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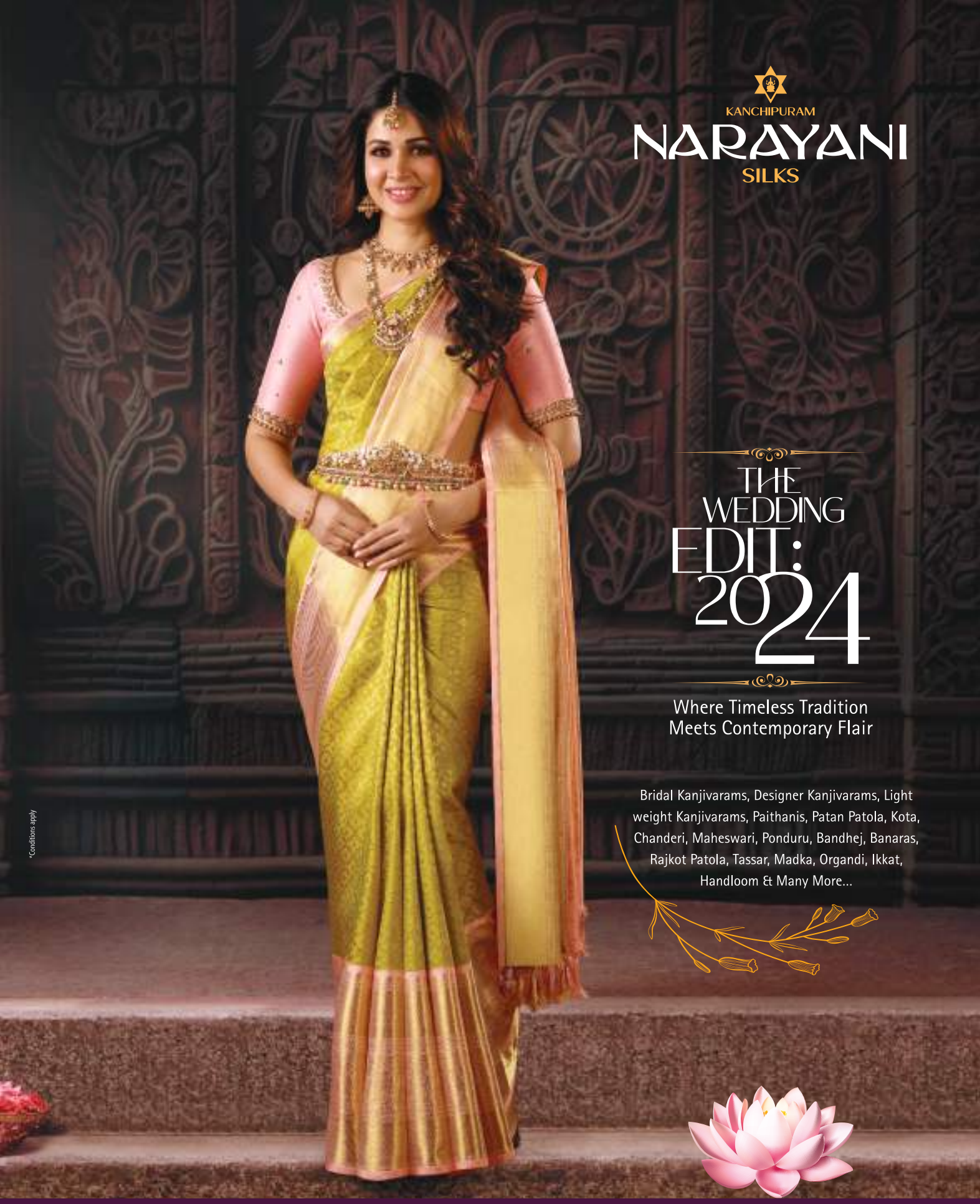
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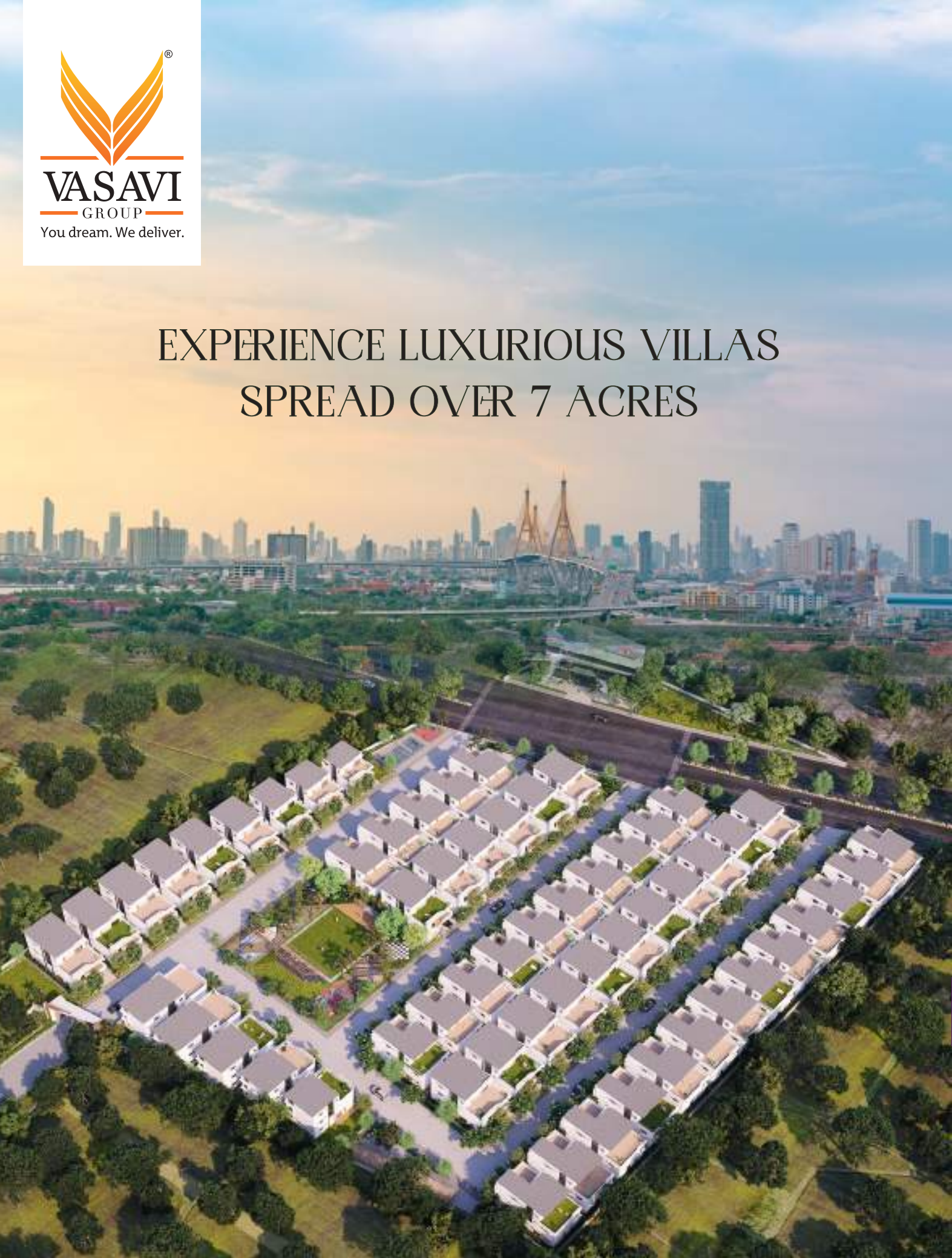

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Global Green Investments: The Visionary Leadership of Chamakuri Likitha Bhanu

Under the adept stewardship of **Ms. Chamakuri Likitha Bhanu**, the Managing Director, **Sai Properties and Projects Ltd.** has distinguished itself in the sustainable investment realm, particularly with its focus on red sandalwood plant cultivation. By integrating traditional principles with contemporary strategic approaches, the company has emerged as a leading entity in this burgeoning sector. This discussion highlights Ms. Bhanu's leadership style, innovative business strategies and the significant global impact of their initiatives.

REINFORCED LEADERSHIP AND VISION

Ms. Bhanu has redefined Sai Properties, transforming it into a beacon of sustainable development. Her leadership, deeply rooted in the ethical and environmental values imparted by her father, Chairman Mr. Chamakuri Srinivas Rao, aligns with the needs of a rapidly changing global market. Her forward-looking vision prioritizes sustainability and ethical investments, aiming to establish a lasting legacy.

INVESTMENT PARADIGM SHIFT

The company's business model has prompted a re-evaluation of investment strategies in the context of environmental sustainability. By capitalizing on the unique attributes and market demand for red sandalwood, Ms. Bhanu has shown that it's feasible to secure profitable returns without sacrificing ecological integrity. This approach sets a precedent for future investments, highlighting the role of renewable resources and sustainable agriculture in long-term financial stability.

HORIZON EXPANSION

Ms. Bhanu's strategic shift in Sai Properties' focus towards catering to international investors showcases her broad vision and foresight. By targeting markets in Canada, Australia and Europe, the company is not just diversifying its investment portfolio but is also highlighting the global appetite for sustainable investments. This approach not only underscores the demand for ethical investment opportunities worldwide but also strengthens India's standing in the global red sandalwood market, demonstrating its prowess in leading sustainable

agricultural innovations. This transformation in their business model is aimed at attracting investors from these international markets, emphasizing the company's commitment to global sustainability and ethical investment practices.

RED SANDALWOOD MARKET DYNAMICS

Red sandalwood's global significance is due to its rarity and diverse applications from pharmaceuticals to luxury goods, making it a coveted resource. Sai Properties' strategic emphasis on its cultivation addresses this demand, ensuring a sustainable supply chain that benefits the environment and investors alike. This strategy is in line with global sustainability objectives and presents a stable investment opportunity amidst market fluctuations.

PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

With Bhanu at the helm, Sai Properties is on the brink of significant expansion. The company's dedication to sustainable methods and its pioneering business model are poised to attract a new cohort of investors, especially those who value green investment principles. As the demand for sustainable investments grows, the company is well-equipped to lead the industry, offering a mix of ethical investment opportunities and financial soundness.

THE DAWN OF SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

Ms. Chamakuri Likitha Bhanu represents a new breed of leadership that places a premium on sustainability, ethical practices, and a long-term outlook rather than immediate profits. Her contributions to Sai Properties transcend red sandalwood cultivation, focusing on fostering a future where commercial success and environmental responsibility are intertwined. As the company progresses and extends its influence globally, it stands as a model for others, demonstrating the feasibility and necessity of sustainable investments for our planet's future. Both investors and industry observers are keenly watching Sai Properties, ready to engage with the green revolution led by Bhanu's inspiring leadership.

The red sandalwood market is highly valued, with prices around INR 10,000 per kilogram, ($137) in the international market. This reflects its strong demand and significant investment potential.

Ms. Chamakuri Likitha Bhanu

"As Chamakuri Likitha Bhanu, at the forefront of Sai Properties, I am personally steering our mission towards pioneering sustainable investment in red sandalwood cultivation. My philosophy intertwines steadfast ethical principles with a progressive strategic outlook, harmonizing with the global market's evolving needs. Our shift towards environmental stewardship represents a transformative approach in investment strategies, promising rewarding yields without undermining the planet's health. By advocating for sustainable and principled practices, we aim to draw the global investment community's attention, establishing ourselves as innovators in eco-friendly agricultural advancements and contributing significantly to the universal sustainability agenda."

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WE CUT THROUGH THE CLUTTER OF EATERIES AND CAFES TO LIST OUT THE BEST FOR YOU. This month, we check out Prezmo, India's first pretzel cafe - The Beanery Café; Pan Asian restaurants - Shitori and newly opened Mings and Mee; seafood restaurant - 63 Degrees and the artisanal coffee place - Kohe. The month of feasting and fasting - *Ramzan* - begins this March.

SHOPPING

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE WEARING NATURAL FABRICS LIKE COOL COTTONS IN SUMMER. We tell you about some affordable streets where you can shop for trendy western and ethnic cottons, handlooms, and linens. Also, a first-hand review of Mysore Saree Udyog and Aulerth stores

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THE LAST FEW YEARS HAS SEEN THE ART SCENE IN HYDERABAD ABUZZ WITH GALLERIES, COLLECTORS AND CUTTING-EDGE ARTISTS. We talk to gallerists and collectors to catch the pulse of this new wave

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

We tell you about the upcoming events for this month

PLAY TIME
MARCH 24

Sutradhar premiers their first Marathi play, *PASSWALA*, as part of World Theatre Day. Written by Jayant Pawar and directed by Vinay Varma, the play is an adaptation of Pawar's *Mulakat*, which is set in a crematorium and reflects the vagaries of life.

Venue: *KMIT Auditorium, Narayanguda*
Tel: *93918 10378*
Timings: *7:30 pm onwards*
Ticket: *Rs 200*

LIVE IN CONCERT
MARCH 22

Singer Sunitha Upadrashta, known primarily for her work in Telugu films and for having rendered nearly 3,000 songs, will be seen on stage at Shilpakala Vedika after a gap of five years.

Venue: *Shilpakala Vedika, Hitech City*
Tel: *99599 57895*
Timings: *7 pm onwards*
Ticket: *Rs 300 (bookmyshow.com)*

ENCHANTING FUSION
MARCH 8

Paramparaa is all set to present an enchanting fusion of *Mayurbhanj Chhau* and *Bharatanatyam*. To be held on *Maha Shivaratri,* at the Sri Dharmapuri Kshetram in Miyapur, the fusion will be performed by the dancers of Trikayaa Dance Foundation.

Venue: *Sri Dharmapuri Kshetram, Miyapur*
Tel: *83676 07607*
Timings: *6:45 pm onwards*

SCOTTISH HUMOR
MARCH 23

Stand-up lovers, are you ready? Scottish funny man, Daniel Sloss, is making his way to Hyderabad for his latest tour, **DANIEL SLOSS: CAN'T - India Tour 2024**. Those following the comedian's career from the beginning may know him from his smash-hit tours and recurring appearances on Conan O'Brien's show in the past decade. And for those who do not know him yet, here's your chance.

Venue: *Sri Sathya Sai Nigamagamam, Hyderabad*
Timings: *7 pm onwards*
Ticket: *Rs 999 onwards (insider.in)*

YOGA OF AWARENESS
MARCH 22 TO 26

With over 48 years of personal practice and learnings in *Kundalini* Yoga, master of this yoga form Sadeb Sarung Singh of California will be conducting a five-day workshop in collaboration with Sharmila's Yoga Zone.

Venue: *Sharmila's Yoga Zone, Road No. 9, Banjara Hills*
Tel: *98493 38902*
Timings: *9 am to 12 pm*

ACTING UP

MARCH 4 TO APRIL 27

Spread over eight weeks (80 hours), the **Samahaara Theatre Acting Workshop** is for everybody from professionals to students, serious actors to beginners. It starts with the essentials of story development and moves on to focus on the actor in you by working on all the important aspects of acting - body, voice, movement, characterization, script analysis, etc.

Venue: *Kites & Nine Pins, Kondapur, Hitech City*
Tel: *83411 20303*
Timings: *7 pm to 9 pm*
Ticket: *Rs 12,500 (bookmyshow.com)*

MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

MARCH 1 TO 3

The event **Understanding Documentaries History, Journey, and Artistic Possibilities** is a three-day workshop featuring film screenings and interactions. Curated and conducted by documentary filmmaker Amudhan R. P. at Lamakaan, it is a part of their 14th anniversary celebrations. The three-day workshop also includes celebrity talks by Indian actress and singer Nithya Menon along with *hori bandishes* by award-winning *thumri* maestro, Vidya Rao, in traditional *thumri gayaki,* and a whole lot more.

Venue: *Lamakaan, Banjara Hills*
Tel: *96427 31329*
Timings: *11 am to 3 pm*

JULIA HAUSER,
Author and Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Kassel, Germany
AND
SARNATH BANERJEE,
Indian Graphic Novelist

GRAPHIC NOVEL

MARCH 7

A book reading event with Julia Hauser and Sarnath Banerjee, authors of *The Moral Contagion*. A book that showcases a graphic narrative about pandemics from sixth-century Constantinople to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and how it affected human relationships, systems of belief, knowledge and political power. The authors will be joined by renowned graphic novelist Jaideep Unudurti for a conversation.

Venue: *Hamburg Hall, Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad, Banjara Hills*
Tel: *040 23350443*
Timings: *6:30 pm onwards*

SECRET RAMADAN WALKS

MARCH 15 TO APRIL 7

The **Secret Ramadan Walks 2024** covers Charminar, Nampally and Yusuf Tekri from March to April. It looks at the city we love in light of *Ramzan*. The walks will include exploring heritage sites, busy markets and crowd-favorite eateries that include *Ramzan* specials like *Pathar Ka Gosht, Marag, Kebabs,* the famous *Hyderabadi Haleem* among others.

Venue: *Charminar, Nampally and Yusuf Tekri*
Tel: *87128 37784*
Timings: *9 pm to 11:30 pm*
Price: *Rs 1499 and service fee (includes food)*

AN IMMERSIVE ART FAIR

MARCH 16 - 17

A unique art fair, spanning art, textiles and jewelry will be brought to Hyderabad by Artix. What is unique about this exhibition is that it's held inside the rooms of a hotel, where the buyer gets an immersive experience of the art. About 15 galleries, nine solo shows featuring 75 artists pan- India will be on display here. There will be panels and talks as well.

Venue: *The Park Hotel, Raj Bhavan Road, Somajiguda*
Tel: *96436 00310*
Timings: *12 pm to 9 pm*

If you'd like your event listed in the WOW! events' calendar, please mail it to *wowhyderabad2023@gmail.com* for the following month, before the 20th.

FROM THE EDITOR

WHOSE RELIGION IS IT ANYWAY?

Does it strike anyone else in this country that we are making a mockery of religion? Or else why are Ram *Lalla* songs topping the charts as if they were a Taylor Swift album? Or why did all those who attended the opening of a certain *mandir* feel the need to post their selfies in gold saris woven with Ram's name? Ram is certainly not on social media, so I guess it is to declare their piety to their friends and followers, by visiting the *mandir* during Ram's consecration ceremony.

And what was that religious fervor when the whole nation was given a paid holiday that afternoon, so that they could watch the telecast of the match, oops sorry *Prana pratishtha*. You can't deny all of us felt extra pious as we went to temples in our neighborhoods, to offer prayers or sing bhajans as if in so doing we would attain salvation – as if attaining salvation itself were so simple! Our religious frenzy reached such a pitch that we let orange flags flutter from our rooftops claiming this as a victory for religion (which many people believe it was, sadly).

However, I ask, how can we not see that all religions are crafted by humans, and are just different paths leading to one supreme being (that is if you are not an atheist and believe we come from nothing and dissolve into nothingness)? Every religion is based on certain tenets and their supreme God is called either Allah or Jesus, Ram or Krishna, or Shiva or Devi. Why not think of these religions as different paths we take on a journey to reach the common goal of liberation? Or, just as we need different foods to satiate our appetite, we need different gods to keep us happy, and especially in Hinduism we have a god for every day, mood and occasion.

Nowhere do our gods ask us to build temples or offer golden crowns. It's our own petty, egotistical self that thinks by offering gods obscene sums of money or gold ornaments we will receive blessings in the form of a job, a promotion, a groom, even a visa!

The word 'religion' itself is concocted by Western Imperialism (or so some believe). It would come as a surprise to many to realize that in many languages, including Sanskrit, there is no word for 'religion'. The word originates in the Latin word 'Religio' (source Wiki) which has three meanings, none of them have anything to do with God. Only in the Middle Ages, the word 'religion' was used for one who joined a monastic order (the word actually was to join a 'religious')!

In India, I can imagine why Hinduism was not a religion, because the word 'Hindu' itself was a geographical term indicative of people who lived beyond the river Sindu or as the Persians called the River Indus. When the term came to be used for followers of a particular faith is unclear; we can conjecture it came either after Muslim invasions or mostly during British rule when they began to categorize people according to their beliefs.

But to most of us, Hinduism is a way of life, more a cultural tag for the way we conduct our life, what we eat, how we dress or even the rituals of worship. Hinduism is a *dharma* that we follow in our everyday lives – of kindness, decency, and humanity. Nowhere do our gods ask us to build temples or offer golden crowns. It's our own petty, egotistical self that thinks by offering gods obscene sums of money or gold ornaments we will receive blessings in the form of a job, a promotion, a groom, even a visa! Nor is it necessary for all of us as devout Hindus to visit all the temples ever built and add to the carbon footprints. Even a small temple around the corner would do for the truly spiritual, better still, a god under a Peepal tree. Come to think of it, why look outside, doesn't this God live in each of us, and in every other human we meet? *Namaste* we say, when we meet someone, letting the Divine in us bow to the Divine in another. How divine is this religion that asks you to look within, and in others to find a god?

Let the politicians build temples. Let film stars and business people take selfies and post about what should be a private moment. To me, I can invoke Ram or Hanuman, anytime, anywhere. And I don't think he will strike me down if I didn't go to a *mandir*, that too one built at a great cost that could have been put to better use.

Religion to me is a private dialogue with my favorite deity. A sacred moment of quiet. I will not let anyone tell me how to pray or which temple to go to be called a Hindu. ■ RATNA RAO SHEKAR

START-UP

Homegrown **Chotu** to aid local economy and make it as good as corporate delivery apps

Every *kirana* can now be its own Zepto!

If you thought reading was dead, here is some news, typing will be dead soon. You will only be swiping, scrolling and tapping in the next three years, even to order groceries. Does the purchase of cheese slices and a bottle of soda through a grocery delivery app evoke a sense of contributing to the capitalist economy? Do you feel such apps rise at the expense of your local *kirana* store's demise? Trying to offer redemption from such capitalist guilt is the newly established Hyderabad-based delivery app, **Chotu.** It blends in the swipe-scroll-tap experience of shopping from your street corner provision store. *Raju Kirana and Padma* Flowers will be working on their shopping platforms with you.

SHOPS UPLEVELED

You can buy your provisions from your neighborhood store - just like you buy on Zepto, BlinkIt, Big Basket or Swiggy InstaMart - that too on WhatsApp, in your regional language and power your local economy," say Y Ravi and Vamshi Panjala, the founders of Chotu app. The duo graduated from IIM Bangalore and studied at IIT Delhi and Osmania University. They have worked with Microsoft, Airtel and Jio before joining hands in 2020 to float the app which was incubated and launched by T-Hub in December 2023. The name is inspired by Chotu, a popular name for youngsters who usually come home to deliver your groceries. The founders added that it was their desire to empower the local shops that inspired them to develop the app.

HOW DIFFERENT

Unlike other grocery apps, the end-users need not download any new app. The local provision store initiates the process of helping you order by sending a link (as they already have your phone number) that opens up to show a list of products in their store. You pick and put them in the virtual basket, pay the amount and place the order - all this on WhatsApp. They train the shopkeepers to put up their shop QR codes on pamphlets or boards in the area to develop their business and retain their customers. "From vegetable and fruit vendors to medical shops, there is no end to who can get on this bandwagon," says Ravi.

WHAT WENT IN

It took three years of hard work and Rs 1 crore seed money (20 lakh from the founder's savings and rest crowdsourced from 11 friends). Next step is to raise the second round of funding - of about Rs 8 crore from angel investors in 2024.

BUSINESS MODEL

For it to be a good business model the stores pay Rs 99 per month to be on the app. The founders plan to get every provision store in the country under its network and there are over one crore kirana shops in India. This gives them adequate scope to widen their business and grow exponentially in two years. More than 1,500 shops like kiranas, bakeries, fruit and vegetable vendors in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have already been onboarded. "Anyone can visit chotu.com and create an instant online shop for free. No documents required, just WhatsApp is enough," says Ravi. ■ MANJU

***Details:** @chotuapp on Instagram*

RAVI REDDY, FOUNDER, CPW

CAUSE

WOW! speaks to a foundation that works assiduously to improve access to water

Community Pure Water

While for many of us, access to quality water is just a tap away. For most, however, getting clean water is still a dream. It is little wonder that even at a time when we launch satellites into space, accessibility to safe drinking water is still a major health concern.

Entrepreneur Ravi Reddy understood this challenge well. Hailing from the Nalgonda district of Telangana where Fluorosis (a condition where the skeletal system is compromised) and other diseases were rampant due to bad quality of water. He wanted to create a solution to the problems people faced there. After moving to the US, he wanted to work on the health issues plaguing his home town due to water issues and in 2009 started *Community Pure Water* along with Bokka Reddy.

The foundation began by establishing one water purification center plant which works 24 x 7 and where people can buy water for 25 paisa a liter. Today, the movement has snowballed with over 500 villages and schools across six states (including Hyderabad) where clean water is available, accessible and affordable to all.

Ravi explains, "This simple intervention has a profound ripple effect. While the health of the populace has improved, the burden of fetching water was always on women and girls. Through our intervention they now have a better quality of life and fewer cases of young girls dropping out from schools as they no longer have to help out with fetching water or tending to the sick. It has a holistic effect that helps in lowering medical expenditure of families."

The foundation works with village *panchayats* and has entered into a ten-year agreement to build and maintain the water purification centers. They also train operators to ensure efficient functioning. The water undergoes five stages of filtration (in accordance with water quality standards) making it safe for drinking, eliminating both chemical and biological pollutants.

The challenges the founders face are many. From junking unscientific beliefs that treated water is unhealthy to maintaining the centers efficiently, they have crossed many barriers in their endeavor to help people. Ravi shares with a smile, "There is never a plant down for more than 24 hours and we have a stockpile of all equipment and tools handy. There is one technical resource for 20 villages and we have a call center that moves quickly in case of issues due to repairs and maintenance."

Today, the founders are looking to raise funds so that they can further scale their activities given the stupendous need for interventions at the grassroots level. They aim to actualize change, one purification center at a time. After all, it takes a village to raise a child!

Those interested can save the following details. ■ MALLIK

Contact: *ssumeet.rawla@cpwf.org*
Tel: *97695 61620*

The tennis champion and Hyderabad's very own sporty crush, **Shrivalli Rashmikaa Bhamidipaty,** as she sets her sights on the Grand Slam speaks to WOW!

"No cheat days in tennis"

Fresh from her win at Fenesta Open Tennis in New Delhi a few weeks ago, Shrivalli Rashmikaa Bhamidipaty, 22, is charged up for her 10-day intensive Hyderabad stint. Her packed schedule includes practice, physio sessions and time with parents Prasad and Rajshri at her Banjara Hills residence. WOW! asks questions about her current form and performance.

FIRST SERVE

"I am an accidental tennis player," confesses Rashmikaa. At 10, she loved Western clothes, especially T-shirts and shorts/short skirts. Tennis only provided her with a reason to indulge in such attire. "I started playing the sport at school during summers, but before I knew it, I fell hopelessly in love with the game. By the time I was 12, I started enjoying and winning the game. Both my parents were into sports in their younger days and felt it was time to level up my game with professional coaching," she shares.

GAME POINT

She started at LB Stadium and learned the game under several coaches, prominent among them are AR Anand Kumar at Shri Pallavi Anand Tennis Academy at Bowenpally and Vishal Uppal, in Hyderabad.

ADVANTAGE RASHMIKA

In October 2023, she won both the singles and doubles at Fenesta Open National Tennis Championship in Delhi. "I have won the women's national championship twice. I also won the junior national women's singles on hard and soft courts." Last year she won cash prizes in the women's $25K international tournament in Bengaluru and in Thailand, the $15K in ITF women's Singles in Hua Hin and the $25K women's double tournament.

PRIZE MONEY

Does she get to keep the prize money? "Yes, on a good day a match can fetch me up to Rs 3 lakhs" she reveals.

CURRENTLY AIMING FOR:

A leg of Indian tournaments in Gurgaon, Nagpur and Indore of International Tennis Federation (ITF) level $25K tournament.

SIDE HUSTLE

Pursuing an online CA course from London

TRAINING AND WORKOUT

Her day commences at 5 am with Heartfulness meditation and yoga, lasting until 7 am. Following a nutritious breakfast, she dives into four hours of intense tennis practice until lunchtime. Post lunch, she resumes her practice followed by a comprehensive physiotherapy session and a rigorous workout regimen. This includes endurance activities and functional core exercises with weightlifting and strength training twice a week. In the evening, she dedicates two hours to studying before winding down for the day. "Tennis demands a holistic approach to fitness, diet, and mental well-being. There are no 'cheat days' in tennis."

OFF THE COURT

I am an introvert and happy being on my own.

MONEY HONEY

Remember that it costs Rs 7 lakhs per month (including coaching, practice, fitness, diet, and tournament travel and stay expenses with the entourage). Yes, read that again! ■ MANJU

QUICK TAKE

Fun fact
Tennis is the world's second most expensive sport, golf being the first!

Role models
Serbia Novak Djokovic and Rohan Bopanna

Ultimate goal
Winning the Grand Slam

Our favorite star **Chiranjeevi,** free-wheels about fun, fans and family when WOW! meets to congratulate him on receiving the Padma Vibhushan award

"I am no longer attached to the outcome of my films"

Perhaps, it was the sign of things to come. Superstar **Chiranjeevi Konidela**, Megastar to his fans, said in one of his blockbuster movies: "*Just time gap anthe, timing lo gap vundadu*". He means that the timing of things is always right for him. The allusion seems perfect for the Padma Vibushan honor the actor was awarded in January. South cinema industry showered praise on him for the big award, but the 68-year-old thespian with 155 movies to his credit was humility personified when WOW! met him at his residence a few days after he received it.

Not just his humility, but his sense of humor was spot on too. Despite the hundreds of visitors to his opulent Jubilee Hills residence that week, he obliged everyone with a handshake, a good word, a selfie and a little inside joke. We noticed that he gets in his element on two occasions - in the presence of his fans and when his wife Surekha is next to him. In a short, free-wheeling chat in his drawing room alongside his wife we asked him a few offbeat questions.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS FROM MOVIES

I spent almost 40 years of my career being attached to the outcome of a movie. Surprisingly, enlightenment came to me much later. Until just four years ago, I would face outcomes with a stoic attitude. Now I work, and let go.

CHANNELIZING FAN LOVE

Early in my career, I realized the power of my fans' love. It was perennial, intense and strong. I wanted their love for me and my career to be channelized into something sustainable for society and decided that the world could do with more blood and eye donations. These donations, which almost everyone can do, can save someone's life or give them a new lease of life. That's how the idea of opening the Chiranjeevi Eye and Blood Bank struck me, and I set up the Chiranjeevi Charitable Trust in Hyderabad in 1998. Working for the Trust gives me more joy than delivering a blockbuster. In peak Covid, May 2021, we also launched the Oxygen Bank for the needy.

HIS BETTER HALF

My wife Surekha is undoubtedly the woman behind my success in personal and professional life. I think her greatest qualities are her unconditional trust, and unwavering belief about her place in my life.

OFF-SCREEN ROMANCE

You should ask Surekha. She thinks that I am loving - all-giving and all-encompassing - rather than romantic.

FAMILY BOND

I cannot take much credit for the Konidela clan coming together and celebrating, like the recent *Sankranthi* celebrations in our Bengaluru farmhouse. Surekha is the fulcrum around which our family runs. She began planning this mega get-together almost six months ago and coordinated with everyone. She also made everyone work on war footing to get the house renovated in time for the big day.

MEGA FRAME

Yes, it would be a dream come true for me to act in a movie with my son, brothers, nephews and nieces, the entire family! But we want the effort to be worth it and are waiting for the right script to come by. Hopefully in the next two years.

■ MANJU

Top & Stitch

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19th MARCH 2024

at

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COCKTAIL BAR & KITCHEN

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11am – 8pm

Actress **Priya Mani** on her career graph, and second OTT movie outing *Bhamakalapam 2* currently streaming on Aha

"OTT is a win-win for actors and audience"

If variety is the spice of life, south actor Priya Mani has tons of it in her cinematic career of 20 years. Be it her National-Award winning role as a gang rape victim in *Paruthiveeran,* playing NTR's heroine in SS Rajamouli's blockbuster *Yamadonga*, or the girl who was part of Shah Rukh Khan's all-girl squad in the pan-India hit *Jawan*, Priyamani has tasted success in her unconventional choices.

She started as a ramp walk model in Bengaluru and caught the attention of south directors. She debuted in Telugu with *Evarey Athagadu* in 2003 and then there was no looking back. This year, she is excited about playing Anupama again in Aha's OTT movie sequel *Bhamakalapam 2* which hit the screens in February.

WOW! chats her up amidst her movie promotions.

ABOUT *BHAMAKALAPAM 2*

Bhamakalapam released in 2022 and garnered over four million views. The sequel, directed by Abhimanyu Tadimeti, features Priya as Anupama, an innocent-looking housewife and an enthusiastic YouTuber who embarks on a thrilling heist adventure.

WHAT'S ON THE PLATTER?

Article 370 alongside Yami Gautam in Hindi, *Neru* with Mohanlal in Malayalam and *Maidan* with Ajay Devgan in Hindi during Eid, in April.

HAS THE *JAWAN* EFFECT PUT YOUR CAREER IN THE NEXT GEAR?

Well, acting in a pan-Indian movie alongside stars like Shah Rukh Khan, Nayanthara and Deepika Padukone has given me visibility and recognition in the nothern belt, where I haven't done much work. But, has it worked for me or given a push to my career? So far, nothing dramatic has happened, but I am still waiting for the role that would catapult me to another level. Fingers crossed.

THE OTT BANDWIDTH

Across the world, OTT has truly given actors a better and wider playground. It helps actors reach out to audiences from anywhere in the world. Not just us, but even the audience gets to access new content in new languages, thus giving them a wider choice, and making it a win-win for both. As an actor, I am happy to have found my groove in OTT also.

ARE YOU AMBITIOUS AND WHAT IS YOUR WISHLIST AS AN ACTOR?

I like to do 'good work' - work that I define as good, according to my standards and benchmarks. I am prepared to wait and not be desperate to be seen everywhere. I would be even happy to take a two-year break waiting for that one role. I've done it before, and I'm okay doing it again.

ANY ASPIRATIONS FOR A ROLE LIKE SHEFALI SHAH'S IN *DELHI CRIME*?

It doesn't really matter if I aspire for a challenging role like Shefali's in *Delhi Crime*. It's the filmmakers and casting directors who need to be able to map my talent with the role, right? I like to keep it realistic and don't indulge in pipe dreams. For now, I am living the life of an actor, and there's nothing more on the screen that I aspire for. ■ MANJU

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As intimate as a coffee nook can get

Neighborhood Café

If you find comfort in the thought of strolling into a café, wanting to connect with people (and pets) over specialty coffee, then **Kôhé - the Koffee** shop might just be the place for you.

Kôhé (urdu for 'pinnacle') opened last September by partners Vyshnavi Reddy, Shwetha Reddy and Chetan Reddy. The 700-square-feet coffee place is located in Jubilee Hills has interesting elements such as upcycled furniture to lounge, a guitar to jam with board games, soothing music that changes according to seasons.

The café thrives thanks to its founders' passion for fostering camaraderie among customers, centered around a sustainability theme. This includes their aesthetically pleasing indoor and outdoor seating areas to the preparation of their signature beverages and other delectables.

Kôhé sources their coffee beans from the company Bean Rove of the Kalledevarapura estate in Karnataka which roasts their beans specially for the café. Vyshnavi shares, "The whole idea of moving towards specialty coffee is to work directly with planters/estate owners."

We started our culinary journey with *OrangEspresso*, Kohe's newest addition made of freshly squeezed orange juice with a shot of espresso; *Dirty Matcha*, made of a shot of espresso and milk; a regular Cappuccino, freshly brewed espresso with frothy milk and lovely latte art; and the heavenly *Cacau Shot*, a thick farm to table cacao from East Godavari with no additives and very little milk served in a small paper cup resembling a shot glass.

To go with all the coffee, we were served other eats including *Strawberry Cacau Chia Pudding*, which is soaked overnight in different variations of milk and served with nuts, granola, almond butter and fresh strawberries; *Granola with Yogurt*, which features homemade granola and Greek yogurt; and finally, the *Almond Butter Toast*, made with sourdough bread topped with homemade almond butter and fresh strawberries. Despite similar ingredients, each one of them was unique and different from the next with the Almond Butter Toast being our favorite.

WOW! Recommends Cacau Shot

Vyshnavi and Shwetha are open for more collaborations and keen to expand to more neighborhoods. "We are hoping to open up in neighborhoods which need a coffee shop, starting from Banjara Hills to Kokapet," they say. ■ IPSHITA

Coffee for two: Rs 400 onwards

Road No.70, Jubilee Hills
Tel: *89770 55347*
Timings: *7:30 am to 9 pm*

Hyderabad's Indo-Chinese palate is ready for more!

PAN-ASIAN CRAVINGS

Mings Court, one of the earliest Indo-Chinese restaurants in the upscale Banjara Hills, was recently rebranded as **Mings and Mee** with a new Pan-Asian menu. Keeping up with the tastes of Hyderabad, the menu now offers a Sushi station, a range of new mocktails, food and fancy desserts.

AMBIENCE

Comfortable and spacious, the ambience is tastefully uncluttered and minimalist. The opulence is reserved for the private dining area at one end of the restaurant. An alcove seating with a round table offers privacy for a medium-sized group while still being in the central part of the dining space.

FOOD

We started off with *Cottage Cheese Holy Basil, Asian style Spring Rolls, Veg Tempura Roll* in veg and *Shanghai Chicken*, *Mings Hot Chongqing Chicken*, *Chicken Katsu Roll*, and an assortment of *Dim Sums* in non-veg. If you enjoy a hit of heat on your tongue, we highly recommend the *Cottage Cheese Holy Basil* and the *Mings Chongqing Chicken*; the former is liberally spiked with dried whole red chilies and the latter with Sichuan pepper. We cooled off the tingle from the Sichuan pepper with a few well-presented mocktails from the beverage section.

In the main course, we tried the *Dan Dan Noodles*, presented in the pull-up cake style that was trending a while back. Noodles encased in a transparent tube topped with a spicy sauce. The *Nasi Kerabu*, a Malaysian rice dish of sticky blue rice, served with fish crackers, boiled eggs, pan fried chicken and a salad, also stood out for its beautiful presentation and different flavors. The *Thai curry* was very well made and is highly recommended.

SWEET TOOTH

We tried the *Basque cheesecake*, *Coconut Matcha Bliss* and *Bonsai Bliss*. The cheesecake was creamy perfection with a great crumb texture. The latter two were presented with a bit of drama to elevate the experience. The second dessert - a lighter version of the Panacotta, lightly sweetened and beautifully presented - is perfect for times when you are too stuffed, yet want to end on a sweet note. The Bonsai Bliss is an edible chocolate tree to garner eyeballs at the table. ■ SUPRIYA

Meal for two: Rs 1,800

2nd Floor, Ohris Banjara, Rd. No.12
Banjara Hills
Tel: *70329 02489*
Timings: *12 pm – 11.30 pm*

WOW! Recommends Dan Dan Noodles

HOMECHEF

Rajeswari *mami* rustles up homestyle snacks with an authentic South Indian touch

Madras Magic

About 15 years ago, Rajeswari Ramesh, a resident of Malkajgiri started cooking for the elderly in her apartment, especially for those who could not cook for themselves. They were floored by the fact that she kept in mind their spice tolerance and health needs. During her free time, she started making *kai murrukkus* (different from the machine made variant) and *thattai (chakkalu)* which flew off the shelves before the orders were placed. In a year, she was christened the official chef of the area and neighbors started commissioning food orders to her.

A Tamilian settled in Telangana, Rajeswari is the quintessential *Mami* who rustles up delicious vegetarian delicacies. Word about her simple homestyle food spread and she started getting catering orders for weddings. Now she not only caters for weddings but also for small events (as low as 15 people) and special bulk snack orders during festivals such as *Pongal* and *Deepawali*.

"Now my husband Ramesh has also joined me, as we are doing it on a larger scale for parties and weddings. People love my South Indian, Marashtrian and *paneer* varieties. When I am not catering for events, I take up orders for sweets and savories across Hyderabad," she says. *Mami* is famous for her *laddoo* varieties such as *besan, boondi, rava* and *Mysore Pak*. The 52-year-old home chef also specializes in *podis* and pickles. Try out her *idli podi* and you will be transported to your grandmom's home. ■ MANJU

Prices: Kai Murukku, Mullu Murukku and Thattai: Rs 300/half kg; Badushah: Rs 250 /half kg. Food catering for 15 people also available

RK-129, II Cross, RK Nagar, II Street, Malkajgiri
***Tel:** 92461 91788*
***Timings:** 11 am to 6 pm; Bulk orders need to be placed a day in advance. Free delivery within 2 km radius in Malkajgiri*

A charming new café to enjoy an evening with friends

Easy Food for Eventful Evenings

The Beanery Café sits quietly nestled amidst a row of other eateries on the bustling streets of Film Nagar. Located on the first floor, the two-month-old nook has a chic aesthetic and is covered in hues of green, cream and rust brown. The café's interior is further accentuated by the golden daylight seeping in through large floor-to-ceiling glass windows overlooking the city.

As soon as we entered, friendly staff welcomed us in and showed us to a table not too far away from the dessert counter and a small stage for evening entertainment. The weekdays see musicians like Balia Lima and Illana taking on karaoke nights, and the weekends have sets by Telugu stand-up comedians like Anudeep Katikala.

With help from the manager, Robin Balmiki, we ordered ourselves some of the best The Beanery Café has to offer. It includes beverages, a *Cappuccino* and the yummy *Strawberry Milkshake*. From the starters and mains we chose *Tbc Special Chicken* and *Paneer Pop Bombs*; a filling sandwich in *Pesto Panini with Fresh Mozzarella and Tomato*; a heavy dish in *Chicken Lasagna*. For dessert we had a colorful collection of *French Macaroons* alongside the delightfully squishy *Mix Berry Bomb*.

We enjoyed every dish served, but the highlights for us remain the *Tbc Special Chicken*, which includes a blend of

chicken with za'atar spice, marinated with sun-dried hummus; the *Pesto Panini with Fresh Mozzarella and Tomato*, made with pesto marinated mozzarella, tomatoes and panini bread; and finally, the *Mix Berry Bomb,* made with blueberry and mixed berry compote and white chocolate mousse. The fun dessert was the perfect way to end our lunch. ■ IPSHITA

Meal for two: Rs 600

1st floor, Anand Film Square, Film Nagar, Road No. 82, Jubilee Hills
***Tel:** 89770 14276*
***Timings:** 9 am to 11:30 pm*

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The Cascade
Pan Asian Kitchen

 # Ratna Arcade First Floor, Kompally, Secunderabad, Telangana 500 014 Phone: 081100 11110

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THE CASCADE – A PLACE WHERE EVERY BITE TELLS A STORY

63 Degrees – This new restaurant is worth a shot for buffet lovers on the lookout for a new joint that leaves them spoilt for choice

FEAST ON THIS!

Named after the optimal temperature at which seafood is cooked on a grill, **63 Degrees** is a multi-cuisine buffet restaurant with seafood as its highlight. Opened in December, the restaurant boasts 8,000 square feet space, seating 230, with Bali-inspired decor. From the statue of lord Garuda and elephant decorations to the wooden furniture and the terracotta hues surrounding the place, the aesthetic is unmistakably singular.

The place was crowded when we entered for lunch on a Wednesday, not only because it is one of the days for corporate lunches, but it also happened to be Valentine's Day. We waded through the crowd to get to our table situated against the view of the city. We were lucky to sit next to where guitarist and vocalist Shiv Menon of the multilingual band *Aikyam* performed romantic numbers keeping with the theme of the day.

Like any buffet, we began with appetizers. For meat lovers, the selection recommended by working partner, Dinesh K. includes *Gongura Prawns*, *Ajwain Fish Tikka*, *Italian Chicken*, *Murgh Tikka* and *Mutton Ghee Roast*. The vegetarains can go for a platter which included *Malai Paneer*, *Chilli Baby Corn*, *Sweet Chilly Paneer*, *Mini Fryums*, *Crispy Corn* and two pieces of *Veg. Kulfi* on sticks and made of paneer, carrots and beans and coated with *chivda*. Our favorite from the long line-up would certainly be the hot Sweet Chilli *Paneer.*

Next, we had some mains which included popular *Crab Masala, Grilled Fish* and the *Nellore Chapla Pullusu* to go with the fast-moving dish, *Pot Biryani*. Then there are vegetarian options such as *Veg Kolhapuri*, *Dum Biryani*, *Burnt Garlic Fried Rice*, *Paneer Manchurian* and *Mini Fryums*. The standout for us was the *masala*-infused Veg *Kolhapuri* gravy, a must try if you are a vegetarian.

Finally, we ended our feast with a dessert platter made up of creamy *Panna Cotta*, *Gulab Jamun*, *Red Velvet Cup Cake*, *Strawberry Mousse*, *Milk Almond Pastry*, *Chocolate Truffle* and lastly but most importantly the unique chocolate fountain-dipped *Waffle Sticks*. "Each

WOW! Recommends
Chocolate fountain-dipped Waffle Sticks

Sunday afternoon, 600 to 700 waffle sticks are consumed. People love dipping it into the chocolate fountain and they add it to the ice cream as well," shared Dinesh about the highly popular dessert.

■ IPSHITA

Meal for two: Rs 2,000

2nd Floor, Plot No: 25, Mindspace Rd, Gachibowli
Tel: *97333 86333, 96444 15551*
Timings: *12 pm to 4 pm, 7 pm to 11 pm*

NON-VEG MAINS PLATTER

WOW! Recommends Mushroom Adobo

WOW DISCOVERS!

This cloud kitchen makes delish and authentic Pan-Asian

Pan-Asian with a Difference

Whether you are a busy professional in the mood for Chinese takeaway; or a bunch of geeks hosting your own Thai food Thursday a la *The Big Bang Theory*, **Shitori** gives you options aplenty.

A Pan-Asian cloud kitchen brand, Shitori was started by entrepreneur Hema Bhanupriya in September last year. She says, "Shitori focuses on serving food that doesn't burn your pocket without compromising on the quality. Every dish is MSG and enhancer-free." The brand gets its name from a Japanese dessert made with pureed sweet potato served with caramelized sugar.

We tried several dimsums – all in different colors – with the green and pink ones derived from spinach and beetroot. The *Pepper Mushroom Dimsum* was our favorite. Among the non-veg ones, the *Miso Prawn* and the *Shrimp and Broccoli* ones were the best. Though the menu includes Korean and Japanese cuisine, it is Chinese dishes that are the most frequently ordered.

Their stir-fries and main course gravy-based dishes are not to be missed. Whether it is the *Bean and Bamboo Shoot, Spinach and Shrimp, Broccoli and Chestnut* or the perennial favorite – the *Thai Green Curry* – they all make a make.

And any kitchen that gets their *Pad Thai* right, wins our vote. Which Shitori does – the *Veg Pad Thai* we tried was loaded with vegetables and with precise blend of sweet and tangy. The *Basil Fried Rice* was on par too. Portion sizes are suitable for two people; dimsums are three pieces only so you may need to order more than a couple.

Technically, a cloud kitchen you can order from on food apps, Shitori has a takeaway counter as well and are open to organizing curated and other events. ■ MINAL

Meal for two: Rs 700

First Floor, Platinum Heights, 100 Feet Road, Ayyappa Society, Madhapur
Tel: *89770 13819*
Timings: *11 am to 11 pm*
Also available on Swiggy and Zomato

Beat the heat with some offbeat icy and creamy treats

SUMMER SAVIOURS

As the sun blazes over the city, a different kind of heat grips Hyerabadis. Luckily, there are a variety of sweet and frosty offerings - from handcrafted popsicles to creamy cones and icy sundaes - to cool you down.

HOUSE OF POPS

An ice cream brand since 2016, House of Pops has handcrafted popsicles with 100 percent natural fruits. While they have about 12/14 flavors across the year, summer is all about *Mangoficent*, a yellow, slurpy popsicle made of Alphonso Mango (Rs 109 plus taxes) with no added colors or preservatives. The *Rainbow Pack* (Rs 749 plus taxes), which gives one popsicle of each flavors in an assorted pack, is a great option when you have friends over. Currently, they accept online orders through their phone number.

Price: *Starts Rs 100 onwards*
Timings: *11 am to 9 pm*
Tel: *84660 18279*

BEYNIAZ EDULJI

Beyniaz Edulji's organic ice creams are like a best-kept secret that only the Sainikpuri residents seem to know and will fiercely guard. Being passionate about ice creams and a farming aficionado, even the fruits that she uses come from her organic farm which is on the outskirts of the city. Popular with the AFOCHS (Air Force Officers Co-operative Housing Society}, are her seasonal fruit ice creams such as *seetaphal*, mango and jackfruit. She does not make these ice creams on a commercial basis, nor is there a branding/labeling, but as a small, boutique offering. She posts the specials of the day or the week in the housing society WhatsApp group and those interested visit her home or send their drivers to pick it up personally. If you don't have access to that group, befriend someone who does! Beyniaz's legendary ice creams are worth new friendships!

Price: *Rs 300 (half a kilo of fruit ice cream)*
Timings: *11 am to 6 pm*
Tel: *98491 73446*

PESHAWAR ICE CREAM CENTRE

This little nook on the Masab-Tank-Lakdikapul road barely has any parking, but their *malai* series, replicas of the famous strawberry and cream offerings of Mahabaleshwar, are popular in the city. Made locally, these are rich in cream and fresh fruit - from mango to strawberry. Their best-selling one is called *Shahtoot Malai* (Mulberry Cream). Must try variants in summer are their mango, watermelon and dragon fruit. ■ MANJU

Price: *Rs 129 per bowl*
Timings: *11 am to 9 pm*
Tel: *79474 16503*

Prezmo, India's first pretzel cafe, lines up an array of pretzels alongside artisanal coffees for the foodies

Pretty, pretzels and pets

Prezmo, short for pretzels and more, is touted to be India's first pretzel cafe. Hyderabadis may have tasted a pretzel - a twisted knot or loop of bread with a golden-brown crust, sprinkled with salt or sugar crystals on the top - on overseas flights as a sundowner snack. However, Prezmo goes all out to bake an entire range of fresh soft pretzels with melt-in-your-mouth textures in their cafe on Golden Mile Road, Kokapet. By the way, they are pet-friendly too!

GREEN AND GORGEOUS

This charming café, boasting both indoor and outdoor seating across its ground and first floor, exudes a tropical ambience, accentuated by lush ornamental plants sporting large, verdant leaves. Choose a table that overlooks the slow-moving Kokapet traffic.

TWISTY TASTE

Techies and friends Vineeth Musthyala and Naveen Chinthapalli dreamt of starting a unique 'cafe with a twist' in Hyderabad and their love for this versatile snack made them start the 110-seater cafe in January. If you love churros or doughnuts, chances are you will love pretzels. Prezmo has a separate menu book dedicated to the variants they offer.

PRETTY PRETZELS

While the cafe has all the usual suspects - pizzas, pasta, bagels, croissants, artisanal coffees and mocktails, we started with their *Sweet and Cinnamon* that came as a single, big pretzel - like an aesthetic heart on a plate - with a sweet *Mascarpone Cream Cheese Dip*. Perhaps it was the bake, the sugar crystals or our hunger, we wolfed it down with gusto and loved it. They have five other variants of pretzels including *Oreo Delight* and *Biscoff Bliss* and six types of dips.

Next up was the savory one called *Jalapeno with Cheese* and the *Chicken Pepperoni*, both of which were soft, salty and flavorful. The *Kasundi Mustard Dip* added the right amount of spice to it, without overpowering its original taste. Frankly, two pretzels already made us feel satiated. Among the other fare, *Prezmo Signature Wings* stood out, with the right amount of spice and melted butter and light sweetness.

BREWTIFUL MOMENTS

The aroma from the live brew station, making artisanal coffees right at the entrance, tempted us to add a brew to our wish list that day. The coffee menu is exhaustive and goes well with the pretzels and other snacks. So, we first tried the *Bumblebee Coffee* with orange zest and it was perfectly brewed. Then *Cranberry Brew* which was soothing, without being overly sweet or bitter, ideal for the summery days ahead.

WOW! Recommends Sweet and Cinnamon

Their bakery section also has many indulgences such as *Tiramisu Jars* and *Biscoff Cheesecakes*. For now, the pretzels have our hearts. ■ MANJU

Meal for two: Rs 1,500

Ground Floor, Raichandani Square, Golden Mile Road, Kokapet
***Timings:** 11:30 am to 10:30 pm*
***Tel:** 90630 72901*

FUN FACT
Legend has it that a baker in the 1600s shaped them to resemble arms crossed in prayer.

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STREET FOOD

WOW! puts together a list of *haleem* places, with more taste and less hype

HAUNTS FOR *HALEEM*

HYDERABADIS TURN UP WITH STEEL BOXES TO TAKE HOME HALEEM BEING SOLD AT HOTEL NAYAAB IN THE 90S

The Holy month of *Ramzan* is here (begins March 10) and it is time to go *haleem* hunting again. Like Charminar and *biryani*, *haleem* is something that Hyderabad is known for. Made from broken wheat, meat, spices and *ghee* in a time-consuming process, *haleem* is a legacy of Hyderabad's close connection with the Middle-Eastern countries. It is a complete food that helps regain strength after long hours of fasting during *Ramzan*. While the well-known Hyderabadi places like Pista House, Shadab, Café 555, Green Park and Shah Ghouse are popular destinations, on the other side of the spectrum are a few thousand outlets that come up during *Ramzan* to cater to the huge demand for this dish. Here we look at some very special *haleem* places from various parts of the city that have carved out a niche for themselves and can be explored for a different experience this summer.

The prices (per bowl) are indicative and may change based on the cost of the mutton, chicken, *ghee* and other ingredients.

1. ***Hotel Nayaab***, Chatta Bazar: A traditional destination for Hyderabadi food, it has perhaps the best local breakfast that you get in the city. They have been preparing the Hyderabadi version of *haleem* for the last 30 years, and it is popular among the residents of the old city. Their *haleem* is known for its fine texture, spice laden taste and abundant meat.

   Nayapool Road
   Tel: *040 2457 7656*
   Price: *Starts at Rs 250 onwards*

2. ***Pakwaan Grand***, Gachibowli: *Mashhad Haleem* is the signature dish of Pakwaan Grand. It draws its inspiration from Mashhad city in Iran. A different recipe with chunky mutton pieces, cream, dry fruits, and even *Chicken 65* make this variant a top choice for many food lovers, especially in the Cyberabad area. They also make the usual *Mutton Haleem* and *Irani Chicken*.

   Lumbini Avenue, Old Mumbai Highway
   Tel: *092073 44144*
   Price: *Starts at Rs 250 onwards*

3. ***Grill 9***, Karkhana: Grill 9 trends for its *Bahubali Haleem*, a version it launched in 2021. The haleem is topped with Chicken *Kabab*, *Patthar ka Gosht*, and bone marrow, and a plate can cater to up to four people. For the last decade they have been serving *Supreme Haleem* and *Irani Haleem*.

   Opp Pulla Reddy Sweets,
   Tel: *040 49532486*
   Price: *Starts Rs 250 onwards, chicken or other variants: Rs 170 onwards*

4. ***Subhan Bakery,*** Nampally: The prominent outlet known for their biscuits and *Dum Ka Roa*t have started offering *haleem* since last year. Their product has really turned out to be a hit with food lovers, immediately after its launch. The *haleem* here is extremely flavourful with a mild taste. Good quantity of meat and dry fruits make the item even more special.

Bazar Ghat, Mallepally
Tel: *040 23317571*
Price: *Rs 250 onwards*

5. ***Mandar,*** Yousuf Tekdi: The *haleem* here is home-style with less spices, different from the usual fare you get in the city. They maintain a good wheat-meat ratio ensuring that the dish is protein rich. Abundant *ghee* with fried onions, eggs and cashew nuts further enriches the dish. It is a crowd favorite due to its balanced flavors and texture.

Yousuf Tekdi Complex, Toli Chowki
Tel: *040 23562274*
Price: *Rs 250 onwards, other variants Rs 180-200*

6. ***Saleem Ki Haleem,*** Shantinagar: This *haleem* has really been the breakout star in the last three years. Promoted by actor Mast Ali, well-known as Saleem Pheku the character he has played, the *haleem* is made using '*potla*' meat, which gives a brownish color to the dish. Their customers vouch for its authentic taste.

Opp Mahavir Hospital, Masab Tank
Tel: *77996 66637*
Price: *Rs 250 onwards*

7. ***Biryaniwalla & Co,*** Banjara Hills: Replete with dry fruits, boiled egg and chunks of mutton, the *haleem* of Biryaniwalla is a recent favorite. The balance in flavors and home like taste are instrumental in this *haleem* having a lot of fan following. Apart from the *haleem*, their *biryani* deserves a mention, a must try!

Besides TV9 Office,
Tel: *040 66668111*
Price: *Rs 250 onwards*

8. ***Hotel Rumaan,*** Charminar and Tolichowki: Rumaan has multiple branches and is one of the most favored destinations for its *haleem*. The price here is more reasonable than other places, as you have a choice of different meats. The reason people in the old city prefer this *haleem* is its consistency. It has a strong meaty taste with not too much of *ghee*.

MCH Colony, Toli Chowki,
Tel: *83099 62553;*
Price: *Rs 170 onwards for non-mutton variants*

Over the last few years few of the home chefs and cloud kitchens have started delivering some excellent *haleem* at our doorsteps. ***Mom's Homemade Food***, ***Anjum's Kitchen*** and ***SB Haleem*** are some of the trusted brands in this space. The prices are at par with other *haleem* outlets, but the quality and texture of home chefs are superior.

- ***Mom's Homemade Food, Al Hasnath Colony, Toli Chowki Tel: 85000 61658. Price: Starts at Rs 250 onwards. Delivery fee depends on the order***

- ***Anjum's Kitchen, Brindavan Colony, Toli Chowki Tel: 99082 43017; Delivery fee applicable but may be waived off depending on the order size***

- ***SB Haleem, Daulat Gulshan Colony, Surya Nagar Tel: 98856 07864. Price: Starts at Rs 250 onwards. Delivery fee depends on the order size*** ■ SABYASACHI

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WOW! visits Hyderabad's busy streets to see what they have in store for the season

Summer Shopping!

Summer is here! Even though it's hot, yet we find ourselves taking to the streets alongside a clamoring crowd of shoppers, vendors and hagglers, sweaty yet all ready to shop till you drop.

As the sun shone down on us, we decided to explore some of the most packed shopping streets of the city, including Secunderabad's famous *General Bazaar*, *Ameerpet's* shopping haven found beneath the metro-line, and Abids' spirited *Sunday market*.

CLOTHES

On our way to General Bazaar, we chanced upon a line of street shops gearing up for the summer at Secunderabad's Park Lane area. Their display included denim shorts, plaid shirts and tank tops in varied hues. We even found ones featuring Telugu blockbuster movies like *RRR*. Meanwhile in General Bazaar, we came across a more feminine line-up including *dupattas* made of cotton, chiffon and organza; cotton tops with lace work; knitted crop tops; denim shorts and sleeveless jackets; pista green rayon co-ord sets and more, all starting from Rs 300 onwards.

At Ameerpet, located beneath the metro station, we saw *hakoba* cotton short tops and a colorful line-up of *kurtis*. There were beautiful floor length cotton and denim dresses with jackets and matching sling bags, all upwards of Rs 200. While at Abids, street vendor Mr. Mohammed Salim was kind enough to guide us through everything that is sold at the Sunday clothes market, which includes a vibrant collection of shorts, crop tops, denim pants, jackets and t-shirts that start from Rs 100. "Vendors ask for Rs 150 but ultimately settle for Rs 100," he shares, shining a light on what each Sunday looks like.

FOOTWEAR

Located near Patny, you'll find a row of street shops selling footwear designs sourced from Patiala, Jaipur and Kolhapur. There are products for both men and women ranging from Kolhapuri sandals; Patiala *mojris* which incorporate mirror-work, stone-work and *ghungroos;* pastel-colored *juttis* and more starting from Rs 250 onwards for adults and Rs 200 onwards for children.

For something simpler, check out the sandals and *juttis* sold at General Bazaar. You can also get a wide range of colorful flip flops at the Ameerpet shopping carts, costing upwards of Rs 300 that could do the trick.

JEWELRY AND OTHER ACCESSORIES

If you walk through MG road, it is difficult to miss this seemingly popular street cart decorated with Rajasthani jewelry. With a price tag of Rs 180 onwards, these elegant pieces are made for the most part from oxidized metal. The products range from necklaces, nose rings, bangles, *jhumkas*, bracelets, chokers and more. It has been without a doubt our favorite find.

Ameerpet market also has other accessories like multi-colored shades and wristwatches in abundance. At General Bazaar you will find a wide range of classic jute bags, adorable ribbons, hair clips, colorful sets of caps and hats for adults and children alike, starting at Rs 50. ■ IPSHITA

Bengaluru's **Mysore Saree Udyog** opens doors in Hyderabad with the entire spectrum from sarees to lehengas, fabrics and ready-to-wear range

Saree universe is here!

Bengaluru's iconic saree brand **Mysore Saree Udyog,** a saree universe in itself, has finally arrived in Hyderabad with the opening of their store in Jubilee Hills. The brand was named among the world's top 10 shopping destinations by *Vanity Fair,* Germany.

Spread across 15,000 square feet on four levels, the store dedicates a floor each for pure silk sarees, lehengas (with a focus on bridalwear), fabrics, and ready-to-wear Indian ethnic outfits catering to every occasion. We checked out all the floors and wondered if there were about 10,000 sarees under one roof and the salesperson corrected us, saying, "More than 25,000 sarees." We were particularly impressed by a lightweight '*pure Mysore silk patta chitra saree*' with hand-painted work that was on display.

SAREE SPECTRUM

The saree range encompasses the entire spectrum - from the traditional *Kanjeevarams*, *Jamdanis* and *Banarasis* to the modern *lycras* and *crepes*. However, it's their silks that stand out. We were told that every fabric available at the store can be authenticated through on-site real-zari testing and Silk Mark certifications, affirming the true value of the offerings. They have an equally exhaustive range of readymade blouses in edgy fashion to be picked off the racks, with over 500 options of dress materials for stitching *kurtis*. Fashion of the season: Monochrome organza full puff sleeve blouses.

SAREE LEGENDS

Established in 1982 by Kamlesh Talera and Dinesh Talera, the 40-year-old brand which has a presence in the U.S. and other international markets is also into preserving India's textile culture. MSU has the Registry of Sarees, a research center repository and museum that houses over 800 exhibits, safeguarding historical textile artifacts dating back 300 years. They also engage with 3,000 artisans across the country for their authentic ethnic weaves. ■ MANJU

Price: *Sarees begin at Rs 400 up to Rs 3,00,000*

Road No. 36, Near Peddamma Gudi Metro Station, Jubilee Hills
Timings: *11 am to 9 pm*

WOW! Recommends:
Chocolate brown bridal brocade lehenga (Rs 1,25,330)

India's first multi-designer house of jewelry that is couture-inspired and consciously made

Think Beyond Gold

Aulerth is a semi-precious, sustainable jewelry brand that opened its doors to Hyderabad this January. It has collaborated with leading couturiers like Ekaya Banaras, Suneet Varma, JJ Valaya, Shivan & Narresh and Tribe Amrapali.

Founder and CEO Vivek Ramabhadran says that the store showcases jewelry made of base metals which are recycled after industrial use and stones that carry minimal to zero mining footprint.

The jewelry includes necklaces, earrings, headwear, and nose rings. JJ Valaya's collection is a fusion between the old and the new, similarly the delicate Ekaya Banaras showcases traditional work juxtaposed with geometric shapes. Shivan & Narresh are the most fashion forward of them all, while with Suneet Varma and Tribe Amrapali we see a more Mughal and heritage-inspired traditional jewelry form.

The colors of the jewelry pieces vary from a standard red and green to a colorful pastel palette. The piece that we could not take our eyes off was Tribe Amrapali's colorful *Valley of Flowers* choker that doubles as two varied bracelets.

Interestingly "The Aulerth Loop" is a circular model that enables you to exchange, restore and rent jewelry for a short-term. ■ IPSHITA

Price Range: *Rs 4,000 onwards*

Ground floor, The Hill Top @7, Rd Number 7, Banjara Hills
Tel: *83411 80291*
Timings: *11 am to 8 pm*

WOW! Recommends: Tribe Amrapali's Valley of Flowers Choker & Bracelet

UNTIL NOW HYDERABAD'S ART MARKET WAS RESTRICTED TO A FEW ARTISTS, GALLERIES AND COLLECTORS. HOWEVER, THE CITY HAS BEEN SEEING A SILENT CHANGE IN RECENT YEARS AS BIG GALLERIES NATIONALLY ARE FINDING NEW MARKETS HERE AMONG YOUNG COLLECTORS.

From new gallery launches to city artists being celebrated at national and international levels, the city's art scene never had it so good. WOW! talks to people across the board for their insights and charts the growth of the city's thriving interest in all things art

TEXT: MALLIK THATIPALLI

HYDERABAD: THE EMERGING ART DESTINATION

"This year, like never before, there was a flood of people from Hyderabad at the recently held India Art Fair. Walking in at the Fair, it seemed like all I could hear was people speaking Telugu, which really felt great!" laughs art curator Annapurna Madipadiga.

While denizens of the city of Nawabs share pictures from their exotic vacations and concerts (from *Coldplay* to Taylor Swift), perhaps this is the first year that saw images from art fairs posted with pride on Instagram accounts.

One of the most conspicuous indicators of Hyderabad's burgeoning art scene is the palpable growth of art exhibitions, fairs, and festivals in its art market. The city's galleries and art institutions have witnessed a steady influx of investment and interest by attracting collectors, connoisseurs, and enthusiasts alike. Whether it's avant-garde sculptures, vibrant canvases, or bespoke installations, the city's expanding art scene offers something for every aesthetic inclination. Thus, reflecting a newfound appreciation for artistic endeavor.

We now have galleries from other cities and curators trying to tap into the Hyderabad market. We had the month-long NEWS Art Fest bring some of the legends of the art world to town last month. We now have Payal Kapoor, long-time curator and founder of Arushi Arts in Delhi, will be bringing the second edition of Artix – India's inaugural traveling hotel art fair to Hyderabad with much fanfare. Artix will hold the fair in rooms of a leading hotel in a unique innovation.

Though the city is witnessing a slew of art shows and fairs, the larger question looms – Is art an idea whose time has finally come in Hyderabad?

Anju Poddar, a long-time collector and well-known figure in the art scene, affirms the sentiment and adds, "Hyderabad is the new Singapore and home to a lot of High Net-worth Individuals (HNIs). There is a major shift that is happening. More people are interested in buying art and each day I receive a couple of calls regarding emerging artists. It is an exciting time, with several artists being shown at the recent India Art Fair, and galleries in Delhi/Mumbai showing interest in local artists."

A CREATIVE HUB

For long, the city was known for its iconic artists and figures including Jagdish Mittal, Laxma Goud, Thotha Vaikuntam and the late Surya Prakash. But the last decade has seen an emergence of younger artists who are gently moving away from traditional tropes. They are dabbling into new genres, experimenting and creating a name for themselves.

Rekha Lahoti of Kalakriti Gallery says, "There is a segment of bold young artists that is not afraid of trying new styles. We also see a new pool of buyers – youngsters who are keen on starting their own collections, which is always an encouraging sign."

With three floors and over 2,500 artworks, Kalakriti is one of the largest galleries in town. It has been at the forefront of creating interest in art among city people with its functional art or initiatives like the Krishnakriti festival. Their new gallery is but a barometer of the greater interest in art.

Bhargavi Gundala, who runs Dhi Artspace and has opened a second gallery in Madhapur, agrees with the sentiment of

increasing art awareness in the city. She states, "Hyderabad art market till a few years ago was just about buying what your neighbor was buying! Apart from a handful of artists no one even knew others. But today, I have young couples asking about Anish Kapoor! The younger generation is clued in, are well-travelled and are looking at contemporary artists which is simply fabulous!"

One look at the art scene tells us a lot about what is unfolding. The recently held NEWS art fest was an eye opener in which over 250 artists took part, something unprecedented so far. Senior artists like Anjolie Ela Menon, Prabhakar Kolte, V Ramesh, Shobha Broota and Vinod Sharma along with several artists from Hyderabad, new and emerging were included in the show winning the curators much acclaim.

"More people are interested in buying art and each day I receive a couple of calls regarding emerging artists. It is an exciting time, with several artists being shown at the recent India Art Fair, and galleries in Delhi/ Mumbai showing interest in local artists."
– Anju Poddar, art collector

Moreover, the ascent of local artists onto the national stage has been a defining characteristic of Hyderabad's artistic renaissance. Many artists from the city are now gaining recognition and acclaim on a broader scale, permeating the national consciousness with their distinctive voices and perspectives. Through their diverse oeuvre, these artists are challenging conventional narratives and pushing the boundaries of artistic expression, contributing to a rich tapestry of cultural discourse that transcends geographical boundaries.

Annapurna adds, "Look at the young artists from the city who are doing well. T.Venkanna is represented by Gallery Maskara, Ravi Chunchula by Champa Tree and Laxman Kottur by Sakshi Art Gallery. Today, artists from Hyderabad are really breaking barriers and are being talked about everywhere."

REKHA LAHOTI WITH ACTOR RANBIR KAPOOR AT THE INDIA ART FAIR

Taking part in the art camp, veteran artist Shobha Broota exclaims, "There was so much to take in! And there is an excitement here that was not seen previously. For me, the most interesting aspect was that the youngsters are dabbling in different genres which is always an encouraging sight."

The emergence of platforms and initiatives dedicated to promoting local talent has played a pivotal role in nurturing Hyderabad's art ecosystem. From artist residencies to collaborative projects, these endeavors have provided artists with the resources and visibility needed to amplify their voices and showcase their creativity on a national stage.

Senior artist V Ramesh adds, "A city of Hyderabad's size can accommodate a lot more artists and diverse styles. Today what is 'pretty and beautiful' sells, while that is the case almost everywhere, Hyderabad needs a little more cerebral infusion amongst its buyers. Many artists are easy-going. We need more young artists to question the status quo to make the scene more exciting."

Previously overshadowed by more established art capitals (Delhi, Mumbai and Baroda), the city's cultural landscape has undergone a transformative evolution. This has ignited a renaissance that has garnered much attention, both nationally and internationally. From traditional forms to contemporary innovations, art in Hyderabad is experiencing a dynamic revival, fuelling discussions about its emergence as a significant player in the national art arena.

"There is a segment of bold young artists that is not afraid of trying new styles. We also see a new pool of buyers – youngsters who are keen on starting their own collections, which is always an encouraging sign."
– Rekha Lahoti, Kalakriti Art Gallery

VRINDAVAN SOLANKI AT THE NEWS ART FEST

ARTIST RAMESH GORJALA WITH HIS INSTALLATION

"The younger generation is clued in, are well–travelled and are looking at contemporary artists which is simply fabulous!"
– Bhargavi Gundala, Dhi Artspace

"Art is not something that can be sold over the counter like gold. It is more like real estate; it takes time to sell. My suggestion is to buy something you would enjoy hanging on your walls."
– Laksmi Nambiar, Shrishti Art Gallery

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

In the 30 years that I have been on the art scene in the city, I have seen Hyderabad grow as an emerging center for art. At one time, the city had a solitary gallery - Surya Gallery, that the artist Surya Prakash ran from literally a cow shed in Srinagar Colony. Artists Laxma Goud, Devraj, Surya Prakash used to work from a small studio near Himayat Nagar. Later they nurtured Thota Vaikuntam who used to teach art at Bal Bhavan in Public Gardens. They remember how they used to cycle to Golconda and paint Deccan's magnificent rocks. As students who graduated from the Art College they had few mentors, and they pretty much supported and encouraged each other. There were of course the great art collectors Jagdish and Kamla Mittal who not only bought the early works of Laxma and Vaikuntam but also encouraged and gave them commissions for *batik*. We have come a long way since then; today these three are among India's Masters, and their work is much sought after.

Their success encouraged graduates of the SN University to focus on their practice; artists like Fawad Tamakanat, Rajeswara Rao, Chari took the baton forward as it were. With Laxma being such a master of the line, most of the artists emerging out of Hyderabad are strong with their drawings. This includes Laxman Aelay who has made a name for himself.

Apart from Goethe Center, which was an early patron of art, there was the Surya Gallery. In fact, Surya can single-handedly be credited with energizing the city's art scene by holding camps and nudging several institutions like LV Prasad Eye Institute, CCMB and Dr Reddy's to build their collections. No wonder then that these institutions have a fine collection of early Vaikuntams and Laxma Gouds.

From the rather slow-paced slumberous art scene of a decade ago, Hyderabad has grown into a vibrant center for contemporary art, with Telangana artists much in demand nationally. Importantly, there is an emerging breed of artists like Priyanka Aelay, Varunika Saraf and Harsha Durrugadda breaking out of the mold of their predecessors to work on pressing concerns of politics or the environment. Not only that, while the gallery scene may not be booming like Mumbai, Kolkata or even Bengaluru, several galleries are showing good work, with a few taking Hyderabad artists to the India Art Fair too, where we hear most of the Hyderabad artists had sold-out shows! ■ RATNA

ART AND INTERIORS

According to a report 'India Market Monitor Q1 2023' released by real estate consulting firm CBRE, Hyderabad saw about 800 percent growth in the luxury residential segment in 2023. Many couples are relying on their interior designers to ensure that art is a part of their interiors which is further fuelling this growth.

Anju Poddar calls it a welcome trend. "Everyone wins, the artists get more business, and the homeowners get art. Many think they have arrived if they have art in their homes. The role of interior designers is key in this as they have the aesthetics and influence and it is the very reason we are seeing so many designers and architects at art shows," she shares.

This trend underscores a shift in perspective among residents, who increasingly view art not merely as decorative embellishments but as integral components in shaping the ambience and character of their living spaces. Not only homes, hospitals including AIG and LV Prasad today boast of art rivalling galleries!

Furthermore, the advent of social media platforms has facilitated the dissemination of design trends and inspirations. As a result, homeowners aspire towards curated lifestyles synonymous with luxury and sophistication. Interior designers leverage these digital channels to showcase their projects, thereby amplifying the visibility of local artists and artisans whose creations resonate with contemporary tastes.

Many still view art as an investment. However, gallery owner Lakshmi Nambiar explains, "Art is not something that can be sold over the counter like gold. It is more like real estate; it takes time to sell. My suggestion is to buy something you would enjoy hanging on your walls. Also, scarcer the artwork, higher is its value."

Art cannot exist in isolation without emerging talent. Hyderabad-based art schools, be it the Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication or Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University (JNAFAU), have consistently upped the game ensuring that the emerging pool of talent is something to watch out for.

Ramesh says, "The only way for youngsters to improve is to expose themselves to better art. You need to be inspired by what's happening around the world, without blatantly copying it. There needs to be more residencies, more patrons backing artists and more cutting-edge art."

Rekha Lahoti agrees, "There is a diverse young pool and these schools are encouraging the upcoming artists to experiment with their work. They are getting great exposure and are not afraid to take risks."

Timing is everything in life. What has really worked for the art scene in Hyderabad is a multitude of factors from the financial growth of the city to the diversity and range of upcoming artists.

Will art be the next big thing from the city after pearls and IT? "It already is!" says Annapurna.

Today, artists from Hyderabad are really breaking barriers and are being talked about everywhere.
– Annapurna Madipadiga, art curator

"Hyderabad has been consistently producing some incredible artists. I attribute this to its art schools, talented teachers and senior artists who are not just mentors for younger artists, but have also created co-working studios. Despite there being an increased conversation around building platforms for artists and art patrons in Hyderabad, there's still a need to make these spaces more accessible to larger audiences. And to produce exhibitions and programmes that expose these audiences to different ways of looking and engaging with diverse practices"

– Artist Faiza Hasan, a Hyderabad-based artist who worked closely with the education initiatives and programmes at the Kochi Biennale Foundation until 2021

"I firmly believe that drawing is the backbone of art, and Hyderabad's artists have always had a strong grip on drawing. Look at Laxma Goud (sir's) hold over multiple mediums or the late Surya Prakash (sir's) art. In that sense, the city has always been home to great artists. That said, yes, whenever I travel out of Hyderabad, I see a renewed interest in the city and its art scene. It is happening because of a multitude of factors – young artists coming into their own, art schools encouraging them to think out of the box and new art collectors mushrooming in the city. All of them have contributed to making the art scene in the city vibrant."

– Artist Priyanka Aelay, a contemporary visual artist who has been showcased at the India Art Fair 2024 and is also part of the New York Art Fair this year

ART CURATOR MANVINDER DAWER WITH THE LEGENDARY ANJOLIE ELA MENON AT THE NEWS ART FEST

"I have mixed feelings about this growth (of the art scene in the city) as we can see a surge in people showing interest in art. But the real question is what kind of art is witnessing patronage. There needs to be more awareness of contemporary art and its practices. One must notice that the real action happens in the cities where there is more participation from the artists and institutions. One such example is Kolkata where the art galleries and art institutions collaborated to change the art scene along with some stellar programming around curation and new practices.

With new galleries opening and artist talks happening more often, I hear everyone is excited about visiting Hyderabad for its art scene. We have recently seen some spectacular shows opening with artists and curators from across India, especially Delhi bringing the much-needed diversity in terms of art language.

There is a heightened sense of exhilaration in the art community as it anticipates what's next in Hyderabad. But we still have a lot of bases to cover. We must nourish and educate our city through more engagement thereby empowering it to be a part of the dialogue. We need more private art institutions with a strong focus on community building for the arts. Institutions akin to the Kolkata Center for Creativity and Hampi Art Labs should come up in the city."

– Artist Harsha Durrugadda is a multidisciplinary artist and recipient of multiple awards such as The Arts Family Emerging Artist Award in 2023 for South Asia and the Rio Tinto Sculpture Award 2017 at Sculpture by the Sea, Australia

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A 30-day gardening guide for busy (and lazy) Hyderabadis this spring

Snap, Seed and Sprout

If barely a month into the New Year you have already given up on finding a soul mate and are looking for a soil mate who will photo sympathize with your life, we have you covered, that too with a green filter. Giving professional help to busy urban (and lazy) working professionals to cultivate a garden – in 30 days and their 8x8 kitchen garden are two green thumbs from the city.

THE GREEN PEOPLE

Located in Kowkoor, **Mireya Garden Centre** started by friends and green thumbs Dundoo Paul Chandrakanth and Meenakshi Sangeetha is spread across 700 sq. yards, displaying various plants, accessories, outdoor furniture and tools. They have a collection that varies from common plant varieties, vegetables, fruits to exotic plants. "Whatever is placed in the store is handpicked and curated from across the country," says the duo which gives us an express tutorial in turning the house clean and green.

SUMMER GREENS

As the city begins to show the first traces of summer, opt for 'plants for all seasons.' In Hyderabad's early summer, new gardeners should prioritize adequate watering to combat rising temperatures. First timers can try out these plants:

Hibiscus: Thrives in full sunlight; ensure well-drained soil, consistent watering (every alternate day), and occasional fertilization for optimal blooming.

Rubber Plant: Prefers indirect light; water when the topsoil feels dry and protect from drafts (keep away from vents and radiators) to maintain its glossy, rubbery leaves.

Mint: Plant in partial shade; keep soil consistently moist and trim regularly to encourage fresh growth for culinary use.

Desert Rose: Requires full sun; water sparingly, allowing the soil to dry out between watering.

Snake Plant: Thrives in low light; allow soil to dry completely before watering, and avoid overwatering to prevent root rot. Avoid planting this if you have pets that may chew on the leaves.

PET-FRIENDLY PLANTS

The dream plant for the laidback urban gardener is the Pilea peperomioides, commonly known as the Chinese money plant due its coin-like round leaves. With varieties such as Jade and Adenium, it adds a pleasant touch to any space, requiring little effort to maintain. These plants are non-toxic to cats and dogs and like a lot of indirect light.

TRENDING PLANTER DESIGNS

Elevate your gardening aesthetics with hanging planters adorned with macrame hangers. There is a rise in the popularity of ladders as people are getting very creative in setting up their green space. Get creative with ladders, metal holders, and witness the steady rise of terracotta planters. Embrace the fusion of functionality and style in your green space. ■ MANJU

Prices: Rs 35 onwards

Venukusa Estate, Kowkoor
***Tel:** 81799 76930*
***Timings:** 9 am to 8 pm*

Pro tips for lucky bamboos and feng shui plants

- Avoid overwatering. Change the water once a week
- Ensure that water doesn't cross the top of the roots
- Pluck away brown leaves if any
- Keep them away from direct sunlight, maintain moist soil
- Provide monthly supplements and fertilizers for overall well-being

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WOW! checked out **Akan**, the most recent party destination to hit Madhapur

MAYAN MAGIC

Named after the Mayan God of intoxication, **Akan** promises a well-stocked bar, artisanal cocktails and mocktails to keep the party flowing. In their quest to offer something unique, founders Nihal Reddy Gurrala and Nikhil Reddy Gurrala decided to move away from the more popular industrial décor to incorporate accents from the mystic Mayan Culture. With each new place vying to stand out from the crowd, Akan does that with their interiors and the enviable view. Several elements from the ancient Mayan civilization have been incorporated in the decor and the menu. The Mayan calendar on the ceiling, handcrafted pots set carefully into the walls, handmade, all natural clay bricks from Benaras pay homage to Mayan culture and add a distinct character.

FOOD

Akan serves a range of cuisines, from authentic South Indian to Continental to North Indian and yes, Biryani as well.

Among the food we tried, the following stood out: *Crispy Shiitake Mushrooms*, *Lotus Stem Galoutis, Mutton Chettinad Roast* in the starters, and *Madras Curry Pasta*, *Pesto Burrata Spinach Pizza, Butter Chicken Nanza* and *Mango Fish Pulusu* among the mains. The *Madras curry pasta*, infused with a specially sourced curry paste from Puducherry, is a delicious example of fusion of flavors by the *Gora Sahibs* who experimented with the curry powder and loved it so much that the powder still has a fan following in England. There is a small portion of the menu dedicated to Indo-Mayan fusion flavors. We also tried a few cocktails from the bar menu. Try the *Mayan Melon Drama* for its mildly fruity notes and pretty presentation.

VIBE

Akan offers a vast space that can accommodate up to 1,500 guests across three levels, including a rooftop, so no fear of feeling crowded. We enjoyed the mesmerizing view of the lake and the twinkling Durgam Cheruvu bridge. You can choose to sit indoors and be one with the pulsating music or sit outdoors and ponder about life over a drink and the view.

An exclusive space on the rooftop with beautiful breezy cabanas and seating areas can be booked for private and corporate events. It has its own bar and a brick-oven to roll out pizzas. Sundowners are bound to be popular with revelers raising a toast to the setting sun and enjoying the changing view of the lake.

■ SUPRIYA

WOW! Recommends: Prawn in Blanket

Night out for two: Rs 3,500, including alcohol

Opposite Durgam Cheruvu,
Software Units Layout, Doctor's Colony,
InOrbit Mall Road, Madhapur
Tel: *96496 52222*
Timings: *12 noon to 11.30 pm*

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A young pub-hopper tells us how and where she unwinds on weekend nights

Where this Bengaluru girl parties in Hyderabad!

Yashaswini K, 26, is a communications professional in a Bengaluru-based agency. She has been in love with Hyderabad since she visited the city as a seventh grader. She shuttles between Bengaluru and Hyderabad, and seems to have the best of both worlds.

After finishing her master's in international relations in Glasgow, the UK-returned, Yashaswini went onto work on several beverages and lifestyle brands (*Myntra* for instance). She carved out a space for herself in PR with a career spanning five years. It was through her work that she re-established her love for the city of *Nizams* when she returned for the *Signature Green Vibes* event, which featured musical performances from the likes of Shilpa Rao, Bhuwin and *When Chai Met Toast*.

Knowing Hyderabad has a special place in her heart, we ask Yashaswini to recommend things to check out and do in the city by sharing some of her favorites. ■ IPSHITA

Q & A

A NIGHTCLUB YOU CAN BE SEEN AT, TYPICALLY ON A SATURDAY NIGHT
Xena Brewery & Kitchen, Jubilee Hills. I start with wine, move to the classic *Long Island Ice Tea* and wrap it up with *Jager bombs*. Of course, I never do that on an empty stomach. I love Xena's *Korean Fried Chicken Bao* and *Butter Chicken Pizza*. For dessert, it would be *Crème Brule*.

FAVORITE BAND
Rooh, a *Sufi* band at Air Live, Gachibowli. They also have great EDM music.

NIGHLIFE FASHION
Two looks. First is a glow-up look in a layered western outfit with fancy cold shoulder and ballerina shoes. I take off the jacket after a session of heavy dancing. Second, if I am in the mood to chill and not dress up, it's a simple cotton dress and sneakers.

CHOICE OF POISON...
Red wine.

WHO DO YOU PARTY WITH...?
My close friends – a diverse group of singers, influencers and techies - who live in and around Madhapur.

AFTER PARTY
In Gachibowli, at home with my friends. We start with English music and end it with Telugu chartbusters. Our current favorite is *Kurchini madatapetti*. After the dance, we either order late night *biryani* from *Shadaab* or Pizza. If it's even later, we make do with Maggi.

We wind down the night with soulful breakup songs by Arijit Singh and Sid Sriram and crash.

NIGHTLIFE IN ONE WORD...
Extravagant.

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Mandala workshops that help one slow down and touch base with one's innate creativity are catching up in Hyderabad

Discover Your Zen

If you spotted two dozen art enthusiasts sitting around a table to intricately fill color in a circular mandala and lost in their own world of sketching, shading, blending, and cross-hatching, it's a mandala workshop in progress in the city.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Mandala (pronounced Mandaala, meaning circle in Sanskrit), is a geometric, symmetrical design characterized by intricate patterns arranged around a central point. Hyderabad-based architect and artist, Sruthi Padakanti who conducted a dot mandala workshop at Renao Bistro in February says, "It is ideal for people engaged in technical or physically exhausting work and for those with jobs that have no scope for creativity. Imagine pouring your focus over the plumage of a yellow canary for two hours to ensure every little inch of its feathers is lighted up with color. That's the excitement mandala art brings to the canvas."

WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

This Buddhist practice of drawing intricate details teaches patience, mindfulness, self-expression and being completely involved in the activity. A design thinker, Sruthi has been conducting these three-hour workshops using paper and brush or dots (for dot mandala art), for the last two years.

WHERE TO LEARN

Mandala is usually learnt in spurts and then practiced in one's own time and space. Many art teachers conduct this over long weekends for batches of 15/20 participants. Aaromale, Align Hub, restaurants, cafes and co-working spaces are some of the places where these workshops are conducted.

MANDALA WITH A TWIST

Sruthi explains, "During the event, attendees learn about the history and significance of mandalas while creating their own unique dot mandalas, which is a variation that involves the precise application of dots to form intricate patterns and designs. This method provides a calming and therapeutic experience for the participants."

BEGINNER'S DELIGHT

Through guided instruction and experimentation, participants get to express themselves artistically, tap into their creativity, and experience the meditative benefits. No prior experience in art or mandala-making is required to take part in this event.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

In most of these workshops, the teacher provides a DIY kit which comprises fine-tipped pens to a vibrant array of colors, brushes, MDF boards, and even a stand to put the painting base on. The kit is included in the event fee.

WHAT IS THE OUTPUT?

You get wings to your imagination by making creative pieces of art on keychains, fridge magnets, coasters etc. "It also improves one's spiritual significance, and focus on inner contemplation," says Sruthi. ■ MANJU

Duration: *Three hours*
Fee: *Starts at Rs 1,500 onwards (includes kit)*

Timings: *Usually conducted over long weekends*
Tel: *90598 99944*

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A handy guide to maintaining balance in the overwhelming world of social media, as a user and a creator

DIGITAL DELUGE: How to handle it

In today's hyper-connected world, social media has evolved into a pervasive force, overloading users with a constant stream of information, opinions, and visual stimuli. The overwhelming nature of social media is fuelled by the sheer volume of content, the pressure to keep up with trends, and the incessant notifications vying for attention. This digital deluge can lead to information overload, comparison fatigue, and heightened anxiety, underscoring the need for strategies to navigate the online landscape without succumbing to its overwhelming effects.

WOW! talks to **Shalini Gianchandani**, counselling psychologist and co-founder of **Inner-Connect Counselling Services**, Jubilee Hills, to put together effective strategies to stay healthy in these digitally overwhelming times.

FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Get emotional: Creating a mental timeline is an effective strategy. Tune into your emotional state in different spaces, as social media can significantly influence your mood, especially during vulnerable moments. If certain content disrupts your sleep or occupies your thoughts, it's a clear indication that social media is affecting your overall well-being.

"If certain content disrupts your sleep or occupies your thoughts, it's a clear indication that social media is affecting your overall well-being" – Shalini Gianchandani

Personal analysis: Conduct a personal analysis to track the time you spend on social media. This reality check can be eye-opening, revealing the extent of your digital engagement and its potential impact on your life.

Time limits: Set explicit time limits on your apps to prevent mindless scrolling and ensure that your digital interactions are intentional and purposeful.

Scheduled check-ins: Establish specific times during the day to check social media, considering the potential interference with your daily responsibilities. This structured approach can help you maintain a healthy balance between the virtual and real worlds.

CURATE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FEED

Take control of the content you consume by curating your social media feed. Unfollow or mute accounts that frequently share disturbing news, and instead, follow accounts that provide positive and uplifting content.

ENGAGE IN OFFLINE ACTIVITIES

Distract yourself from distressing news by engaging in offline activities. Whether it's reading a book, pursuing a hobby, or spending quality time with loved ones, offline activities can provide a much-needed break and contribute to a more balanced lifestyle.

STAY INFORMED

Limit exposure to sensationalized or unreliable information by sticking to reputable news sources. This way, you can stay informed without being overwhelmed by sensational or disturbing content that might circulate on social media platforms.

HEALTHY DIGITAL HABITS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA CREATORS

Stay true to the original purpose behind sharing content. While opinions about them are beyond their control, creators understand that their intentions and purpose are within their control.

In the face of online bullying, social media creators should have a protocol similar to handling a stage performance. First, read the criticism, talk to someone reliable to understand if the troller is right in what he/she says. If you think it is right, don't think again. If you believe you will hate comments but still want to go ahead, you can use 'restrict comments' in your feed. That way what you say will be conveyed without the negativity. If criticism turns into abuse, security measures are in place to address the situation. Likewise, on social media platforms, if bullying escalates, reporting concerns to the appropriate authorities becomes crucial.

APPS THAT CAN HELP YOU TACKLE TIME SPENT ON OTHER APPS

* AppBlock *Flipd *Freedom *Cold Turkey *FocusMe *Focus ■ MANJU

WOW! explores the entire gamut of a cancer that kills an Indian woman every eight minutes. We believe early detection helps in early cure

CONFRONTING CERVICAL CANCER

The words **cervical cancer** trended on the internet a few weeks ago, thanks to model Poonam Pandey's outrageous stunt of staging her death due to cervical cancer, ostensibly to create awareness about the illness. While more people Googled #PoonamPandeyDeath rather than #CervicalCancer, we at WOW! think it's time to tell you more about this illness by talking to experts.

March 16 happens to be the National Vaccination Day, and a good time to look at the vaccine for the cancer.

Dr Geetha Nagasree, Sr Consultant Surgical Oncologist and Asst Clinical Director, Care Hospitals, Gachibowli, says there is hope for women, as India has just launched its first indigenous vaccine for cervical cancer.

INDIAN SCENARIO

One woman dies of cervical cancer in India every eight minutes. Globocon 2020 report shows that cervical cancer is the third most common cancer in India. The majority of these cancers were diagnosed at an advanced stage (60 percent), hence the need to tackle this on a priority basis.

WHAT

Cervical cancer is the abnormal growth of cells arising from the cervix. These cells can spread to various parts of the body. The cervix is the narrow, lower part of the uterus (womb) that connects to the vagina and plays a crucial role in childbirth during labor.

RISK FACTORS

Smoking, weak immune system, oral contraceptives, sexual intercourse at an early age, having multiple sexual partners, are among risk factors.

SYMPTOMS

Vague symptoms like infection, malodorous discharge, and can be mistaken for infections. Some women also report having back pain, or pain or bleeding during or after intercourse.

CAUSES

Infection by viruses known as Human Papillomavirus, also known as HPV. The variants 16 and 18 account for 90 percent of cervical cancers.

DIAGNOSIS

Detection of cervical cancer can be done by a PAP smear, which involves taking a swab from the cervix and examining for cancer cells. The cost of a PAP smear test is Rs 400-Rs 1,200 based on the hospital's range, and it takes about one minute for the doctor to check the patient. Women undergoing periods will have to wait.

TREATMENT

It entails surgery during the initial stages of the disease, and the other modalities may be chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

PREVENTION

Follow safe sexual practices including the use of condoms, avoiding multiple sexual partners and getting vaccinated. You can contact your gynecologist for more information regarding the vaccine.

VACCINE

Serum Institute of India, Pune, and the Department of Biotechnology have developed **Cervavac**, an indigenous vaccine, to counter the two most common strains of HPV 16 and 18, which account for 90% of cases. Even the Union budget 2024 is set to push this vaccination through. However, safe sexual practices and screening should continue. ■ MANJU

Cost: Rs 200-400 per dose (Likely to be distributed free from September)

What Goes Around... Comes Around!

Vintage Revival

From spotlight that shone on vintage glamor at the ongoing awards season to the reawakening of historically significant pieces at the upcoming Met Gala, 2024 is already looking like a year of fashion comebacks.

WOW! for our part explores enduring vintage looks set to make some noise this year and highlight ones that are already being flaunted at events so far.

SOBHITA DHULIPALA

TAMANNAAH BHATIA

RASHMIKA MANDANNA

THE CLASSIC RIBBON & BOW

Back with a modern twist are ribbons and bows. Making a statement on the runway are Saint Laurent's Fall '23 menswear collection and Collina Strada's Spring/Summer '24 collection among more. And on the red carpet we have, from across industries, Margot Robbie, Zoe Kravitz, Priyanka Chopra, Deepika Padukone, Sobhita Dhulipala, Tamannaah Bhatia and more experimenting and having fun with it all.

Bringing back the bow, Sobhita Dhulipala looked heavenly in pastel-hued strapless maxi dress by brand Atsu. Ideal for summer, the breezy look was capped off with circular earrings, multi-colored bangles and a pair of Louboutins.

The vintage bow meets the traditional saree in Tamannaah Bhatia's graceful look. Designed by Sabyasachi, the beautiful rani pink saree complements the striking yellow halter neck blouse which is further elevated by the attention-grabbing yellow pussycat bow placed on the side.

LONG OPERA GLOVES

Looking to give a vintage touch to your black-tie attire? Look no further than the iconic Long Opera Gloves that date back to the 15th century. Thanks to the legacy left behind by Hollywood movie icons like Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn, the elegant elbow-length gloves are back in style and the craze for it has spread across the globe, India included.

POOJA HEGDE

Tollywood's it-girl Rashmika Mandanna celebrated the success of her latest movie *Animal* this year by jumping aboard the long-black-opera-gloves train. The fingerless opera gloves that she sported complemented her black strapless Alex Perry floor-length gown and created a radiant look to remember.

Also hopping on the trend is another T-town diva, Pooja Hegde. The actor looked like something straight out of a fairytale in the Dubai-based label GAFFE's off-shoulder white gown that, for dramatic effect, she paired with white opera gloves.

PSYCHEDELIC PRINTS

Echoing the vibrant 60s, bold psychedelic prints are seeing a resurgence with help from renowned fashion brands like Leonard Paris. The French luxury label, founded by Jacques Leonard in 1958, presented some trippy pieces from their 2023-2024 Fall/Winter collection at the Paris Fashion Week.

CAPRIS!

Did someone say Capris are back? Well, these pants famous for being neither too short nor too long made an appearance on Tory Burch and Phillip Lim's SS24 runway shows at the New York Fashion Week and have already been sported by celebrities like Bella Hadid and Julia Fox.

ACCESSORIES

THE 'IT' SHOES

Retro sneakers are making a major comeback. Gaining momentum right now are Onitsuka Tiger's unisex Mexico 66, famously worn by Uma Thurman (in Quentin Tarantino's iconic 2003 blood-splattered epic Kill Bill Vol. 1) to go with her striking yellow tracksuit.

RIBBONS & BOWS

Alongside the gowns, ribbons and bows are also having a moment with accessories like ribbon necklaces, chokers and hair ribbons as styled by Collina Strada.

To make things quirkier, mix vintage with footwear like the delicate ballet flats of the latest balletcore trend. ■ IPSHITA

WOW! catches up with iconic artist **Anjolie Ela Menon** who was in Hyderabad to visit an art festival....

"I don't see the old Hyderabad anymore"

You returned to Mumbai with a solo show, *Anjolie The Wanton Fabulist*, after a gap of nine years. What was the inspiration for the show?
The show is mostly about the city, its boats and the docks, that have greatly inspired me. I lived in Mumbai for many years in the 80s before we moved to Delhi and I miss the sea. This show, however, brings together many facets from my earlier shows, the fishermen, a crow that used to sit on my balcony (in Mumbai) when I used to paint and has literally put itself in the painting.

The current generation is fed on Instagram, will it be able to connect with the beauty of physical art and the sanctity of art galleries?
I certainly hope so. At the turn of the century, 'beauty' became a dirty word. A lot of artists then worked on many themes which moved away from beauty but came back to it subsequently. The point is, some things remain the norm for a while and then balance themselves out. While people are hooked to their phones today, art galleries will always find their patrons.

You've always been a pioneer in embracing newer forms for art...
I think that happens automatically. In 1999, I was the only artist who embraced digital work and presented a show in New York, *Gods and Others*. Later on, I was the first person to sort of work on painted furniture and within three weeks, that was all I could hear others doing. In fact, when I worked on creating a show that formed a bridge between high end art and something that was palatable to everyone it was called *Kitsch* and there was a show held named *Kitsch Kitsch Hota Hain*. (laughs) Art will reinvent itself and when someone has the courage to do something new, others follow and trends emerge.

"The younger generation is in a hurry, They are planning their earnings and shows even while studying"

How do you look back at your work and career?
I've always liked to work and even now (at 83), that is what keeps me going. In my younger days (in the 50s and 60s), I was influenced by a lot of Christian and Byzantine art. Then I really enjoyed working on my *Namboodri* series and still do. (I recently visited Guruvayur and came back refreshed) There was a time when I was inspired by the divine mother and did a series on Yashoda and Mary. It is these diverse influences that have steadied me over the years.

Your advice to the younger generations of artists?
I've always believed in being a *Karmayogi*. Do your bit and wait for your work to reap rewards. The younger generation is in a hurry, They are planning their earnings and shows even while studying. My advice is to create a body of work and the rest will follow.

How do you like visiting Hyderabad?
Oh, I've been coming here for decades but each time I'm shocked at the changes happening in the city. I don't see the old Hyderabad anymore. I used to love visiting Charminar and shopping for textiles but all the old stores have vanished. ■ MALLIK

WOW! reviews an artist's latest show where he recreates elements from the 70s Hyderabad he grew up in

For the Love of Old Hyderabad

Growing up in Himayath Nagar in the 1970s, artist Rahul Mitra was deeply influenced by his surroundings, and its art and culture shaped his childhood. He remembers classical musicians playing on the streets in the evenings, *burra kathas* in the neighborhood and screenings of mythological films on projectors in temples.

What cemented his interest further were his visits to artist Surya Prakash's studio. "He was my friend Nagesh Kukunoor's neighbor in Vittalwadi, and I used to go see his works. He would spread them on the floor making it an impressive sight," he recalls.

Fate, however, had different plans for him when he went to the US in 1990 and pursued PhD in Bio Chemistry and Molecular Biology before working as a scientist. A visit to Venice Biennale in 2008 influenced him to not only pick up the easel but also start exhibiting his work.

Mitra's work is profoundly shaped by the socio-political dynamics he experienced during his formative years in a Socialist India. The disparities between the rich and poor, the macro and micro issues that society faces and dual identities all served as inspiration. His current show, *The Elephant in the Room*, in acrylic and oils, showcases elements of Hyderabad juxtaposed against the issues it faces. From autos to arches of religious structures to issues of colonialism and modernization, they provoke the viewer to think.

"I want my art to raise questions and implore people to look within. There are many things that go undocumented in history. My aim is to focus on issues that are uncomfortable and compel us to look around. I'm influenced by early European art, but my roots are in Telangana."

Mitra uses visual language drawn from the streets to interpret personal, socio-political dialogues exploring poverty, ennui, custom, love, strangeness, technology, and linguistics. His current work is a study of the underbelly of global cultures and has a distinct element of social consciousness and hidden imagery.

Having exhibited his work across the world, the artist is now happy to explore themes that have meaning to him. Also dabbling in public art installation, the 56-year-old is clear on his future path – to continue to let his forever muse, Hyderabad, inspire his form on documenting social change.

His works were showcased at Gallery 78 last month. ■ MALLIK

The newly launched 3D sound and light show captures the magnificent history of the **Golconda Fort**

LOVE, WAR AND DIAMONDS

As the newly refurbished sound and light show of **Golconda Fort** unfolded, an electrifying atmosphere enveloped the audience. Who knew a history lesson could be this entertaining? Against the backdrop of the 12th-century fort's majestic ramparts, the catchy, somewhat AR Rahmanisque rhythm "*Satrangi hai woh, madrangi hai woh, Bharat ki shaan Golconda*," reverberated through the air. Rainbow lasers danced across the sky, painting a vivid picture of the Indian tricolor on the fort's wall. As the show ended, a wave of patriotism surged through the crowd and you may have found yourself compelled to stand tall and salute the Indian flag. Such was the impact of the Golconda Fort's new sound and light show relaunched with much fanfare on January 26.

THE VIBE

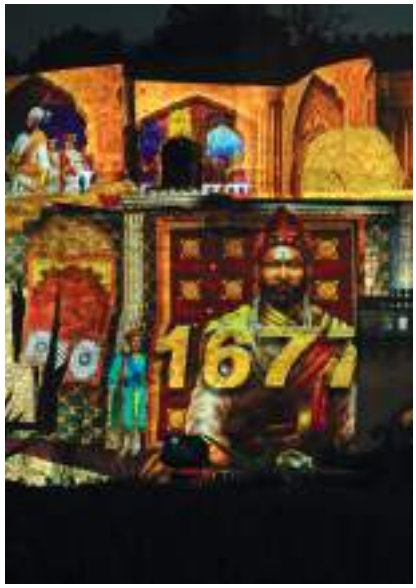
The slick, 30-minute show that we watched was in Hindi (available in Telugu and English also). It began with the fort speaking as an entity, witnessing the history of Hyderabad first hand. The previous version of the show (which ran for over 25 years with a voiceover by Superstar Amitabh Bachchan and Jagjit Singh's *ghazals*) had ancient fixed light graphics of the 90s. However, the relaunched version had 3D graphics and immersive visuals that transported spectators into the heart of historical battles, with galloping horses, flying spears, and the grim realities of war. The melodramatic voices and the emotional tunes came alive in the outdoor theatre while using a few walls of the fort to screen the show.

THE SHOW STOPPERS

The love story of Mohd Quli and his beloved Baghmati were the highlights of the show. The mention of the Koh-i-Noor diamond also seized everyone's interest, evoking a sense of pride in our cultural heritage. The show laced with *ghazals* and *qawwali* traced the 800-year-old history of the fort along with the wars it fought until Hyderabad became a part of the Indian state in 1948.

TECH TALK

What was admirable were the highly dynamic 3D mapping projection with high-resolution projectors, laser lights, and moving heads that enhanced the visual experience. The entire experience would have been better had the audience stopped filming the show with



their mobile phones. If you're feeling too lazy to explore the fort on foot but crave a glimpse into Hyderabad's captivating history, this experience has got you covered.

FOR THE TRIVIA BUFFS

The show is broadcast using a UPS system built to support 2,80,000 lumens worth of projection across 10 high-end projectors, six laser systems and smart lights synchronized to a 14-node surround audioscape.

PRO HACK

Try and catch a show after sunset as the laser lights look best in the dark and not with traces of daylight. ■ MANJU

At Golconda Fort, Ibrahim Bagh
Tickets: *Adult Rs.140; Child Rs.110; Free for children below five; 25% discount bulk bookings for students*
Timings: *Keeping the heat of the season, the show timings change. Check before booking. Details: https://tourism.telangana.gov.in/ or 96400 69290*
March to October
1st Show - Daily 7:00 pm (English Show)
2nd Show - Daily 7:45 pm (Hindi Show)
3rd Show - Daily 8:30 pm (Telugu Show)

MOVIES

In theaters

Kung Fu Panda 4

(ENGLISH)

Po returns to take his skill to the next level and become a master himself as Master Shifu continues to train him in finding inner peace. While doing so, Po has to find and train his successor – a new Dragon Warrior, while battling a nemesis who can resurrect Po's enemies from the past. Jack Black returns as the lovable Panda while Mike Mitchell takes over the directorial duties.

Date: March 8

Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire

(ENGLISH)

After managing to return the franchise to its roots, Jason Reitman hands over the directorial duties to Gil Kenan, while focusing on the writing as we witness a dimensional cross rip in Summerville as the veterans must join forces with the new recruits to save New York City from a powerful death-chilling adversary. The gang is back in full capacity and all cylinders firing as we bid goodbye to the legendary Ivan Reitman, who passed away in 2022.

Date: March 22

Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire

(ENGLISH)

A decade after Warner Bros rebooted Kong and Godzilla franchise, the ultimate team-up motion picture of the year reaches theatres as the two mighty characters are forced to work together against an undiscovered threat which threatens the Hollow Earth and the surface. Nothing is more exciting than the two superstars coming together and destroying major cities in order to save the mankind.

Date: March 29

Double iSmart

(TELUGU)

Announced suddenly, shot quickly, releasing shortly! Puri Jagannath is in complete form as he attempts to bring about a sequel to his last big hit *iSmart Shankar* from 2019, with Ram Pothineni in the lead. Sanjay Dutt stars as the antagonist while Mani Sharma provides the music. The science fiction action film comes out on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri and in major languages. This is Jagannath's next film after *Liger*.

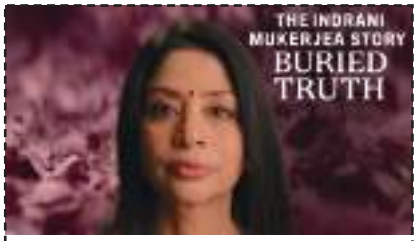
Date: March 8

Tillu Square

(TELUGU)

Directed by Mallik Ram, this romantic crime-comedy stars Siddhu Jonnalagadda in the title role. The film is all about how the wayward, but golden hearted Tillu falls in love again. It is a sequel to the 2022 film *DJ Tillu*.

Date: March 29



THE INDRANI MUKERJEA STORY: BURIED TRUTH

(ENGLISH)
Netflix

Featuring new revelations and unprecedented access, this docu-series digs into the disappearance of 25-year-old Sheena Bora, allegedly murdered by her mother Indrani Mukerjea and the shocking aftermath. The show is expected to document how one high-profile family got embroiled in a dark and gruesome secret, promising to be an edgy and compelling look into the human psyche. The poster features Sheena's mom, Indrani, who spent six years in prison and is currently out on bail. It also comes months after her 2023 memoir, *Unbroken*.

SHOWTIME

(HINDI)
Disney + Hotstar

The show created by Sumit Roy and directed by Mihir Desai and Archit Kumar features renowned actors such as Emraan Hashmi, Mahima Makwana, Mouni Roy, Shriya Saran and Naseeruddin Shah. Emraan Hashmi plays the 'Badshah of Bollywood' in the show that features Mouni Roy playing an actor facing challenges. The show is produced by Karan Johar's Dharmatic Entertainment, a digital extension of Dharma Productions.

MURDER MUBARAK

(HINDI)
Netflix

Based on the novel *Club You To Death* by Anuja Chauhan, Homi Adajania returns to direct this OTT-only movie with an ensemble cast. Pankaj Tripathi stars as the lead detective and is supported by Sara Ali Khan, Vijay Varma, Dimple Kapadia, Karisma Kapoor, Sanjay Kapoor, Tisca Chopra and Suhail Nayyar. That's a talented bunch right there and watching how they solve the case will be a worthwhile watch.

MANHUNT

(ENGLISH)
Apple TV+

Tobias Menzies and Anthony Boyle star in this limited series which follows Edwin Stanton's search for John Wilkes Booth in the aftermath of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. It is based on the book *The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* by James L. Swanson. Carl Franklin – the filmmaker behind *Nowhere to Run*, *Out of Time* and *High Crimes*, will be taking over the direction.

MISS PERFECT

(TELUGU)
Disney + Hotstar

Lavanya Tripathi makes her OTT comedy debut with the quirky tale of a girl who wishes for everything around her to be as clean as possible. Armed with a solid director in Vishwak Khandero, Lavanya nails the character while also delivering a series which is engaging. The humor is decent while each character in her life has an agenda of their own. If you are looking for something light and fun this series is a good choice.

DHOOTHA

(TELUGU)
Amazon Prime

Focusing on the trials of a journalist, we find the lead – portrayed by an impressive Naga Chaitanya. The chaos in his life begins churning out exactly as predicted by the newspapers every day. Co-starring Priya Bhavani Shankar and Pasupathy among others, the series directed by Vikram Kumar remains underrated and deserves a lot more views.

BHAMAKALAPAM 2

(TELUGU)
AHA

Priya Mani reprises her role as Anupama, an innocent-looking housewife poised to embark on a thrilling heist adventure alongside her partner, played by Sharanya in *Bhamakalapam 2*. As the show progresses, the duo engages in discussions about a potential joint heist, leaving viewers buzzing with curiosity about Priya's character and the evolving storyline. ■

CHANDRAMOULI

SNIPPETS

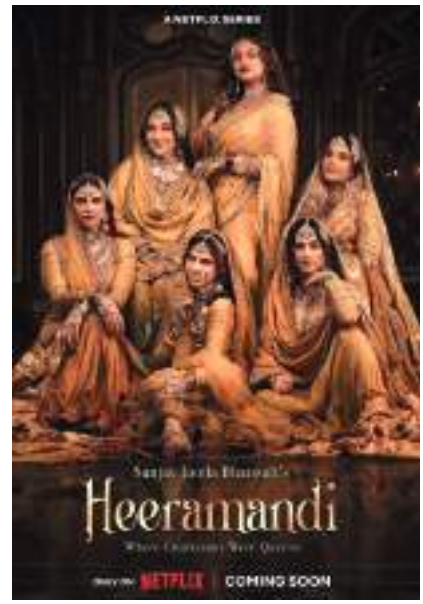
Making waves

Despite having a relatively limited filmography, South Indian sensation Rashmika Mandanna makes it to *Forbes India*'s prestigious 30 Under 30 list for 2024. Just 27 yrs old, the actress has captivated audiences with her talent and presence, making her a force to be reckoned with in the Indian film industry.

Known for her fascinating performances in blockbusters like *Pushpa: The Rise* and *Animal,* Rashmika has already left an indelible mark on cinema. Her inclusion in the coveted Forbes list further emphasizes her impact as a young leader and influencer.

Different Strokes

Actress Samantha is returning to work after nearly seven months of sabbatical albeit in a new *avatar*. The actress announced her comeback vehicle – a health podcast *Take 20* that talks about being kind to oneself. The actress has always been open about her struggle with mental health. With the new show, one hopes that she succeeds in bringing more social awareness about the topic.



Glitz and Glamor

The first look of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's highly-anticipated Netflix series, *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar,* is out to rave reviews. The series, set against the tumultuous backdrop of the Indian freedom struggle of the 1940s, explores the cultural reality of Heeramandi, a dazzling district, through the stories of courtesans and their patrons. Given the penchant the director has for drama, everything from the props to the clothes and the jewerly were authentic, making it one of the costliest web series ever.

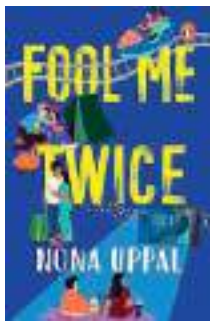
A little *hatke*

After having a great year at the box office, there is growing speculation around Shah Rukh Khan's next project. If the grapevine is to be believed the actor is in talks with filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj for his next. Would it be a typical "Vishal Bhardwaj film with all the thrills and shades that he likes to weave in his stories?" Can't wait for this one!

Debut in Hindi

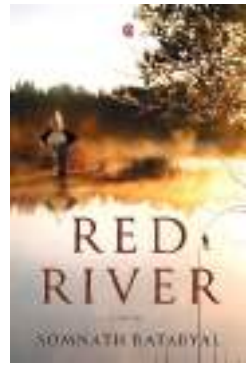
After wowing audiences in the south, actress Sai Pallavi is soon making her debut in Hindi along with Aamir Khan's son Junaid. The two were shooting at the Sapporo Snow Festival, in Japan, for their upcoming untitled film that promises to be a fun and breezy entertainer. ■ MALLIK

FOOL ME TWICE
By Nona Uppal



Nona Uppal of Instagram fame has finally written her much awaited romantic-comedy novel. The book follows Sana's love story with Ashish until he tragically passes away due to a drunk-driving accident. This is not a spoiler, we promise! The book now moves to a place where Sana, being a mere 20-year-old, navigates grief, loss and looks at the complexity of falling in love 'again' at an age where most are falling for the first time.

RED RIVER
By Somnath Batabyal



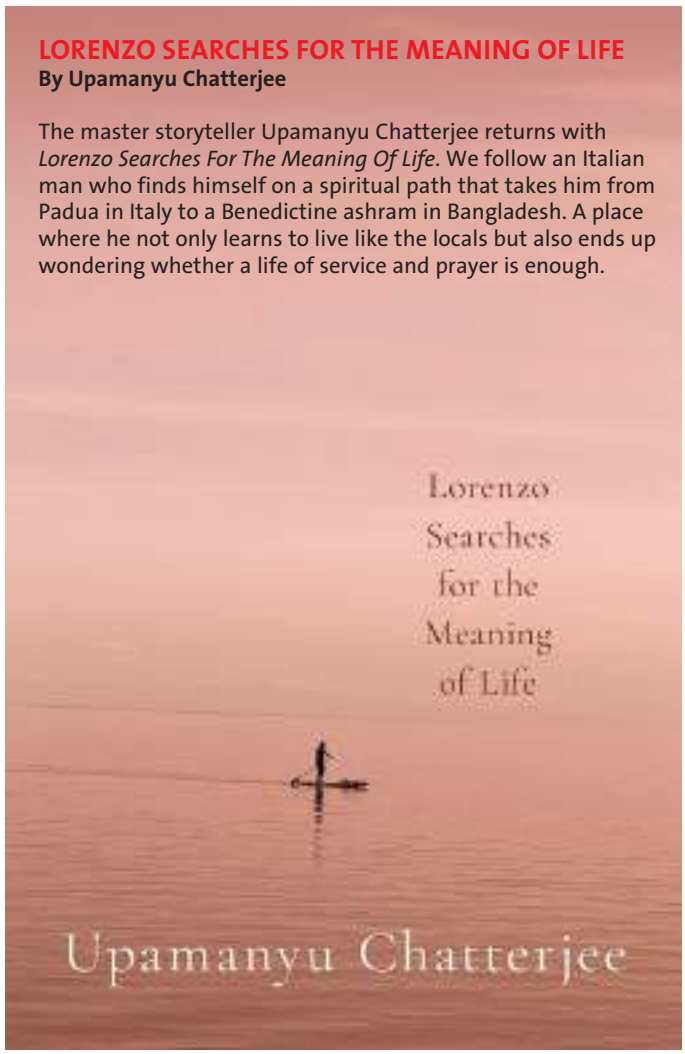
This book follows three boys in Assam during the early years of militancy in the 1980s and how their lives and relationships pan out into adulthood. The novel moves through Guwahati, Dhaka, Bhutan and London and looks at how the shadows of violence in the 1980s continue to haunt and affect the relationships and lives of these three friends.

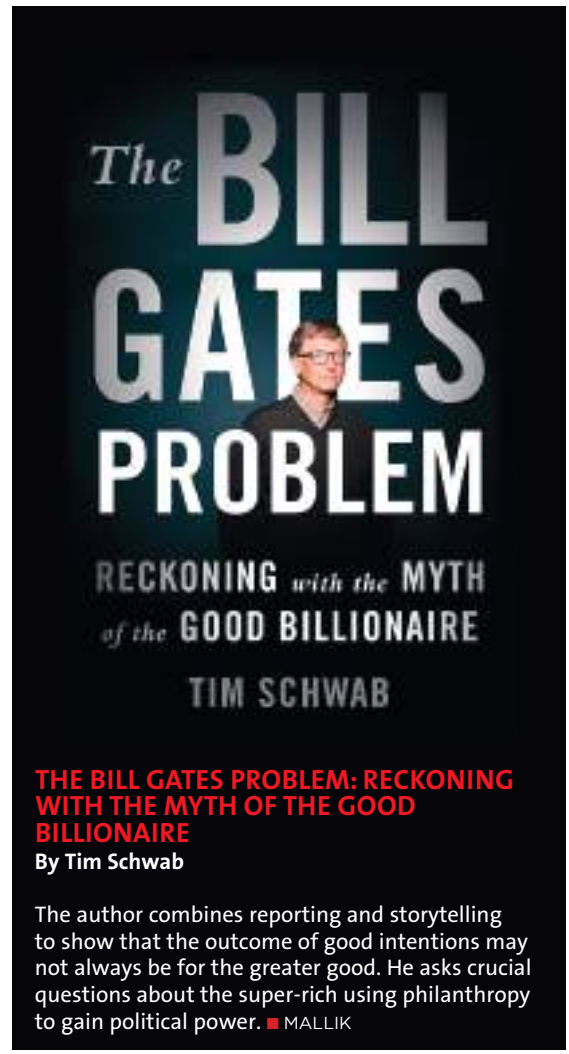
SWALLOWING THE SUN
By Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

In Swallowing The Sun, Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri recounts India's struggle for Independence through women of three generations. Malti and her sister Kamala break convention to live the way they want to. Public records of the freedom struggle are imbued with personal history in this novel about love, valour, and loss.

LORENZO SEARCHES FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE
By Upamanyu Chatterjee

The master storyteller Upamanyu Chatterjee returns with *Lorenzo Searches For The Meaning Of Life*. We follow an Italian man who finds himself on a spiritual path that takes him from Padua in Italy to a Benedictine ashram in Bangladesh. A place where he not only learns to live like the locals but also ends up wondering whether a life of service and prayer is enough.





THE BILL GATES PROBLEM: RECKONING WITH THE MYTH OF THE GOOD BILLIONAIRE
By Tim Schwab

The author combines reporting and storytelling to show that the outcome of good intentions may not always be for the greater good. He asks crucial questions about the super-rich using philanthropy to gain political power. ■ MALLIK

WOW! explores the current awards season and predicts who all may take home an **Oscar** this march

And the OSCAR may go to...

Awards season is currently underway and the final stop, *The 96th Academy Awards*, is right around the corner. The precursors to the Oscars, which include critics' awards, festival awards, the guild awards, the BAFTAs and the Golden Globes (which officially start the season every year), give us an indication as to who all might take home the ultimate golden statue at journey's end.

Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* dominates the 2024 Oscar nominations with 13 nods, closely followed by Yorgos Lanthimos' *Poor Things* with 11 nods and Martin Scorsese's historical crime drama *The Killers of the Flower* with ten. However, receiving a high number of nominations does not guarantee wins which makes it that much harder and fun to predict who may take home the highly coveted prize on March 10.

Keeping the precursors in mind, WOW! creates its very own Oscar's prediction list for ten major categories.

MOTION PICTURE OF THE YEAR

Who will likely win: *Oppenheimer*, directed by Christopher Nolan
Who may surprise: *The Holdovers*, directed by Alexander Payne

ACHIEVEMENT IN DIRECTING

Who will likely win: Christopher Nolan, *Oppenheimer*
Who may surprise: Martin Scorsese, *The Killers of the Flower Moon*

ACTOR IN A LEADING ROLE

Who will likely win: Paul Giamatti, *The Holdovers*
Who may surprise: Cillian Murphy, *Oppenheimer*

ACTRESS IN A LEADING ROLE

Who will likely win: Lily Gladstone, *The Killers of the Flower Moon*
Who may surprise: Emma Stone, *Poor Things*

ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Who will likely win: Robert Downey Jr., *Oppenheimer*
Who may surprise: Mark Ruffalo, *Poor Things*

ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Who will likely win: Da'Vine Joy Randolph, *The Holdovers*
Who may surprise: Jodie Foster, *Nyad*

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Who will likely win: *Anatomy of a Fall*
Who may surprise: *Past Lives*

ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Who will likely win: *Oppenheimer*
Who may surprise: *American Fiction*

INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM

Who will likely win: *The Zone of Interest*, England
Who may surprise: *Society of the Snow*, Spain

ANIMATED FEATURE FILM

Who will likely win: *The Boy and the Heron*
Who may surprise: *Spider-man: Across the Spider-Verse* ■ IPSHITA

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SHWETA, NEHA, MURALI KARTIK, NITIN, NITYA SHIVAANGI

KISHAN AND SARITA

View from the top

Feb 20, Zindagi Sky Bar & Kitchen

Zindagi Sky Bar & Kitchen, the city's newest rooftop watering hotspot, opened to breathtaking vistas of the city. Guests, dressed to the nines, were ready to see and be seen. The transparent, lit-up rooftop domes were a conversation starter.

JENNIFER

SHREYA AND SNEHA

KASHISH

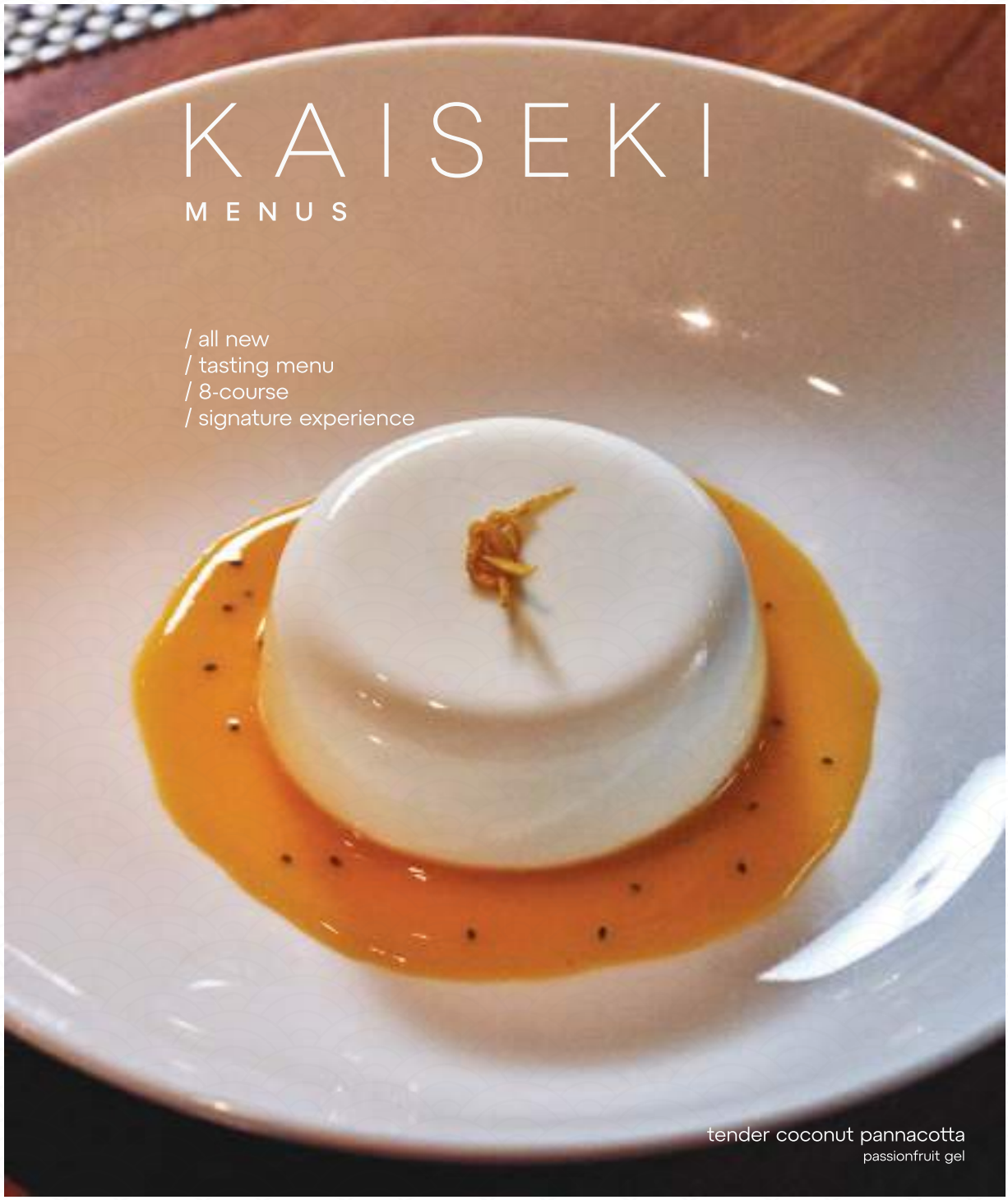
NIKSHITA

Asian delights

Feb 2, Mings & Mee

Old favorite Ohri's Ming's Kitchen at Banjara Hills reopened as Mings & Mee, a pan-Asian specialty restaurant and social butterflies descended to the grand opening. The Asian feast was highlighted by the spicy allure of *Hot Chongqing Chicken* and the comforting embrace of *Ramen Bowls*.

AVASA
HOTELS



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Fun(d) raiser

Feb 11, Novotel HICC

Actor, producer and philanthropist Lakshmi Manchu walked the runway with actors Shriya Saran and Harshavardhan Rane with Shruti Hassan as the showstopper, for 9th edition of Teach for Change's annual fundraiser. The extravagant event featured fashion legends, Amit GT, Shashank Chelmilla and Siddhartha Fine Jewellers.

SHRUTI HAASAN

HARSHAVARDHAN RANE

LAKSHMI MANCHU WITH RUBIN CHERIAN

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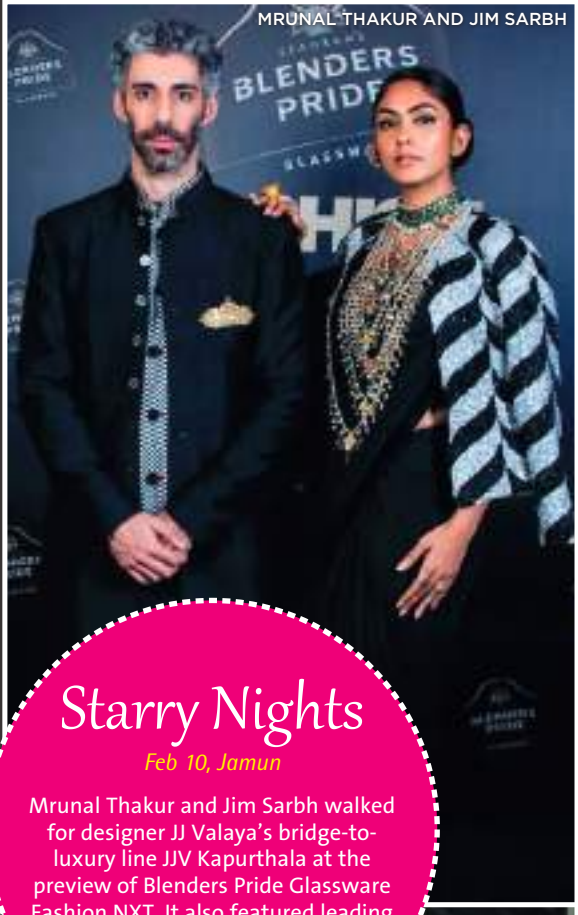

MRUNAL THAKUR AND JIM SARBH

UNNATI

JUHI

Starry Nights

Feb 10, Jamun

Mrunal Thakur and Jim Sarbh walked for designer JJ Valaya's bridge-to-luxury line JJV Kapurthala at the preview of Blenders Pride Glassware Fashion NXT. It also featured leading designers like Alpana Neeraj, Bloni, Mandira Wirk among others.

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