

August 2024 ₹ 100

Women's era

**DIVE INTO
HIDDEN REALMS**

**SHACKLES OF
HOME-COOKED
FEASTS**

**THE DIGITAL
BRAIN DRAIN**

**BEAT THE
MONSOON BLUES**

**REDEFINING
MASCULINITY**

**KOREAN BEAUTY
TRENDS**

**PURSUING YOUR
BOLDEST DREAMS**





16 **ARTICLES**
GLORIFICATION OF MAA
KE HATH KA KHANA
BY SANJANA



20
BYTES VS BRAIN
BY RITU KAMRA KUMAR



22
RAIN PAIN REMEDY
BY S RADHA PRATHI



26
NAKED AMBITIONS
BY ENAKSHI J

31 SUNAYANA
MALHOTRA'S
SOLO EXHIBITION
"ANANDA"

68 EYES OF
ENIGMA
BY RENUKA KRISHNARAJA

76 WHISPERS OF A
HOMEMAKER
BY MANSI CHATURVEDI

84 WILL
BY AMULYA RASALKAR

94 THE GRAY
DIVORCE
BY CATHERINE KARTHIK

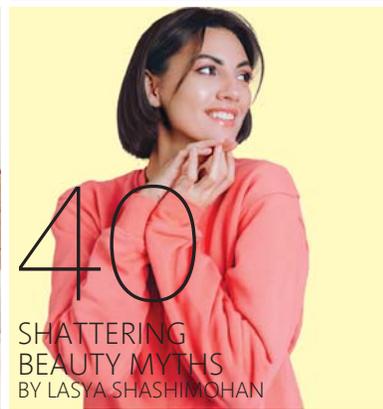
98 WOMEN,
WORK AND WORTH
BY DEEPAK BHATIA



28
BEYOND THE BUTTER
KNIFE
BY ADITI MAHESHWARI



34
SLEEP AND ITS
BEDFELLOWS
BY SNIGDHA JAUHARI



40
SHATTERING
BEAUTY MYTHS
BY LASYA SHASHIMOHAN



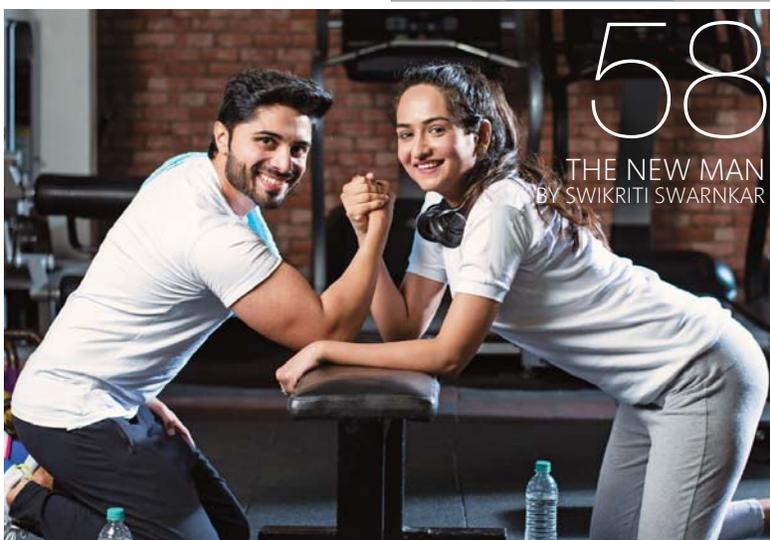
48
EFFORTLESS ELEGANCE
BY BHAVANA RAMAKRISHNAN



52
THE SOLITUDE SERENADE
BY REEMA BANSAL



54
GLOW LIKE A
K-BEAUTY STAR
BY ADITYA



58
THE NEW MAN
BY SWIKRITI SWARNKAR

Cookery

- 86 Mosaic of Tastes
- Kachi Keri Drink
 - Mexican Bhel
 - Homemade Chevda
 - Kosambari Salad
 - Spanish Pinchos
 - Babaganoush
 - Tomato Chutney
 - Buttered Beetroot Salad
 - Grilled Pomfret
- And Many More...





CINEPLEX

- 19 HIDDEN PEARLS (POEM)
- 24 HUBBIES HOWLERS
- 32 BEAUTY QUERIES
- 39 HOW I MET MY HUSBAND
- 46 HOW I SAVED MY MARRIAGE
- 47 CHILD CHALLENGES
- 57 AN OLD FAMILY ALBUM (POEM)
- 61 CLASSIFIEDS
- 63 NEW LAUNCHES
- 66 DIARY OF A LEAF (POEM)
- 69 THE INCIDENT I CANNOT FORGET
- 78 PERSONAL PROBLEMS
- 99 MY FAMILY FRIENDS AND ME
- 108 CAMPUS RUMPUS
- 109 TEENACHE
- 114 AS YOU SAY

Features



RADIANT LUXURIOUS FLAIR (FASHION)



NEWS IN PICTURE



LEARNING JAPANESE BY DEEPAK BHATIA



Fiction

- 62 HIRNI BY RAMCHARAN HARSHANA
- 80 REALLY BY SAVITA SINGH
- 104 THE DARK SIDE BY RENUKA KRISHNARAJA
- 44 INTERTWINED DESTINIES BY SNIGDHA JAUHARI

Editor, Printer & Publisher
DIVESH NATH

Published on behalf of Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.
Editor@WomansEra.com

Printed at:
B-23, Site-3, Industrial Area,
Meerut Road, Ghaziabad,
Uttar Pradesh - 201003

Founder: Vishwa Nath (1917-2002)

1. Contribution articles and stories
write@womansera.com
2. For advertising and product promotion queries:
advertising@womansera.com
3. To participate in features:
features@womansera.com
4. Opinion on articles:
letters@womansera.com
5. Subscriptions and others:
admin@womansera.com

OFFICES

Mumbai: 1704, Lodha Supremus,
Dr E Moses Marg, Worli Naka,
Worli, Geeta Talkies Building,
Mumbai-400018
Phone: 09810160122

EDITORIAL, ADVERTISEMENT & PUBLICATION OFFICE

Delhi Press Building,
E-3, Rani Jhansi Marg,
Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055.
Phone: 011-47377777.

Title WOMAN'S ERA registered with Government of India as trade mark.

Copy sale, subscription, all advertisers and writers can send mail to:

Woman's Era
Delhi Press
E-3, Rani Jhansi Marg,
Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110055.
INDIA

www.womansera.com

Woman's Era Print Subscription Plans

- | | |
|---|--|
| Current Issue
₹ 100
with effect from August 2020.
Shipping by Indian Postal Services. | 2 year - 24 Issues
₹ 2400
Shipping by Indian Postal Services.
Services by courier Assured delivery plus Add ₹ 720 for delivery by courier. |
| 1 year - 12 Issues
₹ 1200
Shipping by Indian Postal Services.
Services by courier Assured delivery plus Add ₹ 360 for delivery by courier. | 3 year - 36 Issues
₹ 3600
Shipping by Indian Postal Services.
Services by courier Assured delivery plus Add ₹ 1080 for delivery by courier. |

Cheques in the name of Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.
Posted to Delhi Press Building, E-3, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055.

The names of characters used in all fiction and semi-fiction articles are fictitious.

Copyright Notice
© Delhi Printing & Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.
New Delhi-110 055. India.

Self-addressed stamped envelopes must be enclosed with all manuscripts, otherwise the rejected material will not be returned. No responsibility is assumed for material submitted for publication.

ISSN 0971-1503

No article, story, photo or any other matter can be reproduced from this magazine without written permission. This copy is sold on the condition that jurisdiction for all disputes concerning sale, subscription and published matter will be forums/tribunals at Delhi.



Modi has already lost. The post-general election scenario has not played out well for the BJP+ (it's no longer BJP) or for the INDIA alliance either. They don't have the power to hold BJP+ from passing laws or modifying the presented bills, for their own camps do not have cohesion in what they speak in the Parliament. Recent upheavals about extremists being in prison and Niti Aayog commentary do not augur well for the development of the country. Further, all the opposition parties in the Parliament have now started gathering pace to offer caste and religion-based subsidies in their own states that are up for state elections. UP will definitely be a tough election for Yogi as well as Prime Minister Modi of BJP+ since they have lost the much-expected volume of mandate of the Indian populace, and it is no longer coming back in the short term.

Temple run is over and UP is almost lost. At the BJP camp in Uttar Pradesh, which is the hub of all political activity in the north Indian states and sort of elects the prime minister of the country, everything that was doing good for BJP has suddenly become a not-so-salvageable position. Yogi has appointed multiple people behind each seat to be closely watched and managed in the forthcoming Vidhan Sabha elections. Usually, elections are fought not by a strategy but by the work on the ground, which transgresses many months. Here those many months have been lost since the elections of the Parliament have shown that the Modi-Yogi formula has not worked with the electorate of Uttar Pradesh. They are now compelled to try the PDA formula of the Samajwadi Party, which now stands already patented by SP, and in most likelihood cannot be duplicated by another party by simply offering carrots to the PDA community. For sure, the BJP must have come over the religious fervour of the grand opening of temples in order to secure a mandate. The sheer ego and *ahankaar* of Modi could safely be considered to have contributed to this marginalisation of votes by the Indian population, who watched it on live TV with most of India behind barracks, while he compared himself with the Gods during the temple run.

The big fat Indian wedding is getting bigger and better for some of the Indian families, and if one could look at history, they are becoming the best and the most revered in the world. Taking the cue from the last few weddings that have happened in India, luxury brands are now focused on the great Indian deal. It has resulted in event management becoming an industry. Though ostentatious, all the big fat Indian weddings have some sort of a takeaway behind the scenes. There

are weddings where alliances between families result in bigger equity in their companies. Political pot sometimes becomes bigger. Akin to how Maharajas used to marry their wards into suitable families, which does not regard the relationship of husband and wife, or an alliance of lovers, but simply an arrangement through the young kids to prosperity and a bigger business. There seems to be nothing wrong in this deal, also since the fabric of marriage has changed with the advent of technology and the changing times.

Trump has almost won. The assassination attempt on Donald Trump has not only marked a victorious gain in his campaign but has almost decided his candidature. Choosing Vice President Kamala Harris over Michelle Obama, who had better ratings over the former, may have been a wrong decision on the Democrats' camp, who could have capitalised on the Obama legacy. Trying out a candidature for a female running for the top office, akin to Hillary Clinton, this could also fall flat despite whatever is being said in the Democrats' rating. With the charisma that Donald Trump brings into the office, America has a better chance to be further larger and more bright than ever. Important programmes like quantum computing and the mission to Mars have America top up to a next level in technology and continue ruling the world.

Wars are done. The Ukraine war seems to be over for President Zelensky and the NATO forces as Donald Trump is on the edge of a victorious Presidential run in the US. It is no secret that the Republicans may not defend their war alliance against Russia. In the last Presidential elections, Russia was targeted to have been supporting Donald Trump in his campaign for the mandate of becoming the President of the United States. If such was true, then this time around the war landscape will have a tough time saving Kyiv from Moscow.

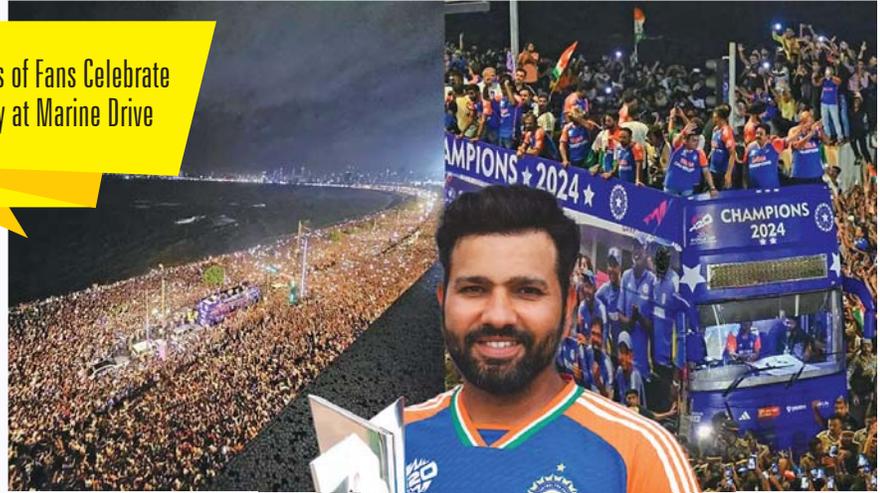
20 Medals in the Olympics for India. India is looking to reap the benefits of its young, trained, and athletic population, which is far better in sports and body than the earlier generation. In the next issue of Woman's Era, there will be a comprehensive report about the journey to the medals India won. With Indian enterprise coming in full support of athletes and the Indian government lending its helping hand, we hope we will be able to hit a 20 medals welcome home for this elite Indian Olympics team. In Tokyo 2022, India won 7 medals: 1 gold, 2 silver, and 4 bronze. All the best to us.

editor@womansera.com

CINEPLEX



Thousands of Fans Celebrate WC Victory at Marine Drive



The post-World Cup celebration in Mumbai was unprecedented. The streets were packed with an estimated 300,000 supporters, and a heavy police force was deployed across Marine Drive and Wankhede Stadium to manage the crowds.

PM Modi Interacts with Team India in Podcast



Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a light-hearted interaction with the Indian cricket team at his residence in Delhi. He shared joyful moments with Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid, listening to anecdotes about their World Cup campaign.

Ravindra Jadeja's Emotional Tribute to Late Mother

Team India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja posted a sketch on Instagram depicting him holding the World Cup trophy with his mother by his side. Jadeja lost his mother, Lata Jadeja, when he was just 17 years old and was part of India's U-19 team.



FROM BOLLYWOOD...

Bowler Jasprit Bumrah celebrated his win with his wife, Sanjana Ganesan, and their son, Angad. After the victorious match, Bumrah draped the winner's medal around his son and posed for a family picture at Barbados.

Jasprit Bumrah Wins 'Player of the Tournament' Award, Celebrates with Family



Natasa Stankovic and Hardik Pandya Finally Part Their Ways

Hardik Pandya and Natasa Stankovic have officially announced their separation after four years of marriage. The couple took to social media to disclose their mutual decision to go their separate ways.

Virat Kohli Shares Sneak Peek of His Luxurious Alibaug House

Virat Kohli shared a glimpse of his luxury home worth Rs 13 crores in Alibaug on Instagram. The video showcased the lavish interiors, a temperature-controlled pool, a bespoke kitchen, four bathrooms, a jacuzzi, and a sprawling garden.



Rohit Sharma Makes a 'Swag Entry' at Wimbledon Event

Cricketer Rohit Sharma attended the Wimbledon semi-final match at Centre Court, dressed in a stylish grey suit and sunglasses. The official Wimbledon page welcomed him with a caption, "Welcome to #Wimbledon, @rohitsharma45."



Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha Stun at Wimbledon Finale

Raghav Chadha and Parineeti Chopra attended the Wimbledon finale in style. Raghav looked dapper in a white shirt, brown blazer, and red tie, while Parineeti wore a white dress paired with a matching coat and black shades.



Politicians and Celebrities Bless Newly-Wed Couple, Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant

Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant exchanged wedding vows on July 12, attended by family, friends, Bollywood celebrities, and Hollywood personalities. PM Modi blessed the couple, along with other prominent politicians and personalities.



Anant and Radhika's Haldi Ceremony Dazzles with Sartorial Elegance

Radhika looked stunning in a yellow outfit by designer Anamika Khanna, and Anant wore a kurta and jacket by Sandeep Khosla at their Haldi ceremony on July 9 at Antilia. The event was attended by celebrities including Salman Khan, Ranveer Singh, Ananya Panday, and Sara Ali Khan.



Ambani's Wedding Registers Big International Stars' Attendance

Global personalities such as Kim Kardashian, Khloe Kardashian, John Cena, Rema, and Nick Jonas attended Anant Ambani's wedding in Mumbai on July 12, dressed in Indian attire.

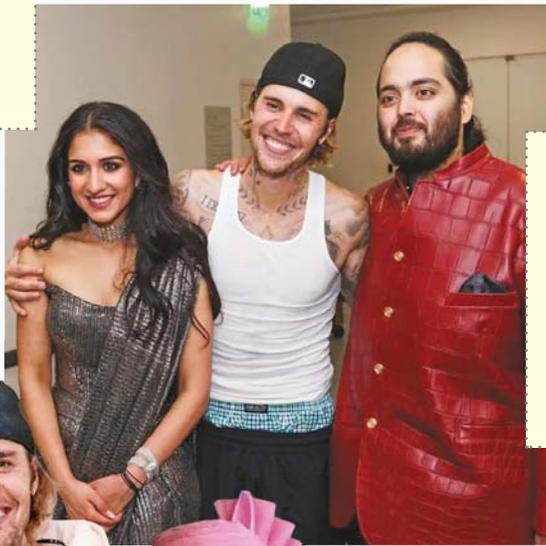


Celebrities Attend Mangal Utsav to Bless Newly-Wed Couple



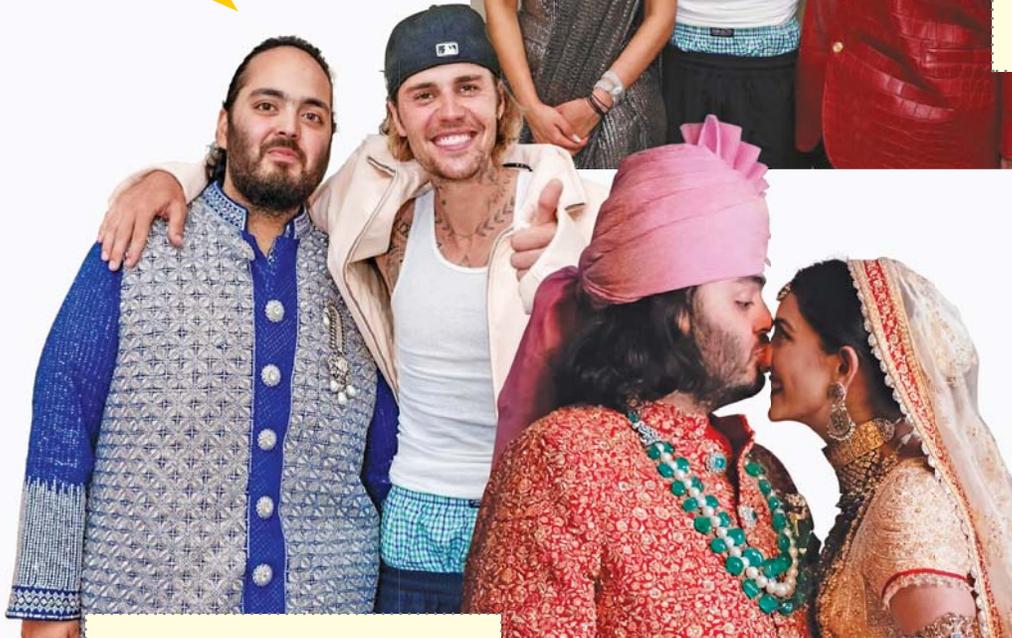
The wedding celebrations of Anant Ambani concluded with the Mangal Utsav ceremony at the Jio World Convention Centre. Guests included Ravi Kishan, Bipasha Basu, Karan Singh Grover, Rajiv Shukla, Subhash Ghai, and Jackie Shroff.

Justin Bieber Paid Staggering \$10 Million for Ambani's Pre-Wedding Bash



Canadian pop sensation Justin Bieber was invited to perform at the pre-wedding celebration of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant. He reportedly charged \$10 million (Rs 83 crore) to perform his popular hits at the sangeet ceremony.

Anant Ambani Gifts Watches Worth Rs 2 Crore to Celebrities and Friends



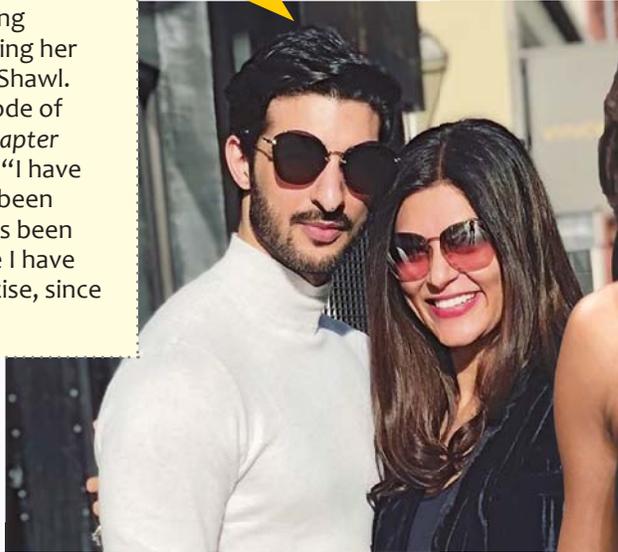
Anant Ambani gifted customised luxury Audemars Piguet watches worth Rs 2 crores each to Bollywood icons Shahrukh Khan, Ranveer Singh, and several other friends. The limited-edition watches, named the 'Luminary Edition,' are among only 25 in the world.





Sushmita Sen Clarifies Dating Rumours with Ex-Boyfriend Rohman Shawl

Actress Sushmita Sen addressed dating rumours involving her ex-boyfriend Rohman Shawl. During the debut episode of Rhea Chakraborty's *Chapter 2*, Sushmita told Rhea, "I have no man in my life. I've been single for a while. It has been almost two years since I have been single, to be precise, since 2021."



'I'm Very Fond of Her': Neha Dhupia on Her Bond with Katrina Kaif



Neha Dhupia spoke about her relationship with Katrina Kaif, the wife of her *Bad Newz* co-star Vicky Kaushal. She said, "I'm very fond of her. My heart lights up when I see that girl. She's a rare find. She's as nice as she is hardworking and disciplined. She goes out of her way to be interested in everyone's issues because she genuinely cares for people."

Anytime is Playtime with Role Play Sets!



PM Justin Trudeau Gives 'Surprise Visit' at Diljit Dosanjh's Concert



Singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh performed at the Rogers Centre in Toronto as part of his Dil-Luminati Tour. Diljit was surprised when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau unexpectedly showed up at the event. Trudeau extended his best wishes and was delighted to meet Diljit. The two shared a hug, and Diljit greeted Trudeau with folded hands.

Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal Welcome First Newborn, Share Picture



Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal shared a glimpse of their newborn daughter, though her face was not revealed. In their collaborative post, they captioned it, "Doing a collab post to announce the biggest collab of our lives!! We've been blessed indeed. Our baby girl continues to keep us very, very busy. So thank you all for your love and blessings."

Salman Khan Celebrates Rumoured Girlfriend Iulia Vantur's Birthday with Family

Salman Khan celebrated the birthday of his rumoured girlfriend Iulia Vantur with his family. Actor Atul Agnihotri shared photos of the celebration on his social media, showing family members including Arhaan Khan and Aayush Sharma posing for the camera. Iulia Vantur reshared the group photo on her Instagram Stories, writing, "I love you."



Abhay Deol Discusses His Sexuality, Says 'It Might Sound Controversial'



Actor Abhay Deol, known for his roles in *Dev D* and *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!*, opened up about his thoughts on sexuality in a candid chat with *Dirty Magazine*.

He stated, "I don't define my sexuality, and this might sound controversial, but for me, it's not something that I think can be defined. All of us have a masculine and feminine within us, so in my opinion, we are all they/them."

A photograph of an elderly woman with white hair and glasses, wearing a colorful patterned sari, standing in a kitchen. She is looking down at a large stainless steel pot on the stove. The kitchen is well-lit with sunlight streaming through a window in the background, creating a warm and cozy atmosphere. Various kitchen items like jars, vegetables, and a bowl are visible on the counter in the foreground.

Glorification of 'Maa Ke Hath Ra Khana',

A way to force cooking on women.

By Sanjana

You must have heard of people who live alone away from family missing 'Maa Ke Hath Ka Khana'. But have you ever thought why is it never 'Papa Ke Hath ka Khana'? Most of my friends in college often rant about their urge to have some homemade food. But what they really mean by that is their mother's cooking. And I don't find it odd because that's what we have all seen around us.



Who is in the kitchen - Didi, Aunt, Mummy, Daughter, or Daughter-in-law? You know what's common between these figures we mostly find there, is that they are women. Primarily a survival skill, cooking has become much more than just the food-making process over the centuries. It is intertwined with gender bias, culture, stereotypes, societal food standards, and work division.

Characteristic Of Being A "Good" Woman

We have grown up seeing the females of the house cooking while the males are entitled as the breadwinner. This legacy has been passed on from generation to generation for centuries. That's why expecting women in the kitchen thrice a day is quite common for us. "No, I don't know how to cook" - This is what sounds shocking to us when it comes from a female, especially with the responsibility of kids and a family.

I heard one of the aunts say about our new neighbour - "She doesn't even know how to cook, what kind of woman is she." I was startled to

WE HAVE GROWN UP SEEING THE FEMALES OF THE HOUSE COOKING WHILE THE MALES ARE ENTITLED AS THE BREADWINNER.

THIS LEGACY HAS BEEN PASSED FOR CENTURIES. SO EXPECTING WOMEN IN THE KITCHEN THRICE A DAY IS QUITE COMMON FOR US.

see them judge the character of a woman based on her cooking skills. Why does it even matter?

Over the centuries, cooking has been glorified as a skill of a "good" woman. By the 1970s, women began opposing this idea. Yet, in patriarchal societies like India, no matter how educated or financially successful the woman becomes, nothing can beat the charm of their cooking in the patriarchal society. They are expected to cook for the family

regardless of doing wage work outside all day. Well, there was a time when people used to argue that it was the housewives' responsibility to look after kids and feed them handmade food as the father did the wage work. But the condition in modern society questions the argument.

Nowadays, modern educated women refuse to fit into this conventional norm. However, it doesn't mean that they have been able to separate themselves from this. With the advent of feminism, society has changed its ways of luring women into their desired frames of living. They now get emotionally manipulated or persuaded to cook for everyone. No matter how much we grow, the responsibility of preparing meals for kids ultimately falls on women. They are made to believe this conscience and often feel guilty if they refuse to undertake this chore.

Marvelene Hughes, an African American woman said, "women cooking is not coterminous with oppression, routine or drudgery, but can be an expression of love, nurturance, creativity and sharing."

How Television Normalises Cooking as a Role of Women?



Have you ever watched *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah*? Telecasted on Sab TV, this comedy entertainment show very comically showed what women should be doing. None of the female protagonists in the show was an independent woman and they all cooked for their families.

Daya, wife of Jethalal is continuously valued for her cooking skills forcing her to hold on to it. However, the women also believed that this counted as characteristic of a *Sanskari Bahu* or *Patni*. At times, when she got late from shopping or somewhere else, she couldn't stop blabbing "sorry".

Additionally, she dedicated all of her time to cooking and serving her family. Starting from breakfast, she spent most of her time in the kitchen cooking something special for them every day.

This show is immensely popular and replicates the mindset of society. Although they focus on several social issues, they often lag behind in challenging the conventional norms when it comes to gender-food equality.

In a short film named *Juice* starring Shefali Shah, it was portrayed very realistically how women are forced into the heat of

the kitchen while men gossip and switch TV channels sitting in front of a cooler. The piece of cinema also shows that a woman is never a guest but a helping hand in the kitchen.

Upon the arrival of guests, all the women moved to the kitchen to cook for men while the men had their leisure time in the hall. And surprisingly other female protagonists than Shefali Shah firmly believed that this is right and they should be in the kitchen to serve men.



This is their perspective which clearly shows how cooking is embedded in their minds as a way to connect with their family.

Women are supposed to do it out of love. If they don't cook for their children and family, they're labelled as 'narcissists' and 'selfish'. People still want women to return from work and cook because that's their "responsibility" only. The fact that they're doing wage work just like their male opponents is superseded.

Growing Gender Gap In Cooking

While we often speak of feminism empowering women and their status in households, these statistics come to prove it wrong. According to a Gallup study, the gender gap in household cooking has widened in previous years. The percentage of women cooking increased steadily in 2022 to 8.7 meals per week. On the contrary, the rate of male cooking declined by 0.7 meals per week making their average drop to 4.0 meals per week. According to *Economic Times*, a survey reported that 70 per cent of women in Maharashtra have only 30 minutes to dedicate for self-care. 84 per cent of women of Nashik feel that if they spent fewer hours on cooking, they'd have more time to follow

their passion. These reports make it clear that women are still subjected to home-cooking more than men. However, the gender cooking ratio turns out to be completely contrasting in restaurants or professional cooking.

“When you see women in the kitchen you think it’s a domestic thing and when you see men you think it’s a creative thing. That’s what we need to change.” — Alice Waters, Chef and Activist.

In restaurants, this is what is happening. They believe when men cook, it’s a favour, creativity, and professionalism. While it’s women’s responsibility to home-cook, they aren’t able enough to earn through it.

Also, what I believe is that society fears women and what they can do if they really understand their cooking’s worth. Probably, they won’t be able to keep women and they are limited to the kitchen anymore. Or the rebel they may initiate.



Extended Cooking Politics

Unsurprisingly, the politics of food to bind women isn’t limited to cooking but extends to serving and eating meals as well. In Juice, there are four children among which is one girl and three boys. When it comes to serving food, only the girl (named Dolly) was called out and the boys were left to play video games.

It shows how society begins to discriminate from childhood. The girl children are always taught to serve the males in the family first.

However, this partiality extends to their share of nutrition.

“Let your father and brother eat first. I think fewer rotis are made - ” My mother said to me a few times. I was surprised to see how the makers don’t get enough meals themselves. Although they prepare all the food, the last one to taste it are women. Why?

What kind of inclusivity, love, or connection is this where women need to compromise with their share of food. Or is it another way to contemplate that women shouldn’t be walking with men shoulders by shoulders and steps behind them? Pretty questionable, right!

Well, that’s what society is like. But we have to ignite change by challenging these norms and normalising women not cooking at home. It’s perfectly normal for women to be tired as well and not go into the kitchen after coming from work. And the ones who decide to be homemakers must be aware of their worth.

We

Hidden Pearls

There are some things that are fully hidden
While some that are partly
As a rainbow that is never full!
The canopy of a mighty banyan is attractive
Providing shelter to many a person
But the roots of the tree are invisible!
A bird’s sweet song can be heard
And enjoyed to one’s heart’s content
While the evasive cuckoo cannot be sighted!
A flash of lightning in the rain clouds
Can be seen and marvelled at
But its tremendous energy cannot be felt!
The rolling rumble of a thunder
Can be heard and be deafening
But one can’t see the clashing of the clouds!
Shadows can be seen
And the light that cast them
But never the source of the shadow!
In your silent sensitive demeanour
None can see within you lying
A beautiful heart that resembles
A lustrous pearl hidden in an abandoned shell!

Sridhar D. Iyer





Bytes vs. Brain

The memory mirage in a digital world.

By Ritu Kamra Kumar

The other day as I filled a form for remuneration for university exam duty, the form required to fill details like Bank Account number, my registration ID as university examiner, the registration number of my vehicle, my contact number, etc. I realised that I had to take help of my document details stored in Mobile's Personal Notes.

The Overwhelming Digital World

Even in my personal notes, there were so many passwords—one for College mail ID, another for personal links, still another for department, similarly bank details of SBI, PNB, and HDFC, passwords for ATM, Credit Card, etc. I was completely dwelling and diving deep in the digital world. I had to search for the relevant information in this labyrinth of pins and passwords I needed, and I felt low.

Why can't I remember these personal details? I remembered minute details as a kid. What has gone wrong with me? I concluded that my memory is becoming like a sieve, my mind registered this bitter

fact and I became so conscious that I endeavoured to revise the registration number of my vehicle, my husband's mobile, etc. to ensure that I remember them all but every time I did so I had the urge to look at my personal notes in mobile, telling myself, "Why this hassle?" Why not seek shelter in the comfort zone of the digital revolution?

A Sharp Contrast To The Past

The number conundrum didn't end here and in the pursuit of remembering my dear one's contact numbers, I felt it anxiety-inducing. Earlier it wasn't like this. I remembered my roll number of class 10th, UG, and PG by heart and the number of landline phones of almost all my friends.

In fact, in childhood, we remembered the house numbers of our friends, relatives, and postal addresses of dear ones were on tips. We had a sharp memory to recall immediately the pin code of our town and places where our grandparents lived. In fact, there used to be competition among cousins to recall such details conducted by grandparents. There used to be chanting of multiplication tables regularly and we memorised tables like parrots.

How the times have changed. Now for any such detail, we instantly seek help from our mobiles. It is so easy but once when I lost my mobile in college, I was totally aghast as I didn't remember even the password for opening my Almira's locker in the department. I wanted to call my husband and twice repeated

my husband's contact number as I wasn't too sure about it. It had made me panicky. What has gone wrong with me? Such poor memory I have developed, I was worried about my plight.

The Impact Of The Digital Revolution

Post the digital revolution, our minds are numbers-fatigued with user IDs, login passwords, transaction passwords, and pins which we must keep changing periodically to avoid any mishap. I had even maintained a diary to record all the details but failed to update it regularly as data kept on increasing and ever changing. The culprit is none other than we, ourselves who have the habit of searching for everything through Google.

Use it or you lose it—this is perhaps what is happening with our memory. It is getting blurred every day with our ever-increasing dependence on gadgets for our ease and comfort. The unused memory box suffers from dependence syndrome on the readily available ocean of information on our phone.

This may sound cliché that technology is a boom but in this era of ChatGPT and AI, we often get fatigued remembering our transition passcodes and pins. What we need to do is go back to the habit of noting down the details in a diary and update it weekly. This way we can keep our memory refreshed and once we write them on paper we tend to remember them. Nothing like paper to save the day.

We





Rain Pain Remedy

Surviving and thriving during the monsoons.

By S Radha Prathi

The romance attached to the rainy season by our Indian films remains a dream sequence on the silver screen as far as the Indian citizen is concerned, no matter to which strata of the society he may belong to. Of late, the erratic and unpredictable rainy season has been consistently playing havoc, disturbing the normal course of living and also destroying life and property.

The concerned authorities across the country have acknowledged the infinite inconveniences caused by the rains to the common man and have promised to look into the matter. Yet one can see that not much has been done, though another torrential monsoon is lurking around the corner.

Facing The Practical Realities

Taking the practical realities like the size of the country, the concentration of population in the urban areas, and the lack of pliable roads and drainage system into consideration, it will be illogical on the part of Indian citizens to expect any magical change to take place overnight. Instead, we can prove ourselves to be wiser and suave if we take a few precautions and save ourselves from all the muck, risk, and illnesses that the impending monsoons spell for us.

The flooded potholes, waterlogged roads, overflowing squally drains, vehicles splashing

rainwater thoughtlessly on unsuspecting pedestrians, and wet and dirty public vehicles can be sources of dreadful nightmares that one has to deal with for the next few months.

Commuting During The Monsoon

Since most of us cannot avoid commuting during the rainy seasons, let us look at a few tips that can see us through the wet spells causing us the least nuisance and avoid any long-term problem.

Before you step out of your homes, make sure that you wear wash-and-wear clothes and carry rain gear like umbrellas, caps, windcheaters, and raincoats to save on the huge laundry bills. Wearing gumboots will certainly save a lot of washing. People who are expected to wear formal clothes at the workplace can preferably carry or leave one set of clothes and shoes in the office, which they can change into. If any of you have extra rain gear or clothing that your children have outgrown, that you can spare or



BEFORE YOU STEP OUT OF YOUR HOMES, MAKE SURE THAT YOU WEAR WASH-AND-WEAR CLOTHES AND CARRY RAIN GEAR LIKE UMBRELLAS, CAPS, WINDCHEATERS, AND RAINCOATS TO SAVE ON THE HUGE LAUNDRY BILLS. WEARING GUMBOOTS WILL CERTAINLY SAVE A LOT OF WASHING.

give away, do make it a point to give it to the people who may not have enough of them.

It is preferable to avail of public transport or carpool as far as possible to avoid traffic jams and quicker movement of traffic. Those of you who do not have a choice except to drive or ride your own vehicles, make sure that you get your vehicles serviced before the season and see that the vehicle is in perfect shape before it rolls on the road. You could carry some clean and dry rags to wipe your two-wheeler if it

happens to be parked in the open. Apart from riding cautiously and following the traffic rules, do keep in mind not to splash the filthy water on fellow road users who may be walking or riding other vehicles.

One cannot discount the possibility of meeting with an accident considering the condition of our roads. Hence, make it mandatory for yourself to carry your driving license and identity card mentioning a contact number in case of accidents. School-going children and senior citizens should be reminded of carrying the necessary information every time they step out of the home.

The use of headlights and indicator lights is of utmost importance in the early hours of the morning and late evenings to help you see your way and also help fellow commuters in the road realise your presence.

If there happens to be an accident on the road, do not hesitate to administer first aid or rush the accident victim to the nearest hospital. The law of the land does not forbid you from helping your brethren. Many people are afraid of getting embroiled in finicky legalities and refrain from such a



social and human gesture, but a talk on the subject with several NGO workers revealed that there is really nothing to fear in most cases as the police seldom get back to the kind Samaritan who admitted the victim to the hospital.

Staying Safe And Healthy

Tree falling has proved to be a menace as there is absolutely no telling when or where this is going to take place. Chopping old trees is not the only solution to the problem. In case you witness such a happening, make sure you inform the nearest police station or inform your friends who can do so.

While using cell phones is a definite no-no on the streets, you can always inform the authorities or some radio stations which announce traffic jams and accidents while waiting for the melee to clear. You can consider yourself to be socially conscious if you extend cooperation and comply with the on-the-spot rules made by the traffic officials in

times of crisis. If you are a hearty soul, you can encourage other like-minded people to clear the fallen foliage instead of waiting for official help.

Eating healthy home-cooked food and the intake of seasonal fruits and vegetables can take care of your health. Suppose you feel like eating outside, ensure that the food is prepared hygienically. As far as possible, refrain from consuming uncooked food like chutneys, salads, etc., and cut fruits outside of your homes.

Laundering clothes on a regular basis can be challenging during this period. Washing them in batches and utilising sun-filled hours to the maximum can help you cope. Semi-dried clothes can be left to dry in an airy room or balcony to keep them away from the musty smell. Pets like dogs and cats tend to stay indoors during this season, and they will make their presence felt with their strong smells. Lighting camphor, agarbathi, or Sambrani/benzoin

around the house for a while every single day can keep the place dry, insect-free, and fresh.

If you have potted plants, move them indoors or to semi-sheltered areas so that they can be protected from rotting due to excess watering.

Making The Most Of Monsoon Days

Usually, most people avoid travelling unless absolutely necessary when the skies open up. Enjoy your time at home while putting it in order. Use this period to sort out your cupboards, shelves, filing your documents, bills, and photos, catching up with friends and family online, pursuing your indoor hobbies, and catching up with your reading.

Prevention is better than cure any day, and if one were to look at the brighter side of the clouded skies, it is not difficult to realise that perhaps the havoc caused by the rainy days in these times has been designed by nature to get in touch with ourselves consciously. **We**

HUBBIES' HOWL(ER)S



'WELL-DONE' SURPRISE BREAKFAST

One morning, Vicky surprised me with breakfast in bed. As I eagerly awaited my meal, he presented me with a plate of toast and eggs that were slightly more 'well-done' than I had anticipated. Instead of being disappointed, I burst into laughter at the sight of the charred offerings. Vicky looked sheepish but also amused by his culinary mishap.

We shared a memorable breakfast together, filled with laughter and love. It was a simple gesture that reminded me of the joy of being with someone who can always make me smile, even with burnt toast. The 'well-done'

breakfast became a cherished memory, symbolising our ability to find happiness in our everyday life.

– Shalu Singh

AMUSING MISHAP

Life is unpredictable and I realised that when my husband was diagnosed with blood cancer. It was just one-and-a-half years of our marriage. I was running in the third month of pregnancy and this thing left me and him devastated. Our doctors assured us that with treatment it can be cured. He was hospitalised for a month when his chemotherapy started. I managed the house and everything myself as I couldn't find a maid. My husband

used to ask for home-cooked food and I cooked full meals, washed utensils, took all and left for hospital.

He regretted that at a difficult time, he should have been helping me, but then I made sure that he didn't feel stressed because of me. One day, he gave me something wrapped in paper and told me to open it. I removed the paper cover and he designed a calendar with our 12 photos from our two-year journey, with the message 'Happy anniversary my beloved'. "But honey, our anniversary isn't until next month!" I exclaimed. He said "Wait what??. . .has chemo made me memory loss?" he laughed in embarrassment.

We laugh after such a long time, those silly moments we spent during hard days I will cherish that for lifetime. After one year of proper treatment, he fought back the cancer with strong determination and hope.

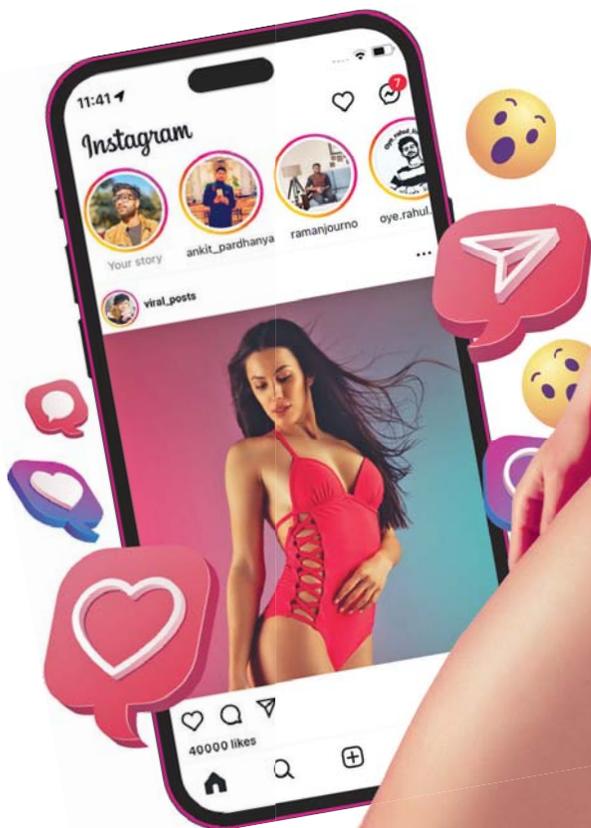
– Sneha Devrang

NAKED AMBITION

The truth behind Instagram's viral obsession.

By Enakshi J

In the frenetic world of social media, Instagram reigns supreme as the Colosseum of attention, where users battle it out for likes, comments, and fleeting moments of fame. Amidst this digital gladiatorial combat, a troubling trend has surfaced: the rampant use of unnecessary nudity to make one reel go viral. It's as if a modern-day Pied Piper is leading millions astray, seducing them with the siren call of instant fame at the expense of authenticity and substance.



NUDITY HAS LONG BEEN A PART OF ART AND MEDIA, FROM CLASSICAL SCULPTURES TO MODERN CINEMA. HOWEVER, SOCIAL MEDIA HAS DRAMATICALLY ALTERED ITS LANDSCAPE.

This article explores the depths of this phenomenon, examining the high stakes of Instagram's naked ambition and whether the pursuit of viral fame is worth the erosion of our collective online integrity.

The Rise Of Viral Culture On Instagram

Instagram's algorithms prioritise visually striking content, rewarding posts that capture attention in the blink of an eye. The mechanics of virality have created a cutthroat environment where only the most eye-catching posts survive. This quest for virality has given rise to a culture where shock value often trumps substance, and nudity becomes an all-too-easy shortcut.

Nudity has long been a part of art and media, from classical sculptures to modern cinema. However, social media has dramatically altered its landscape. Unlike traditional media, where context and artistic intent were often clear, Instagram's rapid consumption model has stripped away nuance, reducing nudity to a mere tool for engagement.

Psychological Drivers

The allure of nudity is deeply rooted in human psychology. Provocative content triggers curiosity and desire, primal instincts that social media expertly exploits. Users are drawn to these posts like moths to a flame, often without realising the subtle manipulation at play.

Influencers, caught in the relentless cycle of staying relevant, face immense pressure to keep their audience engaged. For many, using nudity becomes a surefire way to maintain visibility and popularity. Stories abound of influencers who have resorted to increasingly provocative content

to keep their engagement metrics high, revealing the harsh realities behind their glamorous facades.

Audience Response And Engagement

Audience reactions to nudity are predictably robust. Data show that posts featuring nudity often receive higher engagement rates compared to those without. This feedback loop reinforces the trend, pushing more users to adopt similar strategies in hopes of replicating that success.

The ethical implications of using nudity for virality are significant. This trend undermines the authenticity of content, as creators prioritise shock value over genuine expression. It raises questions about the values we are promoting and the long-term impact on the quality of content on the platform.

Impact On Self-Esteem And Body Image

Constant exposure to idealised and often unattainable images of nudity can have a detrimental effect on viewers' self-esteem and body image. Young users, in particular, are vulnerable to these influences, which

can lead to a distorted sense of self-worth and unhealthy comparisons.

Instagram's policies on nudity are a paradox. While the platform enforces community guidelines to restrict explicit content, it often overlooks the subtler forms of suggestive nudity that slip through the cracks. This inconsistency creates a double standard that confuses users and fosters a sense of unfairness.

Alternatives To Nudity For Engagement

Despite the prevailing trend, many content creators successfully engage their audiences without resorting to nudity. Creative storytelling, unique perspectives, and authentic interactions often lead to sustainable engagement. These alternatives highlight that virality can be achieved through substance rather than shock.

As audience preferences evolve, there is potential for a shift towards more meaningful content. If platforms and users collectively demand higher standards, the reliance on nudity as a quick fix for engagement may diminish. This shift could lead to a more diverse and enriching social media experience.

Conclusion

As we navigate the complexities of social media, it's crucial to reflect on our content consumption and creation. By promoting meaningful and respectful engagement, we can collectively steer Instagram towards a future where authenticity reigns supreme. Let's champion content that reflects our true selves and uplifts our digital community.

In conclusion, the pervasive use of unnecessary nudity on Instagram is a symptom of a broader quest for virality that sacrifices substance for shock.

By understanding the forces at play and exploring alternatives, we can foster a more authentic and enriching social media landscape. The choice is ours: will we continue to chase hollow fame, or will we create a digital world that values depth and integrity?



Beyond the *Butter Knife*

The fierce and fabulous world of competitive table setting.

By Aditi Maheshwari

Forget bake-offs and flower arranging. There's a competition out there that celebrates the meticulous art of transforming an ordinary table into a show-stopping spectacle. Welcome to the surprisingly cutthroat world of competitive table setting.

This isn't your grandma's Sunday dinner table setting. We're talking themed masterpieces, where every napkin fold, every candlestick, and every meticulously placed fork tells a story. Imagine a table sculpted like a piano for a musical evening or a whimsical *Alice in Wonderland* scene complete with tiny teacups and playing card place settings.





These elaborate displays are judged on strict criteria. Think precision, placement of silverware (down to the millimeters!), adherence to a chosen theme, and overall creativity. Points can be docked for a rogue fingerprint on a crystal glass or a missing cheese knife (a cardinal sin in this world).

The dedication is astounding. Competitors, often hobbyists passionate about design, spend months planning and collecting unique pieces. The quest for the perfect vintage salt shaker or hand-painted tablecloth becomes an adventure in itself. This isn't just about competition; it's about expressing a love for detail and creating a truly immersive dining experience (even if the food itself is usually absent).

So, where can you witness these stunning tablescapes? Competitions are held at fairs and events across the nations, with the Los Angeles County Fair being a long-standing tradition. But be prepared, entry slots are limited, and there's often a waiting list of eager tablescapers.

A competitive table setting might seem a bit niche, but it's a fascinating peek into a world where elegance meets meticulousness. It's a reminder that sometimes, the most beautiful things are created with a lot of planning, a dash of competitive spirit, and a healthy dose of love for the finer things in life.



A mermaid-themed table at the Los Angeles County Fair.

THIS METICULOUS AND ARTISTIC ENDEAVOR MARRIES CREATIVITY WITH PRECISION, CHALLENGING PARTICIPANTS TO CREATE VISUALLY STUNNING AND THEMATICALLY COHESIVE TABLE ARRANGEMENTS.

The Art And Precision

In a world where culinary arts and hospitality hold esteemed places, a unique and often overlooked competition thrives competitive table setting. This meticulous and artistic endeavour marries creativity with precision,

challenging participants to create visually stunning and thematically cohesive table arrangements. While not as widely recognised as sports or culinary competitions, the art of table setting demands a unique blend of skills, from aesthetic sensibility to an eye for detail.

The Evolution As A Competitive Sport

The tradition of elaborate table settings dates back centuries, rooted in the customs of European aristocracy. Formal dining tables showcased the host's wealth and sophistication through exquisite China, polished silver, and intricate centrepieces. Over time, these displays of opulence evolved into a competitive sport, with contests emerging at county fairs, culinary schools, and specialised events around the world.

In modern competitive table setting, participants are judged on various criteria including creativity, adherence to the theme, functionality, and technical precision. The competition can be fierce, as even a slight misalignment of cutlery or an off-centre floral arrangement can cost valuable points.

The Anatomy Of A Winning Table

A successful competitive table setting is a harmonious blend of several elements:

Theme and Creativity: Competitors often draw inspiration from a designated theme, which could range from seasonal motifs to cultural celebrations or even abstract concepts. Creativity is paramount, as judges look for originality and the ability to convey a story or mood through the arrangement.

Tableware and Linens: The choice of China, glassware, and silverware is crucial. Each piece must complement the overall theme while adhering to



formal dining rules. Linens, including tablecloths and napkins, should be impeccably ironed and thoughtfully chosen to enhance the visual appeal.

Centrepieces and Decorations: Centrepieces are the table's focal point, requiring a balance between beauty and functionality. They should be striking yet not obstructive, allowing guests to see each other and converse freely. Additional decorations, such as placards and menu holders, should align with the theme and add to the table's cohesive look.

Technical Precision: Precision is key in competitive table setting. Plates must be placed at a precise distance from the edge of the table, cutlery must be aligned perfectly, and glasses must be positioned correctly relative to the plates. Each aspect of the arrangement follows strict guidelines, and judges scrutinize every detail.

Functionality and Practicality: While aesthetic appeal is vital, the table setting must also be functional. It should facilitate a comfortable and enjoyable dining experience. This includes ensuring that all necessary utensils are present and that the arrangement allows easy access to food and beverages.

The Competitors And Their Craft

Participants in table setting competitions come from diverse backgrounds, including professional event planners, culinary students, and passionate hobbyists. Each brings a unique perspective and set of skills to the table. Preparation for these competitions involves extensive planning, rehearsing, and fine-tuning every detail to achieve perfection. Competitors often spend months preparing for an event, researching themes, sourcing materials, and practising their setups. Attention to detail is critical, as judges' expectations are high and the margin for error is minimal.

The Impact And Future

While competitive table setting may seem niche, it significantly impacts various industries, including hospitality, event planning, and culinary arts. The skills honed through these competitions translate into exceptional professionalism and creativity in real-world settings, enhancing the dining experiences of countless guests.

Moreover, the growing interest in aesthetic presentation on social media platforms has brought renewed attention to the art of table setting. Media increasingly covers competitions, and online communities of enthusiasts share tips, trends, and inspiration.

As the world of competitive table setting continues to evolve, it remains a testament to the enduring importance of beauty, precision, and creativity in human culture. Whether viewed as an art form, a skill, or a sport, it celebrates the artistry that transforms a simple meal into a memorable experience.

Competitive table setting is a vibrant and dynamic field that combines artistic flair with meticulous attention to detail. It challenges participants to push the boundaries of creativity while maintaining the highest standards of technical precision, making it a fascinating and enriching pursuit for all involved.



A Humorous Take

However, let's be honest for a moment—we're in for some delightful chaos. Picture this: the judges walk into a room expecting precise European-style settings, only to be greeted by a glorious mishmash of traditions.

One table might feature a meticulously arranged silver *thali* set, complete with *katori* bowls in a perfect circle, each filled with steaming curries and chutneys. Another might showcase a full-on South Indian feast, banana leaves laid out with surgical precision, but spilling over with idlis, dosas, and a mountain of sambar.

The centrepieces? Forget minimalist floral arrangements. We'd have towering mango pyramids, ornate brass lamps, or even a life-size Ganesha idol made entirely of *laddoos*.

And let's not get started on the napkins. While competitors elsewhere might fold theirs into elegant swans, ours would be lovingly converted into little pakora holders or, if we're feeling particularly creative, mini *parathas*.

The real challenge, of course, would be keeping everything in place. Picture the judges navigating through tables where enthusiastic aunties are constantly rearranging the cutlery (“Arrey, beta, the fork goes here!”) and uncles are sneakily sampling the dishes (“Just checking the salt, you see”).

In the end, competitive table setting in India would be less about precision and more about celebrating the vibrant chaos that defines our culinary culture. After all, whether it's a grand wedding feast or a simple family dinner, we know that what really matters is the love and laughter shared around the table.

So, the next time you see a perfectly arranged table, take a moment to imagine the joyful mayhem of an Indian competitive table-setting scene. It will win any heart, for its vibrancy, and will undoubtedly be the most memorable—and delicious—competition of all!

Sunayana Malhotra's Solo Exhibition “Ānanda”



The solo exhibition “Ānanda” by the talented artist Sunayana Malhotra is a captivating showcase of paintings inspired by the fleeting beauty of lotuses. Sunayana Malhotra, a self-taught artist, draws from her own experiences and feelings to find subjects for her works. The serene

beauty of women merging with nature is a prominent theme in her paintings. “My effort is to explore the harmony between man and Mother Nature,” she says.

The artist is fascinated by lotuses, which are prominent in her recent artworks, symbolising beauty, prosperity, and fertility. “For me, drawing the female form comes naturally; it is a way for me to express

my thoughts or reflect on them. In my recent work, I have replaced the female form with the lotus, which has an equally effeminate feeling and portrays the different layers of a woman,” says Sunayana.

The exhibition opened with a special preview, with the lighting

of the lamp performed by Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi, the former Minister of State for External Affairs & Culture, Government of India, and Keshwer Desai, Author and Chairperson of the Partition Museum. Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi shared her thoughts on the exhibition, saying, “Sunayana

Malhotra's art is a beautiful reflection of the joy and peace that comes from a deep spiritual connection. Her work is both inspiring and transformative, capturing the essence of Ānanda in every stroke.”

Sunayana is deeply influenced by ancient Indian art found in caves, temples, and palaces, reflecting the rich heritage of India. Lotuses fascinate her

with their symbolic beauty and mythological significance.

The event was attended by many artists, friends, and art lovers, including Sunil Sethi, Jyoti Kathpalia, Asit Patnayak, Neeraj Bakshy, Rohit Kapoor, Alka Bhurshandi, and Kanchan Chandra.



Meenakshi Lekhi and Sunayana Malhotra at the special preview of Sunayana Malhotra's Solo Exhibition “Ānanda”

We

Beauty Queries



Q & A

AS I GET OLDER, I'M NOTICING more fine lines around my eyes that make me look tired. What non-invasive steps can I take to minimise these lines and rejuvenate my eye area?

To minimise fine lines around the eyes, use an eye cream formulated with retinol, which promotes cell turnover and boosts collagen production. Hyaluronic acid can also help plump the skin and reduce the visibility of wrinkles. Apply the cream gently using your ring finger to avoid pulling on the delicate skin. Consistent use, along with adequate hydration and sunscreen, can significantly improve the skin's appearance over time.

MY SKIN OFTEN FEELS IRRITATED and sensitive, possibly due to environmental factors and stress. Could you recommend some effective natural remedies or ingredients that can soothe and calm my skin without causing further irritation?

Natural ingredients like aloe vera, chamomile, and calendula are excellent for calming irritated skin. Aloe vera provides cooling relief, chamomile has anti-inflammatory properties, and calendula promotes healing. Applying products containing these ingredients, or using fresh aloe vera gel directly from the plant, can help soothe redness and irritation.

I LOVE HAVING VIBRANT, COLOURED hair, but I find the colour fades quickly between my salon visits. What strategies can I employ at home to extend the life of my hair colour and keep it looking fresh and vibrant?

To keep your hair colour bright and vibrant, use colour-protecting shampoos and conditioners that are sulphate-free. These products help prevent fading. Additionally, avoid excessive washing and use lukewarm or cool water, as hot water can strip colour. Using a colour-depositing conditioner or mask once a week can also help maintain the richness of your hue.

I'M CONCERNED ABOUT MY SKIN losing its firmness and elasticity as I age. What daily practices should I incorporate into my skincare routine to prevent sagging and maintain a youthful appearance as long as possible?

To combat skin sagging, maintain a healthy diet rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, which support

skin elasticity. Regular facial exercises can also tone the muscles beneath the skin. Use skincare products with ingredients like peptides and retinol that promote collagen production, and never skip sunscreen, as UV exposure accelerates skin ageing.

IHAVE SOME OLD ACNE SCARS THAT I'm self-conscious about. What makeup techniques can I use to effectively cover these scars and achieve a smooth, even complexion?

To conceal acne scars, start with a primer to smooth the skin's texture. Use a full-coverage, long-lasting concealer that matches your skin tone, applying it with a small brush directly on the scars. Set the concealer with a light dusting of translucent powder to prevent it from shifting throughout the day. Consider a colour-correcting palette for scars with discoloration; green neutralises redness, while peach or orange tones can mask deeper blue or purple shadows.

FOOT ODOUR HAS BECOME A persistent issue for me, especially during warmer months or after physical activity. What daily hygiene practices and products can I use to combat foot odour and keep my feet smelling fresh?

Preventing foot odour involves good hygiene and moisture management. Wash your feet daily with antibacterial soap, thoroughly drying them afterward, especially between the toes. Use moisture-wicking socks and change them daily or more often if you sweat heavily. Apply foot powder or baking soda to absorb excess moisture. Rotate shoes regularly to allow them to air out between wears.

Readers are invited to send their problems of child care and child rearing. Woman's Era will provide the answers, solutions to problems usually encountered by mothers, young and old. Address your letters (neatly written on white paper) to:

Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi-110 055.



Sleep And Its Bedfellows

Understanding false awakenings and beyond.

By Snigdha Jauhari

4 2-year-old Kuldeep was asleep. Suddenly, he woke up and saw a dog in his hotel room. “How on earth did it get in here?” Baffled, he spoke aloud, his eyes flying towards the door. It was bolted.

His eyes followed the furry creature. While Kuldeep lay stiff with fear, the dog circled his bed. Then the shaggy creature sniffed his bedclothes and tugged lightly at them. Then he moved towards the table. Kuldeep saw him climb on the chair and from there onto the table. At this point, Kuldeep sat up and his hand moved towards the intercom to speak with the reception. Just then, the furry-tailed dog jumped down with a mighty noise, dragging with him all the writing materials and the table lamp!!



C..R...A..S..H.

Kuldeep sprang up, bolt upright on his bed. With his eyes wide open, he looked around. No dog! No messed-up table! Door still locked! The clock's hands proclaimed 2:44 am.

"I was awake." The next day, from his hotel room, he told his wife on the phone. "I was wide awake... really, I was not dreaming! I saw the dog with my own eyes." He paused. "But...OH! I DUNNO....."

Has it ever happened to you that you go off to sleep, see something happen, and feel sure that it happened in reality and not in your dreams?! You believe that you were fully awake!

This phenomenon is commonly known as "False Awakening." The medical term for it is "pseudonarcolepsy" or "pseudo-realistic awakenings." It occurs when a person dreams that he has woken up, but in reality, he was asleep.

Why does this happen? Let us try to understand some of these deep secrets of the mind.

Secrets Of Mind

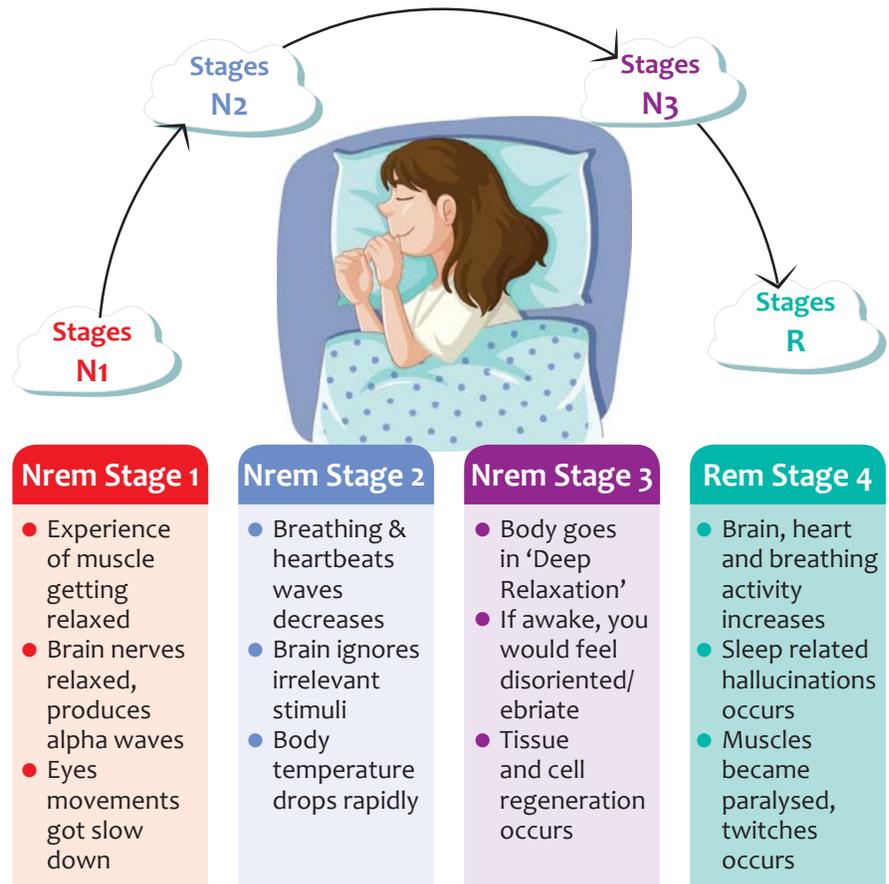
Normally there are four stages of sleep, and each stage serves a useful purpose.

The lightest stage of sleep is Stage 1, where you start to drift off. Your muscles relax, and your brain produces alpha waves. If someone wakes you up during this stage, you might not even realise you were asleep! This stage of sleep helps us transition from wakefulness to sleep.

In Stage 2 of sleep, your body temperature drops, your heart rate slows down, and your brain produces sleep spindles and K-complexes. These serve a protective function, i.e., help the brain ignore irrelevant stimuli and maintain sleep continuity. They occur in response to auditory stimuli, helping the brain to ignore noises (e.g., those coming in through the window). Stage 2 of sleep is important for our memory consolidation.

Stage 3 is the deep sleep state. Your brain starts producing slow delta waves. Stage 3 of sleep is

Stages of Sleep



FALSE AWAKENINGS DURING REM SLEEP CAN BE PARTICULARLY CONVINCING BECAUSE DREAMS IN REM SLEEP ARE OFTEN VIVID AND LIFE LIKE. INDIVIDUALS MAY DREAM THAT THEY HAVE WOKEN UP AND ARE GOING ABOUT THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES.

part of the non-REM sleep cycle (non-rapid eye movement), also known as deep sleep. During Stage 3 sleep, muscle activity decreases significantly, and the body enters a state of deep relaxation. However, some slight movements may still occur. If awakened during this stage, you may feel ebriate or disoriented

due to the deep level of sleep you were in. This relaxation of Stage 3 sleep helps conserve energy and replenish physical resources.

Stage 4 is REM sleep. REM stands for Rapid Eye Movement. The REM stage of sleep supports cognitive processes and emotional regulation. During this stage, your brain becomes very active, almost like when you are awake. But your muscles are paralyzed, so you are unable to move. Normally, this is when we have dreams.

During REM sleep, the brain is highly active but the body is paralyzed. At this stage, false awakenings and sleep-related hallucinations occur due to the difference (or error?!) between the brain's perception of reality and the actual state of wakefulness or sleep.

False awakenings during REM sleep can be particularly convincing because dreams in REM sleep are

often vivid and lifelike. Individuals may dream that they have woken up and are going about their daily activities, only to realise later that it was a dream. People most susceptible to false awakenings are those who frequently experience vivid or lucid dreams, those who are under stress, those who have irregular sleep schedules, suffer from sleep deprivation, or have sleep disorders like sleepwalking, sleep paralysis, or narcolepsy (i.e., a medical condition where a person just drops into sleep anytime during the day despite having slept fully at night).

It is interesting to note that personality types play a role in sleep quality. People who live a value-based life, are emotionally stable, and have good coping mechanisms for stress tend to have better sleep quality. Also, those who maintain a consistent sleep schedule and practise relaxation techniques—such as yoga or meditation before going to bed—are more likely to experience peaceful sleep.

16-year-old Saurabh got out of his bed and walked into the drawing room, where his parents were sipping tea. He sat down next to his father.

“What’s the matter?” his father asked. “You got up early! It’s only 5:30 am.”

Saurabh said, “Something funny happened, Papa. I was awake but I could not move even my little finger—complete immobility of my body; though I was awake, I was unable to move or speak.”

“Hmmm,” his father nodded understandingly.

“Very scary,” Saurabh said, taking a few sips of hot tea from his mother’s cup.

This state is commonly known as sleep paralysis. It is a phenomenon where a person temporarily experiences a sense of immobility. This normally happens during the mid-state (transition) between wakefulness and sleep or vice versa. It is a very discomforting experience but not dangerous.

During sleep paralysis, a person

may feel conscious but unable to move or speak, and they may experience hallucinations or a sense of pressure on their chest. There could also be a feeling of being trapped or even sensing a presence in the room. Thus, it is a frightening experience for those who get it.

So, when and why does sleep paralysis happen? Normally, sleep paralysis occurs when there is a disruption in the normal sleep cycle, especially during the rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep.

In layman’s terms, what happens is that during REM, the brain wakes up from sleep but the muscles remain physically inhibited, preventing any movement, thus resulting in sleep paralysis.

This physical inhibition is known as REM atonia. This is a protective mechanism that prevents the body from “acting out the dream” (e.g., you dream of a thief and

CREATE A RELAXING BEDTIME ROUTINE— DOING CALMING ACTIVITIES BEFORE BEDTIME, SUCH AS READING OR TAKING A WARM BATH, MEDITATING, SAYING YOUR PRAYERS, THINKING ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS IN YOUR LIFE.



your body starts to run, or your body flings itself to grab him!). However, this inhibition is not always perfect. Sometimes, it can fail or be incomplete. Sleepwalking and other forms of sleep movement disorders occur when this inhibition mechanism doesn’t work.

Unlike false awakening (where the person is asleep), in cases of sleep paralysis, the paralysis can persist into wakefulness or occur before a person is fully asleep.

So, who are more likely to experience this? Well, the people who are predisposed, and the factors that can contribute to the occurrence of sleep paralysis are:

- Not getting enough sleep or having an erratic sleep schedule.
- Sleep disorders like narcolepsy can predispose individuals to sleep paralysis because narcolepsy leads to disruptions in sleep-wake cycles.
- High levels of stress, anxiety, and anxiety disorders increase the likelihood of having sleep paralysis.
- Some studies suggest that sleeping on your back (supine position) increases the risk of sleep paralysis.
- Those who have irregular sleep schedules, such as shift workers or individuals with jet lag, may be at increased risk.
- Sleep paralysis often first occurs during adolescence or young adulthood.
- Genetics could be a primary reason. There may be a genetic predisposition to sleep paralysis, as it tends to run in families.

Remedies for sleep paralysis generally involve improving overall sleep habits and managing stress levels. Some strategies to reduce the frequency of sleep paralysis episodes include:

Have a regular sleep schedule:

Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps.

Create a relaxing bedtime routine—doing calming activities before bedtime, such as reading or taking a warm bath, meditating,

saying your prayers, thinking about the good things in your life, expressing gratitude, and counting your blessings. Not engaging in undue excitement, such as video games or heated discussions.

Avoid stimulants—saying no to caffeine and avoiding heavy meals close to bedtime.

Sleep on the side: Some studies show that sleeping on the side rather than on your back (supine) reduces the occurrence of sleep paralysis.

Manage stress: During the daytime, practising relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga. These help reduce overall stress and improve sleep.

Seek professional help: If sleep paralysis is frequent or significantly impacts daily life, then consulting a sleep specialist or therapist helps.

While false awakening and sleep paralysis do not affect everybody, what we will discuss next bypasses nobody. Furthermore, unlike the former two, this is beneficial in several ways.

Realms Of Dreams

Dreams, those enigmatic voyages we take when asleep—we visit surreal landscapes, experience strange events, encounter embarrassing moments, speak confusing dialogues, and at times, do nutty things.

Dreams offer a glimpse into the inner workings of our minds. Though, despite many attempts to study it logically, it still eludes classification and categorisation that can be technically boxed with accurate scientific names and labels.

Dreams are thought to be a result of the brain's processing of emotions, memories, and experiences. They can last anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes of our sleep time. People often have multiple dreams in a single night, with each dream lasting different lengths of time. Everyone

THE HUMAN BRAIN AND MIND ARE THE MOST COMPLEX STRUCTURES WITH THE POTENTIAL TO OPEN UP A SPACE UNKNOWN TO US. HUMAN POTENTIAL COULD RISE EXPONENTIALLY IF ITS MYSTERIES WERE TO BE FULLY UNRAVELED SOMEDAY.



dreams, but those with vivid imaginations, high creativity, high emotional sensitivity, or under stress are likely to experience more intense or memorable dreams.

As we already know, dreams are of several types. Normal dreams are those we have during REM sleep. They can be about anything—flying, talking animals, meeting our favourite hero (or heroine)!

Lucid dreams are those dreams in which we know that we are dreaming while we are dreaming. Some people can even control what happens in their dreams!

And the few tough ones are...

Nightmares: Nightmares are scary dreams that can wake you up feeling scared or upset. They often happen

during REM sleep. They are intense and disturbing and often wake the dreamer, causing feelings of fear, anxiety, and distress.

Night Terrors: Night terrors are several shades scarier! They can drive you bonkers! They are episodes of intense fear that lead to screaming or thrashing about in your sleep. These are often accompanied by physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat and sweating. These are more common in children.

As mentioned above, dreams are so unique and elusive by nature that they have defied all categorisation. However, I would like to conclude by sharing with you some thoughts about the ascending gradient of

dreams—from ‘mundane to divine’ (though sufficient research needs to be done...).

Levels Of Dreams

As dreams vary widely in narrative and intensity, they also seem to stand at different levels of human consciousness due to their content and potential significance. These could be:

Everyday Dreams: These are the most common types of dreams and involve everyday experiences, activities, and situations. They may reflect your thoughts, concerns, and experiences from daily life, such as work, school, relationships, or familiar places. Everyday dreams are usually straightforward and may not have any deep meaning.

Problem-Solving Dreams: Sometimes, dreams serve as a way for the mind to process and solve problems or conflicts. In these dreams, your subconscious mind may

work through issues you are facing in waking life by offering alternative perspectives or creative solutions to some conflict.

Symbolic Dreams: These dreams involve symbolic imagery or metaphors that represent deeper psychological, emotional, or spiritual themes. The symbols in these dreams may not be immediately clear to us and often require interpretation to understand. Symbolic dreams can provide insights into unconscious thoughts, desires, fears, or aspirations, thus offering valuable self-awareness and personal growth opportunities. (Carl Jung, the celebrated Swiss psychologist, has written elaborately on symbolism.)

Prophetic or Premonition Dreams: Some people believe that dreams can foretell the future or provide insights into upcoming events. Prophetic dreams are characterised by their apparent ability to accurately predict

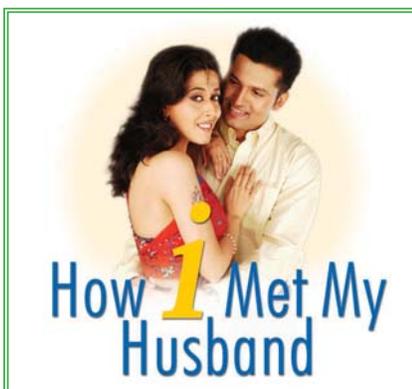
specific occurrences or outcomes. Many individuals report seeing dreams that seem to foretell the occurrence or arrival of significant events or warnings about potential dangers.

Transcendental or Spiritual Dreams: These are dreams that involve experiences of profound wonder and awe and have a spiritual connection. In transcendental dreams, we may encounter divine beings, experience feelings of oneness with the universe, or receive spiritual guidance and insights. These dreams can have a lasting impact on our beliefs, values, and sense of purpose.

The human brain and mind are the most complex structures with the potential to open up a space unknown to us. Human potential could rise exponentially if its mysteries were to be fully unraveled someday.

Till then... Sweet Dreams.

We



JOB INTERVIEW

My meeting with my future husband was a chance. This was around ten years ago when I was freshly out of college and looking rigorously for work. I had gone to multiple job interviews and none of them had worked out.

My answers were pretty good. But my confidence slowly shattered. Then one day, I had this big, important interview that I wanted to crack. I told myself I had to get it and started prepping for it.

Back then, I had to rely on the

bus for transportation. This time too, I took the bus. Since this interview was a little far away, I decided to take the bus an hour early. If I hadn't done that, I wouldn't have met my husband.

I sat down next to a well-dressed man; he seemed to be on his way to work too. I paid no heed to him though; I was nervous and started picking at my nails.

Then, I started reciting and practising my answers to basic interview questions. I was gesturing and talking, and I didn't care if people were watching.

After a while, the man looked at me and said, "Don't worry so much, you're doing fine. Just don't dance like this in front of them." I was taken aback. What did he mean by dance?

Then upon introspection, I realised that I did move my hands around a lot when talking. It was indeed my body language at fault.

I thanked him and we proceeded to have a conversation. It was a rather lovely conversation and I

enjoyed it. He was funny and he had a way of making you feel at ease.

Then when my destination arrived, I bid him goodbye and stood up. "You don't get to leave my company so soon," he said, with a smile as he also stood up. For a moment, I was concerned. But judging by my expression, he clarified, "My office is also here."

We laughed and got off the bus. He asked if I wanted to have tea with him. I had some time to spare so I agreed. We didn't even know each other's names.

We talked about our aspirations and struggles in life over tea. And then when it was finally time to say goodbye, he offered his phone number. "Call me if you want to continue this conversation." He smiled and went into his office building. I was left with a warm, fuzzy feeling.

I got the job. Yes, I did contact him. He congratulated me. And we started dating. A year later, he proposed.

-Hatisha Jain



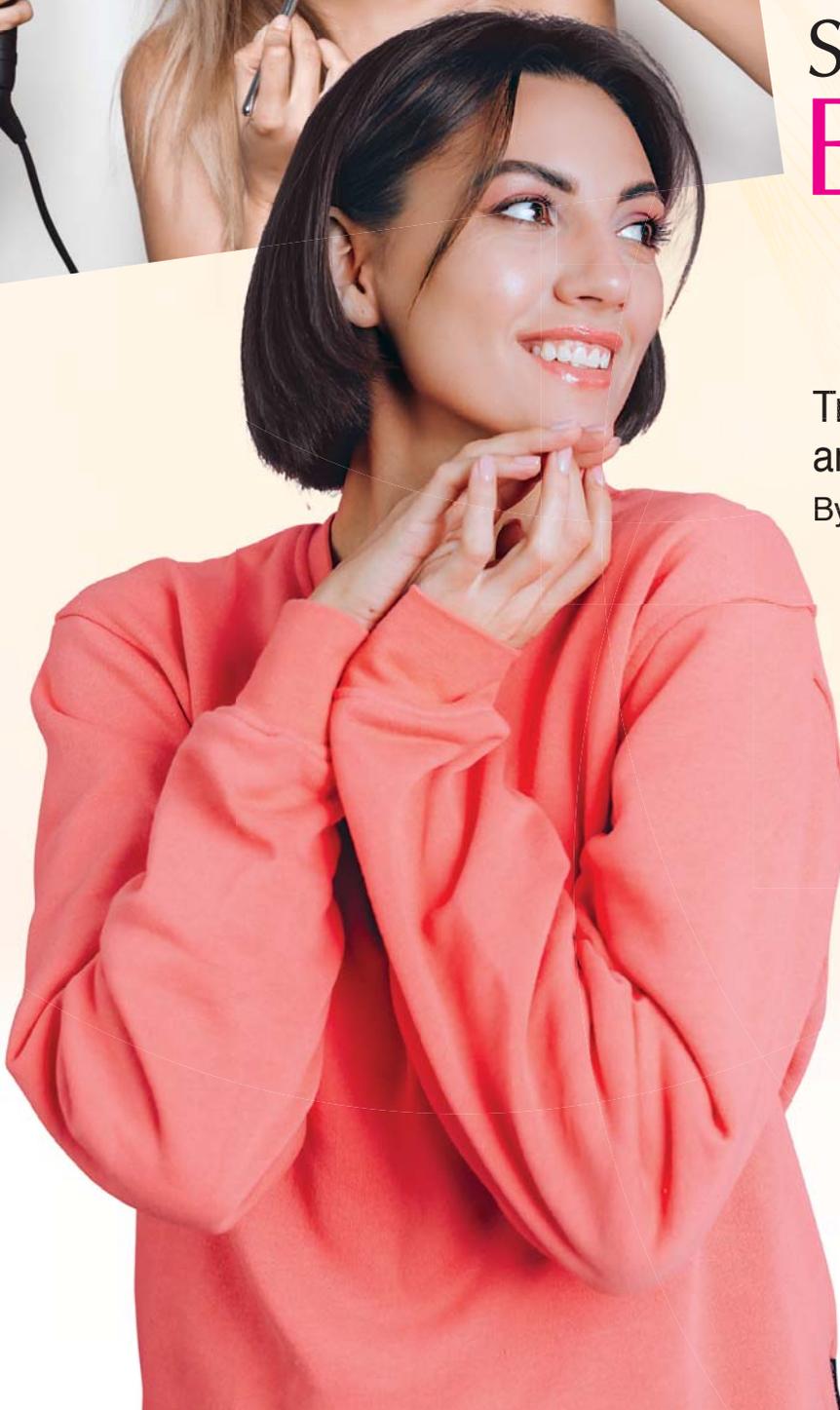
Shattering Beauty Myths

True beauty lies in self-love
and embracing individuality.

By Lasya Shashimohan

Beauty standards throughout the world come with a definite dearth of uniformity. Generally speaking, in Africa (i.e., if you exclude the Arabs and the Cushites), a voluptuous figure, plump well-defined lips, and a medium-sized nose are considered hallmarks of beauty. South Koreans, who perhaps have the strictest beauty standards in the world, swear by flawless skin, a smooth forehead, a V-shaped jawline, and, strangely, the Aegyo-sal, which are sack-like fat deposits under the eyes!

For South Koreans, adhering to beauty standards is a cultural expectation rather than a personal preference, making the cosmetic industry a viable business. Meanwhile, in Brazil, which is known for its subsidised plastic surgeries, to be beautiful is to be thin with large assets.



While the modern world offers numerous treatments to help people meet certain beauty standards, certain cultures follow barbaric practices like foot-binding, neck-elongation using brass rings, and genital mutilation. The imposition of these standards is generally on women, who, from the beginning of time, are expected to bear much pain, humiliation, and disfigurement to meet culturally expected standards of aesthetics.

Despite having been free of British rule for several decades, it looks like Indians are still slaves to the colonial mindset, leading them to favour and fawn over fairer skin tones. For the average Indian, “fair” is synonymous with “beautiful,” with multinationals and the media leveraging this national obsession to push numerous fairness and bleaching creams onto the masses.

Heedless use of skin-brightening creams, and undergoing treatments like chemical peels and laser treatment without considering safety or doing adequate research, have been known to have hazardous side effects in unsuspecting women. So, while your favourite Bollywood celebrity sashays about merrily after her rumoured skin-whitening treatment, there are reports of the average woman suffering from Squamous Cell Carcinoma after a disastrous tryst with the same procedure.

If society places such high stakes on aesthetic standards and puts tremendous pressure on girls to look a certain way, it's time for some profound soul-searching. Is the hourglass the only shape on earth? Don't squares, circles, cylinders,

and rectangles, parallel lines—the whole jingbang—contribute to the fascinating subject that is geometry?

Are all flowers of the same hue, texture, and fragrance, or is it the diversity of the flora that adds a wondrous richness to the ecosystem? Are all fingers of the palm the same size? Isn't the sea dramatically different from the mountains, which, in turn, are nothing at all like lush green forests? If there is no uniformity in the engineering of the universe, how can women, who are a part of it, fit into a single prototype?

Despite the exacting aesthetic norms society wishes to impose on women, beauty is that mysterious something that has to do with one's aura and personality, and very often lies in the eyes of the beholder. Girls

HEEDLESS USE OF SKIN-BRIGHTENING CREAMS, AND UNDERGOING TREATMENTS LIKE CHEMICAL PEELS AND LASER TREATMENT WITHOUT DOING ADEQUATE RESEARCH, HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO HAVE HAZARDOUS SIDE EFFECTS IN UNSUSPECTING WOMEN.

and women can learn to deflect body negativity and focus on the silver lining in their appearance and character. You can begin by identifying your best feature and accentuating it using clothes, makeup or jewelry.

The Art Of Highlighting

If you have expressive eyes, highlighting them with a hint of kohl, mascara, and eyeliner could transform you into a diva! A hint of your favourite lipstick could draw attention to those gorgeous



shapely lips. If you are dubbed as “skinny,” you could experiment with layering (or almost sort of fashion!); if well-endowed, graceful chiffon and georgette drapes could look heavenly on you. The above are mere examples, not rigid rules set in stone. Your face is your palette and your body, your canvas—you are free to beautify them in whichever way you deem fit!

Conversely, it is your choice to keep your dressing style simple and natural. Focusing on basic hygiene, skincare, and grooming while going through life’s journey is also acceptable. Not every woman is interested in adorning herself; take, for instance, the American activists who fought for women’s rights in the 19th century! At the end of the day, self-love is about accepting ourselves as we are and not directing negativity and criticism towards

one’s appearance. Studies show that body positivity contributes to a human being’s productivity and enhances their overall sense of well-being.

Repeating affirmations that are in sync with self-love can also have a positive impact on one’s mindset. So too does eating right, exercising regularly, and getting enough rest. Nourish the mind and spirit also with good books, lectures, music, and meditation.

While it’s commendable to be a hardworking independent woman, it’s essential to understand a few salient rules about how energy

works. Energy healers claim that feminine energy is essentially passive energy, which is able to attract abundance through stillness rather than overthinking and hyperactivity. Feminine energy works best when a woman is centered in the body rather than an incessantly chattering mind. Contrary to the popular belief that women are multitaskers, they are meant to concentrate on and complete only one task at a time. The agenda here isn’t to promote underachievement or sheer laziness, but only a gentle reminder to take care of yourselves. Also, please give yourself concessions to avoid burnout.

Pamper Yourself

At the end of a hectic week, don’t hesitate to spend an entire day pampering yourself. If you are feeling tired, don’t hesitate to go to bed even if it is only 8 pm. If you have been on your feet for the entire day, indulge in a pedicure or give yourself a foot rub. Keep adequate time aside to rest, reflect, and recharge. Activities like dancing are an ideal way to keep women grounded in their bodies instead of in an overactive mind.

Authenticity and self-love need not be restricted to appearance only. It could involve delving deep into one’s consciousness and doing some profound inner work. It could involve identifying your core values (e.g., honesty, kindness, loyalty) and leading a life close to them. Never compromise on your integrity and feel free and emboldened enough to speak your soul’s truth.

Don’t compromise on your authenticity by pretending to be someone you are not, saying “Yes” when you mean “No” and vice-versa. While being kind and helpful is a commendable quality, never feel guilty about refusing to oblige those who habitually take advantage of your accommodating nature.

Grant yourself the grace to experiment until you get to the core of who you really are and forgive yourself for the mistakes you might make in the process. Get in touch



ENERGY HEALERS CLAIM THAT FEMININE ENERGY IS ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE ENERGY, WHICH IS ABLE TO ATTRACT ABUNDANCE THROUGH STILLNESS RATHER THAN OVERTHINKING AND HYPERACTIVITY. FEMININE ENERGY WORKS BEST WHEN A WOMAN IS CENTERED IN THE BODY...

with your emotions; get interested in what each little tear or prick of guilt is trying to say. Learn to process and regulate emotions instead of repressing them. Repressing is the total antithesis of authenticity and self-love and could cause physical and psychological issues.

Try and find passions that are a direct expression of who you are on the inside. It could be learning to sing, act, paint, try stand-up comedy—anything that helps bring out the “true you.” If you desire more visibility, you could sign up with a modelling agency that recruits models across a wide spectrum of looks, ages, gender identities, and abilities. Print and advertising models needn’t always have to be tall, slim, and angular; quite a few of them have an average body type and different hair types.

Beyond Coventional Beauty

While the West has gladly absorbed differently-abled models like Jillian Mercado and Madeline Stuart into its world, Indian transwomen like Naaz Joshi and Trinetra Haldar Gummaraju are ruling the Hindi television and film industry, respectively.

In today’s world, women suffering from vitiligo, hirsutism, gigantic facial birthmarks, and missing limbs have had the opportunity to walk the ramp with models that fit in with conventional ideas of beauty. Beauty pageants are organised exclusively for mobility-challenged women, with Miss Wheelchair India being the most prominent among them. The world (especially the West) is becoming a more inclusive place with non-white actors being cast to play Snow-White, Ariel, and Hermione, who have traditionally been visualised as Caucasian-whites.

Alternately, people suffering from myriad health conditions have access to platforms like TedX Talks where they can throw light on their malaise, bring the prejudices and stigma that come with the territory out in the open, and set an example with their tales of self-love, courage, and resilience. Options like the above and



becoming Instagram influencers are available to women who have been victims of horrendous crimes like sexual assault and acid attacks.

A prominent YouTube channel named “Hooked to the Look” delineates the life journey of a



woman called Skye McLaughlin who turned trauma from years of bullying and alienation into an opportunity to get in touch with her authentic self. Popularly known as the “Plus-sized Art Doll,” Skye uses a bewitching combination of art, makeup, and elements of fashion to create fascinating looks inspired by everything from drag to Japanese Harajuku fashion.

Blessed with a saintly ability to forgive, Skye has transformed what could have been her Achilles’ Heel into a unique and interesting strength. Today, she receives great responses when she goes out in public and also has an enviable following on Instagram.

To quote author Ben Okri, “The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love and be greater than our suffering.”

No one is living this truth better than Skye McLaughlin and the other women mentioned in this piece of writing.



INTERTWINED DESTINIES

Navigating the complexities of love, ego, and unspoken feelings. By Snigdha Jauhari

“What did he say?” Sanjana asked.
“Repeated the same thing, that I am free to leave,” Ritu replied with a wry smile.

“I will speak to this husband of yours. So many times I have tried to understand what’s on his mind but he stubbornly refuses to get into that discussion.

Anyway, tomorrow I have work close to his office. I will talk to him,” Sanjana said.

Since school days Ritu and Sanjana were best friends.

In the Management college, they were joined by Shatrujeet and Arun.

While Arun was soft-spoken and easy-going, Shatrujeet was bright, strong-willed, and difficult to understand.

Among the girls, Ritu was cheerful and easy to be with, while Sanjana was intelligent, fun-loving, quick-witted, and quick-tempered.

Shatrujeet and Sanjana often got into cat-fights. But surprisingly, also made up quickly. And, these two always made the decisions for this group of four, while Arun and Ritu were happy to go along with whatever decisions were made.

A year after they got jobs, Arun had proposed to Sanjana during a dinner where all four were present. “She will take all decisions...make my life easy,” he had quipped, laughing.

Sanjana had initially laughed it off but a few weeks later, she had accepted.

Ritu had always found Shatrujeet attractive but inscrutable, “but... that makes him so attractive,” she had said to Sanjana.

“I really like his deep voice and intelligence. Even his broodiness.”

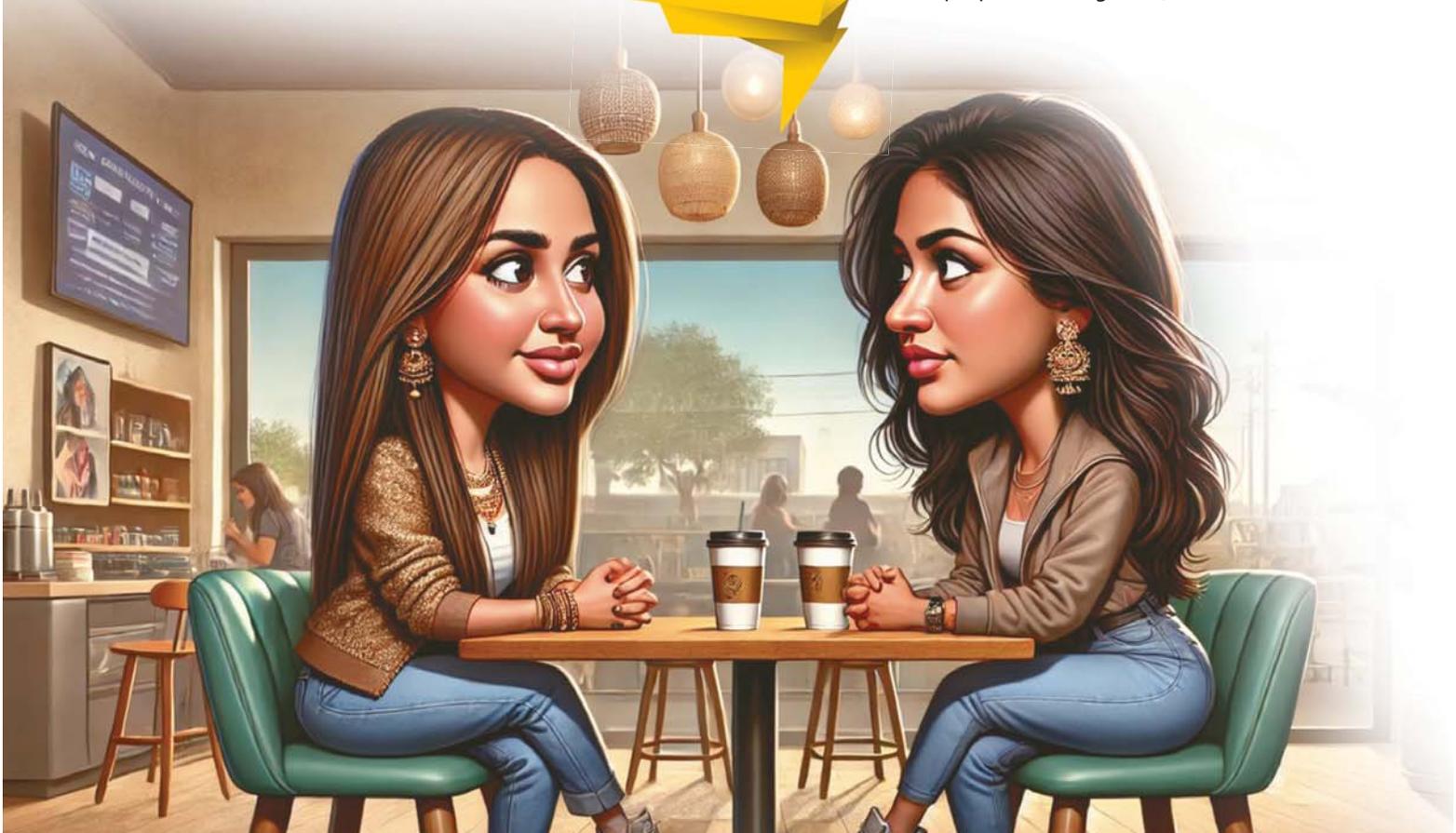
“Are you crazy? Don’t marry him, he is most difficult. Really,” Sanjana had said.

“Oooo...that’s what is most sexy,” she had laughed.

“Besides, he will take all decisions. Make my life easy,” she had smiled. Soon after Arun and Sanjana’s wedding, Ritu had taken the initiative and had proposed to Shatrujeet. “I have begun to love him. And, in his silent ways, he loves me,” she had told herself.

Shatrujeet took a week but agreed to her proposal. Though still, she had no idea

“Are you crazy?
Don’t marry him,
he is most difficult.
Really,” Sanjana
had said.



of his feelings. Married, they all continued living in the same city. They often got together like before, though less frequently.

*** **

The next day, sitting in Shatrujeet's office, Sanjana finally hoped to understand this marriage-circus!

"Shatrujeet, I want to speak to you."

He sat down, his legs evenly apart, sitting straight on the high back executive chair, his eyes fixed on her.

"Tell me," he said.

"You and Ritu! Married for just about a year...where is this leading?" she asked.

"I gave her the option to walk out."

"So that you can continue with your affair?" Sanjana said bluntly.

"She suspected me of having an affair even before I actually got into one, that too a very brief one."

"I know, she told me that she had behaved rather thoughtlessly in those early days of marriage. But now she is more mature and sensible."

"Yes, I know she has changed a bit but there is nothing between us. There never was."

"You married her!!"

"Yes, I did. And I thought I may connect with her, but year down the line, I do not feel any connect."

"Then why did you marry her?"

"Well, if you remember, she had proposed to me. And at that time it...well...it just...seemed okay."

"...she told me that you suggested divorce when she talked of starting a family." Sanjana confronted him with the truth as she understood.

Shatrujeet took time to reply and then said, "Yes. Because she has a right to create her life her way. But the bare truth is that I have never desired her. Nor is there any reason to extend this association."

Sanjana was quiet for a moment. Then she asked, "Why did you stop this affair you were having?"

"She was not who I wanted."

Suddenly Sanjana was struck with a thought. An insight clear and definite. She looked at Shatrujeet sitting across, an inscrutable look in his eyes.

"Shatru," she said, "I think you were in love with someone BEFORE you married Ritu."

Shatrujeet stared at her.

"You were in love," Sanjana repeated with conviction.

"And you haven't forgotten her. Where is she?"

Shatrujeet got up from the chair and went towards the window.

"Shatrujeet," Sanjana repeated her question, "Who is she?"

"She is married," he said in a flat voice.

"She is happily married and you are pining away. When are you going to stop this madness?" She smiled but with mock-severity, demanded to know.

Shatrujeet turned around.

"Never," he said harshly. "Not when I keep seeing and meeting her often."



For the first time in her life, Sanjana was speechless. When she spoke, her voice was choked. "Now you are telling me. You let me go and now you are telling me!?" White-faced, she looked at him.

"When do you meet her? Who is she?"

He looked at her with a mock-expression.

And then she knew the answer...like a bolt from the blue. She gaped at him, unable to move.

"So many years of togetherness and you never knew...so completely oblivious of me," he said bitterly, his eyes looking into hers.

For the first time in her life, Sanjana was speechless. When she spoke, her voice was choked. "Now you are telling me. You let me go and now you are telling me!?" White-faced, she looked at him.

Shatrujeet quickly came to her, "Sanjana..."

Tears streaming down, she said hoarsely, "You and your damn ego. I waited...for years...but...you didn't ask...while Arun did...even then I kept him on hold, hoping you will butt him out, but you didn't."

Shatrujeet got up and caught her hand, "Sanjana...I..."

"Years later, now, you tell me! Where were you when I waited and hoped?" She asked, her voice pained. "All through my so-called marriage, ... every single day, I have lived just going through the motion." Fresh tears welled up in her eyes. "Every single night I have thought of you. You know...Arun too wanted to start a family, but...our life is a lie...I don't want to add to it."

"Sanjana, believe me. Please believe me, I had no idea that you loved me too. I was too scared of being rejected."

"So you let me go. Your ego was stronger than your love," she said sadly.

"No. I was not sure of your love. Arun proposed to you before I could overcome my fear of rejection," he said desperately.

"Always the egotist." She smiled amidst tears.

Shatrujeet knelt beside her. He held her hands in his and said, "Oh, Sanjana, what are we to do now?"

Sanjana looked at him, "Nothing Shatru. The guilt will be too much for both of us."

"Guilt!? Well!! But we need to do something." He said determinedly, "We have to do something."

He got up and paced the floor. "Let Arun and Ritu get together."

"What?"

"Yes. Let them get together. Out of our way." He said forcefully.

Wiping her tears, Sanjana laughed, "My darling, don't be mad."

"Then what do we do?"

Despondently she replied, "Nothing sweetheart. We forget that we met today."

*** **

A week later, Ritu picked up the loudly ringing phone.

For years, every day the phone had rung several times a day, but, at that moment, it seemed inordinately loud to her.

"Sanjana, what's the matter, you sound upset." Concerned, Ritu asked as she heard Sanjana's voice.

"Ritu," Sanjana said, "Arun and I were to holiday in the mountains. I am caught in a very important project. This is crucial for my career. Help me out, sweetie. Go in my place with Arun. He will pick you up at '8' tonight."

"Sanji...!..... how can.....I go with Arun!!!" Ritu stammered. "He is my dear friend. But...?!"

Sanjana said forcefully, "Of course, you can. Your best friend is asking you to go on a holiday with another good friend. That's it."

"But Shatru...." Ritu murmured uncertainly.

"HA..." Sanjana snorted. "You know, he has NOTHING to say to you."

"But..... I.... I still..."

Sanjana interrupted, "No point. Look, he is on a long tour. You also, are on leave from work. So, you are free. Really a FREE bird."

Then, Ritu heard Sanjana's coaxing voice. "Please, please dear. Help me."

Ritu sighed.

Sanjana's persuasive voice filled Ritu's ears, "Listen Sweetie.....it's just a matter of 10 days....Okay.... Now go ahead and you two ENJOY."

And the phone clicked. Ritu put the receiver down.

Perplexed, she moved towards her room. Then, her mind full of confusion, she started to pack.

We



AI FRAUD

It was evening, I was waiting for my husband to return from office. He usually comes by 7 pm, but it has been 8:24 pm and he didn't come yet. I called him, but he didn't pick up the call. Later, I tried 5-6 times but he didn't respond. I started having bad feelings. I got a call from an unknown number I picked up and heard my husband and lady laughing voice. I heard him saying "How beautiful you are.... and the call got cut itself. He came after 25 minutes and I was red-faced with anger; I asked him 'Where were you and why you aren't picking up my calls'. He said "I was stuck in traffic dear, what happened?" I

was really angry, and we had a bad fight. I decided to leave the house, and then suddenly, that number called me and I heard the same voice. I was surprised because if he was with me. In a split moment, I realised someone was trying to trick us by using an AI voice. I felt guilty for misunderstanding him and saved my marriage.

– Ananya Rai.

EMOTIONAL RECONCILE

It has been 2 weeks since we returned from a family vacation. One day, during the daytime I called him, that if he could pick up our kid from school today. He bluntly said, "No, I'm busy and I won't do it even

if free." I was shocked to hear, and a thought came in my mind "What suddenly gone wrong with him? "He came back from the office late evening; I asked "what happened to you. Why you replied me rudely". He ignores me. I shouted at him back again, he said "I want divorce from you, I can't able to live with you anymore," I was shaken to the core, and asked why, suddenly this thought came to him. He said 'I got angry even on small things and he felt like caged in an unloving relationship.' We fought badly and I left home and went to my mother's place. Weeks on, I realised i had been exploiting his kindness and patience, taking all he had done for granted and found that I had not shown much emotional connection with him. I came back to my home after one month, I asked him for forgiveness. He jokingly said "missed your angry face very much."

– Rachna sharma

Child Challenges



Q & A

MY FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD SON often reacts to stress or frustration with outbursts of anger and defiance. He slams doors, shouts hurtful words, and refuses to engage in constructive dialogue, straining our family relationships and causing emotional turmoil.

Helping him develop healthy coping strategies for managing his emotions is crucial. Encourage him to identify triggers that lead to his temper tantrums and explore alternative ways to express his feelings, such as journaling, physical exercise, or deep breathing exercises. Teach him assertive communication skills to express his needs and concerns respectfully, and model effective conflict resolution techniques within the family. Encourage him to seek support from trusted adults or counsellors to develop strategies for managing stress and improving emotional regulation. Provide a calm and supportive environment for your son to discuss his feelings and concerns openly, and reinforce positive behaviours with praise and encouragement.

MY SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD daughter experiences overwhelming anxiety before exams and major assignments. She struggles with perfectionism, spends hours studying without breaks, and becomes physically ill due to stress, impacting her academic performance and well-being.

Supporting your daughter in managing academic anxiety involves creating a supportive and structured approach to studying and exam preparation. Help her establish a balanced study schedule that includes regular breaks, physical activity, and relaxation techniques to reduce stress

levels. Encourage her to set realistic goals and expectations for herself, focusing on effort and improvement rather than perfection. Teach her mindfulness and stress reduction techniques, such as meditation or progressive muscle relaxation, to help her cope with exam-related stress. Create a positive study environment free from distractions, and encourage open communication about her concerns and fears. Consider involving her in study groups or tutoring sessions to build confidence and academic skills, and reassure her of your unconditional support and belief in her abilities.

MY SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD SON is overwhelmed by the college application process. He feels pressure to excel academically, write compelling essays, and secure scholarships, causing him to doubt his abilities and future prospects.

Supporting your son through the college application process involves providing emotional support and practical guidance. Help him break down tasks into manageable steps, such as researching colleges, drafting essays, and gathering application materials.

Encourage him to create a timeline for completing each task, setting realistic deadlines to alleviate last-minute stress. Offer constructive feedback on his essays and applications, emphasising his unique strengths and accomplishments. Explore scholarship and financial aid opportunities together, and reassure him that there are many paths to success beyond academics. Encourage him to maintain a balanced approach to his studies and extracurricular activities, prioritising self-care and well-being during this transitional

period. Provide opportunities for him to explore his interests and goals, and remind him that his worth extends beyond college admissions outcomes.

EVERY AFTERNOON, WHEN IT'S TIME for homework, my nine-year-old daughter protests loudly. She avoids starting assignments, complains about the difficulty, and often ends up in tears, making homework time a battleground.

Creating a designated homework space for your daughter can help set the tone for productive study sessions. Choose a quiet area free from distractions and stock it with necessary supplies like pens, paper, and reference materials.

Establish a consistent homework routine, including a set time each day for completing assignments, and break tasks into smaller, manageable chunks to reduce overwhelm. Offer encouragement and support as she works through her assignments, and consider implementing a reward system for completing homework on time and with effort.

MY TWELVE-YEAR-OLD daughter struggles with organising skills. Her backpack is often a mess of crumpled papers, she forgets important assignments, and she frequently misplaces books and stationaries, causing stress and missed deadlines.

Helping her develop organisational strategies can improve her academic performance and reduce stress. Encourage her to use a planner or digital calendar to keep track of assignments, due dates, and extracurricular activities.

Create a homework and study schedule that includes designated times for completing assignments and reviewing materials. Teach her how to prioritise tasks and break projects into smaller, manageable steps. Establish a daily routine for organising her backpack and school materials, and periodically review and declutter together. By providing structure and guidance, you can support her in developing effective organisational habits.



Effortless *Elegance*

How to look fabulous without makeup.

By Bhavana Ramakrishnan

Makeup is fun. It is such an amazing way to channel your inner artist, but there are days when you are running low on energy, struggling to get out of bed even though it's already 8 am and you have to be at work within an hour. Or perhaps you have very sensitive skin that breaks out with makeup, or you simply want the freedom to rub your eyes and scratch your face without worrying about a messy eyeliner and eat without the worry of your lipstick getting smudged. For such times, here are tips on how to look good without makeup, or more importantly, how to look presentable with minimal effort.



Your Outfit Makes Or Breaks The Look

Try to choose outfits that flatter your body shape and choose colours that complement your skin tone. Make sure you wear well-fitting clothes, and remember that these decisions are made when you buy your clothes, not just the morning you leave for work/college. It's so wrong to think that your outfit only includes your top and bottom.

Footwear is an essential part of your look too, so invest in a good pair of neutral-coloured footwear (like black or nude) that can match various outfits. Choose those you are comfortable walking in, as footwear that only look good and lead to shoe bites or pain are completely useless. Another key element is your handbag.

Unfortunately, many women's outfits lack pockets, making a handbag essential. Apply the same neutral colour theory here to ensure versatility and minimise the need for multiple bags. Remember, less is more. Having fewer bags and shoes makes deciding what to wear easy and also makes storing them convenient.

Take Time On Your Hair

No, you don't need to go to the parlour to get your hair done every single time. Simply oiling your hair, washing it with a shampoo that suits you and deep conditioning it is more than sufficient to leave your hair looking luscious and healthy. Obviously, it is not viable to wash your hair any more than one or two times a week so, you can use a silk pillowcase or silk scarf so that your hair does not get frizzy before your next wash day.

Experiment with new hairstyles that suit your outfit, hair volume, and hair type. You can even take it a step further and try overnight blowouts the previous night (if you have the time). This can be easily done with a pair of socks. Ensure your hair is a little damp and divide your hair into two sections – front and back.

FOOTWEAR IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR LOOK TOO, SO INVEST IN A GOOD PAIR OF NEUTRAL-COLORED FOOTWEAR (LIKE BLACK OR NUDE) THAT CAN MATCH OUTFITS. CHOOSE THOSE YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WALKING IN, AS FOOTWEAR THAT LOOK GOOD...



Take a sock and wrap the ends of a hair section around it. Roll the sock upwards towards your scalp, wrapping the hair around the sock as you go. Once you reach your scalp, tie the ends of the sock together to secure it in place with a clip. Do this for both sections. To prevent frizz, you can wrap your head with a satin or silk scarf. The next day, gently remove the socks and ruffle your hair into place. You will be mind-blown with the results as it would look like you have blow-dried your hair. Best part? There is no heat involved in the process!

Focus On Your Eyebrows And Eyelashes

Eyebrows really hold so much power. Good brows can frame your face and accentuate your overall appearance. It can be challenging to find the right eyebrow shape for your face structure, but once you do, you have won at life.

Ensure to get your eyebrows done regularly. Everyone loves thick eyelashes, but what is equally important is that they are well-groomed. Use an eyelash curler before heading out. Be careful if you are a beginner cause there are chances you can end up pinching



your eyelids. You can also put a very thin layer of Vaseline on your eyebrows and eyelashes to set them in place and give that additional shine. It also helps in moisturising the lash line and conditioning the lashes. In case you are facing eyebrow or eyelash thinning, take a few drops of castor oil and apply it on your lashes and brows before hitting the sack.

Have A Skincare Routine

A good skincare routine can help hydrate and brighten your face. Use a good face wash, and if you are dealing with puffiness in the morning, you can wash your face with ice-cold water. This really helps in both fighting the dullness – both in skin and mind.

Using just moisturiser and sunscreen in the morning gives your skin an extra sheen and brightness. These two also help you in the long term by hydrating your skin and protecting it from UV damage and hyperpigmentation. Your night skincare routine must focus on rehydrating the skin so that you wake up the next morning looking like a glowy goddess.

EXFOLIATING YOUR SKIN ONCE IN TWO WEEKS GETS RID OF THE DRY AND DEAD SKIN CELLS AND LEAVES YOU WITH A SMOOTHER SKIN TEXTURE. NEVER FORGET TO USE THE LIP BALM BEFORE YOU STEP OUT OF YOUR HOUSE.

Exfoliating your skin once in two weeks gets rid of the dry and dead skin cells and leaves you with a smoother skin texture. Never forget to use the lip balm before you step out of your house.

Say No To Alcohol And Smoking

Alcohol consumption instantly leads to dehydration in the body and skin. This can lead to premature wrinkles and dullness. It can also lead to the build-up of toxins that can trigger acne and other skin issues. Smoking leads to hyperpigmentation and dullness of the skin especially around the lips. It can also lead to a lot of dark spots and premature ageing in the long term. Thus, if you dream of clear skin, drinking and smoking is definitely not the way to go.

Lifestyle Is Everything

Ensure you eat healthily. Avoid processed and packaged food that contain a lot of sugar, vegetable oils, and trans fats. These ingredients have a bad impact not just on your overall health but also on your skin. Of course, it is impossible to eat

healthy all the time and a balance is important, but to reduce the effects, you can minimise its consumption.

Start off by saying no to any kind of unhealthy food for breakfast. Your first meal of the day is supposed to be nourishing and filled with essential nutrients. After 10-12 hours of fasting after the previous night's dinner, you must fill your stomach with enriching nutrients that your body can absorb. Have a healthy sleep cycle. Getting a minimum of 7 hours of sleep every night is essential.

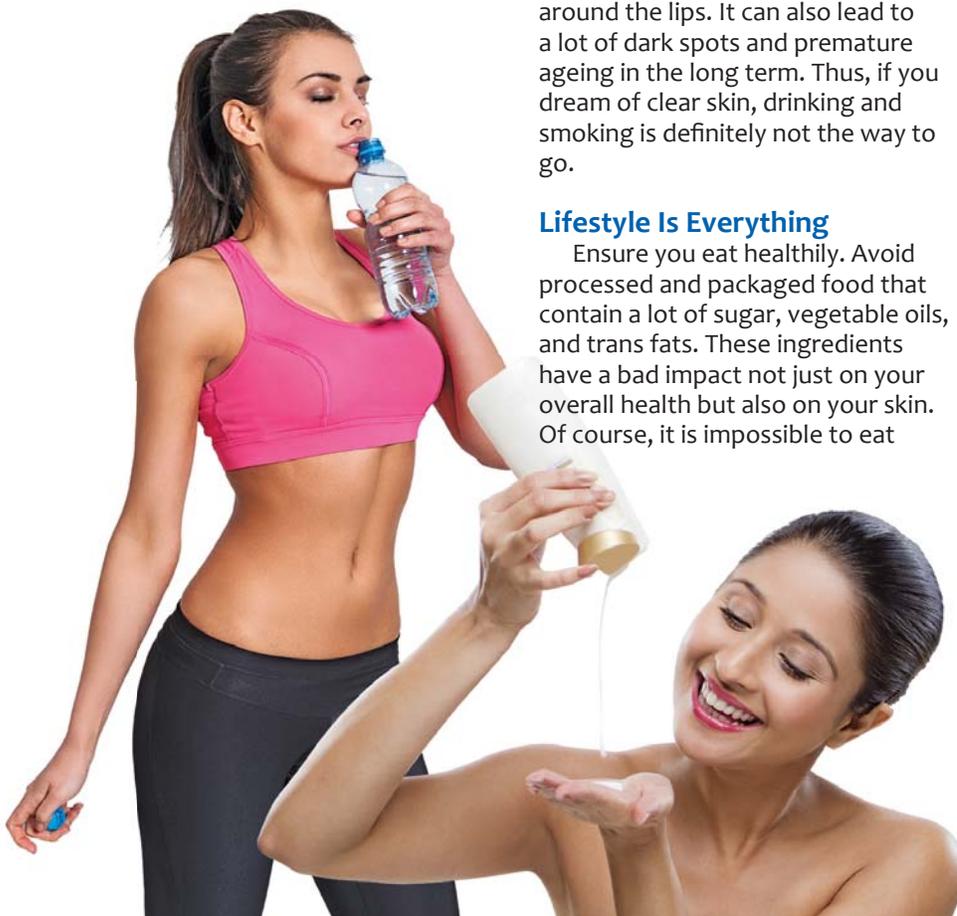
So, start off by setting an alarm to go to sleep rather than for waking up. Try unwinding an hour before sleep. This is a great time for some light reading, music, a podcast, and even your night skincare routine. A good lifestyle will in turn show as radiance in your skin.

Exercise! Hit the gym or go for a casual walk, it really doesn't matter. What matters is consistency. It is not just about how your body looks, but exercising really changes the way you feel about your body for the better. The more confident you feel, the better you tend to look. Exercising lifts your mood, makes you happy and hence makes you smile, and well, the more you smile, the prettier you look. Drink enough water. Hydrating the body helps hydrate the skin internally. This can in turn reduce flakiness in the skin and chapped lips. Water also does a huge favour by flushing out toxins from the body that could cause acne.

Confidence Is The Key

Most of the time, the reason why you tend to look good with makeup on is not really because of the makeup itself, but it is because of the way it makes you feel. Makeup makes you feel pretty and hence confident. So, if you change your perception about yourself and truly believe that you are beautiful no matter what, you will look amazing.

At the end of the day, what the world sees you is a reflection of how you see yourself. Fix your posture and wear a gorgeous smile and believe from within your heart that you are beautiful.





The Kaleidoscope Collection

A burst of vibrant elegance with The Kaftan Company.

Dive into oceanic bliss with this vibrant blue and green aquamarine masterpiece, designed for ultimate elegance.

The Kaftan Company's "Kaleidoscope Collection" offers digital printed kaftans in soft satins and crepes, featuring vibrant colors and unique kaleidoscopic prints. Starting at INR 2000, this collection is known for its comfort and distinctive designs. Explore these beautiful pieces at www.thekaftancompany.com.



Radiate sunshine and sky vibes in this dazzling yellow and blue kaftan.



Step into a kaleidoscope of colors with this stunning kaftan, a celebration of vibrant artistry.



Bold and beautiful, this yellow kaftan features captivating prints for a standout look.



Revel in soft peach hues and delicate designs, creating a blend of comfort and charm.



Embrace timeless sophistication with our black kaftan, adorned with intricate, mesmerizing prints.



THE SOLITUDE SERENADE

Turning loneliness into harmony.

By Reema Bansal

Everyone has, at one or the other time, experienced loneliness. It is a very happiness-countering and life-reducing condition, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Human beings are social animals, and it is against our basic nature to be isolated. However, making a few changes in our days, in our routines, and making other conscious efforts in the right direction can convert loneliness to blissful solitude, and gaiety-filled companionships, and, even more desirably – both.

First, let us have a look at various situations that can lead to / aggravate loneliness (The list might not be exhaustive but will give a broad picture):

- Being confined to home due to disease and/or old age.
- Being surrounded by people, yet not feeling understood or appreciated.
- Lack of social skills.
- Social media addiction – fools us into being occupied – at the cost of meaningful relationships.
- Feeling too different from others to be accepted (e.g., disability, divorce, single parenthood, unemployment, etc.).

These reasons can be quite overlapping, as well. And one can lead to another, thus making loneliness a vicious cycle. Also, while we can freely mention our bodily pains and diseases freely, we can't publicly declare that we are lonely or aching at an internal/ mental level. But, the brighter (though, tough to practise) aspect is that loneliness can be managed. Here are a few pointers:

MAKING A FEW CHANGES IN OUR DAYS, IN OUR ROUTINES, AND MAKING OTHER CONSCIOUS EFFORTS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION CAN CONVERT LONELINESS TO BLISSFUL SOLITUDE.



Develop Hobbies

Please know that one doesn't have to be good at painting to paint, or dancing to dance. The purpose of creativity is boosting self-esteem, confidence, and connection. Joining reading/writing clubs is another way to do it. Don't forget to enjoy the process. Taking a walk in the park and being regular at the gym also counts. These give us a chance to intermingle with people who are dabbling in similar (and different) pursuits.



Smile

Smile, they say, is the universal language of love. It transcends borders, languages, and cultures. Use it profusely. Use it to reach out. Use it on yourself. Use it for everybody. It's a curve that sets everything straight.



Be Prepared To Be Hurt

People, knowingly and unknowingly, are bound to hurt us. Just move towards those who genuinely keep striving for nurturing and repairing the bonds. Also, accept differences of opinion; in fact, despite differences, be there when needed by others. A friend sent me a quote recently: "jeewan mein ek doosrey jaisa hona zaroori nahi, ek doosre ke liye hona zaroori hai."

How will all this put people in your life, one might ask? The answer is that directly or indirectly, it's your vibe that attracts your tribe. These suggestions will improve and fine-tune that vibe, automatically leading you to your tribe.



Do Good Deeds

Do good. Be kind. It starts a ripple effect, a chain reaction; and, it comes back to you. Also, it will in any case come back in unexpected ways. Reminds me of the in-between lines of the beautiful song "Kabhi kisiko muqammal jahaan nahin milta": "Tere jahaan mein aisa nahin ki pyaar nahin – jahaan umeed ho iski wahaan nahin milta..."

Be Yourself

Lastly, while you begin this journey, remember to love and care for your own self. Manage your boundaries well. As quoted by Keanu Reeves, a famous Canadian actor, "Someone told me the other day that he felt bad for single people because they are lonely all the time. I told him that's not true I'm single and I don't feel lonely. I take myself out to eat, I buy myself clothes. I have great times by myself. Once you know how to take care of yourself, company becomes an option and not a necessity."

Get-togethers

Fix meet-up times with friends and family. It could be weekly, monthly, or as suits. In that light, even kitty parties are not a bad idea. But beware lest these get-togethers turn out as show-off parties or gossip/back-biting hours. Let meaningful conversations, looking out for each other, catching up, and supporting each other be the backbone. To execute this, one would need to be ready with some talk-ideas and conversation starters.



In a nutshell, as I recently read on social media, there are four sanctuaries in life: silence, solitude, stillness, and simplicity. Leverage them all.

We

Glow Like a K-Beauty Star

Unlocking Korean skincare secrets for radiant glass skin. By Aditya

Getting over K-Drama or K-Pop is almost impossible, but getting a flawless “Korean Glass Skin” can be achievable with your kitchen stuff. It’s trendy to show off immaculate, radiant skin. Who wouldn’t desire flawless porcelain skin like the K-beauties and the sheen it reflects, which makes most ladies envious, even if they aren’t fans of K-dramas or K-Pop? What is their secret, then? Is this a gift from God, or are the Korean women consuming beauty from some otherworldly source? No, is the succinct response to this. However, there are several Korean beauty secrets that you can learn right now to acquire glass skin.

All around the world, there are fantastic tales of Korean skin having an overwhelming radiance. The most talked-about topic in the beauty industry these days is their beauty secrets. For those who don’t know, Koreans are renowned for having immaculate skin. If you’re a fan of

skincare products, you ought to understand the significance of the Korean beauty business. Koreans are renowned for having skin that reflects like glass and is so brilliant and translucent that it nearly seems radiant.

Discover The Magic

Ladies, get ready to make your skin flawless by following the Korean trends. The everyday routines that ladies follow, such as taking showers,

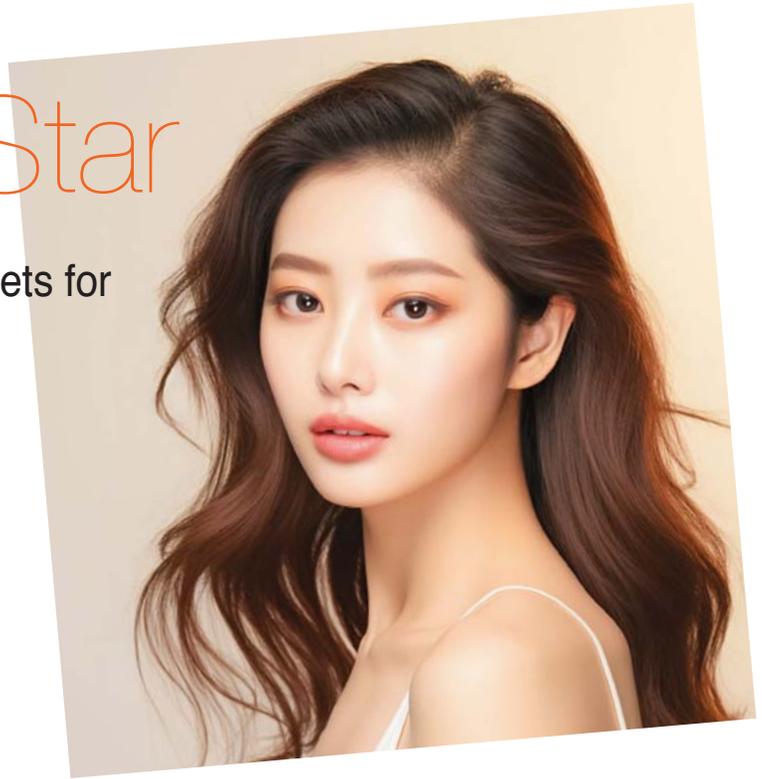
eating certain meals, and even drinking certain types of tea, hold the key to Korean beauty. Discover these Korean beauty secrets to show off your perfect porcelain skin:

Moisturise Your Face And Body

Face moisturising is a staple of any skincare regimen, and Korean skincare is no exception. Vitamin C-infused serum gel or vitamin C-infused creamy moisturising cream are your options. You cannot neglect taking care of your physique if you are a fan of Korean beauty. Thus, use a serum-in-lotion enhanced with lemon essence to deeply moisturize and brighten skin.

Indulge In A Steam Session

Indulging in a hot shower or taking steam treatments would be a great start to your journey toward Korean glass skin. Steam aids in pore opening and purges the skin of debris and pollutants. Unaware of the advantages of steam massages? You can massage your face with your fingertips in an upward-circling motion while taking a steamy shower



A woman with long, dark, wavy hair is the central focus. She is wearing a white, long-sleeved blouse with a ruffled cuff. On her left wrist, she wears a gold-toned watch with a light-colored dial and a dark strap. Her right hand is raised near her face, and she wears a ring on her ring finger. The background is a soft-focus scene of autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and brown. The lighting is warm and directional, highlighting her features.

ALL AROUND THE
WORLD, THERE
ARE FANTASTIC
TALES OF KOREAN
SKIN HAVING AN
OVERWHELMING
RADIANCE. THE
MOST TALKED-
ABOUT TOPIC IN THE
BEAUTY INDUSTRY
THESE DAYS IS THEIR
BEAUTY SECRETS.

or directly from a steamer. After 5-7 minutes of continued application, gradually observe the outcome for yourself.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Are you curious about one of the simplest Korean beauty techniques to achieve glass skin? Learn how to apply skincare products correctly by tapping your face. A facial relaxation method called tapping can help prevent premature skin aging by improving lymph flow and blood circulation. Instead of rubbing their skincare products on their faces, Koreans have a practice of tapping them.

Daily Facial Exercises

A fair, clear skin is seen as a virtue in Korea. As a result, every Korean beauty aspires to have perfect, clear skin by doing whatever it takes. Practise quick mouth stretches, puckering your lips and moving sideways, lifting your head up, smiling, and swallowing, as well as upward face muscle massage, if you want a V-shaped jawline and taut, younger-looking skin. At least five repetitions of each exercise will give you tight skin and a V-shaped jawline.

Toning With Fermented Rice Water

A crucial stage in Korean skincare is toning. Koreans have long-toned and prepped their

skin with natural water-rich foods like cucumber, tomatoes, and watermelon. Therefore, to minimise the appearance of pores and brighten the skin tone, search for these substances when purchasing

THE SECRET TO HAVING KOREAN GLASS SKIN IS DEEP WASHING. FOR BRIGHTER SKIN, USE A FACE WASH INFUSED WITH LEMON JUICE AFTER DOUBLE WASHING YOUR FACE WITH MICELLAR WATER. YOUR FACE WILL BE READY FOR THE FOLLOWING SKIN CARE...

a toner. Additionally, you can use fermented rice water to make your own face mist at home. This miracle concoction promotes the skin's production of collagen, giving the face a glowing appearance.

Cleanse Thoroughly Your Face

The secret to having Korean glass skin is deep washing. For brighter skin, use a face wash infused with lemon juice after double washing your face with micellar cleansing water. Your face will be ready for the following skin care procedures after this procedure.

Exfoliate With A Damp Washcloth

Enhance your Korean skincare regimen's deep cleaning step with a special exfoliating technique. To maintain good skin and prevent wrinkles, Korean beauty prefers to scrub her face with washcloths rather than using any exfoliating products. Squeeze out the water after dipping a gentle cloth into lukewarm water. Next, use a gentle upward swipe of the washcloth to remove dirt, grit, and filth off your face, as if it were a magnet.

Drink Tea

The range of tea selections that Korean celebrities incorporate into their diet and skincare regimens demonstrates how seriously they take tea. Thus, if you enjoy drinking tea as much as I do, you can incorporate green tea, roasted barley tea, and ginseng tea into your daily regimen to achieve glowing skin.

Elevate Your Skincare Game

You may also get Korean glass skin by using a sheet mask containing a green tea or charcoal serum. You got the reading right! Face masks are crucial to Korean skincare since they aid in hydrating and nourishing the skin. The benefits of using a charcoal face mask increase because it helps remove pollutants from your skin. Given the benefits of green tea for skin care, applying a sheet mask soaked in the tea can also be an effective method of treating acne



and lowering inflammation. So apply a sheet mask to create tight, clear, attractive skin in fifteen minutes or less.

Aloe Vera And Rice Flour Face Mask

Rice flour, well-known for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant qualities, prevents skin aging, lessens UV damage to the skin, and evens out skin tone. It can also be gently scrubbed with it as a natural exfoliant. Aloe vera, on the other hand, can treat acne, moisturise the skin, and lighten imperfections.

Strawberry And Lemon Face Mask

The simplest approach to getting Korean skin is using this mask. Lemons are good for reducing skin damage and premature aging because of their antioxidant qualities and high vitamin C concentration. Strongly astringent, strawberries also contain antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and UV protection properties that help heal acne and remove dead skin cells from the skin.

Hold on! The adoration of sheet masks among Koreans doesn't stop here. They incorporate an overnight mask into their PM Korean skincare routine because they understand the value of beauty sleep since the body heals and repairs itself during this time. They can combat dullness and indications of ageing, lock in more moisture, and wake up with bright, youthful-looking skin thanks to this.

With these tips, the secrets to the coveted Korean glass skin are now in your hands!

So, women of *Woman's Era*, if you want to achieve a glass skin glow at home, try these easy methods. Additionally, remember to use sunscreen every day. Before going outside in the sun, protect your skin from UV radiation by using sunscreen, donning caps, and wearing scarves. Prioritise staying hydrated during the day. Drink lots of water and fresh juices on a daily basis and fill up on seasonal fruits and vegetables that are high in water content.

We



An Old Family Album

Once I was decluttering a wooden almirah
Suddenly an old family album caught my sight...
I took it off its shelf carefully and
began to see the photographs that lay inside...
I rolled down the memory lane
Became nostalgic again...
Realised how much everyone has changed,
I have myself transformed a lot and not the same...
Eons elapsed since these pics were clicked yet it felt like yesterday...
Every minute detail of the time etched in memory vividly even to this day...
Each photo carried a special anecdote to remember
Attached with it hid emotions galore...
What was the occasion,
Who brought the camera,
What conversations went by during the shoot,
There came flashing countless incidents to reminisce and recall...
In one of the group photographs, how young my parents looked...
So did other elderly relatives around, who stood...
Sitting on a chair my grandmaa was then alive...
Always posed for a pic with a big broad smile...
There stuck photos all over of my siblings, cousins, and childhood friends...
Some had faces that showed mischief
While some displayed tenderness, pure innocence...
So I kept flipping the thick pages one after one
Till there were left none...
No matter how little time in gazing these pictures might I had spent...
It made me relive my past once again with those
I still remember to my heart's content...
I wiped the cover of the album with a cloth
And put it back where it was gently...
Like one would keep a sacred book respectfully...
Finally, before moving on to attend other chores
I closed not only the almirah behind...
But also closed many, many files of my memoirs
That I had just opened in my mind...

– N. Kavita

The New Man

Why men should be gender-sensitive towards women peers.

By Swikriti Swarnkar

A man and a woman are arm-wrestling on a gym bench. The man is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt and dark pants, smiling broadly. The woman is on the right, also in a white t-shirt, smiling. They are both leaning forward with their arms on the bench. The background shows gym equipment and a brick wall. Two water bottles are on the floor near the bench.

A chance encounter, I have with my neighbour Vikas, a new father beaming with joy over the arrival of his newborn daughter. His happiness reflected the palpable elation on his face. He distributed sweets to the community, celebrating the joy of parenthood and his willingness to help his wife with household chores is a heart-warming display of gender roles redefined. Meanwhile, my 10-year-old son's recent show wins my heart as at such a tender age he unknowingly advocates for the freedom to play without gender-based restrictions.



RATHER THAN EXCLUSIVELY CENTERING GENDER CONVERSATIONS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE INVOLVE MEN AND BOYS FROM AN EARLY STAGE IN THESE DISCUSSIONS SO THEY CAN COMPREHEND AND ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY.

He stood for his girl best-friend Maya when she was teased by classmates for playing with trucks instead of dolls. His actions resonated deeply, and I couldn't help but feel a sense of pride in his budding understanding of gender altruism.

As society continues to evolve, we're witnessing a significant shift and the evolution of social attributes challenging stereotypes and encouraging men to embrace feminist values. It thus seeks to foster a more inclusive society where individuals are valued based on their abilities and character. Masculinity traditionally represents controlled emotions, dominant nature, and stoicism that can perpetuate inequality.

The evolution of gender sensitiveness seeks to challenge oppressive gender norms, harmful behaviours and attitudes that perpetuate sexism, and fight for justice and inclusivity. The acts of kindness, support, advocacy, or activism that specifically address certain communities define a broader spectrum of identities and roles, fostering personal fulfilment and healthier relationships. It gives men a wider perspective of understanding relationships and promoting liberation. When you raise your son with these values, he will become aware of diverse expressions of gender and will empower society to break rigid conventions.

Defining Gender Sensitiveness

The concept of gender sensitiveness serves as a crucial foundation for fostering peacebuilding and cultivating an inclusive environment that encompasses all genders. It is essential for individuals identifying as men, women, or non-binary to have the opportunity for meaningful participation and partnerships in order to construct a transformative society.

Rather than exclusively centering gender conversations on women and girls, it is imperative that we involve men and boys from an early stage in these discussions so they can comprehend and actively contribute to the promotion of gender equality. It is important to encourage young boys and men to champion gender equality and reduce disparities across genders.

Why Should Men Be Gender Sensitive?

Men should understand essential boundaries and limitations to navigate gender complexities. They should recognise that an equitable society does not relate to women's issues but humans as a whole. 'Gender inclusiveness' is an important dialogue to work towards dismantling perpetuating social injustice against all genders to ensure equal respect for diverse identities. The emotions of empathy, compassion, and vulnerability should

be fostered in men, to shape the world through restraint of toxic masculinity.

Therefore, these essential factors will encourage society to build healthy relationships on mutual trust, respect, and open communication. Thus, we can achieve liberal feminism as it highlights the distinction between sex and socially learned gender to demonstrate that "gender roles could be socially transformed through conscious social and political action to foster a more egalitarian society" (as quoted in Mann & Patterson, 2016, p. 49).

Education And Feminist Values In Men

Historically, men are positioned as oppressors, and the masculinities were to destabilise and invalidate gender ideas. They do not consider gender sensitive values to be promoted and also resist the rights of feminism in society. In reality, it is noted that many young men feel positively inclined towards gender equality and feminism, but it's also true that Gen Z men are statistically less likely to identify themselves as feminists. A recent study in 2024 conducted by King's College London and Ipsos found through a survey that Gen Z believe that 'feminism has done more harm than good' according to those aged 16 to 29.

Some young men believe that though feminism aims to promote

gender equality, its main ideology is to punish men. They reported mistreatment in their daily lives. They don't want to instil feminist values because of two factors – mainly fear and ego. The fear drove them to lose power and status, or being ostracised by their peers and uncertainty to navigate gender and relationship dynamics. Therefore, it is essential to recognise the concern that eventuate misunderstanding of feminism's true goals. To overcome the barriers pertaining to feminism quintessence, men must engage in open dialogue, education, and empathy.

Media's Significant Role In Shaping Perspective

Media influx has played both positive and negative roles in casting a comprehension of feminist men. Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have overemphasised feminist and feminist voices, allowing a broader stage for discussion. It provided the facility to have open dialogue for feminist men to influence and educate significant others on concepts such as patriarchy, intersectionality, and systemic discrimination.

Role models and public figures also advocate for gender sensitiveness and gender equality, thus influencing the public to engage with feminist ideas. On the other

hand, some media outlets and online spaces downplay it by framing it as a threat to traditional masculinity or going into crisis, thus brainwashing them to reinforce resistance to moving towards feminist principles and activism.

Religious And Cultural Barriers Resistance

In the Indian context, traditional gender roles defined long years back resist embracing changes. It is because patriarchal interpretation reinforces classification, thus making it difficult for men to sponsor feminist ideals. Certain religious ideologies, norms, and traditions pressuring men to conform and fear of social ostracism or reputation hold men back from validating gender sensitivity.

Additionally, some religious leaders or community elders may disapprove of feminist ideas and thus internalise misogyny in contributing resistance. From the religious view, some cultural practices like *Karva Chauth*, and *Vatsavriti puja*, where women fast for their husbands' well-being, propagate gender stereotypes. These practices discourage men from pursuing traditional interests or if they break the stereotypes to participate either ridiculed or judged as unmanly. This cultural narrative reinforces gender segregation and perceives it as 'Feminine'.

Parents' Role To Inculcate Gender Sensitiveness

When we talk about parenting, it not only includes equal treatment of gender but also focuses on promoting empathy, vulnerability, and inclusivity.

Here are some ways how parents can practise gender sensitiveness and feminist values when raising a son:

Emotionally Viable: Allow your son to express openly without hesitation and any judgement. Teach that vulnerability is strength, not a weakness.

Challenge Stereotypes: Engage your son in traditional activities like cooking, art, or dancing. These things will make them aware of having shared responsibilities.

Promote Positive Traits: Traits like kindness, respect, and responsibility are essential for positive masculinity.

Teach Consent and Boundaries: Educate them to take consent and respect the boundaries in developing healthy relationships.

Foster the Discussion on Feminism: Have open conversations about gender, equality, social justice, and critical thinking.

Therefore, good and empathetic parenting helps sons to prioritise self-care, reduce aggression, and feel comfortable in discussing their problems with parents and friends. It would help them to direct their thoughts and emotions healthily.

Embracing Gender Sensitivity: Key To Tackle Mental Health

Did you know that suppressing emotions can result in staggering consequences in men? If they equip themselves with feminist values, they can effectively have coping mechanisms to mitigate these alarming statistics:

- A data published in the *Journal of Men's Health* found that due to social pressure and stigma, men have been reported with higher levels of stress and anxiety.



- 60 per cent of men have been experiencing higher levels of depression and anxiety due to feelings of isolation, according to a study published in the *International Journal of Men's Social and Community Health*.

According to the reference of Priory Group findings, another set of statistics reveal more about mental health:

- 40 per cent of men have never spoken to anyone about their mental health.
- 29 per cent of those say they are “too embarrassed” to speak about it, while 20 per cent say there is a “negative stigma” on the issue.
- The biggest cause of mental health issues in men's lives are work (32 per cent), their finances (31 per cent), and their health (23 per cent).
- 40 per cent of men surveyed said it would take thoughts of suicide or self-harm to compel them to get professional help.

These statistics are triggering but can be effective when they can live to their authentic selves and become allies to women and other marginalised groups to create an equitable society. In this context of equitability, I randomly interviewed Amit, my office colleague. He emphasised the importance of his roles as a father and husband, influenced by his family experiences.

He said he believes strongly in notions of equality and justice between the sexes and described being a man he feels more responsible for earning money, despite his wife also having a profession and earning decent money. He acknowledged feeling pressure to uphold traditional masculine values, even though he supports gender issues and recognises himself as a feminist.

While his remarks highlight that there is a complex interplay between gender roles breaking free from the constraints of traditional pre-defined masculinity definition.



Conclusion

Gender Sensitiveness exclusively refers to having cordial gender relations, where men can be allies to women to make inclusivity in communities. The reason for not choosing to identify as a feminist was because of the conception that the identity should be closely aligned with one's personal experience. Hence, feminism and gender sensitiveness should be promoted as a whole and not just viewed through one angle.

I came across a book related to the subject of feminist men named *Feminisme is Ook een Mannenzaak*, authored by Rutters and Van Dam, which describes the importance of male feminists. They write that without the active participation and support of men, a gender-equitable society will never exist, but are quick to acknowledge that men should not feel that they need to speak on behalf of women. Instead, the concept highlights that men should question their role in society and the potential ways in which they are in an alliance against the system of gender inequality or intersectionality.

In my point of view, I think feminist men need to raise their voices, be more vocal about speaking over women and non-binary individuals, and offer support when needed. Men are always in a position “which brings with it all

the implications of domination and appropriation, everything precisely that is being challenged, that has to be altered” (Heath 1987). In short, Men should be involved in having feminine qualities, but they must recognise and acknowledge their privileges.

We

CLASSIFIEDS

BODY WELLNESS SPA AT HOME

Professional Massage Therapy Services That Are Offered In The Comfort Of Your Own Home.

Call Now Rahul At

80158 70557

SEARCHING FOR BRIDE

Smart, 36-year-old guy, highly educated, well settled, a loving, caring and sincere person, searching for a good looking, loving, caring, committed, and independent girl for long lasting alliance based on mutual trust and understanding. Interested girl may sms or call at

7874997446

HIRNI

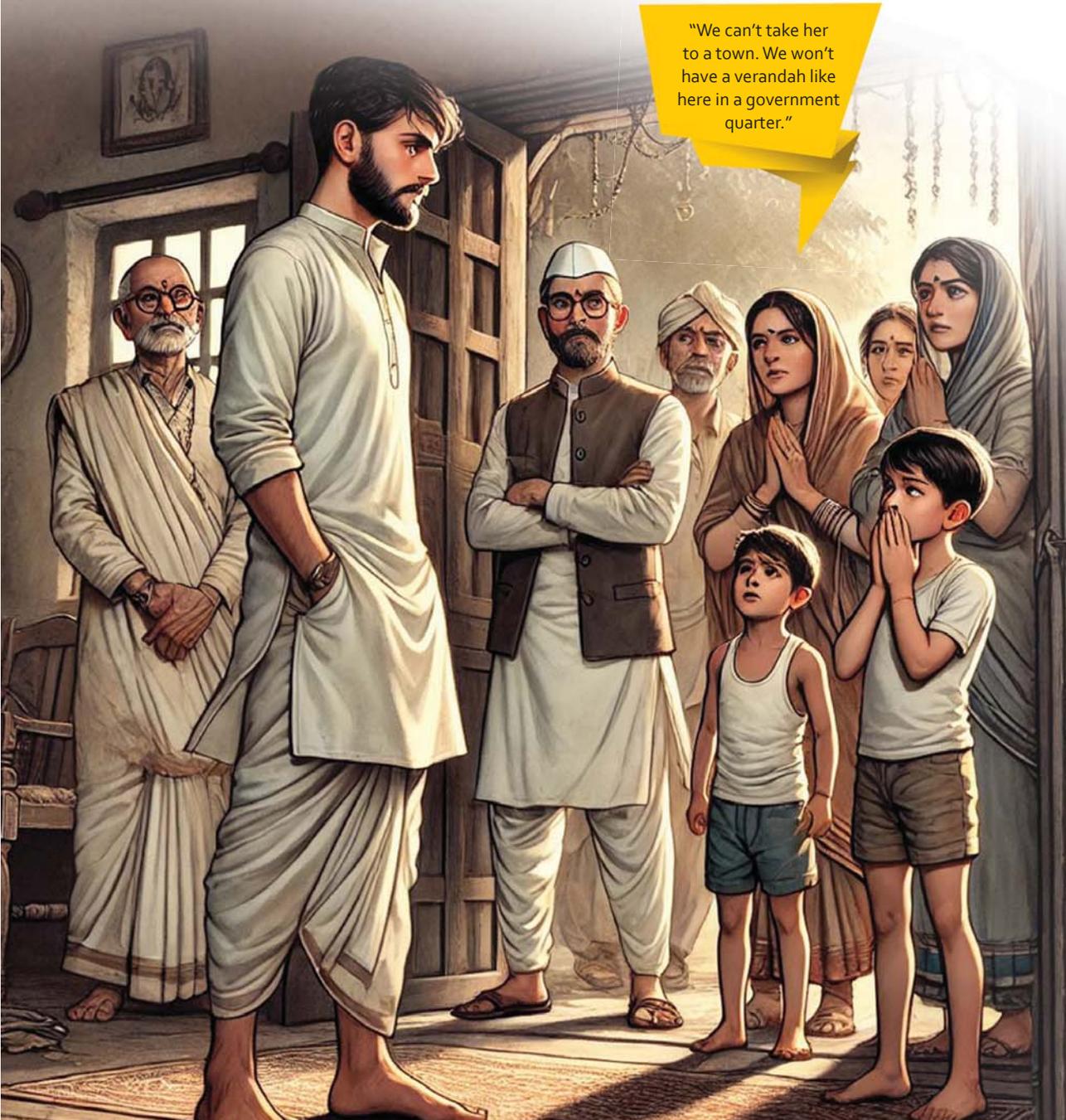
A bittersweet farewell to their cherished goat. By Ramcharan Harshana

In a village Rampur, our residence was a house built of bamboos, clay, and stones, comprised of two big rooms with a verandah equally large, and one of the rooms was a kitchen. We, six members, two elder sisters, a younger brother, and myself had been happily living there as we were fascinated with the rural spectacle with dusty narrow roads, uneven foothills, a river bank, and Ramji Temple close to it.

Father was a *patvari*, a government servant in charge of the village. However, he too had to look after two other nearby villages under him. He used to go on duty early morning riding on his bike and would return by evening, or sometimes even late at night.

After returning from duty, he would have a chat with the village serpanch, school teachers, and even elders assembled in our verandah.

"We can't take her to a town. We won't have a verandah like here in a government quarter."





She complained, "Why isn't Hirni allowing me to milk her?"

"Surprising! The bowl is almost half empty." Mother was shocked. "Ma, she knows we're leaving her." I spoke with speculation. "If so, we aren't to blame for that. How could we take her to the town? There's no verandah, no shelter, no weeds or grasses or hay to feed her," said mother.

My sisters would commute to a nearby town to attend college, departing in the morning and returning by evening. I was studying in the local High School and the youngest, Arjun, was admitted into the Primary School.

I loved to roam around the village, watching the beautiful sunset with a herd of cows, sheep, and goats returning to their shelters at twilight, and playing with boys on the bank of the river. Mother too sometimes led me to Ramji Temple to attend *sandhya aarti* where I felt fascinated looking at the idols of Lord Rama, Sita, and Laxmana. Very often I rushed to the Panchayat House to watch TV programmes with a crowd of villagers.

One evening, father returned and informed us that he was transferred to a *taluka* town place and we would have to leave the village. The news spread like fire in the village and the serpanch, along with the elders, visited our home. There was a long discussion on the consequence of father's sudden transfer and some of them condemned it as an injustice by the government. Nevertheless, the serpanch was of the view that the government order must be obeyed. Brooding over till late that evening in our verandah, we sat with father who was utterly disturbed by his transfer. Somehow we hated to leave the village. For almost a decade long, we had stayed there quite happily and contentedly. My sisters, however, were accepting the transfer gladly as they thought they wouldn't have to commute in a state transport bus again. Anyhow, we had to leave.

While we were lamenting over father's transfer, all of a sudden, I caught sight of Hirni, a goat raised by us. "Ma, shall we take our Hirni with us?" I asked emphatically, eyeing everyone there.

All stared at our goat, sitting in a corner of the verandah, chewing hay with her jaws. Since the day we had brought her to stay with us, we all had never glanced at her with so much attention. She, undoubtedly, was growing up with us as a family member. I looked at her with concern; her innocent striped face with sparkling eyes,



Unleash Monsoon Magic Paragon's Stylish and Functional Clogs Collection

Step into the monsoon fun with Paragon's latest collection of clogs, designed to blend style with functionality. Embrace the elements with confidence and let our clogs with superior grip, soothing comfort and trendy style journey you through this season with a smile.

milky white teeth, brown skin colour with white spots, and above all, strong stout physique compelled us to address her as Hirni, as she resembled more to a doe than a mere poor nanny.

After my school hours, I spent most of my time with her, taking her to Karshanbhai's farmhouse for grazing and browsing on pastures. Besides having cow milk from the local cowherds, we also consumed Hirni's milk and distributed it to our neighbors freely as it cost almost nothing.

"Of course, what shall we do with Hirni?" Father too asked with concern. "We can't take her to a town. We won't have a verandah like here in a government quarter."

We all started thinking about her. In fact, we couldn't take her to a town with us. Although we didn't wish to part with her too.

Later on, I took better care of Hirni as I knew she was soon to be separated from us. While passing through the verandah every day, I threw an emphatic glance at her. Poor creature! We'll have to leave you here. What will you do? I mumbled to her and she responded by sneezing and licking my legs humbly as if she understood everything and importuned not to desert her.

A couple of days later, father returned home after joining duty at a new place and we gathered around him and asked inquisitively how was the new town and whether the government quarter had a verandah to accommodate Hirni there.

"No verandah." Father clarified quite disappointedly. "Three storied flats are there and we're allotted one on the top floor." I was shocked and speechless. Staring at Hirni

As we failed to have her even stand up on her feet, we gave up. We both looked into her eyes. Her shining eyes moistened. "Ma, she's crying." I spoke alarmingly, "She is adamant. Doesn't want to leave us."

sitting in a corner of the verandah, I felt utter helplessness anticipating the day when we would be parting with our darling Hirni. I sensed she was listening to our conversation quietly.

"We need to start shifting our household goods tomorrow only." Father instructed and mother began packing the goods the next day. We also extended our help to her.

Early morning every day, mother would feed Hirni with hay and milk her. She complained, "Why isn't Hirni allowing me to milk her?" She had trouble milking her and found that she yielded much less quantity of milk too.

"Surprising! The bowl is almost half empty." Mother was shocked. "Ma, she knows we're leaving her." I spoke with speculation.

"If so, we aren't to blame for that. How could we take her to the town? There's no verandah, no shelter, no weeds or grasses or hay to feed her." Mother grumbled with helplessness.

"She must be sick, Ma." I presumed. "We'll ask your father to send for Veterinary Dr. Varma for a check-up. It isn't easy to rear such an innocent and dumb animal." Mother felt guilty of not caring much for Hirni.

The following day the veterinary Dr. Varma called on us and examined Hirni thoroughly by punching fingers in her stomach. He also injected the poor creature. Even after a week, Hirni showed no sign of recovery.

Mother, while milking her, patted her most affectionately, but Hirni was in no mood of yielding milk. We asked father when we were to complete the transportation of goods and move to our new place.

Though we were deeply worried about Hirni, being uncertain about whether to take her with us or not.

Hirni, unmistakably, communicated her refusal to part with us by bleating and gazing at us.

That evening father had struck an idea.

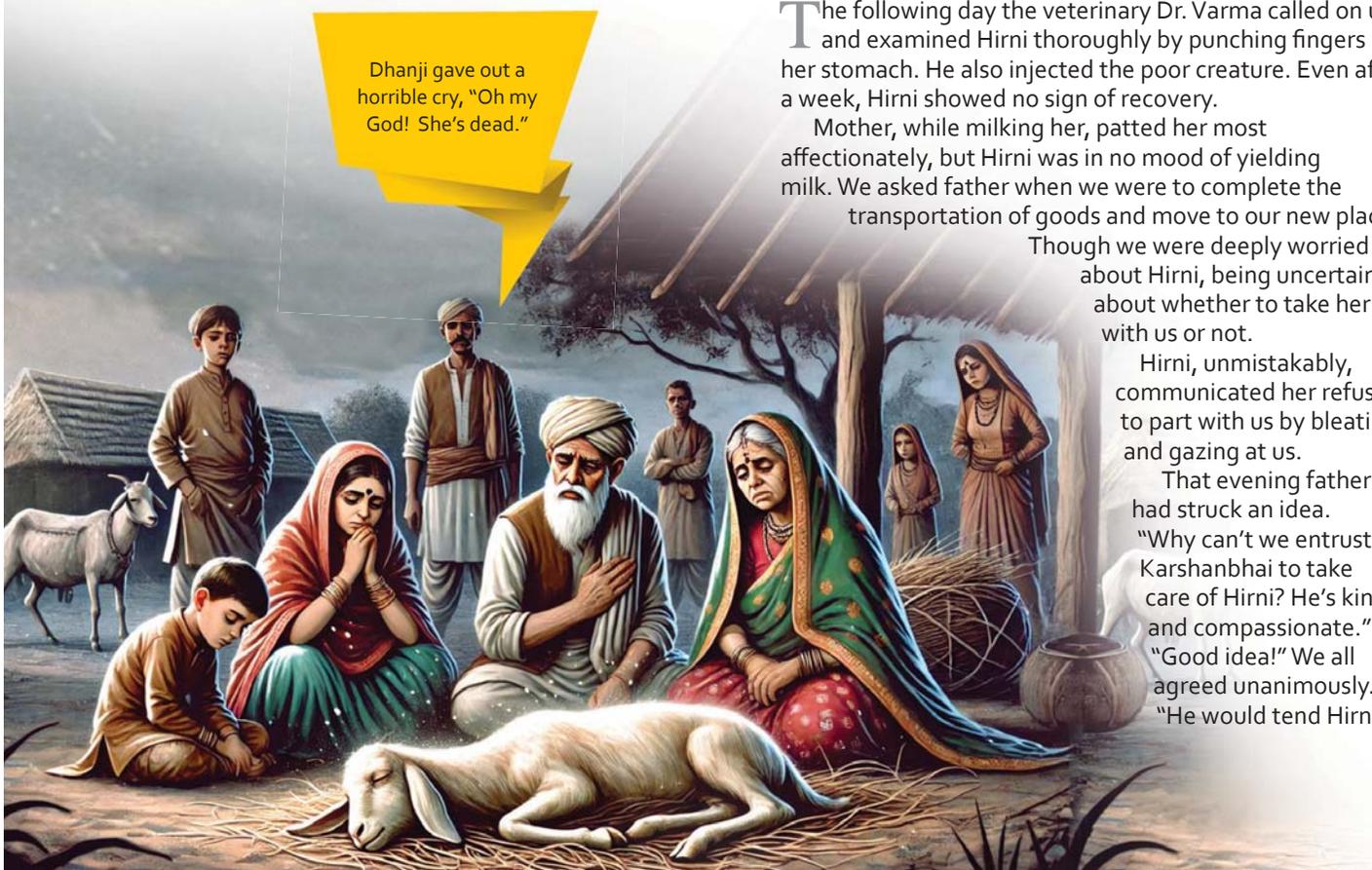
"Why can't we entrust Karshanbhai to take care of Hirni? He's kind and compassionate."

"Good idea!" We all agreed unanimously.

"He would tend Hirni



Dhanji gave out a horrible cry, "Oh my God! She's dead."





House of beautiful printing **DELHI PRESS**

Offers printing and finishing of...

- Text Books
- Coffee Table Books
- Magazines
- Balance Sheets
- Novels
- Any Special Printed Fabrication.
- Presentation
- Folders
- Diaries
- Calenders
- Directories
- Publicity Posters
- Newsletters
- Leaflets
- Catalogues
- Brochures

We offer the best combination of price, quality & service.

Call to discuss a quote

DELHI PRESS (Since 1938)

E-3 Jhandewala Estate,
Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi-110055

WhatsApp|Call|Sms: **9810160122**
info@DelhiPressCo.com



with love and care." Mother too spoke delightfully. The following day father talked to Karshanbhai and convinced him to tend our Hirni in his farmhouse. Eventually, we felt extremely relaxed as we arranged to keep Hirni under the care of a kind farmer. We decided to take Hirni to Karshanbhai the day before we quit the village. I found it easy as I routinely used to take Hirni to Karshanbhai's farmhouse every day.

The day dawned. Mother and I prepared to take Hirni to Karshanbhai after lunch. Father had left for duty. Sisters had gone for attending their college. Mother caressed her loving hand softly over Hirni's face and spoke with a heavy heart. "My sweet darling!" She had tears in her eyes. I too grew serious, my heart laden with grief. Hirni was sitting quietly, Mother held her neck and pulled her up to stand up. "On your feet...dear. Buck up." She uttered in a tone that expressed a sort of helplessness. "Karshanbhai will feed you voraciously. He's kind." I too added to push her up. Nevertheless, Hirni didn't move even slightly.

"Hurry up please...Hirni!" I pulled her ears hard and mother too caught her with her arms to force her to rise. Oh my God! Hirni stuck to the ground. As we failed to have her even stand up on her feet, we gave up. We both looked into her eyes. Her shining eyes moistened. "Ma, she's crying." I spoke alarmingly, "She is adamant. Doesn't want to leave us." "Let her stay today." Mother stated disappointedly. "We'll call for Maganbhai's hand lorry and load her to Karshanbhai." That evening Karshanbhai

himself arrived and asked, "Why didn't you bring Hirni to me?" "She doesn't move and we can't lift her up. We'll send her by Magan's lorry afterwards." He went away.

Father arrived late that evening and we discussed seriously the issue of sending away Hirni to Karshanbhai's farmhouse. "We alone won't be able to load her up," Father said, "Let's ask our neighbor Dhanji and Mansukh for help." We all stared at Hirni sitting silently and comfortably in the corner, overhearing our conversation.

Father sent the message and soon Magan arrived with his hand-lorry. Quickly, not only Dhanji and Mansukh, but about half a dozen youngsters too came to lend their helping hand. "Lift her up."

Father told them and they all walked close to Hirni to load her up into Magan's hand-lorry. We all just stood a little away to watch helplessly the forceful departure of our darling Hirni. Just then, Dhanji gave out a horrible cry, "Oh my God! She's dead." "Oh no. Never." Mother rushed near Hirni. I too followed her.

Dhanji shook Hirni's head and it turned ice-cold. "Of course. The poor creature is dead." He confirmed. And mother gave out an ear-splitting shriek and wept bitterly. There began an uncontrollable lament and wailing by us in front of our house. In no time the village people gathered at our house as silent mourners in consolation. Truly, by breathing her last before parting with us, Hirni had solved our problem of leaving her to a safe place.

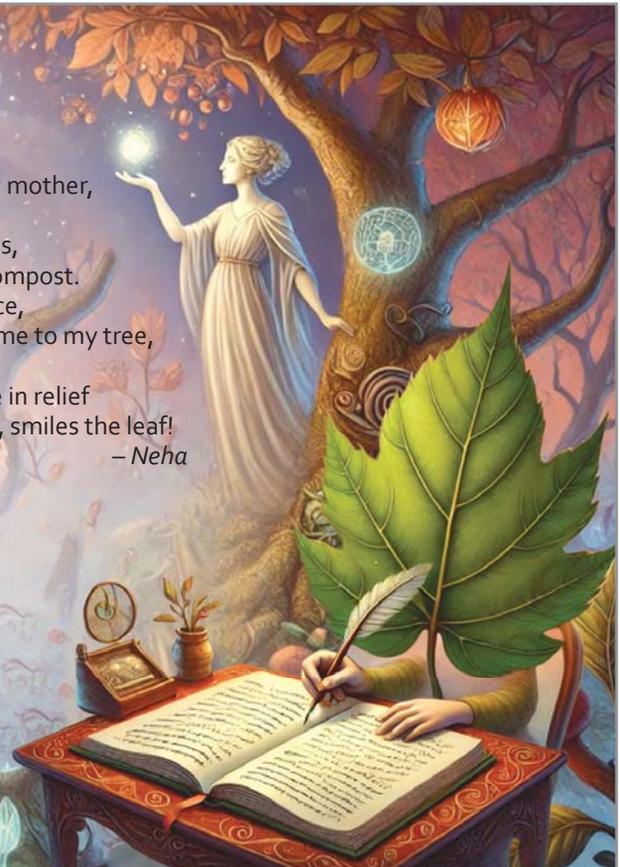
We

Diary Of A Leaf

"Life is a bowl of cherries,
And I sway merrily.
Seeing my youthful beauty,
Smiles every branch,
With their sweet melodies,
Win my heart, the nightingale and
Boy at the ranch.
Every dawn sun wakes me up,
By kissing dew drops on my lip
The beautiful rosy berries
Blush as I flip.
All of a sudden, in a moment,
Joy ceases, so does all the merriment.
A gust of wind envelops our territory,
And aaah! I fall down on the pavement.
Separated from my family,
Far away in a strange town,
I tremble in the lap of wind,
Amidst a haze smoky brown.
Caught in the splatters of raindrops,
Stirring in pain on a rooftop,
You are the divine please listen to my prayer I plead,
Take me to my hometown to the wind I said,

Where at the feet of my mother,
I serve her at my most,
Where I shine in her eyes,
And enrich her as the compost.
Of compassion and grace,
The wind goddess flies me to my tree,
My home, my place."
Beneath the blue solace in relief
Lying in the garden bed, smiles the leaf!

— Neha



GUFTAGU

Advancing Equal Opportunities

Insights from Rahul Jain, Founder of Guftagu.



Rahul Jain is the visionary Founder of Guftagu & Bizwiz Learning. He also serves as the Director & CEO at SKIL WIZ (P) Ltd, and Director at SGL (P) Ltd. Rahul is a respected mentor at IIM Ahmedabad and IIM Lucknow, a Trustee of the SWT, and Secretary at SDJB Hospital. His leadership extends to being a Trustee of JATF and a dedicated Leadership Coach. Rahul Jain's diverse roles and extensive experience underscore his commitment to empowering individuals and fostering growth across various sectors.

What is Guftagu and how does it promote gender equality in networking?

Guftagu is unique among Indian business networking platforms since it places a high value on longevity and environmental awareness. It provides flexibility in terms of geographical attendance and category selection, cost-effective leadership networking, and a trusting circle for long-term commercial results. I believe that more men should participate in women's organizations and vice versa to assist in creating a more diverse and inclusive atmosphere where a range of viewpoints and experiences can be appreciated and shared. As a result, problems may be solved more thoroughly, and everyone may feel more a part of the community.

How does Guftagu empower women to network effectively?

We are often taught that success is an isolated and lonely

endeavor, or even worse, that only the shrewd, the physically gifted, or the self-centered can achieve it. Our networking app design is intuitive and has easy navigation. It not only gives them a chance to meet like-minded people, but it also encourages women to voice their thoughts and opinions, which boosts their self-esteem and confidence.

Could you share something about your personal life and background?

I was born and brought up in Kolkata. I had a premature birth, and you would be surprised that I did not have salt till I was five due to a disease known as nephritis. Ironically, I failed my Maths exam in high school, and now am coaching businesses on how to enhance their ROI. If I were to go back to the early years of my career around 2002, I realize how immature I had been to blame the external circumstances for my struggles instead of taking responsibility for them.

What is your ultimate passion and how did you overcome the struggles in your journey?

My passion is empowering people, especially women, by helping them realize their full potential and enabling organizations to experience exponential growth. Since then, my goal has been to mentor and educate business owners, students, and corporate employees so they can succeed in their chosen industries and become more productive.

I began upskilling myself with the help of astute planning and skillful execution, as they say, "Rome was

not built in a day," and there was no magic bullet. This put me on the right track for success from the outset of my next endeavor.

What role, according to you, does leadership play in organizational change?

As a student at heart, I am fascinated with the notion/concept of what makes a leader. I believe that true leadership is the ability to convert crises into opportunities. Good leaders are committed and possess the skills to convert adversity and emerge stronger. Some of the broad skill areas required for leaders are strategic thinking, planning and delivery, people management, change management, effective communication, persuasion, and an ability to influence. These skills can be developed by making a conscious effort and practicing them consistently.

As a founder of Guftagu, how do you envision Guftagu evolving in the future?

Since this month honors Independence Day, I'd also like to mention that Guftagu gives its leaders the freedom to take the initiative in networking situations and recognizes the value of self-reliance in these settings. We plan to enhance user experience and engagement by adding more premium features to our platform. We aim to expand our global reach by supporting a variety of languages, cultures, and causes. At this point, we want to make the most of technology and broaden our horizons in the upcoming years.



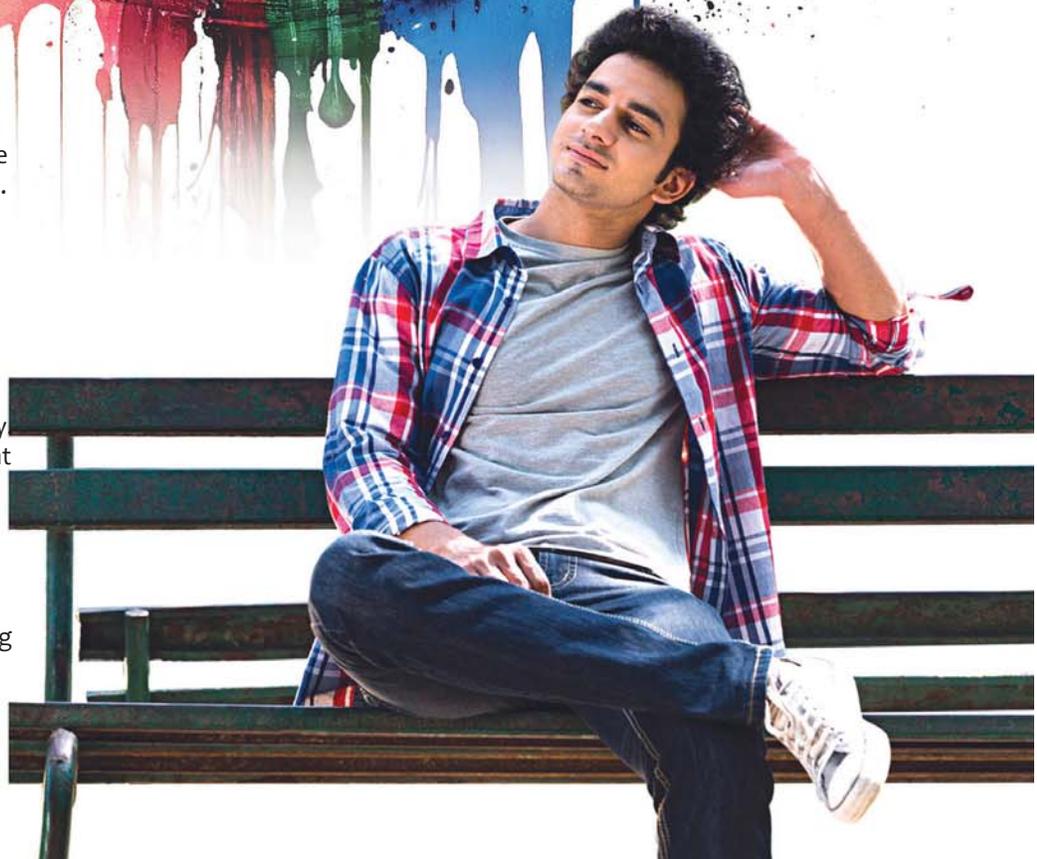
Eyes Of Enigma

Uncovering hidden depths and igniting his creative spirit. By Renuka Krishnaraja



Rumi sat on a wooden bench with his head held down between the palms of his hands, elbows resting firmly on his thighs. The noise from the crowds around didn't bother him much as he was even more agitated from within. Perhaps that's what had hauled him to the bus stand where he'd felt the external chaos could silence his inner discord. All his life, artwork and painting had been his chosen medium of expression.

The classic pieces he'd created could speak volumes on his dexterity. Yet, currently, he seemed to be burnt out of his flair for creativity. Was it a midlife crisis? What about his passion and that longing to create a masterpiece? The passion was still ablaze in all its glory beyond any shadow of a doubt. What was lacking probably was an aesthetic source of inspiration.



But where would he find it? Running his fingers through his thinning hair and taking in a deep breath, he raised his head and opened his eyes. Right in front of him, upon the opposite bench, he saw a girl in her early twenties, rather nondescript at first glance. But she was a bit too close to him to be overlooked.

It was her eyes... something in her eyes that seemed to unfold intense shades. The more he looked into them, the more he was lured. He leaned backward and sat upright. And as she too stared at him with the same appeal, he couldn't take his eyes off her.

The expression in her eyes was like they were conveying something much more profound. He'd never seen anything like this before. Those enchanting eyes had mysterious depths... the depths that he wished to explore at the moment. Meanwhile, realisation struck hard on Rumi and he was seized with guilt

for incessantly looking at a complete stranger, that too female.

It must have been a stretch of his own fancy, he thought and tried to dismiss the whole thing but not for too long. He caught a glimpse of her from the corner of his eye, and alas! Her gaze was fixed at him as well, all the more perfectly still. Those pale-emerald eyes, doe-shaped, gracefully fringed with dark lashes, were brimming with enigma that had thoroughly stirred and aroused the artist inside Rumi.

He found himself plunging into every minute detail and sorting out every subtle emotion they portrayed. 'How could they be so calm yet provoking, so simple yet unique and exciting all at the same time,' he wondered as their gazes were locked, neither of them affected by the surrounding commotion.

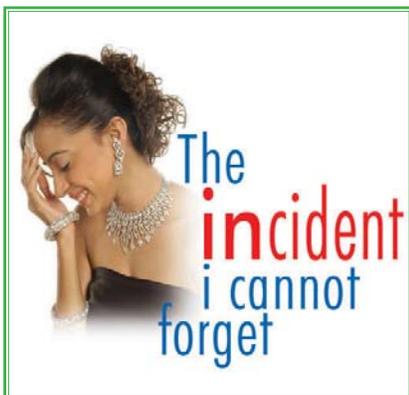
And then, all of a sudden, as an old woman rushed into the scene, Rumi had to deliberately orient himself. "Naina," called the woman,

laying a hand upon her shoulder, "let's go, the bus has come." 'What an apt name for the girl with intriguing eyes,' thought Rumi, as she blinked twice.

With the same expression, she stood up and slowly turned towards the old woman who held her left hand. With her right hand, she unfolded a walking stick. Tapping it ahead of her footsteps, she walked away, leaving him totally aghast.

The girl had disappeared into oblivion before he could even grasp what he'd just witnessed. 'Sheer darkness in those illuminating eyes! How could they secretly hide such enormous gloom,' he thought in utter disbelief. Although excruciating, the mystery had been solved.

Likewise, those mystical eyes were absolutely clueless as to how they had been an abstract inspiration for a striving artist. Rumi sat there until the anguish in his chest faded with the daylight... We



HAUNTED TOMB

There was a very infamous tomb in a park in my city. It was not a very touristy place but at the same time, it was known for the spooky stories people spun after visiting it. Many said that it had ghosts and djinns. One of my friends told me that he had experienced the fright of the tomb first-hand. He had been up to no good like always and decided to spend the evening in the tomb to see if it was truly haunted. He swore he saw a figure in the shadows and that he felt uneasy ever since.

To test this theory out, I went there myself. I know that is how all scary movies start and didn't want to believe anything unless I saw it with my own eyes. I went there after sunset with a pocket knife and my phone's torch. I looked around and suddenly there were a pair of eyes looking back at me. I flashed the torch on it and realised that it was just a cat. I was frightened even though I didn't experience anything. It was just my mind expecting the worst. I came back home immediately and I was sure that I didn't want to be that daring. I couldn't even sleep that night and had to keep the lights on the whole night.

– Akansha

THE DAREDEVIL

A few years back, I did something that completely changed my life. It was a very small feat but it still changed the way I looked at myself. I was a very insecure and under confident person. But it all changed this one day when I decided to be a

little adventurous for a change.

I was hanging out on the terrace of my building with some friends one day when one of us noticed a narrow wooden platform connecting our terrace with the next one. We were four floors high and the next terrace was at least 3-4 metres away. A friend of mine who loved doing such stupid but fearless things suggested that we should cross the wooden platform to the next terrace. I thought he was out of his mind. A couple of them tried their hand at it and despite the initial hesitation, they ended up on the other side just fine. It was my turn and I was not sure. But my friends pushed me so much and I wondered how I was missing out on things.

So, I put one step in front of the other and kept walking. Within seconds I reached the other side and I realised that it was just that easy. Since then, something shifted inside of me. I started trying to be more confident, and take on more challenges.

– Anuradha

A woman with dark hair is sitting on white steps, wearing a teal blue, halter-neck, floor-length gown with a high slit and a matching belt. She is also wearing gold high-heeled sandals with clear straps. Two silver disco balls are visible on the steps to her left. The background is a plain white wall.

Radiant *Luxurious Flair*

JULO Designs is establishing itself as a premium Western wear brand, blending timeless sophistication with modern glamour. Each piece, carefully crafted with international flair, premium materials, and exceptional craftsmanship, embodies exceptional design, quality, and comfort.

Teal Blue Elegant Gown: A signature gown that radiates flair, glamour, and timeless style. This elegant piece is perfect for glamorous evenings.



**Twilight Sparkle
Soirée Maxi Dress:**
A glamorous choice
featuring shimmering
fabric, stylish gathers,
and a captivating
flared design, ideal
for any soirée.

A fashion advertisement featuring two models in a dark denim collection. The model on the left is wearing a sleeveless, knee-length denim dress with a wrap-style front and a side slit. The model on the right is wearing a matching denim suit consisting of a blazer and wide-leg trousers. Both models are wearing white high-heeled sandals. They are standing in a large, white, circular frame against a light gray background. The text on the left describes the collection as 'Chic Denim Collection' and highlights the use of rich indigo denim with modern designs and a tailored silhouette.

Chic Denim Collection:
Embrace the allure of rich indigo denim with modern designs and a flattering, tailored silhouette. This collection combines casual ease with a sophisticated touch.



Olive Elegance Collection: Effortlessly blending grace with contemporary style, this collection is perfect for both casual evenings and formal daytime sophistication in an enchanting olive green hue.



**Mustard Charm
Corduroy Mini
Dress:** Delightfully
crafted in a mustard
hue with soft stretch
corduroy fabric, this
mini dress blends
style and comfort
effortlessly for a
charming look.



Sunlit Marigold Collection: Vibrant summer dresses with playful flares and soft gathers, embodying fun summer styles. These dresses are perfect for enjoying sunny days with a touch of elegance.

Courtesy:
www.julodesigns.com

A woman with dark hair, wearing a green saree and a light green apron, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding a bright yellow cloth. The background shows a modern living room with a pink armchair, a gold floor lamp, and a framed picture on the wall.

WHISPERS OF A **HOMEMAKER**

The heart of the house. By Mansi Chaturvedi

It has been years that I have been in here, and these are the boundaries that I do not cross. Boundaries that keep me comfortable in a way but talk a lot about me when I am not there. I hear them scream and shout at those whom I leave behind. They look confused as they hear everything that was me, but I am invisible to them. They say I am missing, yes, from where I used to be. The walls hear someone shout out for me when they come in. The walls have seen them rush in and out and have even seen them in silence when I am not there.

Strange it is but true that the walls know all about me more than you all do. I have been in with them. At times, cleaning the cobweb that just found a place in those corners that stood unnoticed or never given heed. At times, I have just brightened them up with something so creative, giving them a new look or a new life. I have gazed at them when no one is around. I remember when I had first entered this place. An empty space that just made me feel I was welcomed, and since the day I entered, I was here, just here.

The initial months were spent in creating those cozy corners near these walls. In these months, a lot started growing here with me. The empty space got a name called 'Home'. A smile just added the glow on my face when it was all done up and the nameplate was hung outside. An indication that this place belonged to me. Years have gone by, and as I have aged, so have these walls, or should I say boundaries.

Somehow these walls kept a vigil on me, I know not why. I gave them time to be in peace when no one was at home. I realised that these walls never liked me stepping out. They would just get the house upside down the moment I ventured out. They used to remain in place when I was there, but when I was not, they made it uncomfortable for people in there.

They would scare the kids, I suppose. They would frantically call me to ask where I was and pursued me to come home. They would disturb my partner as well, as he could never do what he used to easily, and neither could he get a good sleep. Everything would be fine once I was back. The walls would be just silent, and we would be busy with each other. I would always wonder what went wrong; everything looked fine to me.

I guess there is something between me and this place I call home. I think I have made it a home for everyone in my life. I have made it a room to rest. I have made it a workplace for those young and old. I have made it a place where the smell



WHERE THE HEART HEALS JUST BEING THERE IN A CORNER, HOLDING HANDS, LISTENING TO A ROMANTIC MELODY TO ENJOY. I HAVE MADE IT A PLACE OF HEALING. SINCE I HAVE MADE SO MUCH OUT OF IT, I HAVE BEEN CALLED A 'HOME MAKER.'

just increases the appetite of those who wait to be served with love. I have made it a cozy nest where love brews a fascinating story of me and you. Where the heart heals just being there in a corner, holding hands, listening to a romantic melody to enjoy. I have made it a place of care and healing. Since I have made so much out of it, I have been called a 'Home Maker.' I think that is why these walls have set their boundaries for me. I guess they do not feel at home without me.

They had just been there, I do not know for how long, just waiting for someone like me to give them an identity. It's difficult now for me to leave them alone. I need to keep them secure when we go out. As I step out, I wonder, am I keeping the place or the belongings secure?

I am making this space secure, ensuring every window and door is closed, even the lights or any other equipment that could disturb my place in case of a natural or untoward calamity. These walls only allow me to step out with family and not alone. We share this understanding: as I leave it secure, so does it ensure my safety by having my dear ones around. So it stays at rest as long as we are out, resting in silence, taking a break from the commotion that goes on within the boundaries.

At times, they do irritate me as I want to escape from the drama that goes on in life. They have heard me cry out loud with no one around or see me break down and even talk to myself. Yet they do not help me move out because if I do, it will be just a space with people around. You might say I am being boastful; if I am, what is wrong? If ever you go through any write-up on a homemaker, why is it still a 'She' who always fits the role?

A space needs someone to make it a home, and the one who can do this is a Homemaker. If you could, these walls would have trapped you too. I think this is the special bond between me and my boundaries which could be yours if you are willing to be like me. When I am asked what do I do, I simply say I create a home, and you can say a 'Home Maker'.

We

Personal Problems



I'M A 30-YEAR-OLD PROJECT manager, and I'm dealing with a toxic work environment where gossip and office politics are prevalent. Despite my efforts to focus on my work and maintain professionalism, I often find myself caught in the middle of interpersonal conflicts and rumours. For instance, recently, misinformation about a project I was leading led to distrust among team members, affecting morale and productivity.

Navigating such dynamics is challenging as it distracts from my primary responsibilities and impacts team cohesion. I'm concerned about

the long-term effects on my career and well-being. How can I effectively manage these toxic workplace dynamics and foster a more positive and productive environment?

As a project manager for navigating a toxic work environment, it's crucial to focus on fostering a positive team culture despite the external negativity. Start by clearly communicating project goals, roles, and responsibilities to your team to minimise misunderstandings. Address rumours directly and transparently, ensuring your team gets accurate information from you first. Building trust within your team will help buffer against the wider toxic environment.

Consider having regular team-building activities or check-ins to boost morale and strengthen relationships. Also, document any incidents of toxicity and discuss them with HR or senior management if they persist. Your professionalism and dedication to a healthy work environment will ultimately reflect positively on your career.

I'M A 28-YEAR-OLD GRAPHIC designer, and while I enjoy my current role, I feel stagnant in terms of career growth. Despite consistently delivering high-quality work and taking on additional responsibilities, I haven't been considered for promotion or challenging projects that align with my career aspirations. One frustrating incident was when a new senior designer was hired externally for a role I felt qualified for.

I'm eager to advance in my career and take on more strategic and creative challenges. How can I position myself for career advancement within my current organisation or explore opportunities elsewhere that align with my skills and ambitions?

It's essential to showcase your skills and ambitions. Begin by seeking feedback on your work and understanding what is valued in higher roles. Look for opportunities to demonstrate leadership, such as mentoring junior designers or spearheading new initiatives.

Network within and outside your organisation. Attend industry conferences, participate in online forums, and showcase your work on platforms like Behance or LinkedIn. If internal opportunities are limited, consider exploring roles at other companies that value your creativity and experience. Your proactive approach will make you a strong candidate for advancement.

I'M A 35-YEAR-OLD STARTUP founder, and I'm facing significant challenges in securing funding and attracting investors for my business. Despite having a promising product and a dedicated team, convincing investors of our potential has been tough. An incident that highlighted our struggles was when a potential investor withdrew funding at the last minute due to market uncertainties.

These financial challenges are hindering our growth and innovation. How can I overcome funding obstacles, sustain momentum, and achieve sustainable growth for my startup?

It's crucial to refine your pitch and demonstrate your product's potential clearly. Highlight your product's unique value proposition, market demand, and any traction you have gained. Build a compelling story around your startup that resonates with potential investors.

Expand your network by attending startup events, joining incubators, or connecting with mentors who can introduce you to investors. Diversify your funding sources by exploring grants, crowdfunding, or strategic partnerships. Persistence and a strong narrative about your startup's vision will attract the right investors.

I'M A 40-YEAR-OLD HR MANAGER, and I'm committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity within my organisation. However, I'm facing



resistance from senior management who view these initiatives as unnecessary or overly burdensome. An incident that underscored the need for change was when a talented candidate from a diverse background declined our job offer citing a lack of diversity in our team.

I believe fostering diversity and inclusivity is not just a moral imperative but also crucial for our organisation's long-term success. How can I effectively advocate for and implement diversity and inclusivity initiatives despite opposition from senior leadership?

Highlight how diverse teams drive innovation, enhance employee satisfaction, and improve financial performance. Use data and case studies to back your arguments. Start small with initiatives like diversity training, inclusive hiring practices, and employee resource groups. Showcase early successes and gather employee testimonials to build momentum. Engage allies within the organisation who share your vision to help advocate for broader changes. Your commitment will gradually shift the organizational culture toward inclusivity.

I'M A 32-YEAR-OLD CONSULTANT, and I'm looking to establish a strong personal brand in my industry to attract new clients and opportunities. While I have expertise in my field, I struggle with promoting myself effectively and standing out from competitors. One challenge I face is articulating my unique value proposition in a crowded marketplace.

Building a compelling personal brand is essential for my professional growth and business success. How can I enhance my visibility, credibility, and influence within my industry through effective personal branding strategies?

As a consultant, building a strong personal brand requires a strategic approach. Begin by identifying your unique strengths and areas of expertise. Create a consistent online presence through a professional website, blog, and active social media profiles.

Share your knowledge through

articles, webinars, or speaking engagements. Engage with your industry community by commenting on relevant topics and collaborating with other experts. Highlight your successes and client testimonials to build credibility. Consistently delivering value will establish you as a thought leader in your field.

I'M A 27-YEAR-OLD SOFTWARE engineer, and while I appreciate the flexibility of remote work, I struggle with maintaining productivity and work-life balance. Distractions at home, lack of face-to-face interaction with colleagues, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life have impacted my performance. An incident that highlighted these challenges was when I missed a deadline due to internet connectivity issues at home.

Finding strategies to stay focused and disciplined while working remotely is crucial for my career success. How can I effectively manage remote work challenges and optimize my productivity and well-being?

Maintaining productivity while working remotely involves setting clear boundaries and creating a conducive work environment. Establish a dedicated workspace free from distractions and set a routine that mimics your office schedule.

Use productivity tools to manage tasks and communicate effectively with your team. Schedule regular check-ins with colleagues to maintain a sense of connection. Address technical issues proactively by having backup plans, such as alternative internet options. Balancing work and personal time will improve your overall well-being and performance.

I'M A 45-YEAR-OLD NURSE, AND AFTER years of working in a demanding healthcare environment, I'm experiencing burnout. The physical and emotional toll of caregiving, long shifts, and high-stress situations have led to exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction. A critical incident was when I made a medical error due to fatigue, which could have been prevented. I'm considering

a career change to regain fulfillment and work-life balance. How can I successfully transition into a new career path that aligns with my skills and interests while addressing burnout and maintaining financial stability?

First of all it's important to identify a new career path that aligns with your skills and interests. Start by reflecting on what aspects of your current role you enjoy and what you find draining. Explore careers that utilise your caregiving skills, such as health coaching, patient advocacy, or administrative roles in healthcare.

Consider further education or certification if needed to transition smoothly. Network with professionals in your desired field to gain insights and opportunities. Gradually shift to your new career while addressing burnout through self-care and setting healthy boundaries. A planned transition will help you regain fulfillment and balance.



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

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



REALLY!!!

Being mistaken for someone else has been a daily comedy.

By Savita Singh

Really, sometimes real life can be funnier and stranger than fiction. Take my own case. Right from childhood, I lived in the shadow of my elder sister. That is, I was always mistaken for her. You'll wonder what is so great about it. Well, the fact of the matter is that there was a generation gap of ten years between the two of us. But ever since I entered my teens, the confusion people seem to make between the two of us sometimes bordered on the ridiculous.

I was just thirteen, and my still rather new brother-in-law, a young Captain in the Army, had come on leave in Patna from NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) where he was posted. He went in for a bath and had forgotten his towel outside and yelled to my sister to give him one. She was busy with her newborn baby and handed me the towel and told me to pass it on to him. I stood outside the door of the bathroom and just said, '*Ley aaye hun*' (I have brought it). My brother-in-law started opening the

I stood outside the door of the bathroom and just said, '*Ley aaye hun*' (I have brought it).



door and then suddenly slammed it shut in my face. I just could not understand why and was highly offended. Later that day, he confessed to my sister. 'Baal Baal bach gaye. I was in my birthday suit.' (got saved by a hair's breadth) Your voices are so identical.'

I was sixteen and still unmarried. My sister had just delivered her third child in the Delhi Military Hospital. I went to see her in the evening.

She told me to take her suitcase home as she would be coming back the next day. I was walking back down the corridor with the suitcase when the nursing sister came chasing after me. 'Where do you think you are going?' she demanded, catching hold of me. I looked at her astonished.

'Why? Home of course,' I replied, wondering what was the matter with her. I only realised what had happened when she dragged me back to the ward and found my

Why? Home of course,' I replied, wondering what was the matter with her.



This case of mistaken identity seems not to be confined to me alone but seems to be rampant in my entire family. My three children are totally different from each other. Both my daughters were working in NIIT but people...

sister lying in the bed there. Her face was worth seeing. She had thought the patient was running away. She called all the sisters to see the two of us. My own two-year-old daughter, when she saw my sister for the first time, burst into tears, 'Yeh doosri Mummy kahaan se aa gayee,' (From where has this second Mummy come?) she wailed.

Once I went to visit my sister at Som Vihar. Later, my brother-in-law decided to drop me at Dhaura Kuan from where I could get a bus to Noida where I was residing. My sister came down to see me off. I was about to open the door of the car when a smart Sikh gentleman walked up smartly and with a huge smile upon his face said, 'Getting younger day by day. Getting younger day by day. What is your secret, Mrs. Singh?'

I was a little surprised. I was also a Mrs. Singh like my sister by then. Was I supposed to know him? He opened the door for me with a flourish. For the life of me, I could not recollect his name. I just gave him a smile and got in. As we shot forward, my brother-in-law told me to look back and see the fun. I looked back and there was the Sikh gentleman looking askance at my sister who had been standing on the other side of the car and he was obviously asking her, 'but who was that in the car?' Obviously, I would look younger as I was ten years younger.

Once I was going with my brother-in-law somewhere and we dropped in at the Gymkhana Club from where we had to pick up my sister. There comes this suave middle-aged man with a huge smile and says, 'Aap ne tou humay pehchana hi nahin. Roz subah walk par miltey hain na.' (You have not recognised me. We meet every day on our walk in the morning). He was the son-in-law of Mr. Shastri, the former PM of India. I didn't say anything as I wondered



where I had met him on what walk? My brother-in-law only grinned and did not disabuse him. He only realised his mistake when he saw the two of us with my brother-in-law together. These are not the only times I have been mistaken for someone else. I have had the honour of being mistaken for my children, for someone else's wife, and even a spy.

Let me tell you my tale of woe. It happened in Jodhpur. It was a holiday and my husband and I had had a fight over something I can't recollect now, but I was in a flaming temper. This senior officer rings up and when I answered the phone he obviously thought I was my daughter and said, 'Beta zara upne Papa ko bula dena. Urgent kaam hai.' (Child, just call your Papa. There is some urgent work.)

'Mere baap tou Dilli main baithe hain. Haan mere bachon ke baap se baat karni hai to bula deti hun,' (My father is sitting in Delhi. But if you want to talk to the father of my children I can call him). I snapped back at him.

The poor officer after that whenever he rang up would always first ask who was speaking before saying anything.

Another time at a party, as usual, we ladies were sitting in a circle and there was this officer making his obligatory round and talking to each one of us. He came up to me and asked where I stayed. I told him. He looked a little puzzled. 'But that is the home of BP (My husband's initials.) I gave him a lift back there just two days ago.'

I looked at him and retorted, 'And who do you think I am? I am his wife.' The poor man after that spent the entire party as far away from me as possible.

This case of mistaken identity seems not to be confined to me alone but seems to be rampant in my entire family. My three children are totally different from each other. Both my daughters were working in NIIT but people did not know that they were sisters. One day a guy was talking to my elder daughter Bhavana. When she told him that her brother was posted in Bhuj, he looked at her incredulously. 'You

know, Puja Singh's brother is also posted in Bhuj!' he exclaimed. My elder daughter looked at him offended.

'And who

'Aap ne tou humay pehchana hi nahin. Roz subah walk par miltey hain na.'

do you think is Puja Singh? She is my younger sister,' she declared to the deep embarrassment of that boy. In fact, my children look so different from each other that most of their colleagues refused to believe that they are real siblings. One person even went to the extent of asking, 'Are you sure you have the same mother and father?'

My son, who is a Lt. Colonel in the Army, also looks young for his age. At that time, he was a Flight Commander in the Aviation Corps. He was sitting in the club when two new entrants to the station came up and slapped him on the back and asked, 'So buddy. How is life here? How is the flight commander?' They spent a cosy half an hour discussing him with him and went off. Their faces were worth seeing when the next day they realised that the man they had been so paly with the evening before had been the flight commander himself.

Looks can be so deceptive. I have had the experience of being taken for *Gaon ki gawaar* (Boorish) just because I was dressed in a crumpled, cotton saree all mussed up after a twenty-four-hour journey in a second-class sleeper in which we all were travelling on our annual holiday with two small children. As usual, the Army had granted us leave at the last possible moment and there had been no time to make reservations of any kind and in those days flights were just beyond our budget. A kind TC seeing our plight put us all along with another JCO and his family in the ladies coupé. At Lucknow she gets this smart lady doctor with her male colleagues and starts a shindig. Why men, i.e., my husband and the poor JCO are in the ladies coupé? Both the poor men were too decent to say a word. Suddenly, I lost my temper.

The lady was being a tad bit too up nosed and abusive. She obviously thought we all were uneducated *gavaars* who would tremble at her abusive English. Suddenly I had had enough. I actually erupted up from my berth and let her have it in chaste English. I told her not only to go to hell but go and bloody well talk to the TC who had put us in this compartment. Our men were decent folks and not *gunda*, *mawalies* as she was insinuating. The three male doctors and the haughty lady were so stunned to hear the good English flowing from my mouth that they just shut up and then looking rather sheepish decided to stop making trouble and peace descended.

So you see that being mistaken for someone else is quite an experience. But who am I to complain when even a person like the late Queen Elizabeth of England, out on a walk near one of her castles in Scotland, I think, met a person who failed to recognise her. The gentleman fell in beside her and while walking asked her, 'I believe the Queen is in residence at the castle. Do you see her often?'

The queen looked at him with a twinkle in her eyes and then replied, 'No. I don't, but he meets her every day,' she said, pointing to her bodyguard who was walking behind her.





Will

A tale of unsettled wealth. By Amulya Rasalkar

Mr. Tinaikar, at a young age, had progressed rapidly to become a CEO of a company and built sizable assets to ensure a leisurely retired life. Being a type A personality, he was restless most of the time and always in a hurry. One day, before he could realise it, he had a massive heart attack and left the world without making a will.

Now arose the issue of the distribution of his wealth. He was married but living separately from his wife and staying with another woman whom he had not married, as he had not yet divorced his wife. Both came forward to claim his large assets. Both had to go to court to stake their claims. The matter is yet to be decided by the court. As the assets of Tinaikar were self-made, he

could have given his assets to anyone of his choice. A legal 'will,' also called will and testament, is a legal document wherein one outlines how his assets are to be distributed after his death. If a person dies without making a will, he is said to have died intestate. A will, once made, is effective perpetually unless a new will is made with the statement that the new will cancels all previous wills.

- Any person who is a major and of sound mind can make a will.
- A will can be even an oral statement in the presence of a few witnesses.
- A will need not be registered.
- However, if there is any dispute regarding the authenticity of the will, a registered will is more likely to be held as valid.

Steps For The Creation Of A Will:

The steps are fairly simple. The person will describe himself with his PAN card and Aadhar number. He will appoint someone in whom he has trust to act as an administrator or executor of the will, whose job it will be to distribute the wealth as accurately as possible as per the will. The administrator can deduct incidental expenses related to its execution and then distribute the balance amount. While bequeathing assets, one also mentions the relationship between the giver and the recipient.

It may be noted that one can only will the assets which are self-earned. For example, if you have received some assets from your father's side up to four generations, then such property cannot be bequeathed as per your wish. Ancestral property does not include self-acquired property, gifts, or partition deeds. Such ancestral property has to be distributed according to the inheritance laws existing at the time. Currently, sons and daughters have equal rights to the ancestral property.

The Supreme Court has held that daughters shall also be considered joint legal heirs as sons and can inherit ancestral property equally with male heirs. If one wants to make a claim on the ancestral property, one can do so within 12 years from the date when a person becomes eligible for the ancestral property. Interestingly, property received from the mother's side is not considered ancestral property but self-acquired property. For example, if a father receives property from his mother, then children cannot claim their



IT MAYBE NOTED THAT IN INDIA, CURRENTLY, SONS AND DAUGHTERS HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE ANCESTRAL PROPERTY. THE SUPREME COURT HAS HELD THAT DAUGHTERS SHALL ALSO BE CONSIDERED JOINT LEGAL HEIRS AS SONS AND CAN INHERIT THE ANCESTRAL PROPERTY EQUALLY WITH MALE HEIRS.



share in such property as a matter of right. A will can also include instructions on how one's body is to be disposed of—whether any religious ritual is to be followed or not, or if the body is to be handed over to a medical college, etc. After completing the will, the signature, name, and address of two witnesses are required.

Further, a family physician has to certify that he has examined the executor of the will on the day of execution and found him to be of sane and stable mind, capable of understanding the purpose and meaning of the will. Afterwards, the will can be registered with the sub-registrar of stamps and registration. One can rewrite another will if one wants to, even after registering a will. When there is no will and a person dies intestate, the family members will have to approach the court or a tehsil and obtain a probate or legal succession certificate to transfer the property to the rightful owners.

Succession laws differ according to the religion followed. Hindus follow the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, Christians, Parsis adhere to the Indian Succession Act of 1925, and Muslims are guided by Sharia law. The process of obtaining a succession certificate is time-consuming and costs quite a sum of money. It is always better to write a will once you have created an asset.

We

MOSAIC OF TASTES

Fusion Fare for the Modern Palate.

By Roma Ghosh

Course 1

Kachi Keri Shots with a Dash of Sparkling Wine and Raw Mango Bites

KACHI KERI DRINK

INGREDIENTS

500 gms raw green mangoes
200 gms brown sugar

1 inch piece ginger
2-3 green chillies
2-3 pinches rock salt

To Serve

1 medium-sized raw mango, peeled and cut into very small pieces
1 tsp roasted jeera powder
½ tsp red chilli powder
Pinch of salt
30-40 ml sparkling wine per shot

METHOD

Boil the peeled mango pieces with ginger, chillies, and sugar in 3-4 cups water in a pressure cooker until mango pieces are very soft. Cool the cooker completely.

Blend the boiled mango pulp to obtain a smooth consistency. Strain and store in a bottle.

To serve, add ¼ tbsp of Kachi Keri drink, sparkling wine, and a small portion of raw mango bites mixed with spices.

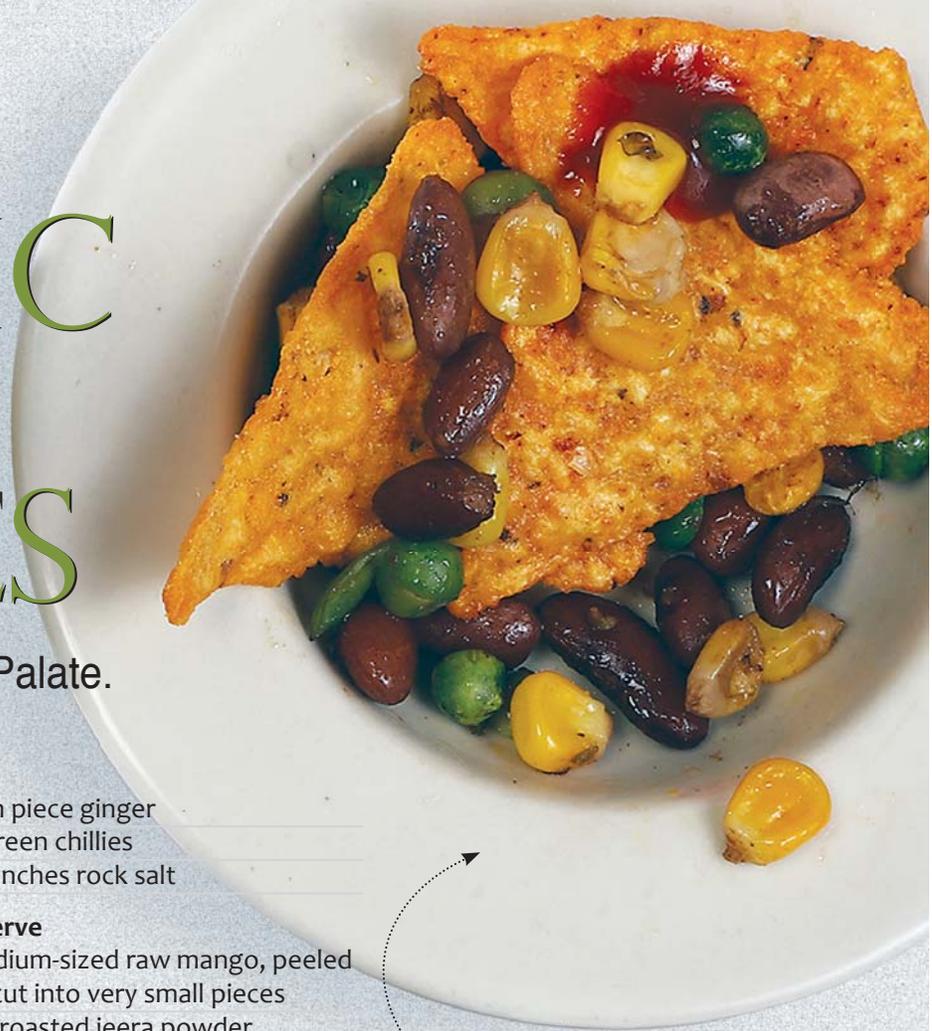
MEXICAN BHEL

INGREDIENTS

200 gms corn chips (ready-made or homemade with leftover rotis)
150 gms grated cheese
1 cup rajma (soaked overnight and boiled)
1 cup corn niblets
1 cup fresh peas
2 tsp olive oil
Salt to taste
2 tsp pizza topping
Handful of homemade chevda (optional)

To Serve

Green chutney, tamarind chutney, or ketchup as per your choice.



Homemade Chevda



Kachi Keri Drink



METHOD

Sauté the corn, peas, and rajma in olive oil with salt and pizza topping for 2 minutes in a non-stick pan over medium heat. Remove from heat.

In a bowl, mix the sautéed ingredients with corn chips, cheese, and chutneys as per taste and serve immediately.

HOMEMADE CHEVDA

INGREDIENTS

60 gms flattened rice
30 gms peanuts
30 gms cornflakes
30 gms copra (cut into thin strips)
Few curry leaves
1 dried red chilli

Mexican Bhel

METHOD

Dry roast all ingredients on very low heat until crispy. Cool to room temperature and mix with copra strips and cornflakes.

Kosambari Salad

KOSAMBARI SALAD

INGREDIENTS

½ cup mung dal (soaked in water for 3-4 hours)
1 cup cucumber (cut into pieces)
1 cup freshly grated coconut
1 cup grated or diced carrot
1 medium-sized capsicum or red bell pepper
Small pieces of green mango (optional)
Salt to taste
2 tsp lemon juice

For Tempering

2 tsp gingelly oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
Curry leaves
2 green chillies (optional)

METHOD

Combine all salad ingredients in a bowl. Heat oil for tempering, add mustard seeds, curry leaves, and green chillies, and allow to splutter. Pour over salad and serve.



Course 2

Spanish Pinchos, Babaganoush, Buttered Beetroot Salad and Grilled Pomfret

SPANISH PINCHOS WITH INDIAN FLAVOURS

INGREDIENTS

4 slices garlic bread
1 bowl babaganoush (with Indian flavours)
1-2 boiled eggs (cut into circles)
½ cup tomato chutney (or mango chutney during mango season)
4 triangular pieces of mozzarella or cheddar cheese
Bhujia for garnishing

METHOD

Toast the garlic bread slices. Spread a layer of babaganoush, place egg circles, add a layer of chutney, top with cheese, and garnish with bhujia. Serve immediately.

BABAGANOUSH WITH INDIAN FLAVOURS

INGREDIENTS

1 large brinjal (about 300 gms)
1 inch piece ginger
4 cloves garlic
2 chopped green chillies
3 chopped tomatoes
1 medium-sized onion
2 tbsp mustard oil
Salt to taste
1 tsp curry powder
1 tsp or less red chilli powder

METHOD

Roast the brinjal until the skin is charred. Cool and remove the black skin. Mash the brinjal.

Fry onions, ginger, garlic, and chillies in mustard oil until

translucent. Add tomatoes and cook. Mix in mashed brinjal and spices. Cook until spices are blended and aroma rises. Set aside.

TOMATO CHUTNEY

INGREDIENTS

400 gms red ripe tomatoes (cut into small pieces)
1 bay leaf
1 inch piece cinnamon stick
2 cloves
3 cardamoms
2 dried red chillies
2 tsp mustard oil
4-5 tbsp sugar (or more to taste)

METHOD

Heat oil, add whole spices, and let them splutter. Add tomatoes



and 2 cups water, cook until tomatoes are mushy. Add sugar and stir until it melts. Cook until desired consistency is reached. Cool and use for pinchos assembly.

BUTTERED BEETROOT SALAD

INGREDIENTS

3-4 medium-sized beetroots (boiled)
 2 tbsp butter
 2 tsp olive oil
 1 tsp roasted poppy seeds
 Salt and pepper to taste
 2 tsp vinegar
 Few mini-sized mandarin segments

METHOD

Cut beetroots into medium pieces. Heat oil and butter in a pan, add beetroot pieces, and fry for 2-3 minutes. Add salt, pepper, vinegar, and poppy seeds. Mix gently. Add mandarin segments and serve cold or at room temperature.

GRILLED POMFRET

INGREDIENTS

1 medium-sized pomfret fish
 3-4 tbsp mustard oil (for grilling)

For Marinade

2 tsp ginger garlic paste
 1 tsp green chilli paste
 1 tsp red chilli paste
 1 tsp tamarind paste
 Salt to taste

METHOD

Clean the fish, make insertions, and apply marinade. Let it rest for an hour. Grill on a tava or grill pan over medium to low heat until cooked. Serve hot.



• Masala Pavs

Pav Bhaji Fondue •

Course 3

Pav Bhaji Fondue with Masala Pav

PAV BHAJI FONDUE

INGREDIENTS

100 gms carrots
 100 gms beans
 1 medium-sized cauliflower
 1 medium-sized capsicum
 2 medium-sized potatoes
 2 medium-sized onions
 3 medium-sized tomatoes
 3 tsp ginger garlic paste
 Salt to taste
 3-4 tsp pav bhaji masala
 1 tsp red chilli paste
 3 tsp lemon juice
 4-5 tbsp ghee
 3-4 tsp oil
 2-3 tsp fresh cream

METHOD

Steam cook vegetables until tender. Heat oil and fry onions and tomatoes until onions are translucent.

Add ginger garlic paste, steamed vegetables, pav bhaji masala, and cook on low heat, stirring and adding ghee occasionally.

Cook for at least 10 minutes until spices blend. Add cream before serving for a creamy consistency.

MASALA PAVS

INGREDIENTS

2-3 pavs (cut into halves)
 2 tbsp ghee/butter

Spices

1 tsp red chilli powder
 1 tsp amchur powder
 1 tsp roasted cumin powder
 1 tsp anardana powder
 Salt to taste

METHOD

Mix all spices. Heat ghee on a non-stick tava, add half the spices.

Fry pavs on both sides on low heat, adding more ghee and remaining spices as needed. Serve with fondue.

Course 4

Jhal Muri with Fish Caviar and Sindhi Suna Pakora, Dal Vadas with Guacamole

JHAL MURI WITH FISH CAVIAR

INGREDIENTS

150 gms puffed rice
½ cup chopped cucumber
½ cup chopped onions
2 chopped green chillies (or to taste)
50 gms mixed namkeen
1 tsp mustard oil
2 pinches turmeric powder
2-3 pinches red chilli powder
½ tsp amchur powder

For Fish Caviar

150 gms fish egg
2 tbsp gram flour
Salt to taste
1-2 chopped green chillies
½ chopped medium-sized onion
Mustard oil for deep frying

METHOD

Blend fish caviar ingredients into a smooth batter. Deep fry small portions until crispy and brown.

Mix jhal muri ingredients and serve topped with caviar pakoras.

SINDHI SUNA PAKORAS

INGREDIENTS

1 medium-sized onion
1 medium-sized potato
2-3 cloves garlic (chopped)
½ inch piece ginger (finely chopped)
Salt to taste
½ tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp roasted cumin powder

1 tsp anardana powder
2 1/2 tbsp besan
3 pinches hing
Oil for deep frying

METHOD

Peel and chop potatoes and onions. Mix all ingredients with 2-3 tbsp water for a dry mixture.

Sindhi Suna Pakoras

Fry big-sized pakoras, cut into small pieces, and fry again until crispy.

DAL VADAS WITH GUACAMOLE

INGREDIENTS

100 gms chana dal (gram dal)
40 gms arhar dal (split black lentil)
Salt to taste
4-5 whole peppercorns
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp cumin powder
2 tsp rice flour
Oil for deep frying

Jhal Muri with fish Caviar



METHOD

Soak dals separately for 3-4 hours. Grind to a coarse paste, add 3 tsp chana dal, peppercorns, salt, and spices.

Shape vadas and deep fry until crispy.

GUACAMOLE

INGREDIENTS

1 medium-sized avocado
1 chopped tomato
1 small chopped onion
1 jalapeño pepper (seeds removed and chopped)
2 cloves garlic (chopped)
2 tsp lime juice
Sea salt to taste

METHOD

Scoop out avocado pulp and mash. Mix with remaining ingredients and serve.



Dal Vadas with Guacamole



Medu vada

Millet Noodles

Vegetable Manchurian

Course 5

Medu Vada Sandwiches Stuffed with Millet Noodles, Topped with Cheese, and Served with Vegetable Manchurian

MEDU VADA

INGREDIENTS

1 cup urad dal (soaked in water for 2-3 hours)
Salt to taste
1 tsp coarsely crushed black pepper
3 pinches baking soda
Oil for deep frying

METHOD

Wet grind soaked urad dal to a fine paste. Add pepper and let sit for 15 minutes. Add salt and baking soda, blend well. Shape vadas and deep fry until golden brown.

MILLET NOODLES

INGREDIENTS

150 gms millet noodles
150 gms mixed veggies (beans,

carrots, capsicums, cauliflower)
3 tsp oil
1 tsp soy sauce
1 tsp tomato ketchup
1/2 tsp vinegar (optional)
1/2 tsp chilli sauce
Salt to taste

METHOD

Boil noodles with salt until cooked, drain, and rinse. Heat oil, fry veggies, add noodles and sauces, and cook over low heat.

VEGETABLE MANCHURIAN

INGREDIENTS

For Manchurian Balls:

1 cup grated cabbage
1/2 cup grated carrots
2 tsp oil
1 tsp garlic paste
1 tsp red chilli paste
2 tbsp cornflour
1/2 tbsp rice flour
Oil for deep frying

For Gravy

2 tbsp tomato ketchup
1 tsp green chilli sauce

1 tsp soy sauce
1 tsp vinegar
Pinch of salt
2 pinches sugar
2 tsp cornstarch

METHOD

Fry cabbage in oil until water is absorbed. Mix with remaining ingredients, shape balls, and deep fry. For gravy, mix sauces and water, bring to simmer, add cornstarch mixture, and cook until thickened. Add manchurian balls and serve.

To Assemble

Cut each medu vada horizontally, stuff with noodles, top with cheese, and serve with vegetable manchurian. Optional: Microwave sandwich for 30 seconds before serving to melt cheese.

Course 6

Jala Roti with Chicken Wings and Summer Cooler

JALA ROTI

INGREDIENTS

150 gms flour
1 beaten egg
Salt to taste
40-50 ml coconut milk
Oil for cooking

METHOD

Sift flour with salt, add egg and coconut milk, whisk to form a smooth batter. Strain to remove lumps.

Grease a non-stick tava, pour batter in a criss-cross pattern, cook until crispy, and serve.

SPICY SOY SAUCE FLAVOURED CHICKEN WINGS

INGREDIENTS

500 gms chicken wings
3 pinches salt
3 tsp oil
Chopped green chillies
Few curry leaves

For Marinade:

2 tsp ginger garlic paste
2 tsp green or red chilli paste
2 tsp soy sauce
1 tsp vinegar

METHOD

Marinate chicken wings for 20 minutes. Cook wings with marinade over low heat, adding curry leaves and green chillies halfway through, until tender. Serve with jala roti.





Sweet Mango and Rasgulla Kulfi

Bakhlava Kheer

SUMMER COOLER (WITH JAGGERY, TAMARIND PULP, AND MINT)

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ tbsp tamarind pulp
2 tbsp jaggery powder
1 tsp chaat masala
1 tsp pepper powder
2 tsp lemon juice
Few mint leaves

METHOD

Mix all ingredients with water, adjust taste, and serve chilled. Optionally, use soda or sparkling water.

Course 7

Sweet Mango and Rasgulla Kulfi and Bakhlava Kheer

SWEET MANGO AND RASGULLA KULFI

INGREDIENTS

2 cups thick mango pulp (Langra or Alphonso mangoes)
4 tbsp milk
3 pieces rasgulla

METHOD

Mix mango pulp and milk in a bowl. Squeeze syrup from rasgullas, break into small pieces,

and mix gently with mango mixture. Pour into moulds and freeze overnight. Serve drizzled with chocolate sauce.

BAKHLAVA KHEER

INGREDIENTS

1 litre milk
150 gms bakhlava pieces

METHOD

Reduce milk to three-fourth by boiling. Add bakhlava pieces and cook until they crumble and mix with milk. Serve at room temperature or cold, garnished with nuts, bakhlava pieces, or red grapes.

We

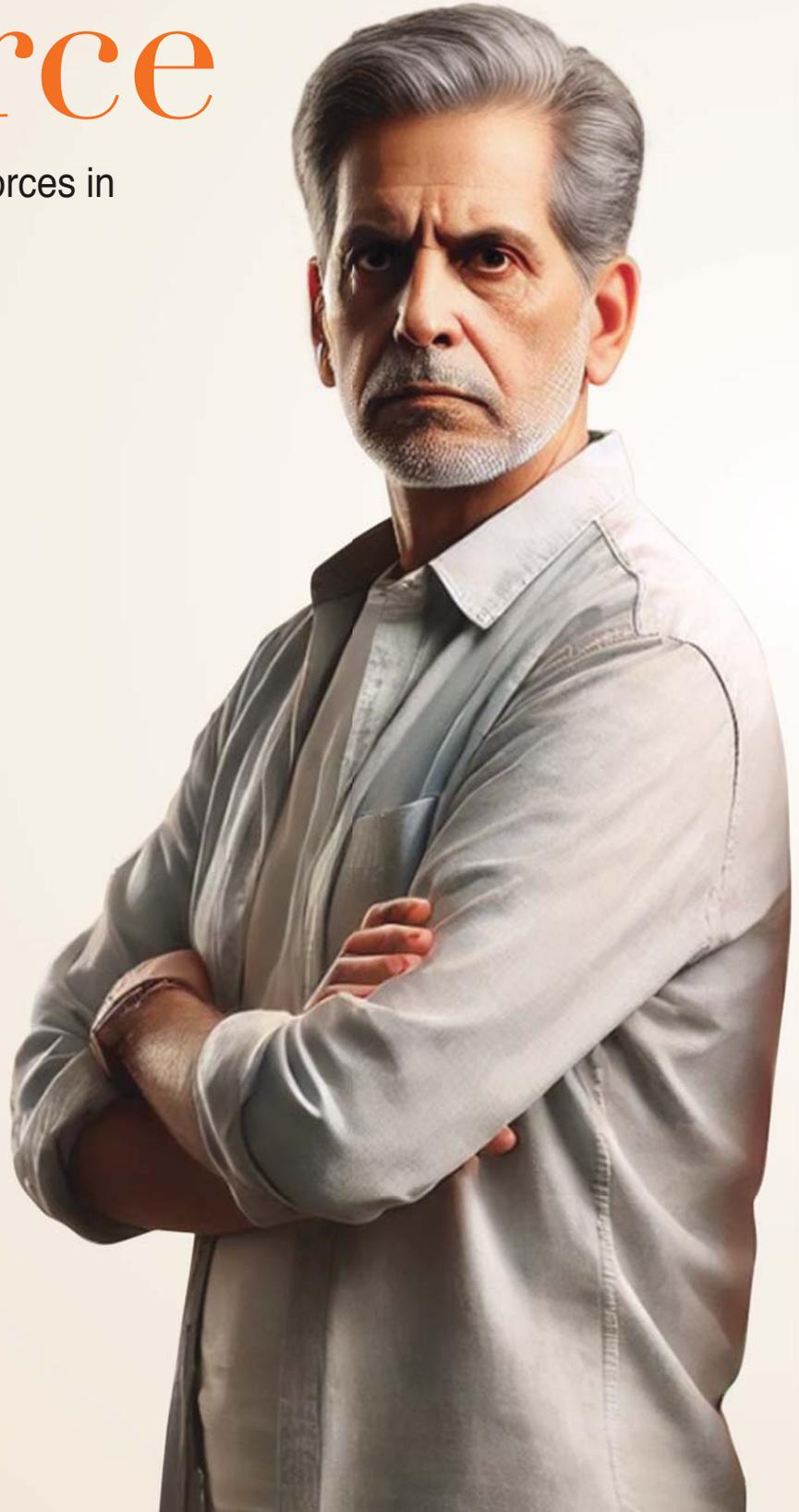
The Gray Divorce

The untold stories of elderly divorces in modern India. By Catherine Karthik

Geriatric Divorce, Gray Divorce, and Silver Divorce are not new or uncommon terminologies in India; they are a new trend now. Solicitor and Advocate Nityoah says that the percentage of geriatric divorce cases has elevated from 2 per cent to 25 per cent in the last ten years. The underlying reason for geriatric divorces among elderly women is that “I want to live for myself now.” Divorcing after sharing 25 years of bondage is termed as “Silver Divorce,” while divorce involving individuals 50 years or older is termed as “Gray Divorce.”

This kind of divorce is said to occur in couples that have no serious issues but result from poor recognition, lack of communication, neglect, reluctance to share responsibilities, infidelity, and unreciprocated empathy and love in the marriage. In most cases, children would be the buffering factor that seals the bond, and once the children get settled, they have no driving force to uphold the relationship.

THE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL STRESS UNDERGONE BY WOMEN OVER A PERIOD OF TIME ALL PILED UP SUDDENLY BURSTS OUT AND MANIFESTS IN GERIATRIC DIVORCES.



Why Geriatric Divorces Are Initiated by Women?

The AARP reports reveal that over half of the divorces after the age of 40 are initiated by women. Guru Preet Kaur, chief judicial magistrate cum secretary DLSA, said, "Rising intolerance and increased awareness among women are a cause for elderly divorces." In 2022, The Thane Family Court granted an elderly couple divorce in less than an hour of their application to mitigate the sufferings of the parties.

Ludhiana District and Sessions Judge Gurbir Singh commented, "Marriage is about adjustment. Couples are not willing to adjust with each other. It is indeed shocking and disappointing to see aged couples with children settled take to courts." Geriatric divorces don't materialise overnight; they result from accumulated unresolved feelings and emotions.

The physical, emotional, and mental stress undergone by women over a period of time all piled up suddenly bursts out and manifests in geriatric divorces. Women who were passive to all blatant and discreet abuses start to retaliate and take an upper hand in their sunset years. They want to live for themselves, explore their creativity and social networks, make friends, freak out, and lead a peaceful and carefree life.

The Walkaway Wife Syndrome

A research study at Sweden's Karolinska Institute found that women who possessed a variation of oxytocin, "The Cuddle Chemical"/ hormone of love and bonding, were less likely to get married due to the difficulty of bonding with people. Those with the gene who did marry were 50 per cent more likely to report "marital crisis/Threat of divorce."

Men married to such women were not satisfied in their relationships. The Walkaway Wife Syndrome is another factor where the wife prepares herself mentally, emotionally, and financially to exit the marriage.

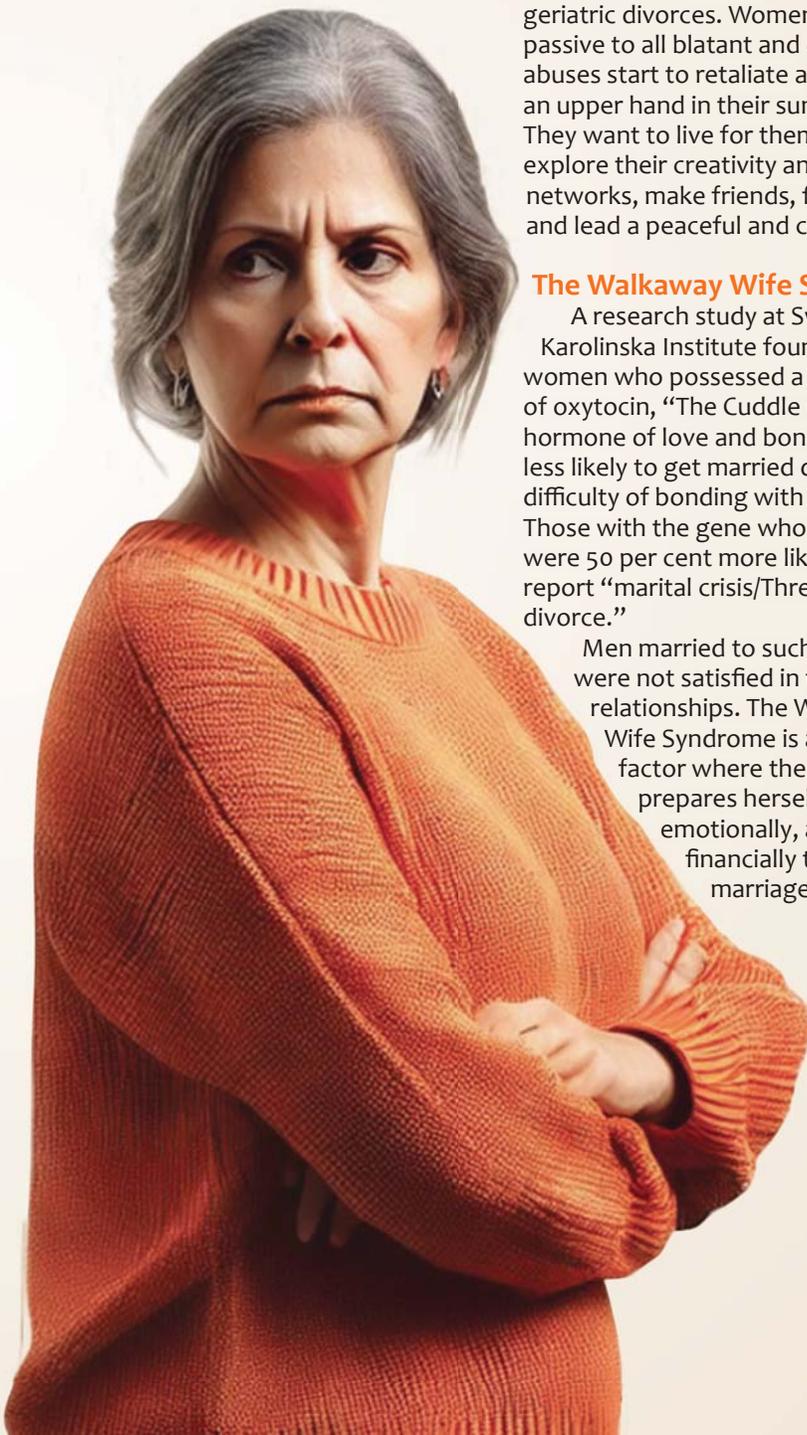
THE WALKAWAY WIFE SYNDROME IS ANOTHER FACTOR WHERE THE WIFE PREPARES HERSELF MENTALLY, EMOTIONALLY, AND FINANCIALLY TO EXIT THE MARRIAGE. IT GENERALLY OCCURS WHEN THE WIFE UNDERGOES LONELINESS, RESENTMENT, AND NEGLECT OVER A PERIOD OF TIME...

It generally occurs when the wife undergoes loneliness, resentment, and neglect over a period of time and eventually decides to mark a full stop to the relationship. It is reported that this walkaway comes after an extensive period of unresolved conflict between the couples.

Causes to Wind Up the Relationship

Here is a range of grievances that women point out against their husbands:

- Working women encountered difficulty balancing work and family with almost no support from the husband and his relatives. They were financially bullied by their spouses, had no right over their salaries, and struggled with the guilt of having no time for their children.
- The physical, emotional, financial, and mental desires were never given a priority. The husbands were neither supportive nor protective of their wives when harassed or snubbed by their in-laws.
- Women had to take care of aged parents-in-law but were never permitted to visit or help their ailing parents.
- Women gave up on their careers to take care of the husband's



The Role of Men in Marital Dissatisfaction

Neglect and Lack of Communication: One primary reason for the rise in geriatric divorces is prolonged neglect and lack of communication from men. Marriages suffer when men fail to recognise and address their spouses' emotional needs. Over time, this neglect leads to unresolved feelings and emotional distance, prompting women to seek divorce to reclaim their emotional well-being.

Reluctance to Share Responsibilities: Many men adhere to outdated gender roles, expecting their wives to handle most domestic responsibilities. This unequal distribution of household duties creates significant stress and resentment. When men do not participate in household chores or childcare, women feel undervalued,

family and children, and such sacrifices were always looked down upon.

- The 24x7 mundane and hectic schedule in the kitchen seemed very disgusting. Being a housewife was the most underrated and unpaid job.
- The load of parenting was never shared by the spouse. The wife was always to be blamed for the flaws in the upbringing of the children.
- Though financial infidelity isn't a ground for divorce in India, women struggle with emotions of insecurity and confusion when faced with it.
- Body shaming, comparing the wife with the mother and other women, and underestimating their skills were intolerable.
- Decision-making unfairness made women feel helpless and docile.
- Negligence on the part of the

contributing to the decision to divorce.

Infidelity and Emotional Unavailability: Infidelity and emotional unavailability are critical factors that drive women to initiate divorce. Men who engage in extramarital affairs or remain emotionally detached undermine the trust and intimacy foundational to a healthy marriage. These behaviours



MEN WHO ENGAGE IN EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIRS UNDERMINE THE TRUST AND INTIMACY FOUNDATIONAL TO A HEALTHY MARRIAGE. THESE BEHAVIOURS LEAVE WOMEN FEELING ISOLATED AND BETRAYED, LEADING TO THE MARITAL BREAKDOWN.

leave women feeling isolated and betrayed, leading to the marital breakdown.

Misinterpretation of Research Findings

Oxytocin Gene Study: The research from Sweden's Karolinska Institute on the oxytocin gene, often dubbed the "cuddle chemical," has been misinterpreted. The study highlights a small genetic variation that may influence bonding behaviour, not a genetic predisposition to divorce. This finding should not generalize or stigmatise women.

Walkaway Wife Syndrome: The Walkaway Wife Syndrome describes

husband and his relatives to support the newly postpartum mamas made them feel dejected.

- Wives had no choice of friends; many times, they were compelled to befriend their husband's friend's wives and abandon their own friends.
- Husbands forget basic details like birthdays and anniversaries but expect women to cherish and celebrate their special days.
- Last but not least, managing to live with a straying spouse for the welfare of the children and the family seemed the most unforgivable and painful thing for women.

women leaving marriages after years of feeling unheard and unsupported. This syndrome is not indicative of a genetic predisposition but a response to prolonged dissatisfaction and unmet emotional needs. Men's failure to address these issues often leads women to plan their exit as a last resort to find personal happiness and fulfillment.

A Gender-Neutral Perspective

Emotional and Physical Neglect:

Both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of emotional and physical neglect. Societal expectations often place women in vulnerable positions where their sacrifices go unrecognised and contributions undervalued. Addressing these issues requires effort from both partners to ensure mutual respect and care.

Financial Control and Inequality:

Financial control and inequality within marriages often lead to feelings of powerlessness and resentment among women. When men dominate financial decisions and limit their wives' access to resources,



it creates a toxic environment that can precipitate divorce.

A balanced approach to financial management, where both partners have equal say, is essential for marital harmony.

Unrealistic Expectations and Lack of Support: Many women report feeling unsupported by their husbands, particularly in balancing work and family life. Men's failure to share the load of parenting and household responsibilities can lead to

burnout and dissatisfaction. Both partners must work together to create a supportive environment that fosters mutual respect and shared responsibilities.

Ignoring the wife, making her feel unsupported, unhappy, and helpless can play havoc with the relationship in the sunset years. The person on the giving end of divorce is happy and seeks relief, while the person on the receiving end experiences the emotional strain of divorce.

Is Geriatric Divorce Rampant?

The wife from high society is able to accrue house, medical care, and maintenance from her husband, and she opts to part ways with her husband. Moreover, they have economic independence and less stigma associated with divorce. Madhavi Desai, a marriage counsellor, hints that "the increase in the divorce rate is due to the change in the status and educational level of women in India.

As women work and gain financial and social independence, they have the ability to end their broken marriages."

But what about other common women? An elderly divorce can pose significant financial risk for them; they are left with no option but to live together with no love and commitment.

Some women feel it's better to live separately and walk alone into

their sunset years rather than being in a strained and unhappy union.

There are couples living under the same roof but don't share life anymore; they are just roommates rather than soulmates. It is disturbing to learn that many elderly women hadn't orgasmed with their spouse even once in all their married life. They had just lived for the sake of their children, and in their sunset years, they wanted to live in solitude and solace, they wanted to create more "me time" and live for themselves.

The Impact Of Geriatric Divorce On The Family

Couples over 50 who have settled children have less compulsion to stay together. Some children witnessed their arguing parents live happier after divorce. Children who grew up watching their mothers subjected to suppression by their fathers

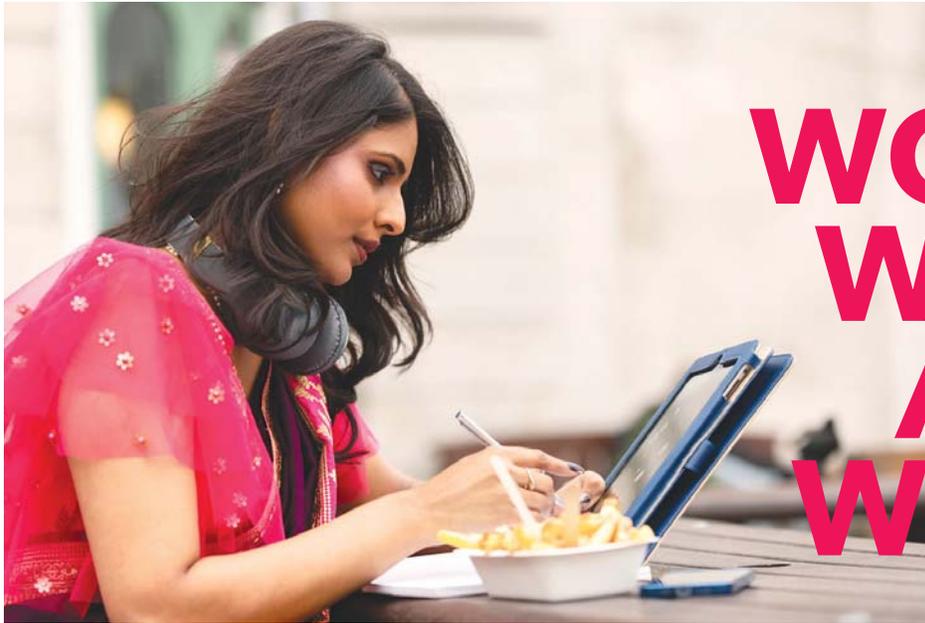
stand by their mothers and support the decision, whereas children who didn't witness any blatant harassment harbour resentment towards their parents for not having sorted out their internal conflicts.

Adult children may feel betrayed and doubt if the happy memories in the family were genuine. However, in a few cases, the children stay neutral and avoid taking sides; rather, they support and respect their aged parents' decision on divorce.

Takeaways From Geriatric Divorce

Women are said to understand the nuances of relationships better than men. Little things mean a lot in a relationship and promote stability in the union. Husbands must try to recognise, value, and appreciate their wives' decisions, perspectives, and desires, and be open to their criticisms.

We



WOMEN, WORK, AND WORTH

A journey from home to workforce. By Deepak Bhatia

Man is the wandering hunter and gatherer, while Woman is the stay-at-home caretaker, homemaker, child bearer and rearer, nutritionist, cleaner, cook, et al. Yet a man “works” i.e. goes out for/to work, but a woman’s labours (of love?), multi-tasking contribution to the family unit or tribe are not classified under the same category.

An anomaly? Surely!

Unjust and wrong? Certainly!!

This has been the “system” ever since *homo sapiens* settled down in sheltered dwellings. Women going out to work were an exception. Fetching water from distant water bodies, collecting grass, leaves, twigs, and wood to keep the home fires burning and providing fodder to domesticated animals was undoubtedly necessary, but it still did not count as “work.”

The same pattern is in vogue even now, though the details and format have changed. A woman can be a housewife or homemaker, but her services as babysitter, cook, laundress, maid, nurse, AND recipient (a euphemism for vestibule) while submitting to the dominant man for his physical enjoyment and relief remain unpaid.

The OED Defines Work

(To) work (intransitive verb) – To do something that involves physical or mental effort, especially as part of a job, usually for money.

Work (transitive verb) – To do, perform (a task, deed, process, etc.).

In Physics, Work is the energy transferred to or from an object via the application of force along a displacement.

There is no differentiation about work being done indoors or outdoors, at home or a place of work outside the home. “Work” is work. Period.

Slowly, but surely, times they are a-changing. After the abolition of slavery, being granted freedom of movement – though with restrictions – and the right to vote, women are no longer voiceless; they are enabled to assert their independence. Their need for recognition and credibility is being accepted, though equality, fair play, and safety are a far cry.

Today, some women go out to work, being identified by their professions. More often than not, their burden has increased manifold. In addition to their domestic chores and family duties, they have to cope with the pressures, strain, and stress at their place(s) of work,

while commuting, sometimes at odd hours. Most do it due to the need for their own survival and necessity of providing for their own as well as extended families; they choose to take up the responsibility even though it may not be very different from Hobson’s Choice or TINA – There Is No Alternative!

After the epidemic in 2022, many companies advised or offered and both male and female employees accepted or opted to Work From Home (WFH).

This brought about changes in the home and workplace environment and relationships, distribution of chores and duties, and division of responsibilities between men and women. It was a relief for some, physically and mentally taxing for others.

Nevertheless, women’s contribution and importance were recognised and their spouses, partners, and other male members in the family became more considerate. It is hoped and expected that this trend is widely prevalent and will continue. The physical and mental potential of the ‘Second’ or ‘Fairer’ sex will be utilised for their betterment and for the benefit of society.

We



AS A 32-YEAR-OLD WOMAN, navigating an ethical dilemma at work has been one of the toughest challenges I've faced. The realisation of fraudulent practices within the company shook my belief in the organisation's integrity. It's a moral tug-of-war between doing what's right and safeguarding my job security. How can I uphold my principles and navigate this dilemma without compromising my integrity?

It's understandable to feel conflicted when faced with ethical dilemmas at work, especially when they challenge your integrity. Consider documenting your concerns and discussing them with HR or a trusted supervisor. Exploring options to anonymously report the fraudulent practices may protect both your job and your values. Seek clarity on the company's policies and ethical standards to guide your decision-making process.

BEING A 28-YEAR-OLD MAN IN a long-distance relationship has been a test of patience and commitment. Celebrating our anniversary apart was bittersweet, with moments of joy clouded by the distance that separates us physically. How can we weave our love stronger across these miles and ensure our bond grows deeper despite the challenges of separation?

Long-distance relationships require intentional communication and trust-building. Schedule regular video calls and create shared experiences, even from afar, to strengthen your emotional connection. Discuss long-term plans and visitation schedules to maintain a sense of closeness. Setting realistic expectations and openly expressing your needs and feelings can help navigate the challenges of distance.

AS A 35-YEAR-OLD MAN WORKING in a diverse workplace, cultural misunderstandings have added layers of complexity to my professional interactions. During a cultural celebration, my well-intentioned actions inadvertently offended colleagues from different backgrounds. How can I navigate these cultural nuances more sensitively and foster a more inclusive environment?

Addressing cultural misunderstandings in the workplace involves empathy and proactive communication. Reflect on the incident and consider reaching out to colleagues involved to clarify intentions and apologise if necessary. Engage in cultural sensitivity training or workshops to enhance your awareness and ability to navigate diverse perspectives effectively. Building relationships based on mutual respect fosters a more inclusive and harmonious work environment.

MOVING TO A NEW CITY AT 26 for career opportunities brought a mix of excitement and homesickness. During the holidays, the pang of missing familiar faces and places was palpable. How can I plant roots in this unfamiliar city, forge new connections, and create a sense of home away from home?

Moving to a new city can be overwhelming yet offers opportunities for personal growth. Join local interest groups or community activities to meet new people and establish a support network. Embrace the adventure by exploring your surroundings and finding activities that align with your interests. Acknowledge feelings of homesickness as natural and allow yourself time to adjust gradually while staying connected with loved ones back home.

CONFRONTING GENDER discrimination in my career path as a 30-year-old woman has been a poignant struggle. The moment of being overlooked for a promotion in favour of a less qualified male colleague starkly highlighted system biases. How can I advocate for gender equality effectively within my workplace and beyond?

Addressing gender discrimination requires strategic advocacy and support systems. Document instances of bias and discuss them with HR or a mentor within your organisation. Engage in networking opportunities and seek allies who can amplify your concerns. Consider joining or supporting gender equality initiatives to drive systemic change. Upholding professional standards and advocating for fairness promotes a more equitable workplace for all.

AT 29, PARENTAL PRESSURES TO settle down and start a family have become a constant presence. Family gatherings often turn into interrogations about my relationship status, amplifying the sense of urgency. How can I assert my independence respectfully and make decisions about my personal life on my own terms?

Managing parental expectations about marriage involves setting boundaries and open communication. Express your desire for independence and decision-making autonomy respectfully. Share your long-term goals and timeline for personal milestones, emphasising your commitment to personal growth and stability. Seek support from family counseling or mediation if conversations become strained, aiming for mutual understanding and respect.

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

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



Learning Japanese

Adventures in learning a new language.

By Deepak Bhatia

漢字

Kanji

ひらがな

Hiragana

カタカナ

Katakana

I have a history with Japan. In the late 1970s and early '80s, my father was posted in the Embassy of India, Tokyo, Japan. In September 1980, I was in Delhi where my elder daughter was born. On hearing the news, my father flew down from Tokyo to Delhi to see his first grandchild. He named her 'Deepika' – Deepak's daughter (*Deepak ki beti* - Deepika). My father returned to Japan after his leave. He invited the three of us, myself, my wife Sangeeta, and the newborn to Tokyo – "Just get on the 'plane, I will take care of everything!" But we did not have the courage to travel so far with a small child. The trip was planned for later, was postponed, planned again and postponed again. Thus, more than forty years passed.



Fun Factoid

Toyota Camry is named after the anglicised version / pronunciation of Kanmuri meaning ‘crown.’ Another Toyota car model ‘Corolla’ is named after the Latin phrase “corona parva” meaning ‘small crown.’

Ten Years Earlier

After my graduation, I left Lucknow in June 1970 for London where my father was then posted in India House, the High Commission of India.

Fast forward: I acquired a degree in Electrical Engineering and joined the Data Systems Division, a company which was part of the conglomerate ITT, in October 1974.

After working there for more than a year, I thought it was time for a trip home. I went to the office of Japan Airlines in the West End. I was welcomed with utmost courtesy – indeed, it was the only time when a lady had pulled out a chair and requested me to please be seated. Without much ado, I purchased a return ticket to Delhi and flew home a few days later. The cabin staff aboard the aircraft were as courteous as the office people and those at the check-in counter at Heathrow. Shortly after take-off, I was offered a choice of beverages. I chose Saki, the famous liquor made from rice in Japan. It was in an egg-shaped, flat-bottomed green bottle with a cup on top like the one seen on Optrex, the eye solution. Along with it came a packet of savouries “Otsumami.” Those were perhaps the first two words I learnt in Japanese.

I did learn a few other words, like ‘Ohayo’ and ‘Mushi-mushi’ for ‘Hello’ from a programme on TV, Shmaataa for ‘Sorry / I have made a mistake’ from a book with a Japanese character, and Haiku for a style of poetry in Japanese with three lines and 17 syllables and in the pattern 5-7-5, from the James Bond novel *You Only Live Twice* by Ian Fleming, in which he quoted a poem by Basho - ‘You only live twice, Once when you are born, And once when you look death in the face.’

Fun Factoid

The great seer, poet and philosopher, Thiruvalluvar, wrote couplets of only seven words in which a wealth of wisdom is concentrated.

Example:

About Gratitude

Seyyaamal Seydha Udhavikku
Vaiyakamum Vaanakamum Aatral
Aridhu ceyyāmal ceyta utavikku
vaiyakamum vānakamum ārral aritu.
— (Transliteration)

Neither earth nor heaven can truly
repay spontaneous aid.

I DID LEARN A FEW OTHER WORDS, LIKE ‘OHAYO’ AND ‘MUSHI-MUSHI’ FOR ‘HELLO’ FROM A PROGRAMME ON TV, SHMAATAA FOR ‘SORRY / I HAVE MADE A MISTAKE’ FROM A BOOK WITH A JAPANESE CHARACTER...



I went back to England after my holiday but soon decided to return to India for good. I secured a job in ONGC and was posted in their Bombay Offshore Project (BOP for short) in the Engineering & Construction Division in December 1976. After a few weeks in the office, I was deputed offshore to a Derrick Barge (large ship fitted with cranes), the DB-14 (DB to DB!). Later I was sent for a few shifts of 14 days each to a Jack-up Rig, the W. T. Adams. I learnt that ONGC owned and was operating a jack-up rig, the Sagar Samrat, which had been built at the Hiroshima Shipyard in Japan, since 1975. In 1980, ONGC acquired a second jack-up rig, the Sagar Vikas, and I was posted on it as the Electrical Shift-in-charge. I had the opportunity to meet some members of the Japanese crew which had sailed aboard to hand over the rig to ONGC.

The Japanese crew, true to their reputation, were courteous, disciplined, dedicated, hard-working, helpful and more! But they left after a few days with the ONGC operational crew to look after the rig – operate, maintain, repair, and everything else to be done, including cleaning!

The shipyard had supplied enough spare parts for an estimated two years. Everything was beautifully segregated, packed, listed with all details for items of each equipment, and neatly stored in light green metal or polished brown wooden boxes.

Back To 1980 And Further

ONGC ordered one more Jack-Up rig from Japan, the Sagar Jyoti, one from France, the Sagar Pragati, and two more from Singapore, the Sagar Shakti and Sagar Gaurav. ONGC personnel who had worked offshore were deputed to the three shipyards for familiarisation during construction. Much as I would have preferred, I was not posted to Japan, but to Singapore. Later ONGC also ordered a Drillship, the Sagar Vijay, built at Tokyo Shipyard, and I was again fortunate to work on it for some time. I was fortunate to sail



aboard the vessel to Cochin from Bombay High when it was taken to the Cochin Shipyard for its first dry docking.

In 1989, I was transferred to Madras, which was later renamed Chennai. By then Deepika had a sister, Malvika, born in Bombay in 1986, and the two of them had their school and college education in Chennai.

Deepika had diverse interests, besides studies, and joined first French and later Japanese language classes also, at the Consulate General (CG) of Japan. Many years later, I was to approach the same CG for a visa and their PR department for tourist information.

Fun Factoid

In Japan, military rulers were formerly known as Shoguns, who were collectively referred to as Bakufu.

Present Year

Like most places in the Northern Hemisphere of the world, Japan also has four seasons – Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter - following the Gregorian Calendar of 12 months from January to December. Winter can be quite severe, with rain, snow, and wind which can be quite strong at times. Spring follows to give respite and also brings out the famous Cherry Blossom flowers

which cover the trees from a few to many thousands, depending on the area and the location. The renowned “Viewing of Cherry Blossom flowers blooming in Spring” is Hanami. The best place for this viewing is said to be Mount Yoshino in Nara. However,

SPRING FOLLOWS TO GIVE RESPITE AND ALSO BRINGS OUT THE FAMOUS CHERRY BLOSSOM FLOWERS WHICH COVER THE TREES FROM A FEW TO MANY THOUSANDS, DEPENDING ON THE AREA AND THE LOCATION.



this was not included in the itinerary of our Cherry Blossom Group Tour for Senior Citizens conducted by an internationally well-known Travel Agent.

The locations included were Ueno Park in Tokyo, and some others. To our great misfortune (rather like the opposite of serendipity!), Spring was delayed by the prolonged Winter, and few trees bloomed as forecast; the tour turned out to be a misnomer!

Fun Factoid

There is an Oyama restaurant in Gandhi Nagar, Adyar, near our residence.

Oyama Meaning – Small mountain. It is also a town/state/prefecture in Japan.

Preparation For The Tour Before Departure From Chennai

I searched for maps and books and travel guides soon after my wife, Sangeeta, had booked two places having thoroughly searched and scrutinised several offers from newspaper ads as well as online. I found a book in our local lending library – The Devotion of Suspect X. This was located in old-time Tokyo, but gave a good idea of the lifestyle of the Japanese proletariat.

Incidentally, this novel by Keigo Higashino had been adapted and made into a Hindi Movie, *Jaane Jaan*, starring Kareena Kapur Khan, Jaideep Ahlawat, Vijay Verma, and other actors.

Both Sangeeta and I became members of the Public Library in Gandhi Nagar, Adyar. The only source of information I could find there was *The Times World Atlas* with very large size maps.

I took photographs of the relevant portions of maps about Japan, made photocopies in A3 size and stuck them on chart papers to learn about the country. Japan consists of nine states and 47 prefectures.

From a book - cum - stationary shop, I could purchase some old blank outline maps of Japan (no longer in use in schools, which was apparent from the brownish tinge on

the paper!). On these, I marked the names of states and the main towns and cities of Japan.

Even a well-known and stocked bookshop like Higginbothams was not of much help. I turned to Google Uncle in whom I have unshakable faith and I was not disappointed. I tried to translate English words and phrases of common usage into Japanese and quickly realised that to learn to read and write Japanese was probably beyond me! It was amply clear to me that I would have to be content to transcribe Japanese into English and try to learn the pronunciation in the English script. The results of my exertions are shown below.

However, during the tour I did manage to learn to write my name in Japanese by copying the handwriting of our tour guide, Ms Aki-San (San = Respected, or Jee in Hindi).

Epilogue

On the penultimate day of the tour, we were given time for shopping at Dotonbori in Osaka. We peeked into a few shops, and finally made our way to Daison – the Life Coordinate Shop.

My wife and I purchased some miscellaneous items, like different flavoured Kit-Kat chocolates (supposedly available only in Japan), a giant shuttlecock for our grandson, a Yukata for our granddaughter (A yukata is lightweight, made from cotton fabric, suitable as summer wear, as compared to a generally known Kimono which is heavier, made from silk and suitable to wear in cold weather), and a few others. But how could I return home without

Sake? I asked our local tour guide, Ms Aki-San, to recommend a good brand, and she readily obliged. Next day at the airport, I showed the page in my pocket notebook to the salespersons at the Japan Duty Free (JDF) shop.

After some discussion amongst themselves, they pointed out a bottle of the specific brand but recommended a 3-in-one pack which would be easier to carry. I readily accepted their suggestion. The result may be seen in the attached photograph.

The Japanese Script and Writing System

The Japanese language has three types of characters: Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji. Hiragana and

I TURNED TO GOOGLE UNCLE IN WHOM I HAVE UNSHAKABLE FAITH. I TRIED TO TRANSLATE ENGLISH WORDS INTO JAPANESE AND QUICKLY REALISED THAT TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE JAPANESE WAS PROBABLY BEYOND ME!



Katakana are phonetic symbols, each representing one syllable while Kanji is an ideogram, each stands for a certain meaning.

The modern Japanese writing system uses a combination of logographic kanji, which are adopted Chinese characters, and syllabic kana. Kana itself consists of a pair of syllabaries: hiragana, used primarily for native or naturalised Japanese words and grammatical elements; and katakana, used primarily for foreign words and names, loanwords, onomatopoeia, scientific names, and sometimes for emphasis. Because of this mixture of scripts, in addition to a large inventory of kanji characters, the Japanese writing system is considered to be one of the most complicated currently in use.

In modern Japanese, the hiragana and katakana syllabaries each contain 46 basic characters, or 71 including diacritics. With one or two minor exceptions, each different sound in the Japanese language (that is, each different syllable, strictly each mora) corresponds to one character in each syllabary.

Unlike kanji, these characters intrinsically represent sounds only; they convey meaning only as part of words. Hiragana and katakana characters also originally derive from Chinese characters, but they have been simplified and modified to such an extent that their origins are no longer visually obvious.





A DARK SIDE

A mother's triumphant quest for justice.

By Renuka Krishnaraja

I could hear the wind chimes clinking to the cool breeze at dawn and the birds chirping heedfully composing a distinct soulful rhythm. It might have been like any typical winter morning, but for me, everything felt special as I woke up from the warmth of my bed, tied my unruly hair into a bun, and set forth with my routines.

"Seema is the promising teacher of our school," the principal's words echoed in my mind, and I grinned wide ear to ear, in the faint twilight. Such potential teachers from all schools of our district had the privilege of attending a prestigious training the very next day, and I was the chosen one from our school. Wow! When your hard work is applauded it feels great, doesn't it?

I had a long day ahead of me, I thought as I rushed into my eight-year-old son, Raghu's room to wake him up. After school, in the evening, I had to travel, for my training, to Bangalore, which was about a hundred kilometers away from my town, Malur.

"Ask me anything today?" I said, squeezing his cherubic cheeks. It was inevitable as that was how I could compensate for my absence from home that night and the whole next day. Not that Raghu or my husband would miss me too much while I was away, as they had their boy things to do, but I had my own share of guilt. On hearing what I'd said, my son's sleepiness had evanesced! He sprang upon the bed all at once.

"Mamma, can you pick me up from school... I don't want to come in the school bus today"



"Mamma, can you pick me up from school... I don't want to come in the school bus today," he said with raised eyebrows – that was his innate expression when thrilled. I had to fulfill his desire as I had asked for it, even though I would have to rush to the bus station later.

'Raghu is no more,' the harsh phrase slammed on my ears and struck me like lightning. 'It's not happening.'

And then, to my delight, that morning he made no fuss in bathing or having breakfast, not even in drinking milk.

"Bye, mamma," he said getting into the bus, "don't forget to come."

"Not at all, dear," I said waving at him.

As I strode back into the hall, I found my husband, Suresh, lazily reaching out for the newspaper on the coffee table.

"Good morning, dear, I've to go to Bangalore today, do you remember?" I said, finishing my last-minute household chores.

"Oh yes, I've made myself free for two days," he said flipping through the pages. The furniture showroom he owned had been devouring most of his time recently, and by then I'd got used to his late-night arrivals and late-morning waking. He was, for the most part, busy with his business errands, and it was only at such compelling times that the father-son bond strengthened.

One last time, I acquainted him with Raghu's schedules and also told him about the foods stacked in the fridge. He seemed to nod to whatever I'd said, but I really wondered as to what he followed.

"Don't worry, we'll manage," he said, handing me my bag. For a brief moment, my mind was filled with the thought of the clutter that would greet me on returning home, and I had to take a couple of deep breaths to relax and voluntarily dismiss the notion. I'd finally managed to smile as I left for school. The warm sunshine had made the cold winter day so bright and beautiful, but little did I know at that time how ugly it would turn out to be eventually.

My colleagues wished me for the training as I left for the day and then rushed to Raghu's school, but I was late.

"His father just picked him up," the class teacher told me. I was taken aback. 'Why didn't Suresh tell me?' I wondered, but then I had no time to spare. I hired an auto, headed to the bus station, and took the bus to Bangalore.

Acquaint agitation had consumed me when Suresh did not answer my phone calls, but I kept on trying. And then, on the spur of the moment, I woke up jolting to the vibrations of my phone. When I opened my eyes, it was pitch dark outside. It was 8:45 p.m. I had dozed off in the bus, I realised – that too for so long. I answered the call.

"Is this Seema Suresh?" a female voice questioned.

I replied in the affirmative.

"Madam, this is from Adarsh Hospital, Malur... there's



I'd finally managed to smile as I left for school. The warm sunshine had made the cold winter day so bright and beautiful, but little did I know at that time how ugly it would turn out to be eventually.

an emergency, you should come here immediately," the horrendous words gave me sudden chills.

"What's the matter?" I asked, to which she just repeated her message.

My eyes widened with dread, and my heart banged against my chest wall violently, and I thought I had a panic attack. I called my husband, but again he didn't respond. My co-passenger, a pleasant lady, counselled me to calm down.

"We are near Bangalore now, so you can take a bus and go back to Malur," she said.

I was jittery all the while, so she guided me to the right bus. The return journey was anxiety-driven, and every passing minute had felt like an era until I reached my town. The deadly silent, empty Malur streets gaped back at me. In the middle of the haunting night, shivering all over with cold and fear, I ran with all my competence on the deserted streets with dogs barking and chasing me. I was so breathless to the core that I thought I'd died. Nevertheless, I reached the hospital only to collapse near the gate. When I was back to my senses, a few acquaintances had gathered around me, and I was on the hospital bed. What

'It's not happening, it can't be true,' I said to myself. But it had happened. Destiny had cast its brutal ghastly spell upon us. Suresh and I were devastated as our world had crumbled down. The feeling of loss of a child was inexpressible.

ensued was worse than the worst nightmare I'd ever had in my entire lifetime. One by one, the awful tragedies unfolded. I learned that my husband and son had met with an accident, and some passersby had got them admitted. Their bike had hit a truck, and Suresh had sustained multiple fractures and abrasions and was lying in the bed next to mine.

And... and... my baby... had a fatal head trauma and could not make it. 'Raghu is no more,' the harsh phrase slammed on my ears and struck me like lightning. 'It's not happening, it can't be true,' I said to myself. But it had happened. Destiny had cast its brutal ghastly spell upon us. Suresh and I were devastated as our world had crumbled down. The feeling of loss of a child was inexpressible. The pain was profound. None other than those who had such personal experience could fathom the abysmal pit that we were in.

'Those eyes would never twinkle, those supple lips would never smile, he would never call me 'mamma...'

The next day, we were discharged from the hospital, and that evening was the funeral. Suresh was in a wheelchair, and I felt like I was in a semiconscious state. Family and friends had poured in to convey their condolences. My colleagues from school and even my students had come over to pray for the departed soul. In the midst of the crowd, I spotted a familiar face, and after frisking my memory, I was able to recollect who she was. She was Sharada, the manager of the New Horizon Orphanage, from where we had adopted a six-month-old Raghu.

That's true – Raghu was our adopted son. Despite several medical consultations, we had failed to have a child of our own, although the doctors never said there was no hope. But after a long span of hopelessness, I'd made my decision – to go for adoption. Suresh had always said that I was an impulsive person and urged me to think over again, but I was adamant and finally, he did oblige. And soon, we were on the waiting list and subsequently got the good news. That was how Raghu had entered into my life.

So what if I hadn't given him birth? He was our rightful child and had made us complete. We had laughed with him, cried with him, and watched him walk and talk. He had been an inseparable part of our lives. He had bestowed us with the boons of parenthood. Memories flooded until a hot stream of tears gushed out of my eyes, and I sobbed out loud as I saw his little body wrapped in white. 'Those eyes would never twinkle, those supple lips would never smile, he would never call me 'mamma,' his tiny heart would never throb,' sorrowful thoughts had crushed me down. I was inconsolable. Sharada came to me and hugged me tight. That was all anyone could do. Nobody could bring him back to me.

"We couldn't look after him," I whined.

"It was an accident, Seema... nothing is in our hands," she said misty-eyed.

The cremation was overwhelming and had left us heartbroken. It was like an abrupt ending to a young life – like a life was nipped out in the bud.

Every nook and corner at home reminded us of Raghu. Many times, I'd felt like he had just gone out to play and would come back, but then realisation would creep in. Perhaps, we were never destined to be parents, I felt. Sleep and hunger had deserted us and let us mourn quietly for our kid. I would sit and stare into nothingness for hours maybe – I'd even lost track of time. Yet, life is strange. Although I had strongly felt that I couldn't survive anymore, I was still alive. Suresh and I wept in turns and at times together. He was possessed by an enormous



wave of guilt, and I had to alleviate that feeling in him and also look after him. After all, I had only one person in this big world to call my own. He was recovering gradually, physically at least. People frequented every now and then to check upon us during our tough times.

After a fortnight, we decided to resume our duties so that our minds would not be idle. Although the pitiful gazes at school only dampened my spirits, teaching and being with my students somehow distracted me from my grief. Suresh also did better once he started stepping out of the premises of the four walls called home. Even my feelings of anger, depression, despair, and whatnot confined me when I was at home, but the moment I walked out, I was free from those high-strung emotions. And hence, we started living mechanically, like automated devices. And if that was what you call moving on – yes, we were moving on. But I'd never imagined that the worst was yet to come.

Two months later: A distant muffled voice woke me up in the middle of one night, and I saw that Suresh was not in bed. I gently followed the direction of the voice that led me to the kitchen. I hid behind the door and watched from there. I saw Suresh talking over the phone. I couldn't hear what he spoke, but I saw that he'd placed a file in a briefcase and kept it in the store room's topmost closet. By then, I had to go back to bed as he had disconnected the call. Lately, he had seldom been at home. His behaviours had been bizarre and dubious on more than one occasion. Something wasn't right, I sensed, and I couldn't sleep for the rest of the night. In the morning, as soon as he went into the bathroom, I knew he would take a long time as that was habitual of him, and I raced into the store room.

I climbed the countertop to reach the closet, dragged the briefcase out, and frantically looked into it. The file had various documents - Raghu's death certificate, an insurance claim form, and an insurance policy worth two crore rupees – that was a huge amount! The policy was in the name of Raghu and the beneficiary was Suresh, the father. I turned the papers over and also found some loan documents and our company documents. I had poor knowledge of such stuff, yet I could decipher that something was miserably wrong. 'What did all that mean?' I wondered as the room started spinning around me. The chaos in my mind slowly leached out, laying down an utter denial which then clarified into logical insight. In an intense fit of rage, I fetched the file and barged toward Suresh.

"You owe me an explanation," I screamed hysterically, tossing the file at him, & the papers scattered on the floor.



The mask of his dignity had tumbled down, exposing an occult dark side of his persona. I stood there dazed, numb, and speechless. I recounted that fateful day wherein I was supposed to pick my child from school...

"You owe me an explanation," I screamed hysterically, tossing the file at him, and the papers scattered on the floor. He could see that I was out of my mind and had lost it totally. Before he could speak, I pulled out a knife and pointed it at him, yelling, "I want nothing but the truth."

He was visibly shaken, "Seema... Seema... I'll tell... keep that away." He was trying to flee as he walked backwards, but I persisted to threaten him.

"Do you remember that shipwreck, Seema?"

"Yes... go on," I said, firming my grip on the knife.

"With that, we'd lost a big consignment and didn't even get any compensation. I endured heavy losses. Moreover, I had to take care of the salaries and rent. I took loans but couldn't repay the interests, and that compounded the problem. I was bankrupt and also in heavy debt, so I even pledged our house documents and that too was not enough, and...."

"Why didn't you tell me anything?" I felt my anger abating a bit.

"You were blinded... blinded by motherhood... you had time only for Raghu and for your school..."

"That's not true," I snapped out, "I didn't want to

interfere in your business. I don't even understand that – you know how poor I am in money matters. But then what did you do?" I felt foolish, anxious, and furious all at the same time.

"I heard about someone grabbing huge insurance claims. I'd purchased a life insurance policy in Raghu's name long time back, and it struck me that I could claim the lump-sum amount in case of an accident. I convinced myself that he was not our own child..." Suresh's voice was cracking.

"And you killed him?" I was burning and trembling, and tears were blinding me.

"Seema, I always said that you are impulsive, but it was me who had been insane and monstrous at that time. I was desperate. We were riding behind a speeding truck, and I accelerated my bike on purpose and crunched into its rear end... it was an intentional accident... and I managed to escape with minor injuries." I realised that until then, I'd never dared to know more about that dreadful mishap.

"How could you?" I shrieked.

"I'm sorry, Seema... I acted in haste... I got the money but now don't know why I'm always restless..." he choked as he spoke. His gentle voice, that I'd always admired, was piercing me.

"What is a life's worth, Suresh, just money?" my tone was highly lunatic. His legs wavered, and he squatted on the floor. The human mind is so mysterious, so perilous at times. There was so much more than what had met

my eyes within this soft-spoken, humble man whom I'd been living with, who had been my better half for almost two decades. The mask of his dignity had tumbled down, exposing an occult dark side of his persona. I stood there dazed, numb, and speechless. I recounted that fateful day wherein I was supposed to pick my child from school, but I never knew that he had already gone – gone away from me into his death trap. I wish I'd been there earlier. It might have made all the difference. So, all I can tell you is why he was murdered...

Being a dutiful teacher, a law-abiding citizen, and above all, an unfortunate mother, I'd decided what I had to do. I went to the washroom and cleansed down the endless layers of tears smudged on my face. And then, I gathered those papers, picked up the file, and headed out of the house, leaving my brooding husband behind. I waved at a passing auto and signaled it to stop. "Police station," I said and got into it.

Two months later: The available credentials proved that there was a strong motive, but there was no substantial evidence of the murder as there was no suspicion whatsoever and no autopsy was done before the cremation. But after thorough interrogation, Suresh confessed that it was, in fact, a deliberate act. Suresh was convicted of the murder of my son, Raghu, and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

We

CAMPUS RUMPUS

TEA STALL

When we were in college, I had a nice group of friends and we used to eagerly wait for winter so we could bask in the sun, drinking tea. It was one of our favourite pastimes in between classes. My friends and I used to catch up on our personal lives, discuss the lectures and go on discourses about politics. There was this one particular tea stall near our college that we liked going to. The uncle would always chip into our conversations with his little anecdotes. These anecdotes were from his youth and they were very interesting. His lively spirit and the delicious tea would wake us up from the sleepiness and laziness we endured during winter lectures.

Once, we were sitting and chatting at the tea stall when we noticed that Uncle was unusually quiet. He served us tea and biscuits and returned to tend to his utensils. There was something wrong and after a while, we asked him what was wrong. What he told us broke our hearts. Uncle's family lived in his village in Himachal. He came to the city for work and did all sorts of menial jobs to send money back to his family. Now that his only son was big enough for college, he asked them to come to Delhi to stay with him. His son could work and pay for his studies. And he would be closer to his family. However, his son was having trouble getting admission because he didn't have proper coaching to crack the entrances. When we heard this, we knew we had to help him out. This man had made our college lives so much better; we couldn't leave him helpless. We asked him to bring his son here so we could coach him for free. Our college had students from

different educational backgrounds, so any one of us could help. He didn't believe we would be so generous at first but we asked him to trust us. His son eventually came to Delhi, we coached him and with a little help, he was able to crack the entrance. He was smart, he just needed some guidance. He worked part-time to pay for his tuition. By the end of the year, uncle had his whole family with him and his son was admitted to a good college.

–Amisha Mishra

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

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

Teenache



Q & A

I'M A GIRL OF 15. LATELY, I'VE BEEN comparing myself to the popular girls at school who seem to effortlessly meet society's beauty standards. I've started feeling insecure about my appearance and wonder if I need to change to fit in. When I overheard some classmates making hurtful comments about another girl's weight, it hit close to home. I started skipping meals and obsessing over my appearance, hoping to match the 'ideal' image I thought would make me more accepted. It took a friend's intervention and a lot of self-reflection to realise that true beauty comes from confidence and self-acceptance, not conforming to unrealistic standards. Why do I feel like I have to look a certain way to be accepted by my peers?

It's common to feel insecure about appearance, especially with societal pressures. Remember, true beauty comes from confidence and self-acceptance, not conforming to unrealistic standards. Focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and engaging in activities that boost your self-confidence. Talking to supportive friends, family, or a counsellor can also help you navigate these feelings. Embrace your uniqueness and prioritize your well-being.

I'M A BOY OF 16. I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED of pursuing a career in music, but my parents insist that I focus on a more 'practical' path like medicine or engineering. Our disagreements often escalate into heated arguments, leaving me feeling frustrated and misunderstood. One evening, I gathered the courage to share my passion for music with my parents, hoping they would understand and support my dreams. Instead, they dismissed my aspirations, citing concerns about financial stability

and job security. It was a difficult moment of realisation that we had different perspectives on success and happiness. Finding common ground has been challenging, but I'm learning to communicate my goals more effectively while respecting their concerns. What should I do when my parents and I constantly argue about my future plans?

It's tough when your dreams clash with your parents' expectations. Clear communication is key. Have an open conversation with your parents about your passion for music and present researched facts about career possibilities in the field. Finding a compromise, like balancing music with a more traditional career initially,



might also help. If disagreements continue, consider involving a trusted third party to mediate. Pursuing your passion while respecting their concerns is important for your long-term happiness and success.

I'M A GIRL OF 14. RECENTLY, I'VE become a target of cyberbullying. Classmates started posting mean comments about my appearance and personality on social media, which has left me feeling hurt and isolated. The comments escalated to spreading rumours about me, affecting my reputation and making me dread going online. I tried ignoring it, but the negativity started seeping into my daily life, impacting my confidence and friendships. With support from friends and school counsellors, I started taking steps to protect myself online and build resilience against cyberbullying. It's an ongoing challenge, but I'm learning to focus on positive interactions and ignore hurtful remarks. How do I handle hurtful comments and exclusion on social media without it affecting my self-esteem?

I'm sorry you're experiencing this. Cyberbullying can be very hurtful, but it's important to take steps to protect yourself. Document and report the incidents to school authorities and social media platforms. Adjust your privacy settings to control who can interact with you online. Seek support from friends, family, or a counsellor to navigate this difficult time. Focus on positive activities and interactions that strengthen your self-esteem. Remember, you are not alone in this.

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

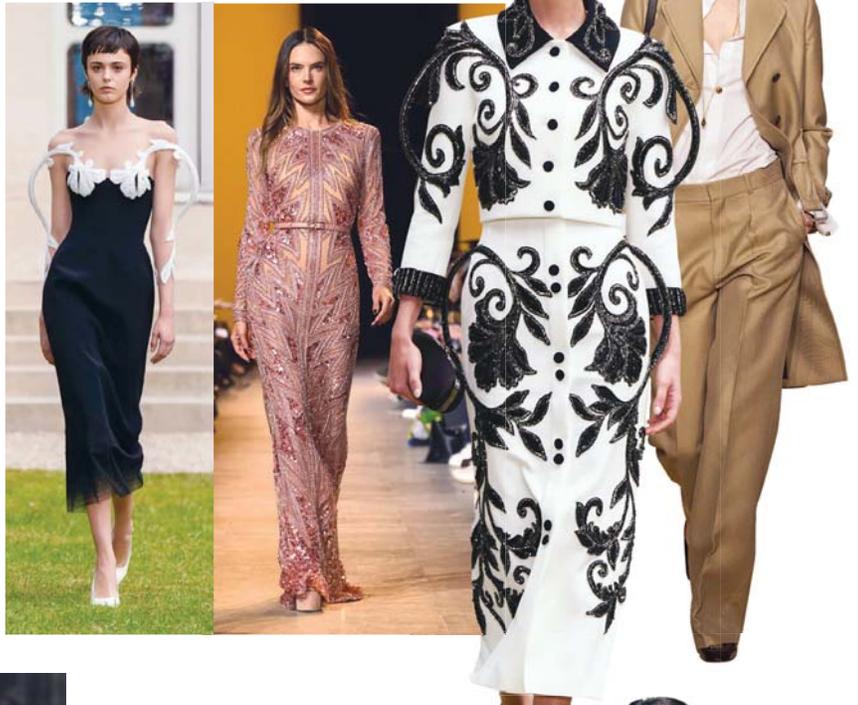
Send your problems to:
Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110 055, Womansera.com



NEWS IN PICTURES

Haute Collection Reigns With Supreme Craftsmanship

Paris Fashion Week showcased a dazzling collection for Haute Couture Fall/Winter 2024-25, featuring a fusion of minimalist elegance and bold conceptual extravagance. This season's runway highlighted craftsmanship, symbolising simplicity and modern finishes.



Paris Fashion Week 2024

Menswear Edition Makes An Opulent Statement

The Menswear edition of Paris Fashion Week presented trendsetting summer fashion collections from Louis Vuitton, Dior, and Hermès. Inspired by the summer travel theme, the fashion week emphasised versatility, showcasing styles from workday uniforms to airport lounge fashion. The collections featured menswear with neutral shades.



Shanghai Fashion Steals The Show With Style

Shanghai Fashion Week featured an array of timeless ensembles with cutting-edge elegance and sophistication. Presented in three chapters—Vanity Fair, Haunting Crush, and Neo-Chinese—the runway embraced luxury and style, showcasing fur coats, jackets, fur-trimmed dresses with feathery embellishments etc.

Shanghai Fashion Week



Celebrating Excellence, BET Awards Honor Black Artists

The BET Awards 2024 in Los Angeles celebrated individuals contributing to Black culture, including writers, musicians, filmmakers, and philanthropists. The event featured electrifying performances by Megan Thee Stallion, Glorilla, Ms. Lauryn Hill and her son YG Marley, Muni Long, Shaboozey, Chlöe Bailey, Keke Palmer, Coco Jones, and a show-stopping performance from Will Smith.

US: BET Awards 2024



Glastonbury Festival

K-Pop Stars And Dua Lipa Bring The Heat To Glastonbury

Glastonbury Festival 2024 thrilled crowds with performances from Seventeen K-Pop stars, Dua Lipa, Little Simz, and Coldplay's Pyramid Stage show. The festival also featured legendary performances by Shania Twain and Kasabian. Celebrities like Tom Cruise, Stormzy, Paul Mescal, Sienna Miller graced the event.

Ottawa Bluesfest Lights Up The Stage

Ottawa Bluesfest 2024 saw enthusiastic crowds, with attendance swelling to over 30,000. Performances by Orville Peck and Maroon 5 rocked the RBC Stage. Jazz ragtime revivalists Pokey LaFarge and Jelly Roll added to the festival's energy, making it an unforgettable event. Ottawa Bluesfest offers the great range of cuisine from traditional to gourmet.

Ottawa Bluesfest 2024



Hungarian Team Finishes At Fencing Championships

The Hungarian men's sabre team won three medals at the European Fencing Championships in Basel. This marks the seventh time the Hungarian sabre team has triumphed at the European Championships in Switzerland. Hungarian fencers Gergely Siklósi and Liza Pusztai finished second, and Tibor Andrásfi finished third in the individual events of European Fencing Championship.

Fencing Championship



British Grand Prix



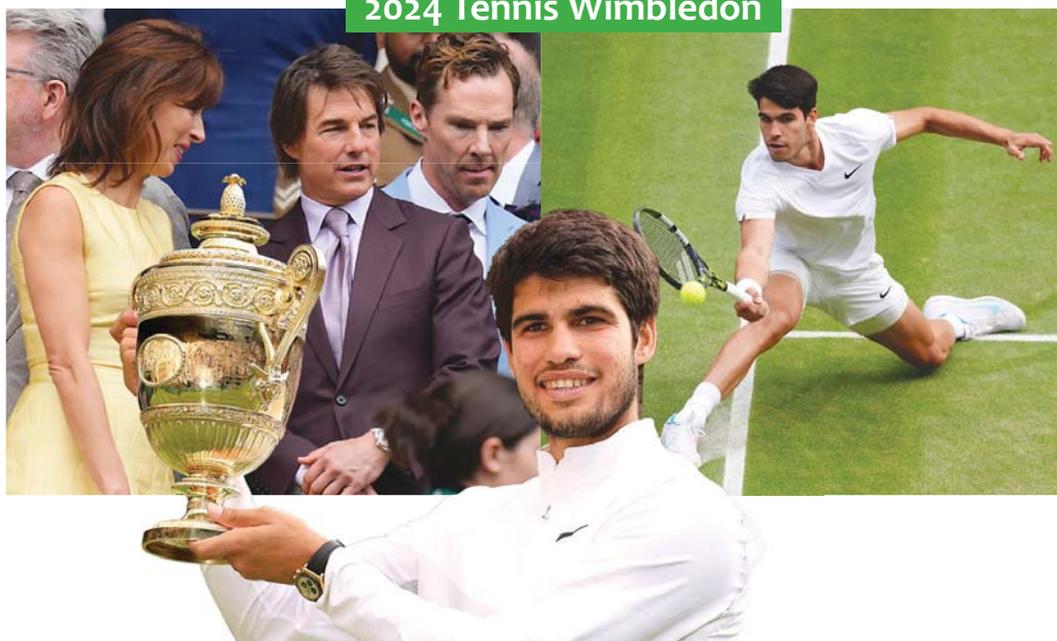
Lewis Hamilton Wins The British Grand Prix 2024

Lewis Hamilton became the first F1 driver to win on any track nine times, extending his F1 record to 104 wins. Reflecting on his journey since losing to Max Verstappen in the 2021 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, Hamilton says "There have been moments between 2021 and now when I didn't feel like I was good enough. I have never cried coming from a win."

Carlos Alcaraz Beats Novak Djokovic In 2024 Wimbledon Finals

The 21-year old Spaniard, Alcaraz, won his first Slam at the 2022 U.S. Open, claimed his second major victory following his recent triumph at the French Open, securing his fourth Grand Slam title. The event was attended by Kate Middleton, Tom Cruise, Benedict Cumberbatch and his wife Sophie Hunter, Tom Hiddleston and his actress wife Zawe Ashton and Courtney Cox.

2024 Tennis Wimbledon



AS YOU SAY

EMBRACING THE GOLDEN YEARS

Referring to the article *Ageing With Grace* by Lasya Shashimohan, June 2024. Getting old is a privilege that is denied to many, and ageing gracefully is a bliss in itself. If you want to enjoy old age, you have to follow certain rules as unavoidable body changes followed by health issues come within the ageing process. Self-care should be our primary concern, and we should apply the right beauty products to our bodies to maintain our youthful look. We should indulge in some creative activity to boost our mental health and do regular exercise to keep our bodies fit. We must visit a doctor for regular medical checkups as early detection of any disease can help us to control it. We should be receptive to constructive change to avoid any conflict with our grown-up children and also to safeguard our mental health. Follow certain rules and enjoy the golden period of your life called old age and be an example for the young who detest wrinkled old persons.

– Harinder Kaur

A TALE OF RESCUING DEDICATION

Apropos the short story *More a Case of Honor* by A. Raghavendra Rao in WE - June 24. The story is woven around four characters briskly and maintains momentum till the end.

The story begins with a crooked Dr. Siddharth, in a quest for easy money, executing a plan to help a lustful mafia don, Rasheed's gang, kidnap a dedicated female surgeon, Dr. Pragna, midway while returning home after completing her duty in the early hours of the morning. The inspector comes out with news about a two-wheeler driven by the surgeon being traced on the outskirts of the city. Even as the mafia don arrives at the bungalow and prepares himself to quench his lust, the ACP and his team arrive at the place and shoot the mafia down to death. The message goes out that while many doctors discharge their ordained duties by serving patients with dedication and should be hailed, a few with evil traits indulging in unscrupulous acts are a blot on the profession and should be handed out harsh punishment so that it serves as a lesson to others not to indulge in misadventures under any circumstances. I wish that we continues to enlighten its readers with more such stories giving positive messages.

– R. Srinivasan

BEATING THE SUMMER HEAT

The article *Protection From The Summer Heat* by Amulya Rasalkar, June 2024, provides us valuable tips for staying hydrated during the summer. As every summer turns out to be hotter than the previous year, we must drink plenty of water, apply sunscreen or cream to our exposed body parts to protect ourselves from the ultraviolet rays of the sun, and be equally sure to take homemade soft drinks that contain sugar and salt. When kids return home from school, they should be given homemade sweet drinks, and should be strictly forbidden to play outside in the afternoon. Those

who have to commute daily for work should keep their heads fully covered while commuting to save themselves from heatstroke, which can eventually turn fatal, apart from following other safety measures to prevent heat-related diseases.

We all should plant more and more trees to save our future generations from heat-related problems like heat cramps, skin rashes, bodily fatigue, and mental stress.

– Harinder Kaur

EMBRACING SINGLEHOOD

This is in reference to the article *Living Single* in the May issue. The writer, in very simple words, has put forth her views. Hats off to your magazine for featuring such write-ups.

There is a sense of accomplishment in leading a good single life in which we do not have to depend on anyone. The write-up will instill a sense of confidence in the minds of many women who decide to remain single throughout their lives. It will also help them plan their lives meticulously, and as the end of the article says, "Life is a wonderful journey. Let's enjoy it our way."

– S.N. Saroja, Pune



Woman's era

invites readers' opinions and reactions on articles, short stories and features published in Woman's Era. E-mail to: letters@womansera.com or by post to:

As you say

Woman's era

E-3 Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110055.

Womansera.com

Name: _____

Mobile: _____

E-mail: _____