTANDING LEISURE & TRAVEL LOCATION, BUT ON YOUR NEXT TRIP, DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT SOME OF ITS HERITAGE TREASURES AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS.

1

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF QATAR

Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, the National Museum of Qatar draws inspiration from and recreates the naturally occurring crystal formations known as the desert rose. Built around Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al-Thani's original palace, and the seat of government for 25 years, the National Museum of Qatar gives voice to Qatar's heritage whilst celebrating its future. It spans a whopping 430,500 square feet.

The museum traces Qatar's history and development over the centuries, teaching visitors about the country's history and the creation of its early cities. Exhibitions bring together antiquities and modern influences, stimulating conversation about the effects of rapid change.





2

KATARA CULTURAL VILLAGE

Katara Cultural Village has a stunning beach promenade, an impressive open-air amphitheater and network of exhibition galleries and cutting-edge facilities. The self-styled cultural village is nestled between the gleaming financial district of West Bay, and the half-moon towers of The Pearl residential neighbourhood. Bordered by a vast beach on one side, and the twin Katara Hills on the other, Katara is Doha's go-to destination for art, culture and cuisine.

Designed by Turkey's Zeynep Fadilloglu, who is believed to be the first female architect to specialise in mosques, the Katara mosque features Persian and Turkish tile and enamel work in shades of blue and gold, proffering a stark contrast to the surrounding buildings.



3

CRESCENT TOWER

Nestled within the enchanting Marina district of Lusail in Qatar, this architectural marvel is inspired by the country's national seal, which proudly displays traditional scimitar swords. The opulent Raffles and Fairmont Doha are ensconced on either side of the towers, inviting patrons into an unparalleled realm of refined luxury and an unrivalled living experience.



ABOARD THESE FIVE SWISS PANORAMIC TRAINS, THE JOURNEY IS AS GOOD AS THE DESTINATION!

Riding Switzerland's panoramic trains is a must-do experience for travellers, and it's easy to see why! These trains offer breathtaking sights where the destination becomes secondary to the awe-inspiring voyage itself. Each leg of the trip unfolds with stunning vistas, making the entire journey a feast for the eyes.

When you match that experience with the country's well-established Swiss Travel System (STS), considered one of the most efficient public transport networks globally, you know you've hit the jackpot in terms of travel sojourn. With the system's all-in-one ticket — the Swiss Travel Pass (STP), travellers can hop

on trains, buses, and boats across the magnificent Swiss countryside and its vibrant cities.

All STP pass holders can also embark on the unforgettable Grand Train Tour of Switzerland aboard the country's renowned panoramic train routes. Here are the five most popular panoramic train rides that are always on time and a convenient mode of transportation for all passengers offering glimpses into local living.



1. GLACIER EXPRESS

The Glacier Express is known as the 'slowest express train in the world' for a reason! On this captivating 8-hour journey between Zermatt and St. Moritz, passengers are treated to unfiltered views of breathtaking landscapes, deep valleys, picturesque villages and magnificent mountain ranges through panoramic windows. The Glacier Express offers an unrivalled experience as it crosses over 291 bridges and through 91 tunnels, showcasing some of the country's most complex and ingenious engineering.

Through the duration of this luxurious rail journey through the Swiss Alps, passengers are treated to an exclusive bar and on-board entertainment, freshly prepared meals and a selection of regional wines that perfectly complementing the scenic views. Add to that a concierge service and a personal travel guide, and you're sorted.





2. BERNINA EXPRESS

On the Bernina Express ride to Tirano from St. Moritz, one passes through Lugano the Mediterranean haven that merges the best of Swiss and Italian cultures and awes with its small-town charm. The Bernina Express navigates the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Rhaetian Railway, taking passengers through awe-inspiring landscapes that include glaciers, alpine forests, charming Swiss villages, and the famous Landwasser Viaduct — an architectural masterpiece. This route offers different views in different seasons. In winter, you see the magic of frozen lakes, and snow-covered mountains and can even catch glimpses of local skiers making the most of the season. In summer, verdant fields and farming settlements enthrall in all their vibrant beauty.

What sets this train route apart is its ascent to the Bernina Pass, that reaches a breathtaking 2,253 meters above sea level, making it Europe's highest railway journey!

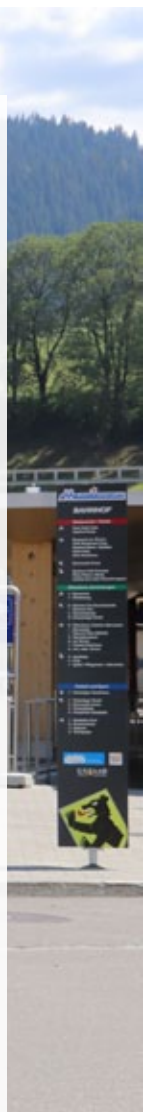
At Alp Grüm, that offers one of the most unforgettable views on the route, travellers can hop off for 15 minutes and take picture-perfect photos. A roving minibar and a range of culinary delicacies are also available onboard.



3. GOLDENPASS EXPRESS

The GoldenPass Express is an enchanting train journey that connects Lucerne to Lake Geneva in just 3 hours and 15 minutes. It offers a seamless transition from the snow-capped peaks of the Swiss Alps to the lush green meadows of the Lake Geneva region, providing captivating vistas at every turn. What makes this journey even more remarkable is that it is the only train connecting Interlaken to Montreux, offering a unique experience bridging the Swiss and French regions. From the Alpine scenery to charming towns and vineyards, passengers can witness the diverse landscapes of Switzerland and France all in one extraordinary trip.

The GoldenPass Express ensures maximum comfort and privacy with small compartments, and the new "prestige" travel class features adjustable leather seats that rotate 180 degrees, providing unobstructed views of the idyllic landscapes. With exceptional culinary offerings onboard, including snacks, light meals, and beverages, passengers can indulge their senses while immersing themselves in the breathtaking beauty of both countries.





4. LUZERN-INTERLAKEN EXPRESS

The Luzern-Interlaken Express is not only the shortest ride connecting Lucerne and Interlaken, but it also offers a scenic route through the heart of Switzerland, showcasing the region's stunning landscapes and picturesque lakes. Passengers are treated to breathtaking views as the train winds its way through charming Swiss towns, emerald lakes, and lush meadows. The iconic peaks of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau add a touch of old-world romance to the journey, evoking a sense of awe and wonder.

The train's interiors are meticulously maintained, providing passengers with spotlessly clean and comfortable surroundings. With ample space and a well-equipped onboard bistro, passengers can fully immerse themselves in the essence of Switzerland's natural grandeur while enjoying the highest level of comfort.



5. GOTTHARD PANORAMA EXPRESS

The Gotthard Panorama Express offers a two-in-one experience perfectly combining a scenic boat trip with a panoramic train ride! From Lugano to Flüelen, passengers enjoy the historic Gotthard route aboard the Express and from Flüelen, they take a boat cruise on a historic steamboat or modern boat across Lake Lucerne. This captivating journey concludes in the Italian-speaking city of Lugano, making it a delightful blend of Swiss and Mediterranean influences.

Warm meals are served on the boat and snacks and beverages can be enjoyed on the train. The first-class coaches are very spacious with enough room for six-footers to stretch out and enjoy the panoramic views. On the train's photo coach, one can open the windows, feel the fresh air and take photos!

Traversing the magnificent Swiss countryside by train is not only a convenient mode of transportation but also an eco-friendly, sustainable way to explore this stunning destination. You can buy the STP as early as 11 months and as late as 90 days before travel to Switzerland so that you can start using the country's diverse public transport network spread across over 90 cities and towns the moment you land. Children up to 16 years of age can travel free of charge with a complimentary

Swiss Family Card, when accompanied by a parent holding a Swiss Travel Pass. Although these trains are included in the Swiss Travel Pass, seat reservations and additional supplementary bookings are required. The tickets provide captivating vistas, engineering marvels, and an appreciation for Switzerland's grandeur. The journey itself becomes a memorable part of the travel experience. Discover Switzerland's beauty and create lasting memories with the Swiss Travel System.

DISCOVER KHAO YAI

A Slice of Undiscovered Thailand

Situated in the Thai province of Nakhon Ratchasima, Khao Yai is one of the most versatile tourist destinations in the world. This location boasts a wide range of attractions that cater to various interests, seamlessly blending modern and multicultural elements with idyllic landscapes and exciting safari trails.

Whether one is travelling with a group, as a family, or embarking on a solo adventure, Khao Yai offers a wealth of options to suit every preference. Every visit to Khao Yai promises fresh discoveries, allowing you to continually uncover its many prominent and alluring features, including:



KHAO YAI NATIONAL PARK

Khao Yai National Park is one of Thailand's largest and most abundant nature reserves, occupying over 2,000 sq. km of lush space.

It is home to 800 plus species of mammals, birds, and reptiles, as well as more than 100,000 species of insects! A safari into this lush park will lead its wanderers to Thailand's abundant flora and fauna, including some of the endangered species in the world, such as the Asian elephant, Asian Black Bear, and Serow.

Visitors also have access to activities like camping, trekking, night safari, birdwatching, and stargazing. Tourists can also take advantage of its protracted hiking and biking trails and check out its tall waterfalls including the Haew Narok and Haew Suwat, immortalised by Danny Boyle's 'The Beach' which starred Leonardo DiCaprio.



PRIMO PIAZZA

Khao Yai also contains attractions that pay homage to various cultures, like Primo Piazza – A little Italian town that perfectly mirrors the charms of a rustic Tuscan village.

A popular stopover for visitors, Primo Piazza brims with elegant Italian architecture and countryside quirks, including farms that house animals like merino sheep, and alpacas. Tourists can interact with and feed these animals by visiting the barn. Apart from Italian buildings, shops and alleyways, this quaint little town is well-groomed with colourful flower beds and green meadows backed by the view of majestic mountains.



WINERIES AND NIGHT MARKETS

The region is gifted with numerous wineries, due to Khao Yai's rich soil and climate which is ideal for growing wine-quality grapes.

PB Valley Khao Yai Winery is the largest vineyard in the area and is perfect for indulging in wine-tasting sessions and learning about the intricacies of winemaking. The winery grows red wine grapes like Shiraz, Tempranillo, and Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as white wine grapes like Chenin Blanc and Colombard, making it a hotspot for oenophiles.

To cap the day off, head to Pak Chong Night Market, a small night market in Khao Yai that is lined with delicious street food and shops that sell local produce, clothes, and accessories at affordable prices.



MAGNIFICENT FARMS AND FLORAL GARDENS

Khao Yai provides a much-needed escape from the noise and commotion of cities and overcrowded tourist hotspots. To enjoy a countryside experience, visit the Farm Chokchai – Asia's largest dairy farm.

Farm Chokchai organises tours where the visitors can immerse themselves in rustic farm life. From activities like cow milking and animal feeding to riding a horse or exploring lush surroundings on ATV, the farm has plenty to offer. One can also savour ice cream and delicious steak made from the farm's produce.

When travelling between the months of early November to late January, one might witness sunflower fields in full bloom in Manee Sorn Sunflower Field (Rai Manee Sorn) which is just a few minutes away from the main road in Khao Yai. The mesmerising field of sunflowers spread across acres of land is a fantastic sight and draws meandering tourists off the road. The park also has a miniature market where visitors can buy sunflower seeds and enjoy food and drink.



HAVEN OF RECREATION AND RELAXATION

Beyond the thrilling escapades, the region boasts a multitude of attractions where visitors can unwind, rejuvenate, and partake in leisurely activities. For those seeking a touch of euphoria, Ban Tha Chang Spring provides an exquisite spot for a refreshing dip. Meanwhile, avid golf enthusiasts can indulge their passion on the expertly crafted Toscana Valley Golf Course. Khao Yai also presents a plethora of amusement parks and recreation facilities, with highlights such as the thrilling Khao Yai Speedway Speedkart, tailored to provide endless entertainment for the young and the young at heart.

For couples seeking a romantic retreat, Khao Yai offers a selection of enchanting resorts. The four-star French country manor U Khao Yai and the European-castle-inspired Mövenpick Resort Khao Yai set the stage for an idyllic escape.



A PROFUSION OF UNIQUE THEMED RESTAURANTS AND CAFE

The region's charm extends to its assortment of unique themed resorts and dining experiences. The enchanting ambience of The Witches Brew Restaurant Khao Yai, the Michelin-starred culinary excellence of Midwinter Green, the toothsome offerings of The Chocolate Factory Khao Yai, and the tranquil Waterside House campsite create a tapestry of culinary and aesthetic delights.

Establishments like Ribs Mannn, Dairy Home Farm Shop, and Priom Café, also offer distinctive flavours and ambience, contributing to Khao Yai's vibrant dining experiences.

*Information Courtesy:
Tourism Authority of Thailand*

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IZU PENINSULA, JAPAN

Located in the picturesque Shizuoka province, the Izu Peninsula stands out for its captivating natural beauty, pristine beaches, upscale highland resorts, and hot springs. An idyllic seaside getaway, this region is surrounded by mountains, striking rock formations, and the expansive sea, ensuring fresh air. The allure of Izu is enhanced by its proximity to some of Japan's best beaches and historically rich Atami and Shimoda. The distinct charms of Higashi Izu, Nishi Izu, and Ito City contribute to its appeal. It is accessible via a swift bullet train journey from Central Tokyo, taking just under an hour.

Estimated AQI: Less than 30 (AQI.in)



SOPRON, HUNGARY

Tucked in northwestern Hungary, Sopron is a quaint wine-producing region with its bucolic terrain creating a tranquil atmosphere. Dotted with heritage sites and ancient Roman empire ruins, you can enjoy the bird's eye view from a 13th Century Fire Tower and relive the past at the Fabricius house, just a short walk from the tower. Visit Esterházy, Classicist Széchenyi Castle, and the Old Synagogue. Nature lovers can hike in the Fertő-Hanság National Park, home to the 20,000-year-old Lake Fertő, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. To cap off the day, go wine-tasting at the wineries, especially Taschner Wine and Champagne House for Blue Frankish and Green Veltliner. Try local delicacies, Fertő Lake fish soup, bean soup with plums, and Winzer cabbage.

Estimated AQI: Less than 10 (IQAir.com)



AMBOSELI, KENYA

What better way to seek repose in nature than venturing into the great African plains? Kenya's Amboseli National Park has rich biodiversity and hosts hundreds of bird species, from pelicans to kingfishers and raptor species. For an unobstructed view of the free-ranging elephants in their natural habitat, a stay at Ol Tukai Lodge Amboseli is recommended. Overlooking Mount Kilimanjaro offers an intimate connection with nature, complemented by eco-conscious amenities. The resort also facilitates encounters with the local Maasai tribe for an immersive cultural experience.

Estimated AQI: Less than 15 (Plumelabs.com)

SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS, ANTARCTICA

Far from the effects of industrialisation, Antarctica makes for a perfect clear-air destination. The South Shetland Islands, a 540 km-long chain of islands lined with ice-filled fjords and massive icebergs, are populated by seabirds, penguins, seals, and whales. The best way to explore it is with Antarctica21 fly-cruise expedition. After a luxurious ride to the peninsula, you can reach the islands on inflatable Zodiacs accompanied by polar guides. The unique aspect is that the routes are altered as per the climate, rendering a different experience every time. Apart from the South Shetland Islands, the voyage includes visits to the Antarctic Sound, the Gerlache Strait, and the Penola Strait.

Estimated AQI: Less than 15 (Accuweather.com)



UDON THANI, THAILAND

Surrounded by forests, paddy fields and hills, Thailand's Udon Thani province offers an unadulterated atmosphere for outdoor activities like camping, glamping, rafting, trekking, and safari. From the natural wonders of Phu Foi Lom Eco-Park and Red Lotus Lake to the historical charms of Phu Phra Bat Historical Park and Ban Chiang Museum, this Thai countryside comprises a multitude of attractions. You can see its thriving local textile and silk markets, buy handmade artefacts at the night markets, and relish Thai food. Don't miss trying Isaan food at the highly acclaimed restaurant Samuay & Sons. To ease travel formalities, Thailand is offering Indians a visa-exempt entry until May 10, 2024.

Estimated AQI: Less than 25 (IQAir.in)



LA DIGUE, SEYCHELLES

Known for its awe-inspiring landscape and beach idylls, La Digue is one of the most hankered islands in Seychelles. The allure is heightened by the presence of granite formations, golden sands, and gently swaying palm trees. The clear water of its bays is perfect for kayaking and snorkelling. Relax at the jaw-dropping beachside of Anse Source D' Argent, take a dip in the natural pools of Anse Cocos, or hike to Anse Marron caves and jungles.

Estimated AQI: Less than 15 (Accuweather.com)



CAM RANH, VIETNAM

Cam Ranh finds itself on top of a Vietnam travel itinerary due to its unspoilt natural vistas and proximity to Nha Trang coastal town. With white sand beaches, vibrant coral reefs, and forests, this southwestern region serves as an excellent clean-air getaway. One of the best ways to indulge in barefoot luxury and exceptional Vietnamese hospitality is by staying at The Anam Cam Ranh. Deeply rooted in the cultural aesthetics of Vietnam, it offers epicurean journeys, including authentic traditional and global gourmet meals made using locally sourced ingredients and produce. Visit the Ponagar Cham Towers, Long Son Pagoda, the Institute of Oceanography, and Vinh Hy Bay.

Estimated AQI: Less than 40 (Accuweather.com)



ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

Zanzibar, one of the main islands in the Tanzanian archipelago, is gifted with tranquillity. Endless stretches of white sand meet crystal-clear blue waters flanked by palm leaves gently sifting warm sunlight. Tucked away in Kizimkazi village is The Residence Zanzibar, a private pool villa-only retreat. Guided by the resort's herbalist, you can relish the island's clean, refreshing air as they journey through villages and spice plantations. The uninhabited Pungwe and Kwale islands within the Menai Bay Conservation Area provide an opportunity to enjoy a seafood barbecue amidst the invigorating, untainted air.

Estimated AQI: Less than 20 (Plumelabs.com)

Disclaimer: AQI sourced from IQAir.com, Aqi.in, Plumelabs.com, and Accuweather.com



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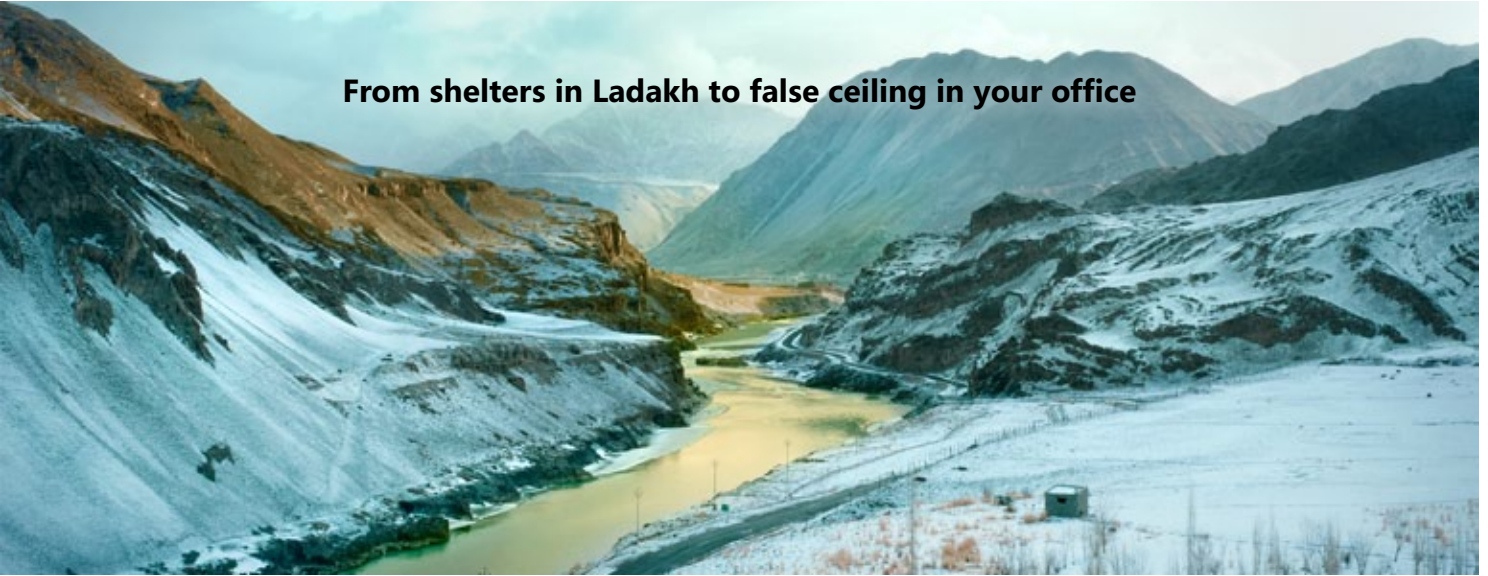
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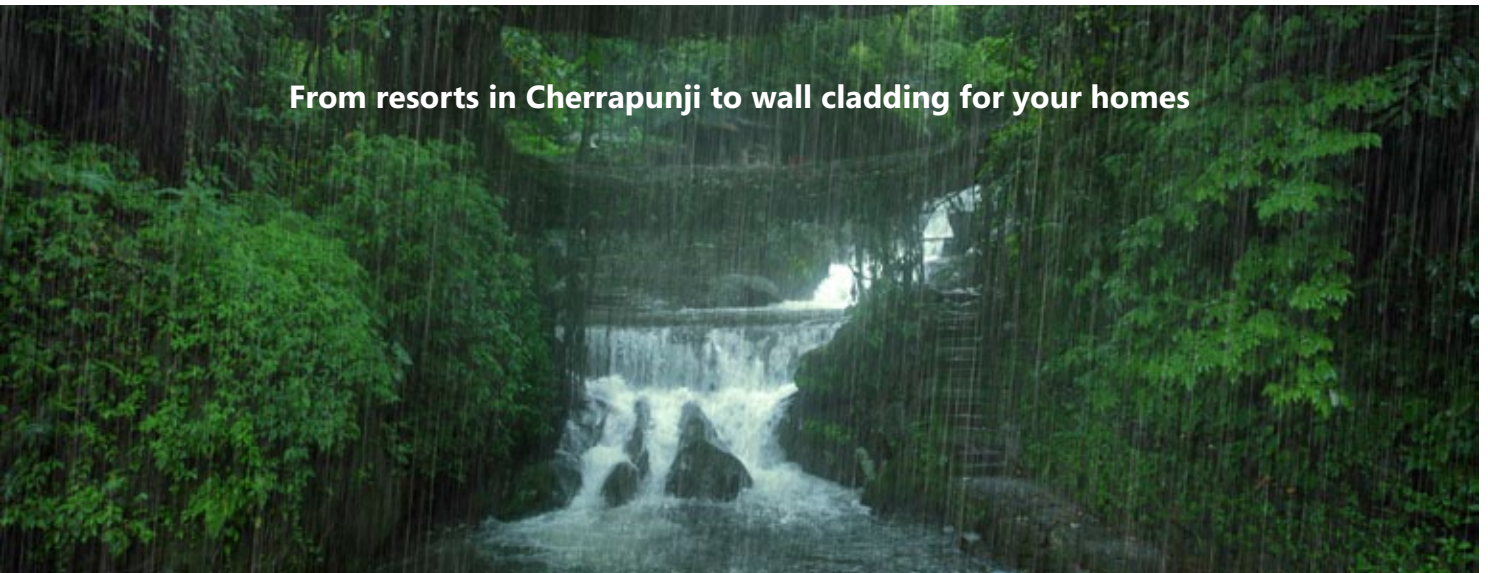
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