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MORE: KOREAN
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shopping

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STORE**

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OUR DOPE ABOUT THE NEW LOUNGE BARS – BARRACKS & ANTEROOM AT SAINIKPURI AND MYTHUS AT GANDIPET. Also, RU beats Mumbai's bars to be in the country's top 30 list

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A DEFINITIVE GUIDE to unmissable city events – from arts and culture to flea markets

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WE LIST OUT FIVE CHARMING CAFÉS THAT ARE SPOT-ON FOR A V-DAY DATE.

Also read our reviews of new eateries in town – Hanok, the Korean place, Tteokbokki which serves Korean, Himalayan and pan-Asian; air-fried specialty cafe L'unico and Mitti Café run by differently-abled people. In What's New, we talk about the new Roastery Coffee House, the food festival at Palle Vindu and Big Byte Bakery



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AUTHENTIC REVIEWS OF GOURMET STORE, FOODSTORIES, BAMBOO HOUSE INDIA'S RECYCLED PRODUCTS, PREMIUM KITCHENWARE at The Warehouse, and an old-fashioned shopping experience at the famous Gudimalkapur Flower Market

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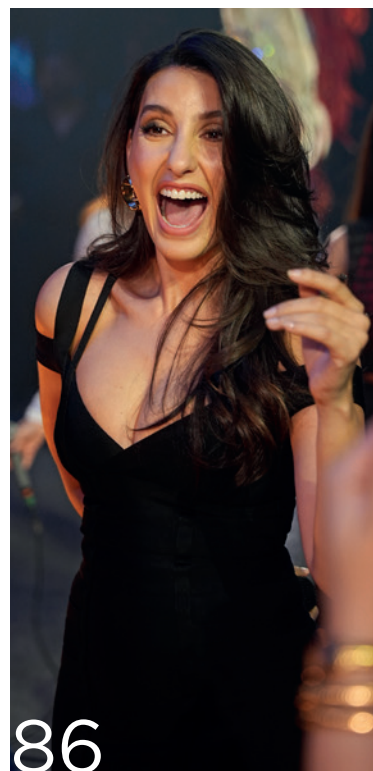
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OUR PICK OF MOVIES, OTT LISTINGS, BOOKS AND CINEMA SNIPPETS.
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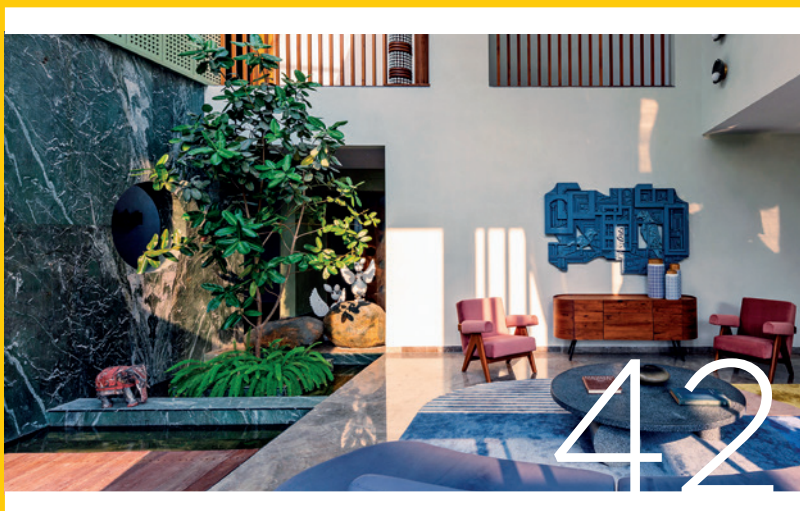
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WE UNRAVEL LIFE COACH MANJULA GHATTAMANENI'S CELEBRITY SECRETS PROGRAM; discover the benefits of face yoga; and new skin/hair treatments at Zennara Clinics

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WOW! PAYS A TRIBUTE TO WORLD RENOWNED ART COLLECTOR JAGDISH MITTAL WHO PASSED AWAY LAST MONTH. Plus, a look at Iconart Gallery that turns 15 this February



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WE GIVE YOU A PEEK INTO THE GORGEOUS AND CURATED HOMES of four hip young couples in the city who are blending design with aesthetics, comfort and nature. The homes are inspiring, innovative and interesting



ON THE COVER: THE COURTYARD
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this month

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Our guide to the exciting happenings in town



BRITISH HITMAKER FEBRUARY 2

Breaking records across the globe, Ed Sheeran's $+=\div\times$ tour is coming to Hyderabad. Having played a sold-out show in Mumbai last year, the British singer is bringing the tour back to India promising a pan-Indian fan experience.

Venue: Ramoji Film City
Timings: 4 pm onwards
Ticket: Rs 5,000 onwards (bookmyshow.com)



AN EVENING OF GHAZALS FEBRUARY 21

The Humrahi Ghazal Festival is an endeavor to promote and nurture various aspects of Indian culture through music. Along with singer Hariharan, the evening will also showcase the best young and upcoming talents in this music form.

Venue: Ramoji Film City
Timings: 6.30 pm onwards
Ticket: Rs 885 onwards (bookmyshow.com)



ZINE WORKSHOP FEBRUARY 1

This month, Align Hub by Padmaja Penmetsa is ready to present the art of zine creation with their Zine workshop. The workshop's offerings include folding and binding techniques, an introduction to zines and their history, and basic journal and creative practice.

Open to all, this workshop will focus on embracing mistakes, self-acceptance, analysis, and understanding through creative expression.

Venue: Align Hub by Padmaja Penmetsa, Film Nagar
Timings: 10.30 am onwards
Ticket: Rs 1,299 onwards (bookmyshow.com)

A COMPELLING PLAY FEBRUARY 7



Presented by Yogibear Collectives, and designed by Chandini Agarwal and Jonas David, the play *P.T.A.* is a poignant and heart-wrenching exploration of grief, misunderstanding, and the desperate search for answers in the wake of an unimaginable event.

Venue: Yogibear Collectives, Begumpet
Timings: 7.30 pm onwards
Ticket: Rs 350 onwards (bookmyshow.com)

ART & HUMOR TILL FEBRUARY 25

The Kadari Art Gallery is holding a group exhibition titled *Laughter Lines: Humour on Canvas - Four Voices, One Narrative: The Art of Seeing the Funny Side*. It takes a refreshing look at the role humor plays in enriching our lives and will feature works by renowned artists Gurmeet Marwah, Mrinal Dey, Rajeswar Rao, and S. Nataraj. The exhibition which opened with a special preview on Jan 30th will continue till the 25th of this month.

Venue: Kadari Art Gallery, Road No. 14, Jubilee Hills
Tel: 77028 66990
Website: www.kadariartgallery.com





SID SRIRAM AND HIS SONGS

FEBRUARY 15

Known for songs *Srivalli*, *Kolla Kalle Ila*, and *Adiga Adiga*, musician Sid Sriram is ready to take to the stage this February and fire hits in Hyderabad. Rooted in the timeless essence of Chennai, the soulful singer's artistry resonates deeply with music lovers alike.

Venue: Boulder Hills, Golf and Country Club, Gachibowli

Timings: 5 pm onwards

Ticket: Rs 999 onwards (insider.in)



COLLECTION OF STORIES

FEBRUARY 15 AND 16

Directed by Jyoti Dogra and produced by Preksha Trivedi and Jay Jha, the play *Mezok* dabbles in abstract space and presents a collection of stories. These stories are woven into a physical narrative, examining the nature of desire among others.

Venue: Rangbhoomi Spaces & Events, Gachibowli

Timings: 8 pm onwards

Ticket: Rs 500 onwards (bookmyshow.com)

DIVINE COMEDY

FEBRUARY 8

Stand-up comic, writer, and actor Prashasti Singh is among the top three comics on Amazon Prime Video's popular comedy reality show, *Comicstaan*. Bringing her stand-up comedy show *Divine Feminine* to Hyderabad, the young comedian – inching towards 40 – questions all her life choices and assigns blame to the women and men who shaped her.

Venue: KLN Prasad Auditorium – FTCCI, Lakdikapul

Timings: 7.30 pm onwards

Ticket: Rs 499 onwards (bookmyshow.com)



MAYA BAZAAR AT SAPTAPARNI

FEBRUARY 21

Gather at Saptaparni this month-end for a Telugu play *Maya Bazaar* by Sri Venkateswara Surabhi Theater Group by Jayachandra Varma. Enacted with special effects by 50 artists, *Maya Bazaar* is an epic drama that follows the love story of Balarama's daughter Sasirekha with Subhadra's son Abhimanyu.

Venue: Saptaparni, Plot No. 21, Road No. 8, Banjara hills

Timings: 6 pm to 8 pm

Tel: 79813 89167

Ticket: Free Entry



V-DAY MOVIE DATE

FEBRUARY 14

This Valentine's Day, Sunset Cinema Club in association with Mindspace SOCIAL will be hosting a special V-Day movie viewing experience.

Cozy up next to your partner under the starry skies to watch the iconic Hollywood rom-com *50 First Dates* starring Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore. Scoot down on a bean bag, get comfy under a blanket at this rooftop venue that transforms into a magical oasis.

Venue: Social Rocks, Mindspace SOCIAL, HITEC City

Timings: 9 pm onwards

Ticket: Rs 600 onwards (insider.in)

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

WHEN LIFE TELLS YOU TO PAUSE



Like so many of my contemporaries, all superwomen, I have been an overachiever, pushing myself to do the best in my career and personal life. In school, I had to be Miss Goody-two-shoes showing off my homework to the class teacher, or displaying how well I could recite Robert Browning's *The Last Duchess*. Holidays were not for watching Rajesh Khanna movies and eating bhel like everyone else. No, I had to make a list of books from Aldous Huxley to Camus which I would demolish at the rate of one or two a week.

In college, I had to excel and had to be captain of this House or that. During my working life too, I chose journalism which was an off-beat career option back then when most friends went into teaching or banking, both safe professions. As a journalist I would reach out for interviews no one would attempt (different from

these days where the PR arranges everything including the car ride for the interview), and stood outside Mother Teresa's convent in Calcutta till she agreed to talk to me. It was the same with getting an interview with John Nash (the Nobel Prize-winning mathematician) at Princeton: no one thought he would speak to an Indian magazine. He not only spoke to us but walked us through the mathematics department at the university where he had scribbled his formulae (as shown in the film *The Beautiful Mind*). Simultaneously, on the personal front, I raised two kids as a single mother, and far from having a breakdown, I was happy that I brought up two children who now are raising the bar in their careers; apart from being compassionate and kind human beings, of which I am prouder.

I see this period of recuperation and slowing down, not so much as a setback, but life telling me, 'girl you've achieved enough, rest a bit'

This piece, however, is not about all that I have achieved so far, all of which I am proud of no doubt. But I am writing this as I realize, that in this furious race to excel, I never gave my life a break. And now I have been forced to take the much-needed pause because of a health setback. I see this period of recuperation and slowing down, not so much as a setback, but life telling me, 'girl you've achieved enough, rest a bit'.

I do feel that our young men and women too in corporate jobs need to switch off from their work now and then. We know how many of them are on Zoom, even late into the night, or how they don't take a weekend off, selling their time to a corporation. Worse, we have CEOs telling youngsters to work 70 to 90 hours a week, and on weekends to boost the

Indian economy, never mind that in the bargain, the poor executive is collapsing with stress, while the same CEOs take home humongous salaries.

It has not been by choice, but I have been forced to switch off in recent months because of ill health. Not just my phone, but my responsibilities and my overheated brain that's always ready for a new project. I no longer care if the cook burns the dosa, and I am grateful if there's food on the table, I haven't had to make myself. I don't have FOMO (fear of missing out). I don't care if I'm not invited to a wedding...in fact, it is a relief that I don't have to dress up and go meet hundreds of strangers to make inane conversation. I don't have to worry whether I'm fit or fat or need to go to the gym. I walk peacefully in my garden, at my own pace without any stress of wearing a jogging suit or shoes. Or achieving the 5,000 steps goal. I am happy when I spot birds sometimes. Many times, our puppy follows me, running around, reiterating the comfort of the pace at which my life goes on these days.

Listening to MS Subbulakshmi in the morning, and Dev Anand's songs in the afternoon makes me happy. With no schedule, I look forward to getting up whenever I want and having my coffee looking at the sunrise, or sometimes sleeping in late and having somebody serve me breakfast. There being no major agendas, I sleep early with a book in hand, and occasionally watch Netflix. Sometimes I write, other times not at all.

Mostly, I rest and think of my life gone past. And thank my recuperation period for the much-needed time for reflection. Questions such as where do I go from here, now? Or do I need to have any goals at all? I want neither more money nor am I ambitious about a career. I have let go of others' expectations of me, mainly.

I really don't have any answers but reflect on how far I have come, and what I am now – both are enough for the moment. I may have miles to go before I sleep, but I no longer worry about the roads not taken yet. ■ RATNA RAO SHEKAR

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START-UP

A nine-month-old start-up in the city has been extracting water from the air to protect groundwater resources for future generations

When Air Becomes Water

We know air, we know water, but what is air-water? Simply put, it is manufacturing water by extracting it from the air, using a revolutionary technology that has the potential to resolve the world's crisis for this life-giving liquid sustainably.

PASSION PROJECT

Surya Yadavalli, a 44-year-old techie who shuttles between Hyderabad and California, hit upon the idea of water from the air during one of his visits to India two years ago. He was fascinated by the idea that one can create water from air using an existing technology. "I've always dreamed of a meaningful, 100 percent green project," shares Surya, the CEO of **Nyla Air Water**. "When I discovered this, I knew it was time to take a break from my career as an IT consultant and contribute towards global sustainability efforts, with this amazing technology," he adds. So far, he has pumped in over Rs 8 crore for research and development and setting up of the factory. He hopes to break even in 2025.

LOCAL CONNECTION

Surya has a vast personal and professional network in Hyderabad and it seemed like the logical choice to start his water manufacturing plant here. After many years of research, Nyla was launched in June 2024. "We have a manufacturing plant with a capacity

to produce 10,000 liters of water, but currently we are producing about 3,000 liters as we are streamlining our supply chain management," says Surya.

HOW IT WORKS

"We use a bleeding edge technology that draws natural moisture from the air around us to create clean drinking water. Through condensation, filtration and purification, we transform the moisture in the air into the purest form of pH-balanced water and alkaline water, which we then enrich with essential minerals to enhance health and well-being," he explains. "Sourcing water from the air eliminates dependence on groundwater sources, reduces exposure to all contaminants in the ground significantly, and mitigates the impact of climate change by regulating atmospheric water vapor levels," he adds.

LOOK AND TASTE

Nyla water tastes and looks like authentic mineral water, even tastier after you know its purity is top-notch. It has already gained a following among top Tollywood stars, luxury hotels like Avasa, cafés like Karafo and AMB Cinemas. "Our imported bottles are so well-designed and sustainable that some clients initially order for the bottle itself. But once they discover the water is sourced from the air, they're truly impressed," says Surya.



FUTURE PLANS

Surya plans to expand Nyla by establishing more plants in cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and more, to expand the air-water technology beyond Hyderabad. "Increased usage in the future will lead to higher demand and reduced production costs thanks to economies of scale. It's a win-win for both, those adopting air-water solutions and the environment," he explains.

■ MANJU

Tel: 92979 79497

Price: Starts at Rs 299 for 660ml / 7.5 pH, silver Closure bottle.(at cafés and malls)





CAUSE

This women-led non-profit supports the underprivileged through education, food and medical aid

Boosting Woman Power

An inclusive society, free from prejudice and discrimination has long eluded women. However, in recent decades, changing this scenario at several levels has paved the way for meaningful change. NGOs like **The Pink Circle Foundation**, aim to challenge inequality, call out biases, question stereotypes, and help forge an inclusive world through their dedicated efforts.

ABOUT THE PINK CIRCLE FOUNDATION

An encounter with a young girl in need of urgent medical assistance marked the unofficial beginning of The Pink Circle Foundation in 2014. Moved by her situation, Founder-President Sudha Dabral and her friends decided to contribute to the child's medical expenses. By 2019, Sudha was joined by 60 women in contributing to similar causes. To ensure a sustainable approach, she took a significant step forward that same year by officially registering the women-led Pink Circle as an NGO.

Currently, the non-profit consists of 160 plus members, including the Executive Committee and volunteers. It aims to unite women to support one another

and also ensure that they help others like them gain access to education, basic rights, and a clean environment. Their services include education for the girl child, distributing food and providing financial aid to those in need.

IMPACTFUL PROJECTS

Through their initiatives, Pink Circle strives to encourage and involve as many ordinary women as possible to become change-makers and collectively achieve something extraordinary.

Projects offered at The Pink Circle Foundation include:

- Project Stree Shiksha
- Project Bhojan Bandhu
- Project Sanjeevani

Through Project Stree Shiksha, Pink Circle supports the education of the girl child from low-income families. They provide educational scholarships, mentorship opportunities, and skill development programs. With Project Bhojan Bandhu they provide food at orphanages and old age homes; and, with Project Sanjeevani they grant financial aid for medical expenses to those who cannot afford them.

"During Covid we had around 85 to 90 underprivileged maids and drivers to whom we had given free vaccinations," Sudha shares, reflecting on the medical camps held during the pandemic.

Additionally, the NGO provides community activities in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, waste management, lake cleaning initiatives etc.

SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

Funds are collected from the NGO's 160 members, who contribute Rs 200 each per month and more when required. Additionally, donations, including those from the members' friends and relatives, and fundraising events help in acquiring monetary aid.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

- Through volunteering (only women)
- By offering financial support through donations
- By spreading the word to raise awareness

MOVING FORWARD

Sharing their vision for the future of The Pink Circle, Sudha says, "We are taking things one step at a time. We at a time and have not made any big plans for the future. We continue doing our bit and take things as they come." ■ IPSHITA

Tel: 81250 30001

Website: thepinkcirclefoundation.org

Instagram: [thepinkcirclefoundation](https://www.instagram.com/thepinkcirclefoundation)





SPORTS

Sumeeth and Sikki Reddy, initially the winning partners in badminton mixed doubles from the city, have now forged new paths to pursue the sport

Double the Goals

The year 2024 had significant wins for badminton mixed doubles duo B Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy from Hyderabad. They were the runners-up at the Iran Fajr International and Azerbaijan international tournaments and are looking forward to tournaments in 2025.

MAKING THEIR MARK

The dynamic badminton duo, who are also a couple off the court (they got married in 2019), have been mentored by P Gopichand and have achieved remarkable milestones in the sport. Sikki,

an Arjuna Awardee in 2018, remains a key figure in Indian badminton, while Sumeeth has made a seamless transition from a successful player to a committed coach this year. Sumeeth is set to accompany the Indian women's and mixed doubles teams as their coach for the All-England, European Circuit, and World Championships. Meanwhile, closer home, Sikki is focused on recovery, undergoing rehab for a knee injury as she prepares to compete in the prestigious All England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham this March.

COACHING FUTURE CHAMPIONS

On the Hyderabad badminton circuit, the duo has a special place, having played six world championships between 2013 and 2019 and two in the last three years after the lockdown. "Just when we thought we would win big this year, I pivoted towards coaching, as I felt it was the right time," says Sumeeth. "And I need to find a new partner," bemoans Sikki. The couple have started their academy called Sikki Sumeeth Sports Center at Tellapur for beginners between 10 and 13 years where they have hired state-level coaches. "Both Sumeeth and I guide the students at the center when we are in the city," says Sikki.

Having spent nearly two decades playing badminton, the duo emphasizes that Hyderabad needs more champions – and to achieve that, more academies. "Give kids the gift of time. Don't push them too hard until they're around 14 or 15," they advise. "At the same time, parents should ensure they don't force their children into the sport unless they show genuine interest and aptitude. Not every child who learns badminton will excel at a competitive level, as some may lack the necessary footwork, and agility, or might even face challenges like flat feet."

They stress that parents shouldn't feel disheartened if their child doesn't reach the top league. "Sports training instills discipline, resilience, and other valuable traits that shape a well-rounded personality."

As champions who also run a professional academy, they shed light on what it takes to coach potential top players in Hyderabad. "For weeks leading up to major tournaments, players must dedicate nearly their entire day to training. Financially, the journey is demanding – it costs approximately Rs 15 lakh annually to provide on-court coaching, tailored nutrition, fitness workouts, and cover travel expenses for tournaments."

So, is Sumeeth better as a husband or a coach? "As a coach," Sikki laughs. "We get to spend more time together now as coach and student." ■ MANJU



In conversation with the versatile actress **Anjali**, who likes to take things slow and steady when it comes to her career

“Some roles seemed destined for me”

“Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle put me in a different league and has given me the freedom to pick and choose my roles”





ANJALI IN A STILL FROM *BAHISHKARANA*

While Telugu cinema boasts a multitude of male actors with local roots, finding actresses who have roots in the Telugu states and also speak the language fluently remains a rarity. This trend is due to the influx of actresses from Bollywood and other film industries. However, Anjali has managed to carve a niche for herself, proudly embracing her identity as a true Telugu *ammayi* in Tollywood.

Hailing from East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh, and raised in Chennai, Anjali made her debut in Tamil cinema with *Kattradhu Thamizh* (2007), a film that established her as a promising talent. Her entry into Telugu cinema was with *Shopping Mall*, a dubbed version of her Tamil film. Here, she portrayed a young woman enduring harsh working conditions under a toxic boss, delivering a heart-wrenching performance that resonated deeply with audiences.

Her breakthrough in Tollywood came with the blockbuster *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu* (2013), where she played Seetha Mahalakshmi, a character embodying traditional values and familial bonds. Her nuanced performance brought authenticity and depth, contributing to the film's massive success. Anjali was pitted against superstars Venkatesh and Mahesh Babu, yet she excelled and won hearts as Seetha. In the last 12 years, she has chosen roles that seem to put her in a different league.

Anjali further showcased her versatility in the horror-comedy *Geethanjali* (2014), where she portrayed a dual role. Her captivating performance as Geethanjali, caught in a web of supernatural events, won her the prestigious Nandi Award for Best Actress. Fast-forward to 2024, and she remains in the spotlight with notable projects like *Gangs of Godavari*, *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi*, and *Game Changer* released in January this year. Her debut in the digital space with the Zee web series *Bahishkarana* has also been widely appreciated.

Anjali's career is a testament to her commitment to challenging roles, and balancing traditional characters with modern narratives. Her ability to embody the essence of Telugu culture continues to resonate with audiences,

solidifying her status as a respected figure in Indian cinema. Excerpts from her interview:

A GOOD START TO 2025

This year has opened well for me with two releases – *Game Changer* in Telugu and *Madha Gaja Raja* with Vishal in Tamil, also dubbed in Telugu. It's like a double delight for me. I'm excited for audiences to watch both films in all languages.

GAME CHANGER IN REAL LIFE

I loved playing the role of Parvathi, the wife of Appanna (Ram Charan as an older person) in *Game Changer* as it was relatable. She is a strong woman who supports her partner in the fight against corruption and wrongdoings in society. I look and talk like the quintessential Telugu homemaker who knows her mind. Such roles change the game for an actor like me who has been in the industry for the last 18 years. I think I nailed the *pasupu-kumkuma* (traditional) look.

AWARD-WINNING ROLES

Some roles seemed destined for me – like Seetha (*Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*), Parvathi (*Game Changer*) or Pushpa (*Bahishkarana*). They were powerful and impactful. The roles extracted the best from me and I relied on my real-life experiences to bring authenticity to my portrayal. My role as Pushpa is based on caste politics during a specific period which throws light on the problems rampant in villages amidst this backdrop.

THE SANKRANTHI CONNECTION

Sankranti and I share a vibe. This festival always brings me something to cheer about. Exactly 12 years ago, my life-defining movie *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu* was released on Sankranti, and there has been no looking back. It put me in a different league and has given me the freedom to pick and choose my roles.

MEGA TRIO

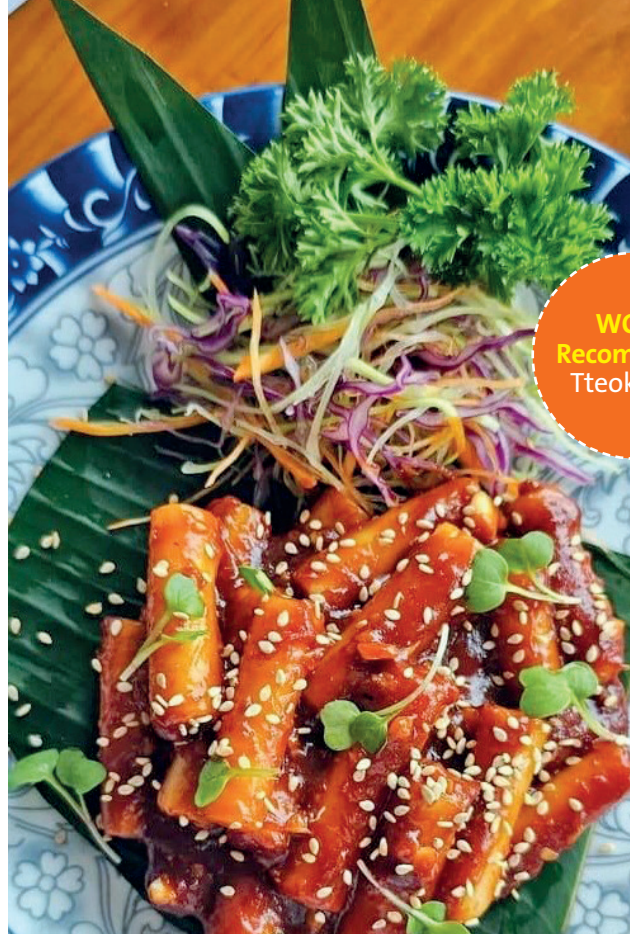
I've worked with Pavan Kalyan in *Vakeel Saab*, and with Ram Charan now. I hope I can land a role with the legendary Chiranjeevi too. Fingers crossed as I look forward to the rest of 2025. ■ MANJU

Tteokbokki, by the founders of Seven Sisters, serves Korean, Japanese and Himalayan food

Pan-Asian and Himalayan Delights

Tteokbokki, named after a Korean street snack, is the latest venture by the Lama brothers from Darjeeling who have popularized pan-Asian/North Eastern/Himalayan cuisine in Hyderabad, with their excellently executed menu at accessible pricing. Housed in Khajaguda, the cozy joint has the signature vibrant ambience, colorful Tibetan flags, paintings of mountains and yaks (by the in-house artist from Darjeeling) on the walls and ceilings, paper and cane lamps, and customized tableware blending seamlessly into that Himalayan vibe.

Tteokbokki doesn't claim to be exclusively Korean even while having enough K-staples (and signatures) on its menu. You will also find plenty of Japanese and Himalayan (Bhutanese, Nepali and Sikkimese) options like sushi, baos, yakitori, datshi, phaling, jhol momos etc.



WOW!
Recommends
Tteokbokki

You would be well-advised to try out their Chicken Corn Dogs – one bite into the crisp panko-coated corn dog on a skewer and you get a delicious mouthful of a cheesy and well-cooked chicken filling, with a Yakitori drizzle garnish. This one is not to be missed for sure; vegetarians can try the cheese corn dog.

For novelty, you must order the Tteokbokki, cylindrical rice flour sesame-coated dumplings simmered in a spicy red Korean gravy. Here the recipe has been tweaked to include chicken sausage, fish cake, cheese, and boiled egg in the dough, The Korean Chicken wings which are now part of global menus, are made quite well here, spicy and crisp. If you like soups, the Korean Jjamppong, a spicy seafood and vegetable noodle soup was steaming hot, fresh, and fulfilling, while being a palate pleaser. Momo lovers should order Jhol Momos, the chicken ones were outstanding.

Sushi, both the Japanese and the Korean versions called Kimbap (aka Gimbap) which is sesame oil seasoned rice (bap) and various other ingredients like chicken and assorted vegetables, rolled in dried seaweed and served in bite-sized slices. Ramen bowls, both Korean and Japanese, feature and the Korean spicy ramen made for a hearty meal.

Rice is a huge part of Korean cuisine, therefore consider ordering Bulgogi or Bibimbap, which comes with Namul or greens with protein of your choice, (chicken, tofu) and veggies, and is served with Gochujang, the amazing fermented condiment of red chilli paste, glutinous rice, and fermented soybean). This one-pot meal gives you all the Korean flavors you could ask for! ■ SWATI

Meal for two: Rs 1,000

2nd Floor, Rainbow Vista, Naga Hills, Chitrapuri Colony, Khajaguda
Tel: 7075748111

Timings: 12 noon to 11.30 pm



Hanok serves authentic Korean cuisine through its well-researched menu curations

Seoul Food

As you approach Hyderabad's first fine-dining Korean diner **Hanok** in Filmnagar, (next to Cravery Café, their sister brand), the pagoda-shaped sloped roofs of the entrance manage to impress. Once inside, the breezy and contemporary ambience charms guests. The spacious alfresco area has loads of greenery and spray mist fans, and the indoor seating is slightly elevated.

"A Hanok is a traditional Korean house with unique architecture – with sloping roofs curving inward. It caught our attention and stayed with us when we went on a recce trip to Seoul to research Korean food for our restaurant," share Priya Vasireddy and Rama Madala, founder-partners at Hanok.

MENU MAGIC

The menu is exhaustive, consisting of soups, salads, starters, the rarer "Mandu" (the Korean version of steamed dumplings/dimsums), Kimbap (seaweed rice rolls on the lines of nori sushi), Buchimgae, (crisp savory pancakes with veggies/chicken/prawn fillings). You are spoilt for choice with plenty of guksu or Korean noodle options and rice bowls, including Bibimbap, the iconic Korean dish gaining popularity. There are burgers and hot dogs too, in keeping with modern Korean food trends. The menu steers clear of pork and beef, even while the founders acknowledge that Korean food is pork-centric, keeping in mind the food preferences of Hyderabad diners.

"We pickle our veggies, ferment our kimchi (cucumber, napa cabbage) in-house and handcraft our rice cakes called Tteokbokki, a chewy and spicy savory rice cake dish," they add.

For starters, try the addictive and crispy Korean Chicken Wings – served in three flavors: spicy, sweet and sour, and original – the last being sans any flavor, well-fried and seasoned only with salt. Silken Tofu with Stir-Fried Kimchi is also a much-recommended vegetarian option.

MORE VARIETY

For sushi lovers, Seaweed Rice Rolls Kimbap, with tofu, veg cheese, crispy chicken/prawns and tuna options are a good choice. The Mandu or Korean dumpling choices are varied and the dainty Kimchi, as well as the prawn ones, were fabulous!

My favorite was the Bibimbap and I chose the vegetarian option, rice topped with seasoned and sautéed veggies, including shiitake mushrooms, peppers, and artichokes, topped with a generous dollop of sesame and sweet-spicy-savory bibimbap sauce.

While the dessert menu is still a work in progress, do try the Hotteok – pancakes made with wheat flour, milk, sugar, and yeast and a delectable filling of honey, cinnamon, and peanuts.

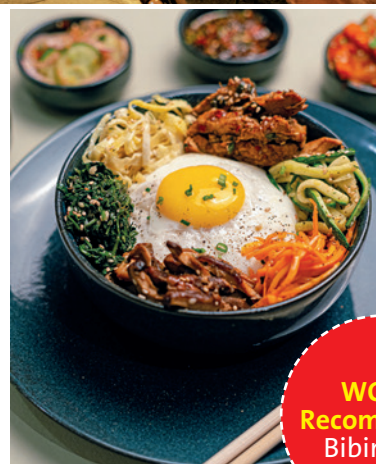
■ SWATI

Meal for two: Rs 2,000

Plot No.416, Road No. 78, Filmnagar, Jubilee Hills

Tel: 9346315193

Timings: 12 noon to 11 pm



WOW!
Recommends
Bibimbap

This Valentine's Day, WOW! lists out cafés that play Cupid by offering an intimate space to all those struck by his arrow

Love is in the Air



LA VIE EN ROSE CAFÉ

The **La Vie En Rose Café's** pink-themed floral aesthetic doubles as the perfect fairyland for new romantics looking to bask in the V-Day spirit. Surrounded by faux rose petals, the trendy joint's charm lies in its bubblegum vibe and a global menu.

For a hot lunch date with your significant other, opt for the spicy Thai Green Curry served with Jasmine Rice that can blend harmoniously with tender chicken or crispy vegetables. Or with Katsu Chicken Maki Roll which includes succulent pieces of tender katsu chicken, and the Continental Grill Fish with Herb Rice that is carefully seasoned and grilled to perfection.

End the meal with a warm brownie nestled in a fluffy cotton candy, crowned with a scoop of velvety ice cream. Yum indeed!

Meal for two: Rs 800 onwards

Tel: 72868 53101

Timings: 12 pm to 11.30 pm

TWO FOLKS CAFÉ

For an icy affair with flavorful soft serves, we could not recommend **Two Folks Café** enough. Creatively served, their wide range of soft serves can be had in multiple ways. Apart from cups and cones, they are also served with cookies, waffles and croissants – the latter two playfully named Waffty and Crofty. The softy line-up includes Belgian chocolate, biscoff and pistachio. Biscoff and Belgian chocolate.

Additional highlights include TF's version of an Affogato topped with a creamy biscoff soft serve, the heavenly TF Biscoff Soffogato.

Meal for two: Rs 400 onwards

Tel: 99639 20044

Timings: 10.30 am to 12.30 am



CHAI PANI CAFÉ

At **Chai Pani**, couple your chai with games like Jenga, Uno, chess, and Ludo, among others, providing you and your partner the perfect opportunity to bond over a playful tête-à-tête.

Chai Pani hits include their crispy Chicken Pav, the super soft Bun Maska, the creamy Jalapeno Cheese Poppers served with tandoori mayonnaise, the filling Smoky Paneer Sandwich, and their must-try Haleem Shots.

Pair this delicious line-up with beverages like the Marshmallow Hot Chocolate, and a regional specialty chai – the Mumbai Cutting – which pairs perfectly with the Vada Pav and the Bun Maska.

Meal for two: Rs 400 onwards

Tel: 98636 36301

Timings: 7 am to 1 am





KÔHÉ - THE KOFEE SHOP

You can settle in with a hot cuppa joe near the lounge area that features upcycled furniture, a guitar to jam with, board games, and soothing music that changes according to seasons.

Get a taste of some of their concoctions, including Dirty Matcha, made of a shot of espresso and milk; and the heavenly Cacau Shot served in a small paper cup resembling a shot glass. Pair these up with other delectables including the delightful Almond Butter Toast, made with sourdough bread topped with homemade almond butter and fresh strawberries.

Meal for two: Rs 400 onwards

Tel: 89770 55347

Timings: 7:30 am to 9 pm

ECHOES LIVING ROOM

Couples who wish to support an important cause this Valentine's Day can try **Echoes Living Room** – a diner built to empower the deaf and mute community by providing them with employment opportunities. The space teaches customers about social responsibility while indulging in some finger-licking food.

At Echoes, you can communicate with their staff members using sign language. At each table, you will find a switch and a note that says, press the bell and we'll be right there to serve you. On your table, you will also find cue cards to help make requests, including ones to share the menu and to clear the table.

Try their crispy Peri Peri Crunch Chicken Momos, the drool-worthy OG Big Crispy Juicy Chicken Burger. The dessert – Echoes Nutella and the Brownie Factory – comes with a chocolate-infused waffle topped with ice cream, Nutella, and chocolate sticks is the perfect wrap for the romantic meal. ■

IPSHITA

Meal for two: Rs 600 onwards

Tel: 85000 03150

Timings: 11 am to 11 pm



Reconnect with nature over chai and a fusion-inspired spread at this new café

Make yourself at home

The words 'Feet Grounded Heart Light' are written on the wall as one walks in. These words are meant to capture the essence of the café's name, **Barefoot Café**. It is the sentiment that welcomes you in. With its lush backyard and homely interiors, the 30-year-old bungalow-turned-café hopes to reconnect you with nature over adrak chai and an extensive spread of fusion-inspired delectables. One is not expected to be barefoot or leave their shoes at the door; the name is meant to motivate the visitor to connect with nature and get grounded.

EARTHY AESTHETIC

Food-curator-turned-café owner Komal Mundra opened Barefoot in November '24. The 4,800 sq.ft. venue offers outdoor and indoor seating. The sun-bathed outdoors is surrounded by green foliage, while the simple indoors offers a display of artwork and soothing music. Additionally, the indoor area features a fun-filled space for children which includes mini-sized seating, board games, and a variety of toys for them to play with and bond over.

FAMISHED

Starved and ready to be served, we dive into Barefoot's scrumptious spread starting with the crispy Prawn Firecracker coated in a spicy and creamy sauce. This was followed by the finger-licking delicious Paneer Inferno – soft and tender cubes of paneer tossed in a spicy and tangy sauce, and the just as savory Rustic Ranch Fries. Refreshing drinks like the Cranberry Coffee and the Orange Frioska are a perfect liquid accompaniment to the food.

Other indulgences include the Veg and Lamb Lasagne, both layered with rich tomato sauce and baked to perfection with pasta and tender lamb respectively. For pizza lovers, the Double Cheese Garden Fresh Pizza, a cheesy delight loaded



WOW!
Recommends
 Double Cheese
 Garden Fresh
 Pizza

with garden-fresh vegetables topped with melted cheese is recommended. Do try the Katsu Comfort Bowl, a Japanese-inspired dish made with tender, breaded chicken served with a rich, flavorful curry sauce; and finally, the BBQ Chicken, grilled chicken infused with smoky BBQ flavors.

The cherry on top of the hearty meal was the luscious chocolate dessert, Black Magic. This dark, rich, and creamy treat is the perfect way to conclude your lunch at Barefoot on a high note!

■ IPSHITA

Meal for two: Rs 600 onwards

Mugdha Lane, Road No. 2, Banjara Hills

Tel: 99124 64270

Timings: 10.30 am to 11.30 pm





This café's enchanting cherry blossom theme is a mood

Air-Fried and Baked Goodies

Located in the heart of Kompally, the nature-inspired and cherry blossom-themed **L'unico Café** opens to a 2,400 sq.ft. space enveloped in pink. The romantic aesthetic is enhanced with the contemporary music playing, comfortable seating, and a floral, Instagram-worthy spot that features a charming swing – quite the mood-setter for Valentine's Day.

Settling into our plush pink seats facing the swing, we place our order. The menu excludes tasting salt – MSG tasting salts which most restaurants use to enhance flavor but aren't healthy – and features items that are either air-fried or baked and served fresh.

We start with café classics – the soft and crispy Crunchy Legs and Chicken Donuts made with minced chicken mixed with homemade spice; the low-on-spice Malai Kebab; and the zesty Paneer Croquet and Fingers. We sample a selection of creamy and cheesy, paneer-heavy mains – the Pink Sauce Pasta, Basil Pesto Pizza, and Rice Paradise respectively.

We paired this feast with the café's refreshing mocktail, the Watermelon Wonder, and rounded off our lunch with the soft yet crunchy Belgian Waffles that oozed with melting chocolate. ■ IPSHITA

Meal for two: Rs 600 onwards

3rd floor, Yes Bank building, HT Road, beside SPG Grand Hotel, Pedda Bashirabad, Meenakshi Estate, Kompally

Tel: 84003 12003

Timings: 11 am to 11 pm



WHAT'S NEW

COFFEE AND CONVERSATIONS

The Roastery Coffee House, the OG of café in Hyderabad since 2017, opened its second outlet at Kokapet. This location also boasts of their signature courtyard with an open sky ambience with all the popular food and beverage options they serve at Banjara Hills. The brand that has roasted 55,000 kgs of coffee and served two million customers so far in their eight locations across India (and one in Finland), says 'Same great coffee, new location'. As always, try their cranberry coffee with a breakfast platter.

Tel: 87123 58054



FESTIVE TREATS CONTINUE

Palle Vindu, known for its authentic rustic Telugu festive meal with Konaseema specials, will continue its Veera Telangana Food Festival – started for Sankranti – into February as well on popular demand. Must-try options from their buffet with 40 delicacies are four varieties of mutton and chicken dishes including Ankapur Nattu Kodi and Golichina Mamsam Kooru with Jowar Roti and Pachchapala Pulusu. Vegetarians can relish Rail Palaharam, Pulihora and Dappalam. Local desserts such as Malidala and Bellam Ice Cream are also on the buffet.

Tel: 79693 46653

BAKERY IN A CAFÉ'S AVATAR

The 30-year-old Bigbyte Bakery in Srinagar Colony opens its third outlet at Khajaguda, offering a new range of café-style food besides its popular baked goods, such as artisanal breads like sourdough, ciabatta focaccia, and croissants. This new two-level eatery has added snack options such as bagels, granola bowls and sourdough open-toasts and pizzas on their menu besides their regular offerings such as wraps, rolls, sandwiches, shredded chicken burger, puffs and customized birthday cakes. ■ MANJU

Tel: 90100 19898





PRESIDENT DROUPADI MURMU WITH STAFF

Visit this remarkable café in Bollaram, run by persons with disabilities, where talent and flair take center stage

Served with love by the differently-abled

The **Mitti Café** housed at Rashtrapati Nilayam in Bollaram, Secunderabad, is a visual delight – a charming, Instagrammable space with vibrant walls, quirky interiors, and an explosion of color and creativity. From colorful pillows and Indian kitsch to mirrors, ceramic plates, whimsical wall graffiti, and planters with inspiring one-liners on every table, every corner radiates positivity and warmth.

But what truly sets this café apart is that it is entirely run by 17 incredibly talented Persons with Disabilities (PWD). Mitti Café is more than a place to enjoy great food and ambience—it's a celebration of inclusion, resilience, and the boundless potential of these inspiring individuals.

THE BACKSTORY

Inaugurated on December 18, 2024, by President Droupadi Murmu, this 30-seater eatery is part of the chain of non-for-profit cafés (this is the 47th) run across institutional and public spaces such as the Supreme Court and Bengaluru Airport generating livelihoods for the differently abled. Started by social entrepreneur Alina Alam in 2019 – to promote inclusivity, the brand Mitti Café brings out the potential of those with physical, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities.

KEEPING IT LOCAL

Here, Gouri from Vijayanagaram, who has partial vision, shines at taking orders and seamlessly passing them to the chefs, while Santosh Kumar from Anantapur, who uses a wheelchair, excels at managing the billing counter. Meanwhile, Satyavathi and her son Akash with an intellectual disability pour their hearts into preparing the dishes.

A MENU WITH MANY OPTIONS

The menu is a mix, offering everything from South Indian tiffins to burgers, fries, sandwiches, noodles, chaat, lemonade, and other popular café favorites. We enjoyed sipping the



lemonade while eating vada pav and fries. But more than the food, we loved the vibe – rich with possibilities and hope spearheaded by the Telangana Social Impact Group – TSIG.

“We believe in empowering individuals with disabilities by recognizing and optimizing their unique abilities in their roles at the café,” says Achinto Ghosh. The team underwent three weeks of hands-on training on-site before stepping into their roles. They also sell handcrafted gifts – ranging from candles to cheese and bags made by PWDs, thus making the experience of eating or buying sustainable and sensitive. ■ MANJU

Meal for two: Rs 600 onwards

Rashtrapati Nilayam, Bollaram

Tel: 87774 04414

Timings: 10 am to 6 pm

They also can undertake birthday and event catering, and will shortly be available on food delivery apps



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Foodstories brings over 8,000 of the world's finest ingredients to Hyderabad, including 104 varieties of cheese

A gourmet paradise

Foodstories is the city's newest gourmet food experience store – the ultimate playground for foodies. Imagine this: 8,000 premium ingredients sourced from around the globe, including 104 types of cheese and 2,000 pantry essentials spread across a sprawling 12,000 sq. ft. space. From Sambal Oelek Chilli Paste (a fiery Indonesian specialty) to Kombu Dashi Rishiri (dried seaweed vegetable), Foodstories has it all.

WALK THROUGH EXPERIENCE

While same-day home delivery is available, a visit to the store is an experience in itself. The aisles are a visual feast, packed with fresh produce, sauces, condiments, exotic gourmet items, and more. Of special interest is the hydroponics counter, offering hydroponic moringa, curly kale, and Thai galangal. Nearby, you'll find an impressive selection of healthy crackers, protein wafers, gluten-free options, and spicy hot sauces. Adding to the fun are the food-tasting tables, such as the Chipotle counter, where you can sample products before purchasing them. It's a foodie's paradise where you can taste, explore, and shop all in one place.

THE BACK STORY

Launched in March 2024, Foodstories has expanded from its first store in New

Delhi to Hyderabad's upscale Banjara Hills. This experiential destination caters to discerning, well-travelled consumers searching for exceptional ingredients and unique experiences. "Our mission is to enhance our consumers' quality of life by sourcing the world's finest products. We aim to celebrate the diversity of global cuisines by collaborating with top growers and artisans to bring exceptional

ingredients to our shelves," says Ashni Biyani, co-founder.

DINE WHILE YOU SHOP

The store features a 50-seater all-day café offering an eclectic menu, including breakfast specialties, small plates, salads, specialty coffees, fresh juices, and indulgent baked goods. Highlights include the viral Croissant Loaf (a buttery layered pastry) and Tissue Bread (a flaky South Korean delight). Adding to the charm is the presence of Boba Bhai, the trending bubble tea brand, with a live counter serving signature drinks.

THE MEAT MARKET

Meat lovers will revel in the luxurious offerings here, which include a caviar bar, ready-to-cook meats, marinated options, and a curated seafood selection featuring 10-count tiger prawns and smoked Norwegian salmon.

COMING SOON

The store is set to bring the coveted Japanese chocolate brand Royce to Hyderabad. From the bestseller Nama chocolates to their snacking specialties, this is a sweet treat to watch out for.

■ MANJU

Price: Rs 500 onwards

Takeaway: Orders can be placed online and picked up from the store

Delivery: All grocery items and cheese are available for home delivery through WhatsApp and online

Ground Floor, BSR One, Road No. 2, Banjara Hills

Tel: 90041 71401 (Same-day delivery available)

Timings: 10 am to 10 pm



Celebrating the brand **Bhargavi Kunam**, the homegrown designer who is rooted in Hyderabad, but has a pan-India following

Crafting dreams, one saree at a time

Bhargavi Kunam stands apart with her bespoke creations in a world where fast fashion rules. "I've never worn pret. I have designed every piece in my wardrobe since I was 16," shares the designer behind **Bhargavi Kunam Studio** in Banjara Hills. She believes clothes should reflect individuality.

BRIDALS TO NEXT GEN

Her design philosophy and sense of symmetry come from her architecture degree. Since launching her eponymous label in 2007, Bhargavi has carved a niche where tradition meets modernity. Her handcrafted sarees, from vibrant half-sarees for young girls to intricate bridal drapes, cater to milestones in women's lives. "It's more than design or customization. It's the trust and relationships I build with clients, many of whom return for anniversary ensembles or bridal wear for the next generation," she says.

HER DESIGN FAMILY

Her work has attracted notable clients, including families of Gaali Janardhan

Reddy and Venkaiah Naidu. "I once coordinated wedding ensembles for over 26 members of Naidu *garu's* family," she recalls. Actor Lakshmi Manchu's twinning half-sarees with her daughter Nirvana were also head-turners. Expanding her reach, Bhargavi's collection debuted at the Bangalore Times Fashion Week, with actor Sreeleela as her showstopper last June. She even dressed Bhagya Suresh, daughter of Malayalam actor Suresh Gopi, for her wedding a few weeks ago. Despite a packed schedule, Bhargavi thrives on ambition. "Imitation is flattery. All my designs often get replicated by top stores," she laughs.

INNOVATION MEETS AUTHENTICITY

A self-described 'vintage soul' who finds inspiration in artist Raja Ravi Varma's works, Bhargavi champions handloom fabrics, collaborating with weavers from Kanchipuram, Banaras, and beyond. She also directly sources Kalamkari and other traditional crafts, safeguarding authenticity. "Quality comes from controlling every component of the

garment. Starting our looms was a natural step," she explains.

A VISION BEYOND FASHION

After 17 years in the industry, Bhargavi remains hands-on, seeing fashion as a legacy. Inspired by 120-year-old heirloom sarees passed down from her grandmother, she strives to preserve India's textile heritage while expanding her brand. From starting with a modest Rs 2 lakh loan in 2007, she's built a label synonymous with luxury and authenticity. What does it take to replicate brand Bhargavi? "It's 17-hour days for 17 years," she quips and smiles. The 44-year-old designer sums it up: "All I want to do is redefine Indian fashion, blending tradition with innovation and delivering timeless pieces that tell unique stories." ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 5,000 onwards

39A, Lane No. 12, near Omega Hospital, MLA Colony, Banjara Hills

Tel: 99898 99881

Timings: 11 am to 7 pm

<https://bhargavikunam.studio/>

MODEL IN BHARGAVI'S DESIGN



BHARGAVI, WEARING HER OWN DESIGN



QUICK TAKE ON TRENDS 2025

"Fashion should be a reflection, not a reaction"

Tones dominating bridal fashion: Pastels, classic reds, jewel-toned pinks, greens, and ivory.

Go-to bridal style: A white Kanjeevaram saree with Ganga Jamuna border or a real zari gold Banarasi saree in red with zardosi and kasap embroidery.

Fashion rule to live by: Never be impulsive. Stop, ponder, and pick. Fashion should be a reflection, not a reaction.

Advice: Forget selfies and trends. Focus on how a garment feels — it's about the vibe, not the visuals.

WOW! tells you where to buy recycled diaries, bags and furniture that support marginalized women and the planet

Shop Mindfully

Did you know it takes 10,000 liters of water to produce a single pair of jeans, which often ends up in landfills? With climate change and resource depletion looming large, the need for mindful shopping has never been more urgent. This year, why not embrace the concept of circularity — buying products made entirely from recycled materials?

Hyderabad-based social enterprise **Bamboo House India** is leading the way with its livelihood training program for marginalized women in Balapur Basti. This initiative transforms waste into exquisite handmade products while empowering women with financial independence.

WHAT'S ON OFFER

The product range includes recycled bags, yoga mats, New Year diaries, and lampshades made from discarded car seat and cargo belts, denim and tire waste, synthetic leather waste, aircraft seat covers, army tents, truck tarpaulins, scrap jeans labels, and other products on the verge of being dumped at landfills. The products are all handmade by 50 marginalized women from their homes in Balapur.

“These products not only reduce landfill waste but also tell a story of hope and sustainability. Our purchasing patterns are creating the mess, but together, we can close the loop,” says Prashant Lingam, Founder of Bamboo House India.

The enterprise is also rolling out a “Donate Your Jeans” campaign, encouraging residents and corporates

to contribute used denims that will be repurposed into stylish bags and other goods. Every piece supports the livelihood of women, who are paid per item (e.g., Rs 50 per diary, Rs 200 per bag). “In the coming months, women will be learning to make bamboo bicycles, reclaimed wooden crafts, and products from agricultural waste besides banana fiber and water hyacinth,” informs Prashant.

Starting April, an exclusive store in Madhapur will showcase these upcycled treasures. These products are also available online for those who prefer shopping from home. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 500 onwards (for New Year diaries in bulk)

Tel: 98662 18590 (WhatsApp to order)
<https://www.bamboohouseindia.org/>



This Hyderabad-based store offers a top-tier line-up of kitchen essentials

Premium Kitchen Ware

Conceptualized with the passion to offer a fine dining experience to those with a taste for it, **The Warehouse** is a new store that provides premium tableware, barware, and cookware. “The vision is to give Hyderabad a store where you get premium home appliances, cutlery, crockery, glassware, and more,” elaborates Founder, Dinesh Jain.

THE OFFERING

The ground floor houses a wide variety of kitchen gear, which includes the elegant brass thali set, colorful porcelain and ceramic crockery, adorable chutney holders, a wide line-up of glassware and appliances like mixer grinders, food processors, smoothie machines, coffee makers etc.

The steel, brass and bronze cutlery are sourced from local artisans from across the country, whereas the appliances and the crockery are either imported or sourced domestically.

The hotel, restaurant and bar-centric second floor is grander. Bigger appliances in rice cookers, blenders, pancake makers, single and double-door pizza ovens, waffle makers, food warmers make up this floor. Additional highlights include roti boxes, a sharp range of knives, ice buckets, peg measures, cereal and juice dispensers, chic sets of wooden serve ware for pizzas, burgers, and sandwiches, dimsum baskets, taco holders, and an exciting line-up of sizzler plates. ■ IPSHITA

Price: Rs 20 to Rs 45,000

The Warehouse, Suraj Bhan Pearl, Shaikpet (Flyover Pillar No. 50)

Tel: 70951 81513

Timings: 10.30 am to 8.30 pm (Mon to Sat), and 12 am to 6 pm (Sundays)

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PICS: MOHD ATIF (@CHUPKARATIF ON INSTAGRAM)



STREET SHOPPING

Here are five compelling reasons why visiting the **Gudimalkapur Flower Market** is an experience you shouldn't miss

Stop to smell the roses

Imagine being enveloped by the vibrant yellows of 12,000 kilos of fresh yellow chrysanthemums, their enchanting fragrance floating through the air and leaving you spellbound! If you are in Hyderabad, this isn't just a dream. You can experience this when you walk into the bustling Gudimalkapur Flower Market near Mehdiapatnam. Drop by on a good day and immerse yourself in this floral wonderland! Not just these, the market is a haven for those who wish to buy local flowers such as marigolds and roses to exotic ones such as peonies, carnations, and tulips. Champa, mogra (jasmine), rose, parijat and datura are the regular ones.

Here are five fascinating reasons why you must visit the market, with a cloth tote in tow!

1 The market rose to significance in 2009 after the age-old Jambagh Flower Market near Nampally was shifted here. It continues to be the biggest market in Telangana with about 120 licensed shops and vendors selling flowers here.

2 Nearly three-fourths of the 135 shops here cater to the wholesale market with the rest opening to selling to regular/domestic customers and not businesses/florists. If you have a wedding or a housewarming ceremony, get here by noon so that you can load up your car and get back. The flower trucks start reaching the market from 4 am onwards. It is utter chaos till almost 11 am – unloading, segregating, loading (to local vendors). Post that activity, they settle down and tend to other customers.

3 Get inspired by the magic of the fingers of women who string the flowers into garlands faster than you can say 'garland'. Most of them go about their work diligently while giggling or listening to music on their mobile phones. They string a garland in less than 10 minutes and do over 100 per day.

4 While digital payments also work, some vendors still want cash

because they rotate cash to fellow vendors and make a profit. You can expect the best bargains if you remit cash instead of digital payments.

5 Avoid buying at places surrounding the market as they are leftover flowers (some even picked up from the garbage). The rates of the flowers may differ slightly from vendor to vendor based on their quality and how rare they are in the season. Buy in bulk, 1 kg upwards as they don't sell lesser quantities. Expect filth caused due to polythene covers, flower wrappers, abandoned baskets, and wooden frames. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 80 onwards for a set of six marigold garlands (for door decor)

Gudimalkapur Wholesale Flower Market, Karwaan

Tel: 79471 29943

Timings: 4 am to 2 pm. It is open throughout the day, but the number of vendors and choice dwindle post-lunch

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FROM A SUNLIT HOME WHERE EVERY ROOM GREET'S THE MORNING LIGHT, TO AN ART STUDIO EMBRACING a lush terrace garden, a cliffside cozy nest with lake views, and a haven of stone walls, stepping stones, and garden courts – the homes of four young couples are redefining inspired living in Hyderabad. WOW! checks them out!

BY MANJU LATHA KALANIDHI



CONTEMPORARY HOMES: GARDENS, ART STUDIOS AND MORE



A HOME THAT BREATHES

Proud owners: Aneesha and Saharsh Reddy

Pin: Nandagiri Hills

Built-up area: 10,000 sq.ft.

Nestled in a verdant neighborhood, the home of Aneesha and Saharsh Reddy is an architectural experiment that seamlessly blends modern living with eco-conscious values. Designed as a sanctuary that respects its environment, this residence is a thoughtful balance of aesthetic appeal, sustainability, and innovative design. First-time visitors could easily mistake it for a luxury resort hidden within the city's bustling landscape.

A CANVAS OF NATURE

The home's exterior resembles a living painting, with vibrant greens from the foliage and calming blues from the water dominating the palette. After their low-waste wedding, the couple envisioned their home as a natural extension of this philosophy. "We wanted our house to breathe naturally," says Aneesha. Guided by this principle, the design process focused on creating a residence in harmony with its surroundings.

At the heart of the home is the outdoor deck – a wooden-floored oasis enveloped by cascading bougainvillea and lush curtain creepers that spill like a waterfall from the terrace above. The deck is adorned with over 35 varieties of plants, creating a green haven that has become a favorite retreat, not just for the couple but also for their pets. "It's where we unwind and reconnect with nature," shares Saharsh.

DESIGNING WITH LIGHT AND SPACE

Spanning 10,000 square feet, the house is oriented to the east, allowing every room to bask in the magic of the morning sun. The interiors are illuminated with natural light, while the verandah offers panoramic views of verdant greenery. The three-level home is a symphony of light and shadows, where the interplay of landscaping and architecture ensures every hour feels like a golden hour.

ARCHITECT SPEAK

"This home is a living testament to the harmony between sustainability, comfort, and thoughtful design. From water management systems to thermal efficiency, every element of the design contributes to a greener future. Aneesha and Saharsh's home is not just a residence but a statement – a celebration of sustainable living and inspired design that sets a benchmark for urban homes in Hyderabad. Although the house did not come with any views or focus points, it was created with nature as the backdrop."

– Chirla Sudhir Reddy, Principal Architect at Sudhir Associates, Hyderabad



PICS BY RAVINDER REDDY - RAVI STUDIO



WOODEN DECK WITH OUTDOOR SEATING



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STUDY THAT OPENS TO THE GARDEN



AN INDOOR SPACE THAT MERGES WITH THE OUTDOORS EFFORTLESSLY



MURALS AND MORE IN THE LIVING ROOM

The minimalist interiors echo the home's connection to nature. Neutral tones of grey walls and beige stepping stones underplay their presence, directing attention to the surrounding greenery. Collapsible glass walls in the living and dining areas invite the outdoors in, blurring boundaries between inside and out. The recycled wood ceiling and outdoor deck emphasize the home's commitment to sustainability, while the mural in the living room, depicting plants, enhances the relaxed, natural vibe.

The house is thoughtfully oriented to the east, allowing every room to bask in the magic of the morning sun

SUSTAINABILITY AT ITS CORE

This home goes beyond aesthetics to embed sustainability into its very fabric. A rainwater harvesting system efficiently captures and stores water for later use, while a wastewater recycling system irrigates the surrounding landscaping. These features embody the couple's dedication to reducing their environmental footprint.

Thermal efficiency was another cornerstone of the design. Insulated walls maintain a comfortable indoor climate, reducing the need for air conditioning during summer and heating during winter. This not only lowers energy consumption but also enhances year-round comfort.

VERDANT ROOFTOP RETREAT

Terrace gardens crown the roof, offering a tranquil retreat while serving a functional purpose. These green spaces reduce heat radiation, enhance insulation, and provide a serene escape. Sowmya Lakhamraju of Kiasma Landscape Architecture crafted the landscaping, creating spaces that are both beautiful and sustainable. "The balance between modern living and nature has been the most rewarding aspect of this home," Aneesha reflects.

DECK TALK

"The site was barren and everything was planted ground up. The curtain creepers and a mix of bougainvillea were part of

the original plan," says Sowmya, the landscape architect. The garden is rich with familiar trees such as mango, papaya, and lemon to protect their privacy amidst the tall, commercial IT complexes. Sampangi and Tabebuia rosea plants (similar to cherry blossom trees) in the garden add a touch of fragrance and a pop of color to the greens. Sowmya has used basalt and wood for the outdoor deck which is unanimously the highlight of the house.

OWNER'S TAKE

"Every design choice reflects our values of sustainability and harmony with nature. From the recycled materials to the lush greenery, this house feels like an extension of who we are."

Their favorite spot? The outdoor deck, where their dogs wag their tails in contentment as the couple soaks in the tranquility of their green paradise.

— Aneesha and Saharsh Reddy





THE DRAWING ROOM WITH A BALCONY AND QUIRKY FURNITURE



PICS BY ISHITA SITWALA

HOUSE ON THE EDGE

Proud owners: Sanjana Reddy and Akhil Ravi

Pin: HUDA Enclave, Jubilee Hills

Built-up area: 5,000 sq.ft.

Nestled at the edge of a cliff in the prime neighborhood of Jubilee Hills, this cozy 5,000-square-foot duplex apartment can best be described as quaint, quirky, or whimsical. An abandoned post box stands strong at the entrance giving us a hint of things to come. Home to young couple Sanjana Reddy and Akhil Ravi, it is a reflection of the hosts' love for art, books, and sweeping views of the city. "I often work from home and entertain our close circle of friends. We wanted a house that blends seamlessly from one room to the other without too many doors and enclosures," says Sanjana.

THE VIBE

The lower floor is an open floor plan, that flows seamlessly from the kitchen to the dining area, to the living spaces, and the bar. The double-height dining area will stop you in your tracks for multiple reasons. The first is a fuchsia pink matte painting by artist Anjaneyulu featuring watering cans and garden paraphernalia; views of the city streaming through the glass walls; and the dazzling Channapatna light from Ashiesh Shah Atelier in tones of green which lights up the space at night.



ARCHITECT SPEAK

"The guests' bedrooms and the couple's rooms are minimalist with connected balconies, again for their staple – the views. The walk-in closets are bound to spark envy as there is almost an entire bedroom allocated for them."

– Disha Bhavsar & Shivani Ajmera,
Principal Designers, The Quirk Project, Mumbai



THE PARTITION MADE USING REPURPOSING PHARMA WASTE



THE ROOM WITH BOOKS, COLLECTIBLES AND BEST VIEWS OF DURGAM CHERUVU



The Kota flooring, wooden ceiling, and lime plaster walls provide great backdrops for the quirky elements of the house

PERSONAL PICKS

The Kota flooring, wooden ceiling, and lime plaster walls provide great backdrops for the quirky elements of the house including the Laxman Rao Kotturu (monkey) installation in the hall, opposite the well-stocked bar. Sanjana, a confessed addict of home décor reels on Instagram, admits that she would impulsively pick up a chair here, a painting there, and the canary yellow fridge, without really heeding her design consultants – The Quirk Studio. The huggable cactus by an Italian artist shipped from Barcelona is another of her impulsive buys.

It is their library with 500 books, vinyl records, collectibles, and a wall-to-wall mixed media Kerala painting by Vivek Vilasini that stands out. The view of Durgam Cheruvu from the balcony is the hero of the home with lovely greens lined along the length of the balcony. The couple say they make it a point to stop by and smell the coffee during sunset at this spot. Perks of a corner house!

OWNER'S TAKE

"The library is our special space. Lined with floor-to-ceiling shelves, a desk, a cozy couch, a rocking chair, books and collectibles, and a designated spot for the record player, this room is where we work, converse, curl up with a book or lay back and listen to some classics. The other favorite is the upcycled white 'The Wicker Story X Cancelled Plans' partition made of pharma waste. The third is the post box at the entrance that I picked up after an auction from Kochi. Friends drop notes to me in the box and I open it once a month."

— Sanjana Reddy



SANJANA AND AKHIL





OUTDOORS AND INDOORS BLEND IN HARMONIOUSLY

PICS BY PANKAJ ANAND

NOSTALGIA MEETS NATURE

Proud owners: Deepti Kolla and Sricharan Atluri
Pin: Road No. 10, Jubilee Hills
Size: 8,680 sq.ft.

For Deepti Kolla, it was all about recreating childhood nostalgia, and the memories of her grandmother, when she was building her house in Jubilee Hills. An ode to the yesteryears, her courtyard house is also a celebration of most things local. The inspiration behind this 9,000-square-foot home was her love for nature.

The three-level house uses the courtyard – with a two-story ceiling – as the central point and builds the entire structure around it. The load-bearing pillar is adorned with Channapatna lacquer beads to give it an earthy look and make it the showstopper. While the ground floor accommodates the common areas and the parents' bedroom, the first floor comprises a living room and master bedroom for Deepti and her investor husband Sricharan Atluri, and their twin boys. The second floor houses the guest bedroom, a bar, spa, and sauna and opens onto the terrace.

ARCHITECT SPEAK

“As per the brief, the project began with the courtyard as the central element, filling the home with natural light. The courtyard tries to blur the boundaries of inside and outside by bringing in nature – it ties the whole project together. The use of indigenously sourced décor elements made by Indian artists includes the marble, antiques, modern art and rugs is an added attraction.”

– Sona Reddy, Sona Reddy Architects, Hyderabad





WOOD, MARBLE AND PLANTS JUXTAPOSED BEAUTIFULLY

BEDROOM WITH EARTHY TONES



THE CENTRAL PILLAR ADORNED WITH CHANNAPATNA BEADS



The three-level house uses the courtyard – with a two-story ceiling – as the central point and builds the entire structure around it

OWNER'S TAKE

“The nature-inspired home with the courtyard brings memories of childhood filled with love and warmth that I want to cherish and relish.”
– Deepti Kolla

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Sona Reddy who is known for her work for restaurants such as Telugu Medium and Kadali, with a distinct Telugu touch, is the architect behind this project. As you look around, the color palette is mostly a muted green with a mix of more of the same color. Next to the courtyard pillar is a green wall connecting the dining room featuring a tiny water body and large indoor plants. Ample light streaming into the central part of the house is an automatic energizer. Ensuring that the natural elements seep through, the house has fewer doors than most houses, except for bedrooms. The dining room has a black, wood-stained dining table with a dry kitchen space adjacent to it. A bold glass chandelier set in brass adds drama to the room.

The parents' bedroom on the ground floor sports a rust color palette. The bed with its high cane headboard in black stands in contrast to the subdued backdrop. Pops of red are introduced by way of the inbuilt shelving unit and bed cushions.





EARTHY VIBE FROM THE WORD GO

A HOUSE OF GARDENS

Proud owners: Meenakshi Katragadda and Siddharth Kolli
Pin: Road No. 45, Jubilee Hills
Built-up area: 12,000 sq.ft.

With stone walls, terrace gardens, and dramatic staircases, the gorgeous 12,000-square-foot home of Meenakshi Katragadda and Siddharth Kolli is sheer architectural drama. Built on a 1,400 square yard plot, the house was conceptualized as one surrounded by multiple private gardens, each with its own unique identity. The layout and circulation spaces were critical in seamlessly integrating the gardens with the indoor areas.

The first garden is in the front yard of the house, which is situated on a busy street. Architect Kanan Modi constructed a large stone wall to screen the garden from the road. This stone wall serves as the home's identity and is the most prominent architectural feature visible from the street. It reduces heat and harsh sunlight coming from the south and allows for beautifully diffused daylight to enter the indoor spaces, which open into the garden.

Meenakshi is an artist with a focus on paintings and runs a design company that specializes in bespoke gifting and invitations. Her husband Siddharth Kolli is an entrepreneur in the food processing industry. They moved into the house last year after the 18 months it took to build it. The land had a traditional house built in the 90s which was broken down to construct the contemporary home they had always dreamed of.

ARCHITECT SPEAK

"We focused heavily on climate control using cavity walls, garden courts, and strategic layering between indoor and outdoor environments, which helps to reduce temperature and diffuse heat and light entering each space.

"Meenakshi and Siddharth are a young couple – an artist and an entrepreneur, both of whom have well-defined ideas about what they want their home to be."

– Kanan Modi,
 architect and interior
 designer at Kanan
 Modi Associates,
 Hyderabad





ART STUDIO OVERLOOKING THE TERRACE GARDEN

MUSIC MEETS DESIGN



The house was conceptualized as one surrounded by multiple private gardens, each with its own unique identity

OWNER'S TAKE

"We envisioned a home that truly captured our vibe – warm, inviting, and brimming with character. Our must-haves? Grand spiral staircases which make a statement and lush green spaces to breathe life into every corner. Today, these elements aren't just part of our design; they're integral to how we experience and cherish our home every day."

– Meenakshi and Siddharth

NATURAL IN CHARACTER

The main entrance, made entirely of reclaimed timber, leads into a semi-covered garden court that guides us into the areas beyond. To the north of the garden court is a linear water feature with stepping stones leading to the drawing room and entertainment space. To the south are the family and dining areas.

A large concrete spiral staircase leads to the bedrooms and private spaces on the first floor. On the second floor, overlooking a terrace garden is Meenakshi's art studio. Finished in monolithic lime concrete, this space is designed to feel like a clean slate. It creates a strong dialogue between the artist, her canvas, and its colors, allowing for a versatile environment filled with diffused natural light.

The house is thoughtfully divided into two distinct spaces – one dedicated to entertaining and socializing, and the other serving as a serene personal living space. The two areas are seamlessly separated by a courtyard featuring a lush garden that houses a swing and a water body. Boundaries are blurred, yet privacy is respected. ■



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Barracks & Anteroom in Sainikpuri is a military-themed bar and lounge worth a visit

Cantonment charm meets cosmopolitan vibe

Sainikpuri's latest addition, **Barracks & Anteroom**, takes inspiration from its Cantonment roots with a military-themed bar, kitchen and lounge space. Opened in December, the three-level venue offers a mix of quirky Army-inspired décor, a versatile food menu, and a lively dance floor. While it aims to be the go-to hangout for the neighborhood's cosmopolitan crowd, does it deliver on all fronts? **WOW!** checks it out.

COMRADES IN ARMS

The story behind Barracks & Anteroom is as heartwarming as its concept. Childhood friends and alumni of Bhavan's Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, Sainikpuri – cricketer Ambati Rayudu, his wife Vidya Channupalli, and Sudheer Yadav – decided to bring their shared dream to life in the very neighborhood where they grew up. While Rayudu was the driving force behind the idea, especially the military theme and map-inspired décor, he has now stepped back due to work commitments. His vision, however, remains the soul of the place. Vidya and Sudheer's hands-on approach ensures things move smoothly.

MARCHING INTO THE THEME

The bar takes its Army inspiration seriously, offering a "barracks meets cosmopolitan" vibe. From maps on the

walls to bottle-cap art and shipment pieces imported from London, every corner tells a story. The crowning jewel is the Anteroom, a cozy lounge space that transforms into a pulsating dance floor on weekends, complete with a DJ console spinning everything from retro hits to current chartbusters. "We also have live concerts and live screenings of matches and those days are crowd pullers," says Sudheer.

SPIRIT OF GOOD TIMES

The 400-seater is versatile, with indoor and outdoor spaces. Our favorite is the cozy private dining space on the mezzanine floor decorated with paper lanterns. The second spot is the terrace with sweeping views of Sainikpuri. We managed to catch a spectacular sunset that day. "The food menu, meticulously curated over six months with chefs from different states, offers an eclectic mix of dishes," informs Sudheer. Highlights include the creamy Fish in Sauce, Mushroom Dimsums, spicy Angara Chicken Tikka, and the crowd favorite – Three Pepper Paneer. For something unique, try the cheekily named Combat Salads or Arrowmatic Mains.

BOTTOMS UP

Drinks are a major draw too. Signature cocktails like the refreshing



ANGARA CHICKEN



Barracks Breeze (whisky and orange juice with red cabbage juice) pair perfectly with the vibe, whether you're enjoying a sundowner or gearing up for a night of clubbing. If you like a desi vibe – a bit *chatakdar* with Indian *masalas* (chilli, *kaala namak*) try the desi cocktails with quaint names such as Chukkalu Choopista, Jambalakidipamba and Lungi Dance. ■ **MANJU**

Meal for two (including alcohol): Rs 3,000

50, Sainikpuri Road, Secunderabad
 Tel: 91249 72888
 Timings: 12 pm to midnight

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THE VIBE

The newly opened **Mythus** is a great vantage point to take in the cityscape for those seeking a breathtaking rooftop experience. Located high above the bustling city, Mythus offers panoramic views of the Gandipet area. We loved the white Greek-style ambience with a bohemian vibe, lush landscaping and chic furniture.

TIPPLES

Although a brewery, Mythus is yet to start serving brews. We tried two artisanal cocktails and a refreshing mocktail. Ambrosia was a tropical fruit medley with strong notes of mango and passionfruit, a tad sweet but refreshing. We loved the Phoenix, quite potent with brandy, red wine reduction and fig syrup; this is definitely the drink for a nippy evening. We also tried the vodka-based Hippocampus, named after the sea horse, made with butterfly tea, lavender syrup, saline solution and garnished with carrot air.

FOOD

Mythus offers a menu that caters to diverse tastes, ensuring a memorable dining experience. Here's what we tried: Smokey Chicken Tikka, marinated to perfection and grilled for a smoky flavor; it is one of their best sellers and we approve! Next up were Butter Garlic Tiger Prawns coated lightly in a butter sauce spiked with Chili flakes and a dash of cream. We also tried the Open Baos, fluffy buns with delightful fillings; Peri Peri Paneer, spiced to perfection and served with herbed rice; and Godavari Royale Roast flavored with fresh coconut.

No meal is complete without a sweet ending so we tried Hit Me Chocolate Mousse: A decadent dessert that you have to break into. ■ SUPRIYA

Night out for two: Rs 3,500 onwards

4th Floor & Terrace, Pearl Cardinal Building,
Gandipet Main Road
Tel: 96401 62345
Timing: 12 pm to midnight

Listed in the '30 Best Bars India' list

RU in high spirits



RU is now in the '30 Best Bars India' list, ranking, at #26. The bar ranking platform that celebrates the country's finest bars, bartenders, and breweries with their annual ranking since 2019 has included Hyderabad's hot nightspot. The modern Indian restaurant in the heart of Jubilee Hills has beaten even Mumbai's hip bars to grab that position. Spread across a 1,600 sq.yd. property and four floors, it embodies an old-world charm with boulders and rocks tastefully incorporated into the design.

SHER-O-SHAYARI

Started by Rahul Reddy and his sisters Shreya and Divya, the bar is designed around a large rock that naturally exists here. The Insta-worthy grand spiral staircase which leads to the rooftop is also built around it.

The bar menu is unique and crafted by mixologist Karl Fernandez. The Nizam's Opulence, a rum cocktail with a note of muskmelon is smooth as silk. If you dig something tangy and desi, try the Guntur Gang with its hint of tamarind and chilli. Dying to know which drink everyone's posting? It's the Sher-O-Shayari – a whisky cocktail with a couplet of Urdu poetry printed on the foam. Also, RU is considered a perfect place for a ladies' night out or a date. ■ MANJU

Night out for two: Rs 4,000 with alcohol

Plot No. 376, Near Diamond House, Road No. 10, Jubilee Hills
Tel: 73311 17812
Timings: 12 pm to 12 am

MEKONG

Khao Suey

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*Mekong is now open at **Avasa**.*





MSN POTTERY STUDIO

Master the subtle art of pottery and ceramic making at this studio

It's Clay Time

Established in 2008, **MSN Pottery Studio** offers sustainable and handmade ceramics. Reflecting the name of its founder, ceramic artist Manpreeth Singh Nishtar, MSN is a natural extension of his love for clay, nature, and mindful creativity.

THE INITIAL SPARK

Sixteen years ago, a short summer camp in Delhi transformed Hyderabad-born Manpreeth's life. The experience sparked an interest in clay, which inspired him to move to Delhi for over ten years to work with it. While pursuing his passion, Manpreeth also held a lucrative corporate job in sales, which he quit in 2018 to become a full-time potter. That same year, he set up and designed the zero-waste sustainable studio at Kokapet, underlined by his 31 years of animal and environmental activism.

THE VINTAGE SPACE

"At my studio, everything is fired with solar energy, is vegan, and based on zero waste. Ten percent of the clay used is upcycled and it has 100 percent greywater in it," Manpreeth shares. The entire studio is built using industrial

waste. The 1,000 sq.ft. space features reused and upcycled wood and old doors and cabinets, giving it a vintage touch. Additionally, the studio's water taps offer only three percent water to wash your hands and achieve water efficiency.

Manpreeth informs us that his work usually involves the technique of hand-building — which allows him to create shapes without using the wheel. Inspired by nature, he often crafts pieces featuring flowers and animals. In comparison, he finds crafting tableware like cups and bowls with the use of the wheel limiting. "If you work on the wheel, you have the limitation of

making everything round," he explains. He believes in a hybrid approach where both techniques are used, inviting endless creativity.

Products offered include wall installations, decorative art, exotic tableware, plaques and more. They are all crafted from porcelain, stoneware and terracotta. You can try making them yourself with the pottery classes offered at the studio — two-hour workshops for beginners and courses from basic to advanced levels. The studio also hosts corporate events, kitty parties, family outings, and birthday parties for children and adults. ■ IPSHITA

Price: Rs 250 onwards

Villa No. 6, Legend Chimes Echo, Kokapet
Tel: 92463 31145

Timings: 9 am to 6 pm

Instagram: msnstudio.in

MANPREETH SINGH NISHTAR (FOUNDER)



Learn to make soaps and candles, or paint a tee shirt paint a tee shirt and grab a bite too

Creativity over a Coffee



THE TUFTING STUDIO



THE SNAZZY INTERIORS

Going out in Hyderabad usually means dining at a restaurant, clubbing or visiting a mall. For those of you who like a quiet spell with a bit of learning thrown in, **Lyzure**, a new activity center especially for adults is a welcome addition. Started by Niharika Gollapalli, Lyzure is tucked away in a cozy by lane of Jubilee Hills and is just what the city needs – a quaint hangout to indulge in one's creative side.

Spread over 4,000 sq.ft. and two levels in an old bungalow (complete with stone walls and lovely old trees) it is an art café – where one can sign up for a class (ranging from 45 minutes to over an hour) and learn candle and soap-making, tufting, and tee shirt and sculpture painting. With dedicated instructors for all the creative sessions present, and materials provided, all one needs to do is walk in, book a session, and indulge in some creative activities.

The interiors are designed by the Mumbai-based, Doodle Mapuls, and the space is warm and inviting. Niharika says, "I thought there was a gap in Hyderabad, and I wanted to have a space where you could do something more than eat and also create a community so that like-minded people can come together."

Art is the heart of this charming activity hub. You can pick a sculpture (mostly from scrap made by a city-based brand,

None of the Mill), or a tee shirt, paint it, and take it home. The tufting studio is already a hit with youngsters trying their hand at the machine and creating interesting (and sometimes hazy!) canvasses. Most of the instructors are artists themselves which makes a world of difference in the manner in which they guide you.

Knowing Hyderabad's penchant for food – the space offers interesting options that are bound to be a hit with Gen Z. Think Tea-ramisu or Curry Ramen. The menu created by celebrity chef Suryansh Singh is eclectic yet delicious – you can snack as you wait for your class to begin. We loved the Dabeli Croissants and the Three Cheese Toastie, both of which were ideal finger food on a lovely winter evening. There are other options ranging from Chhole Kulche, Hummus, and rice bowls for those who want a leisurely meal along with excellent coffee options.

On the cards for Niharika are pottery classes (in the next couple of months) and a similar activity center for kids (the space is already earmarked next door) this year. Drop in, create a reel for your Insta, and oh – don't forget to say hi to the friendly resident poodle-cum-mascot, Maggie. ■ MALLIK

Pricing: For classes: Fees: Rs 799 onwards depending on the session

Meal for two: Rs 800 to Rs 1000

Behind Café Kohe, Prashasan Nagar, Jubilee Hills

Tel: 96666 41577

Timings: 12 pm to 10 pm, closed on Mondays



CAPTION

If you love reading but have no one to discuss your latest favorite with, this club is the one to join

A book club, at last!



KALPANA AND UNNATI

For avid readers who were missing a book-loving community in Hyderabad, **The Lit People** is a book club with a difference. Started by college friends, Kalpana Sinha of the consulting firm Aaroha and Unnati Ved, Founder of the afterschool program Eager Readers, it is aimed at bringing people who love books under one roof.

The club organizes monthly gatherings where members delve into a range of books, from contemporary novels to classic literature. These meetings provide a platform for readers to share insights, debate interpretations, and explore different genres, enriching their reading experience.

Kalpana was with Microsoft before setting up the leadership strategy consulting firm and Unnati was a finance professional (in private equity) before she set up Eager Readers. Both were a part of book clubs earlier, being avid readers, and found a vacuum in the city. Kalpana states, "I grew up with books and over the years there has been a definite dip in the people who read. We want to encourage adults who moved away

from reading to get back to books. The inspiration for this was the 100-saree pact, that brought sarees to the forefront. We hope a similar movement could bring book reading back from the sidelines."

Members of The Lit People will meet once every month and read six books per year. The other six meetings will be centered around discussing multiple topics from

genres to the works of favored authors. The book club is for people who want a space that's beyond casual meet-ups. A learning space where everyone has the opportunity to grow and voice their opinions about literature they love.

The first book at the inaugural session was *Dear Mrs Bird* by AJ Pearce and the author joined the meeting too (via Zoom) much to the delight of the members. The meet-ups will be held at different locations across the city and the founders are enthused that they have had around 60 registrations already; and are looking forward to hitting the three-digit mark. A nominal membership fee is applicable or people will not take it seriously, laughs Kalpana.

The idea behind starting the book club is to ensure a platform for the city's reading community. Kalpana adds, "We want to keep the momentum going by having several smaller events and spin-offs once we have a dedicated community. Right from book discussions to guest speakers, there is a lot that is planned."

This is not just another book club; it's a haven for Hyderabad's readers to rediscover their love for reading. ■ MALLIK

Membership Fee: Rs 7,500 for one year

For more information head to www.litpeople.in



Spaces that Spark Joy



KITCHEN & BAR

From the mezzanine
floor overlooking
the space
to secluded corners
for hushed whispers,
find your spot
at QOSA.

*Where Can I
Serve You From?*

- LOVE, QOSA.

Now Open

AT GANDIPET

Scan to reserve a table or call 9995939299



Wellness coach **Manjula Ghattamaneni** draws from the lives of achievers around her to create a Pancha Koshas-based program to help you be your best self

Celeb secrets for a better you

Every Sunday at 4 pm, a remarkable community gathers virtually, united by a shared mission to transform their lives. This isn't just a webinar; it's a weekly ritual of self-discovery, growth and empowerment led by Manjula Ghattamaneni, life coach, founder of Mann Ghatt Wellness and creator of the transformative Celebrity Secrets Holistic Wellness Program.

Actor, director and producer turned wellness coach, Manjula has dedicated 32 years to mastering meditation, personal development, and energy healing. "With over 10,000 hours of meditation and wisdom gained from celebrated spiritual mentors, I have crafted this holistic program designed to empower individuals to achieve happiness, health, prosperity and spiritual fulfilment," she says.

THE JOURNEY TO WISDOM

Manjula's own transformation began with a moment of deep frustration and prayer, which led her to meditation. She discovered that happiness lies within and that true change begins with our thoughts. Inspired by this revelation, she formalized her practice, delved into spiritual courses, and developed a deep understanding of the internal world of thoughts, emotions and beliefs. These experiences form the foundation of the Celebrity Secrets program. "My father Krishna and my brother Mahesh are superstars not because they got lucky or just worked hard, but because they mastered the secrets of holistic wellness, mindset, discipline, energy and manifestation. My program draws inspiration from these people who I have seen at close quarters," she says.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

She begins with a free orientation and introduction to her program over a Zoom session followed by signing up for the online program. "The members connect every Sunday at 4 pm – for the rest of their lives – for a live class. The program focusses on the five bodies of human existence – *pancha koshas* – physical, energy, emotional, mental and spiritual. True success and health come from nurturing each of these dimensions," she states.



WHAT IT ENTAILS

The program also addresses deeper issues like thyroid imbalances, suicidal tendencies, and emotional trauma, providing tools to heal and thrive. "It's an amalgamation of 35 years of research, life lessons, and experiences, offering a roadmap for achieving 360-degree health – not just the absence of disease but a proactive, vibrant state

of well-being," she quips. From mindset, breathwork, relationships to goal setting, the weekly sessions handhold you to a better life, she promises. ■ MANJU

Membership fees: Rs 4,999 onwards for Silver to Rs 1,00,000 for Diamond

Tel: 99080 68840

Timings: Sunday 4 pm, online



Salmon Sperm DNA plus a non-invasive alternative to botox and more are some of the skincare treatments on offer at **Zennara**

From acne to anti-aging, solved

If Kim Kardashian and Jennifer Aniston can get it, so can you, and right here in Hyderabad. We are talking about the Salmon Sperm DNA (PDRN) Treatment for skin rejuvenation and more such revolutionary treatments, available at **Zennara Clinics** at Jubilee Hills, under the supervision of dermatologists.

THE INCEPTION

Started by three entrepreneurs Nagu Reddy, Priyanka Reddy and Adhip Iyer, the center believes that beauty starts from within. "We take a holistic approach to beauty and wellness, starting with diet and lifestyle changes before turning to advanced treatments. The treatments – ranging from HIFU (High-Intensity Focused Ultrasound, a non-invasive alternative to botox) to PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma) therapy, we have it all," reveal the founders Nagu and Priyanka.

THE TAKERS

Zennara caters to individuals aged 25 to 50, but stands out for its focus on teenagers. "Teen clients, often influenced by social media, seek treatments for acne, pigmentation and scars to combat insecurities early," adds Priyanka. The clinic also attracts professionals, brides, grooms, and men, she adds. New brides start six months ahead of the big day with full-body laser hair reduction. Some of the treatments are what they call 'lunchbreak procedures,' lasting for about 15 minutes.

TOP THREE TREATMENTS

1. Salmon Sperm DNA (PDRN) Treatment: Known for its anti-aging properties, this treatment uses DNA closest to human DNA (of the salmon fish) for skin rejuvenation. It can be injected or applied via microneedling, offering flexibility for first-time clients. "The treatment introduces salmon DNA

into the skin through micro-injections which stimulate the body's natural healing process thus improving skin texture, elasticity and overall appearance," explains Nagu. It also addresses fine lines, wrinkles, acne scars, sun damage, and heals damaged tissues. For best results, it takes three to five sessions spaced a few weeks apart, at this center that won India's Best Aesthetic and Wellness Center of the Year.

- 2. PICO Laser:** This treatment is a revolutionary solution for hyperpigmentation and melanin issues. The laser breaks down melanin using pico seconds (one millionth of a microsecond), providing quick, noticeable results in just a few sessions. "High-tech lasers like PICO are designed for Indian skin tones," says Priyanka. The benefits include preventive and long-term complexion solutions. One needs two to six sessions for best results.
- 3. Exosomes Therapy:** This is a regenerative treatment for hair loss and skin concerns. Using bio-stimulators, it promotes anti-aging and combats hereditary hair loss effectively. One of the procedures involves applying a serum on the skin through micro-needling (hundreds of micro-needles that prick your skin and you wouldn't feel anything), shares Nagu about this treatment. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 5,000 onwards and they also have a subscription-based loyalty program

Road No. 19, Jubilee Hills

Tel: 70707 01099

Timings: Mon to Sat: 10 am to 7 pm; Sun: 11 am to 3 pm

www.zennara.in

Keep the muscles in your face and neck toned and strong with this online class

YOGA FOR THE FACE



Face yoga is a wellness practice that includes exercises, massages, and stretches. These exercises help tone and strengthen the muscles in your face and neck, and improve your overall appearance.

“We have 56-plus muscles including the neck in our face, and we work to tone and strengthen them,” shares face yoga

instructor, Nidhi Garg who is also adept at zumba, aerobics, pilates, strength training, kickboxing, and more. Additionally, she says that practicing face yoga helps address issues like double chins and dark circles, while uplifting muscles and minimizing wrinkles.



Tools used in performing face yoga include spoons, jade rollers, guasha stones etc. The routine begins with a focus on the neck. Moving upwards, it targets the jawline, cheeks, and lips to plump them up, followed by working on dark circles and puffiness under the eyes. Moving on to the eyebrows to keep them in shape, and lastly, the forehead is toned to help eliminate frown lines. Deep tissue massage is also practiced every Thursday. A visible difference in one's appearance can be noticed within a month or two.

The sessions take place over Zoom in the evenings from Monday to Thursday, where Nidhi offers her expertise to 14 to 15 students. You can join when you feel ready to start your journey towards refreshing and improving your appearance naturally. ■ IPSHITA

Price: Rs 1,500 per month
Tel: 93920 11108
Timings: 8 pm to 8.40 pm

Saka Organics, a personal care launched by the young Seethala Karipineni, believes in keeping it simple

Simplifying natural beauty

It was the unique organic environment of Rishi Valley School (RVS), which nurtured Seethala Karipineni's foray into the world of personal care products, with the vision of “simplifying natural beauty.” Her venture **Saka Organics**, is the culmination of a livelihood project in school, conceptualized in 2018, when she was in the 11th grade.

CREATING LIVELIHOODS

“One of our projects was to plan viable livelihood models for our ‘Akkas’, who took care of us. Apart from teaching them to upcycle old sarees into jewelry, we also taught them how to make soaps, as we had learnt soap-making in seventh grade,” says the 22-year-old Seethala.

“The market was limited to teachers and parents of schoolmates, and the Akkas would be able to earn up to Rs 15,000 over a weekend, double their monthly salary. It was empowerment for them as well as us,” she adds.

SUSTAINABLE SELF-CARE

Today, the gender-neutral Saka Organics is retailing skin/hair/oral care products and accessories offline at 60 stores pan India, including Hyderabad, where it retails at Concu, Ewoke, Sage Living and Q Mart. Saka has an FDA-approved 20,000 sq.ft. manufacturing facility in Kakinada and the motto is to reduce carbon footprints and encourage sustainability by relying on direct sourcing from farmers.

“We believe in minimizing ingredients in our products like the Choco Loam, a dry shampoo which uses only two ingredients, arrowroot powder and cocoa powder”

TRADITIONAL INGREDIENTS


“We believe in minimizing ingredients in our products like the Choco Loam, a dry shampoo which uses only two ingredients, arrowroot powder and cocoa powder. The arrowroot absorbs the oil and dirt from the scalp while the cocoa powder imparts a darkish sheen to cover up the whitening effect of arrowroot and dry shampoos. Our hand-crafted products are based on traditional ingredients, avoiding harsh chemicals, suitable for all skin types and free from adverse effects,” she adds. ■ SWATI


www.sakaorganics.com
Tel: 90001 84391





BHARGAVI KUNAM

 bhargavikunam

 bhargavikunam.studio



Pantone's 2025 Color of the Year is the runway hit, Mocha Mousse – a warm brown hue that offers the comfort of chocolate and coffee. Highlighting this pleasant color, WOW! takes a look at the brands that initiated the MM craze, as well as the fashion icons who popularized it and etched it into our minds

The Warmth of Brown



MAKING A STATEMENT

Hangzhou played host to Chanel's Prefall 2024/25 Métiers d'art collection that was put together by its design team, the Creative Studio. The exciting line-up featured this mocha mousse ensemble that has since been highlighted alongside other standout pieces for the ongoing MM movement.

OWNING THE RUNWAY

Paying tribute to the city of Rome, Laura Biagiotti unveiled the Fall Winter 2024-2025 collection at the Milan Fashion Week. The brand's timeless whites and cashmeres were on display alongside chocolate hues that can be best described as breezy and elegant with a touch of empowered femininity.

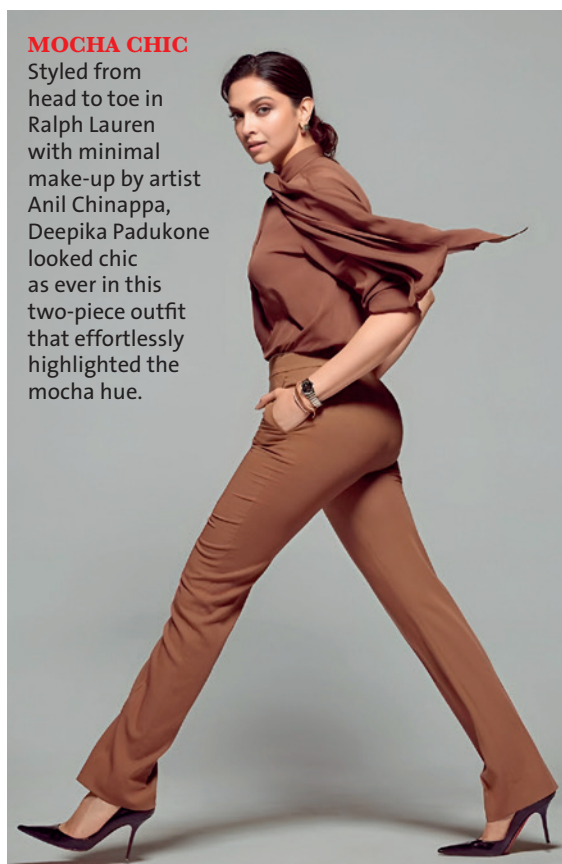


UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Designed by Creative Director Matteo Tamburini, Italian brand Tod's Spring-Summer 2025 Collection included slim dresses and suits in natural tones. The glossy brown combo donned by model Akur Goi was among pieces inspired by stone, sand, bronze, and the lively colors of Italian landscapes.

MOCHA CHIC

Styled from head to toe in Ralph Lauren with minimal make-up by artist Anil Chinappa, Deepika Padukone looked chic as ever in this two-piece outfit that effortlessly highlighted the mocha hue.





ELEGANT SOPHISTICATION

Bollywood actress Tara Sutaria exuded elegant sophistication in the chocolaty Sav Lamba pantsuit, paired with an intricately detailed waistcoat and scarf, while promoting the survival thriller *Apurva*.



STRIKING A POWER POSE

Media personality Hailey Bieber fronted the Jimmy Choo campaign, striking a power pose in a bodycon dress coupled with a matching handbag and a pair of ankle-length boots.



CLASSIC SWAGGER

Looking as sharp as ever, actor Shahid Kapoor rocked a classic pantsuit in the Pantone hue by bespoke menswear label, Osman Abdul Razak, at an event recently. He complemented the suave look with a pair of brown shoes, a crisp white shirt by SDS by Kushal Shah, and a neatly styled crew-cut hairstyle.



ROCKING A POWER SUIT

Also clad in an Osman Abdul Razak power suit was *RRR* star Ram Charan while attending a leadership summit. He teamed the Pantone-hued ensemble with a powder blue shirt and maroon and black oxfords, adding a striking contrast to the overall look.

MOCHA LIPS & NAILS

To complete their look, women can also incorporate the crushed lip color by Bobbi Brown, and the glossy mocha mousse press-on nails by Kloss Beauty for a flawless final touch.



ACCESSORIES

Men can make a stylish statement with Ray-Ban's round-frame mocha lens sunglasses and Zara's leather loafers with metal appliques, and women with Songmont's bucket bag, paired perfectly with Nykaa's The Tie Hub unisex hat. ■ IPSHITA



JAGDISH AND KAMLA MITTAL



JAGDISH MITTAL RECEIVING THE PADMASHRI

TRIBUTE

Jagdish Mittal – one of the biggest art collectors in the country the founder of the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art – passed away at 99 years last month.

Ratna Rao Shekar, who has been associated with the museum and has known the couple for over 30 years, pays a tribute

CUSTODIANS OF HERITAGE

One of the best-kept secrets of Hyderabad is the art, artefacts and textile collection amassed by the couple, Jagdish and Kamla Mittal, as few here know of the treasure that lies at their nondescript home in Gagan Mahal Colony. Ironically, the world over, they are well known among collectors and directors of renowned museums for their collection of artefacts, paintings and textiles among other things. In fact, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, a decade ago, just because Mittalji was kind enough to give me an introduction, the director personally took me around the South Asian Galleries to show me the artefacts there.

And even here in Hyderabad, I was privileged to meet many well-known art curators like Amy Poster – a specialist in Asian art then with the Brooklyn Museum – who once brought a group of wide-eyed acolytes to look at Mittalji's collection. You could write a whole history of Indian art by looking at his collection of Deccani, Pahari or other schools of painting. Scholars often come to his modest home and sit for days together to look at, say a Raag Maalika painting to study its nuances and discuss how a *viraha nayika* looked.

“He had an astute eye for art but also for humans. He knew who was interested in art and who was not”

That was the defining thing about him – his generosity in sharing his time and vast knowledge. You just had to visit his home – he always sat impeccably dressed in loose pyjamas and a khadi or ikat *kurta* – and after the initial small talk (a cup of *chai* perhaps) he would ask his granddaughter to bring a newly acquired artefact which could be anything from a rare Jain manuscript to nothing less than a Jehangir's sword or a page from the Akbarnama. These we would hold in our hand and look at reverentially before handing it back to him. This was the *rasa*, or the aesthetic pleasure that a beautiful object could evoke – something he had seen with Ramkinkar Baij, his mentor during his Shantiniketan days. Both Kamlaji and he were trained artists from Shantiniketan. But thereafter, they moved to Hyderabad at the invitation of some friends like Badrividyal Pittie (another stalwart collector in whose house MF Husain used to stay while in

the city). ‘Hyderabad was so beautiful then’, Mittalji used to say; incidentally, he was born in Gorakhpur in UP.

Mittalji's generosity included showing his collection with an inexhaustible energy. This was both enriching and exhausting for us, but he would never tire of talking about or showing his collection. He had an astute eye for art but also for humans. He knew who was interested in art and who was not. Depending on that, he would show you his collection or send you home, saying he was busy!

His warmth and generosity extended to several artists who are now legends. He would buy all the works Thota Vaikuntam made or some of Laxma Goud's as they were struggling artists in those early days. That his unerring eye saw the talent in them, is a different matter.

Indeed, my association came from the first time I came to Hyderabad to interview him for *Society*, a magazine I used to work for then. I wrote about him, and became an acolyte, learning from his vast collection and from the way the husband and wife lived and treated visitors. There were always *samosas* and *chai* and a showing of some art object and talking of its provenance. He could place period and atelier just like that. And he and Kamlaji would always come to see us off. Such was the grace.

A whole world vanishes with Mittalji's passing, though his legacy will live on in many of us who came under his influence. ■



CAPTION

One of the city's most dedicated art galleries turns 15

Celebrating Artistic Excellence

The year 2010 was one of mounting losses for the art world. The full impact of the Lehman Brothers' collapse in the US and the sub-prime mortgage crisis ensured that art was the last choice of investment for people in a deeply uncertain financial environment.

While art galleries everywhere in India and abroad were closing, art critic and artist Dr Avani Rao Gandra did just the opposite – and started the **Iconart Gallery**, where Iconart was an acronym for Indian contemporary art. “It was my passion, and I was very keen that I pursue it. Also, I was sure that I didn’t want to open a commercial gallery but a place where art can thrive. It helped that we owned the premises and the overheads were minimal,” she says.

The first show titled *Friends Forever* featured the greats including Laxma Goud, Thota Vaikuntam and DLN Reddy, all of whom Avani knew from her days as a research student while doing her PhD. Very soon she found her purpose – to give a platform to young and fledgling artists. That dream came true and since its inception, over 85 local artists have had their debut show at the gallery.

Avani recalls, “I noticed a gap as most galleries would showcase artists who were established and didn’t really need much support while upcoming artists did. Also, because I had been an art critic and research scholar, I was trained to recognize potential. Most young

artists who graduated from the art colleges in Hyderabad have had their shows at the gallery.”

“The biggest challenge has been that the Hyderabad crowd prefers to match art with the interiors of their homes or they prefer art that is beautiful”

– Dr Avani Rao Gandra

Another area of interest was to introduce more affordable works so that young people could invest and buy art. Till Covid hit, Iconart hosted an affordable art *mela* every year where upcoming artists could meet young enthusiasts looking to buy art. She also had artist residencies that helped such creative people make their mark.

One of the achievements Avani is proud of is the number of issues the gallery has touched upon over the years – from ecology and civic problems to women’s issues and the environment. When the American embassy wanted to highlight women’s safety – Avani took art to Irani cafés. During the India Photo Festival, she had street art in the gullies of Laad Bazaar in Charminar which evoked curiosity.

Apart from the Covid years what have been the big challenges? “The biggest challenge has been that the Hyderabad



DR AVANI RAO GANDRA

crowd prefers to match art with the interiors of their homes or they prefer art that is beautiful,” she says and adds, “They need to catch up with contemporary expressions and expand the definition of beautiful.”

The gallery’s current show, *Eternal and Ethereal Himalayas* is a fundraiser where 50 artists take inspiration from the photographs of the majestic Himalayas by Sathyaprasad Yachendra; with the proceeds going towards the medical treatment of a young boy.

With the continued support of the city’s art community and a growing network of collectors and patrons, Iconart’s future looks promising. Avani will ensure art stays part of the narrative for everyone.

■ MALLIK



VISITORS ENJOY GUARDIANS OF THE WILD ZONE WITH VR WEARABLES

PICS: MOHD ATIF (@CHUPKARATIF ON INSTAGRAM)

Now, enjoy a VR wildlife safari in our own concrete jungle. Sit, wear and watch

Discover the wild side of Hyderabad

Imagine a bustling city like Hyderabad offering not just historical charm and culinary delights but also a slice of the wild. Yes, you read that right! Nestled amidst the urban sprawl lies a sanctuary that promises an unforgettable tryst with nature. As we stepped into this green haven, it felt as though we had stumbled upon a hidden world where wildlife thrives and serenity reigns supreme.

THE URBAN JUNGLE

Nestled in the heart of Hyderabad's tech corridor, adjacent to the Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy Botanical Garden now boasts a revolutionary attraction – India's first-ever Virtual Reality (VR) wildlife safari and other VR experiences built on a green campus of 106 acres. The park's entrance, adorned with rocks and life-sized wild animal sculptures, sets the tone for an immersive wildlife adventure.

The Telangana State Forest Development Corporation (TSFDC) introduced the VR Wildlife Safari in November 2024, offering a new way to experience the wild. With four unique attractions, visitors are advised to allocate around six hours.

THE SAFARI

Picture this: the dense forest comes alive with the distant roar of a tiger and the majestic sight of a pride of lions prowling gracefully. The VR Wildlife Safari brings this vision to life. Visitors board a specially designed minibus, don advanced VR

headsets, and are transported into a vividly simulated natural environment. The bus can take ten visitors per ride across 3 km. Strategically placed virtual animals appear to walk toward you, growl nearby, or move past majestically, creating an eerily realistic experience. For a moment, it feels authentic – until you realize it's the magic of VR.

The experience features high-definition visuals, realistic soundscapes, and interactive elements that make the adventure unforgettable. When WOW! tried the safari, it left us deeply inspired by the importance of wildlife conservation.

Duration: One hour

Cost: Rs 200 per person

AR KIDS ARENA

The zone adds a playful twist to the adventure. Visitors can pose with the VR-rendered version of any wild animal, and the park sends the digital snap directly to your WhatsApp – free of charge. A simple yet delightful activity, especially for children.

Price: Free

Kids can also let their creativity shine by drawing an animal on paper, which is then transformed into a lively 3D image through the park's special VR screens. Watching their creations come to life is nothing short of magical.

FOREST WALK

Take a stroll through the forest walkway at night with VR headsets and feel the thrill of being surrounded by wildlife. Spot a cheetah lurking in the shadows or a tiger prowling nearby. While it feels like you could reach out and touch them, the VR magic keeps the experience safe yet spine-chilling.

VR KAYAKING

Climb into a kayak and paddle away on virtual waters. Machines beneath the kayak mimic the sensation of an adrenaline-filled kayak ride, letting you experience the thrill of rowing without leaving the safety of the park.

GUARDIANS OF THE WILD

Settle into an egg-shaped VR pod and journey through Telangana's wilderness. Explore rocky terrains, lush greenery, and mesmerizing waterfalls like Bogatha Falls. The experience includes the Gussadi dance, where the immersive visuals make it feel like you're tapping along with the performers. It's a perfect blend of culture and adventure.

9D CINEMA

This experience is akin to the attractions at amusement parks like Ramoji Film City, where visitors are seated while surrounding screens move rapidly to create lifelike 3D effects, such as encounters with dinosaurs.

■ MOHD ATIF (INPUTS FROM MANJU)

Price: Entry fee Rs 40 for adults. Rs 20 for kids. Plus Rs 100 for each experience (except safari ride)

Sri Ram Nagar, Forest Dept Colony, Kondapur, adjacent to Botanical Gardens

Timings: 10 am to 10 pm, to fully enjoy the adventure, straddle your time between daylight and after dark

Pro tip: Avoid weekends or festive days as the wait time could be one hour for rides



MOVIES

In theaters this month

THANDEL (TELUGU)



Chandoo Mondeti returns to the theaters after his last film – *Karthikeya 2* – won the National Award for the Best Feature Film in Telugu. Naga Chaitanya returns after a hiatus of two years post *Custody* in his most expensive film to date. Produced by Bunny Vasu under the banner of Geetha Arts, the film co-stars Sai Pallavi and is about a few fishermen from Srikakulam who find themselves accidentally drifting into Pakistani waters. Devi Sri Prasad has provided the score.

Date: 7th February



CHHAAVA (HINDI)

Vicky Kaushal stars in this epic retelling of the book by the same name written by Shivaji Sawant. Kaushal stars as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj who takes on the Mughal Empire during the late 1600s. The film is produced by Dinesh Vijan under the banner of Maddock Films while the score is composed by A.R. Rahman. Laxman Utekar returns after *Zara Hatke Zara Bachke*. The film co-stars Rashmika Mandanna, Akshaye Khanna, Ashutosh Rana and Divya Dutta among others.

Date: 14th February

CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD (ENGLISH)

Marvel Studios returns after the debacle of *The Marvels* in 2023, hoping to make new beginnings as it goes back to Earth instead of all over random comic book locations very few care about. Anthony Mackie takes over the shield of Captain America from Steve Rogers as he finds himself in the middle of an international incident after Thaddeus Ross becomes the President of the United States, played by Harrison Ford.

Date: 14th February



LOVE HURTS (ENGLISH)

Fresh off the Academy Award winning performance in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, Ke Huy Quan returns in his first movie as a lead action hero in a movie about a successful realtor whose past life as a violent hit man comes to haunt him. Ariana DeBose and Daniel Wu co-star in this Jonathan Eusebio directed motion picture. Eusebio, like the film's producer David Leitch, is a former stuntman, stunt coordinator and assistant director who is making his directorial debut.

Date: 7th February

BADASS RAVI KUMAR (HINDI)

Himesh Reshammiya returns as the ex-cop Ravi Kumar in the sequel to the 2014 surprise hit *The Xpose*. This time, he is pitched against Prabhu Deva and the movie also co-stars Kirti Kulhari, Nassar, Ashutosh Rana and Johnny Lever among others. Reshammiya himself has provided the background score and songs, apart from co-producing and co-writing the film. The film marks the directorial debut of Keith Gomes, who has assisted on films such as *Taxi No. 9211*, *Knock Out* and *Kick* among others.

Date: 7th February



BRAHMANANDAM (TELUGU)

Directed by RVS Nikhil and starring real life father-son duo Brahmanandam and Raja Goutham, the comedy-drama revolves around the relationship between a young man and his grandfather. The film is produced by Rahul Yadav Nakka and co-stars Vennela Kishore and Priya Vadlamani among others. Sandilya Pisapati provides the music. It is refreshing to watch an actor of Brahmanandam's stature finally getting dramatic roles which can challenge his talent as a performer.

Date: 14th February

OTT SHOWS



RRR: BEHIND & BEYOND

(ENGLISH/TELUGU)
NETFLIX

This documentary film showcases the pre-production, filming and impact of the 2022 epic action drama *RRR*. It depicts the extraordinary scale of the production, the intricate details of each actor with emphasis on their introductory action sequence, as the director of the film – S.S. Rajamouli, proceeds to explain the various payoffs provided across the film, while also explaining the thought process behind each audience cheering moment such as the interval sequence and the climax. It is an astounding watch and depicts the hard work which goes into making a film of this scale.



THE GREATEST RIVALRY: INDIA VS PAKISTAN

(ENGLISH)
NETFLIX

Tracing the cricketing rivalry between the two nations, this series explores the past and present on the pitch with interviews and insights from bigwigs including but not limited to Sourav Ganguly, Sunil Gavaskar, Virender Sehwag, Shoaib Akhtar and Waqar Younis. Often considered as the most watched matches in cricketing history, *India vs Pakistan* brings out an emotion on both sides of the nation unlike any other cricket match.



REACHER SEASON 3

(ENGLISH)
AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

Alan Ritchson returns in the role he was born to play, as the series pushes Reacher into the underbelly of a criminal enterprise when he attempts to rescue a DEA informant. The third season of the series is based on the Lee Child novel *Persuader*. The series marks the return of Ritchson along with Maria Sten as Frances Neagley; Christopher McQuarrie and Lee Child continue to remain executive producers on the series.

MISMATCHED SEASON 3

(HINDI)
NETFLIX

In the season 3 of this romantic drama series based on Sandhya Menon's 2017 novel *When Dimple Met Rishi*, Rishi (Rohit Saraf) and Dimple (Prajakta Koli) navigate the complexities of a long-distance relationship as Rishi thrives at Nandini Nahata's prestigious tech institute in Hyderabad, while Dimple struggles to find her place. This leads her to eventually join a rival institute run by Sid (Rannvijay Singha) to stay closer to him; the season heavily features a virtual reality world called "Betterverse" where the characters interact and grapple with their personal issues.



SOOKSHMADARSHINI

MALAYALAM/TELUGU
DISNEY + HOTSTAR

This 2024 Malayalam black comedy mystery thriller film is directed by M. C. Jithin, written by Libin T.B and Athul Ramachandran. Starring Nazriya Nazim and Basil Joseph, the film revolves around Priyadarshini and her friends, who set out to track down the whereabouts of Manuel, a bakery owner who has recently returned to their neighborhood, with his mother. ■
CHANDRAMOULI

SNIPPETS



REEL, ROLEX AUR ROAST

Urvashi Rautela was just another face in Telugu cinema with her role in *Daaku Maharaj*, a Sankranti blockbuster. But three hilariously awkward moments catapulted her into January's most-Google'd celebrity list. First, there was that so-called awkward dance move with her co-star at the film's success bash. Then came her much-trolled diamond-studded Rolex video, and finally, her cheeky dig at Kiara Advani's *Game Changer* box office numbers. As they say, all publicity is good publicity – right, Urvashi? Oh, and the internet is having a field day with searches like, "Has Urvashi Rautela cleared IIT?" "Is Urvashi Rautela married?" and the absolute gem, "What is Urvashi Rautela suffering from?" We'll let you connect the dots on that one!



STAR KID WITH NO STARRY AIRS

Sukriti Veni, daughter of *Pushpa* director Sukumar, is making waves with her acting debut in the offbeat film *Gandhi Thatha Chettu* – in the news due to the response it is garnering at international film festivals. During a press meet in January, her quick wit and honesty stole the spotlight, especially when her father addressed her as "Sukriti garu" and quizzed her about her choice of film. Sukriti had everyone in splits when she cheekily shot back at him, "What is your name?" leaving the room in laughter and applause. A star kid, with no starry airs.



PEECEEE'S TEMPLE RUN

Guess who was spotted in Hyderabad recently? The one and only Priyanka Chopra! While the details of her visit remain under wraps, fans were excited. Adding to the intrigue, Priyanka made a quiet stop at the Chilukur Balaji Temple, known for its tranquil ambience. Draped in traditional attire, she blended seamlessly with fellow devotees, offering prayers and soaking in the spiritual vibes. Despite the curiosity surrounding her visit, Priyanka has remained tight-lipped, leaving us all guessing about the purpose of her trip. Whether it was a personal pilgrimage or a hush-hush project, one thing's for sure: Priyanka knows how to keep us intrigued!



NEW BAD BOY IN T' TOWN

Telugu cinema has a soft spot for fresh talent, and the latest to join the club is the charming Sparsh Shrivastava, best known for his endearing role as Deepak Kumar (married to Phool Kumari) in *Laapataa Ladies*. This budding actor is about to flip the script, taking on the role of a villain in Naga Chaitanya's upcoming pan-Indian mystic thriller, tentatively titled *NC 24*. Directed by *Virupaksha* fame Karthik Varma Dandu, the film has already created a buzz, even in its pre-production phase. With Sparsh's adorable charm and Telugu cinema's love for discovering rising stars, this one is bound to grab attention!

AKHIL TO GET HITCHED AT ANNAPURNA?

It feels like the Akkineni family is on a roll with weddings! Just two months ago, Tollywood fans were abuzz with Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala's intimate wedding on December 4, 2024. The newlyweds even celebrated their first Sankranti at Sobhita's family home in Vizag. Now, it's Akhil Akkineni's turn to take the plunge as he prepares to marry his fiancée, Zainab Ravdjee, at Annapurna Studios. Looks like another grand celebration is on the cards for the Akkineni clan. ■ MANJU



Internet sensation and playback singer **Sameera Bharadwaj** whose hilarious reels attract millions of views, is now stepping into cinema

“My goal is to make people laugh”



When the *Ambajipeta Ambanis* reel on Instagram hit 12 million views last year, Sameera Bharadwaj became an internet sensation. Earlier this year, her *Abbayi Color Vuntada* and *Alladipotadamma* reels – poking fun at the Bangkok trips undertaken by Indian married men – had Telugu audiences in splits. But while Sameera shines as a digital creator, her heart beats for singing, and now, acting.

VIRAL REELS, INSPIRED BY LIFE

Sameera's hilarious reels are born from everyday moments with family and friends. “I get a spark in conversations, improvise at home, and hit record. My goal is to make people laugh,” she says. She started posting her reels about two years ago, and is unstoppable now. An average video of hers garners nothing less than three million views. However, she

is in no hurry to sign up for collaboration deals to promote brands. “I prefer to move with intention, making choices only when they align with my values. For me, it's all about being steady, thoughtful and deliberate,” she says.

“I'd rather meditate than post every moment online”

SOCIAL MEDIA TO CINEMA

A professionally trained singer, Sameera's social media presence has opened doors to acting opportunities. Director Indraganti Mohan Sharma said that he is a fan of her creative work and has decided to cast her in his next movie, albeit in a short role.

SUPER SINGER TO PLAYBACK FAME

Trained in Carnatic and Hindustani music, Sameera rose to fame as the runner-up in *Super Singer 8*. Her prize – a playback singing opportunity – kickstarted her journey. Sameera's tracks such as *Telusa telusa* in *Sarainodu*, *Madhurame ee kshanamey* in *Arjun Reddy* and *Kakinada Khaja* (an independent number) have established her as a formidable singing talent. Last year, her peppy number *Abbacha* in *Mr Bachchan* put her firmly in the spotlight.

SPIRITUAL ROOTS

A devout Hindu at heart, Sameera finds peace in temples and *bhajans*. “Singing in front of God makes me cry. It's pure bliss,” says the singer who is a regular visitor to Peddamma Thalli temple in Jubilee Hills. Her spirituality shapes her life and art.

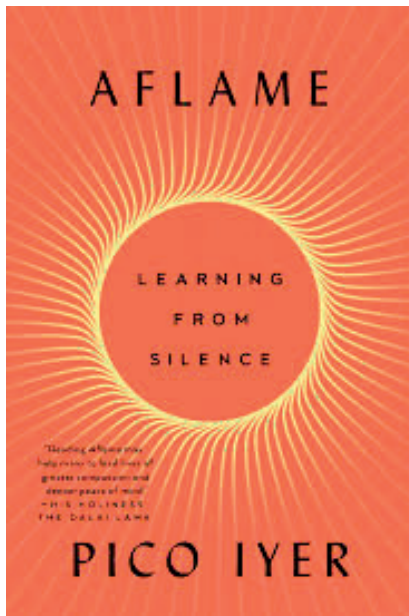
MORE THAN AN INFLUENCER

Married to a techie and mother to a four-year-old, Sameera balances her creative pursuits with deeply reflective practices. “I'd rather meditate than post every moment online. I'm a devotee and singer first, digital creator next and influencer last,” she quips.

CINEMATIC DEBUT

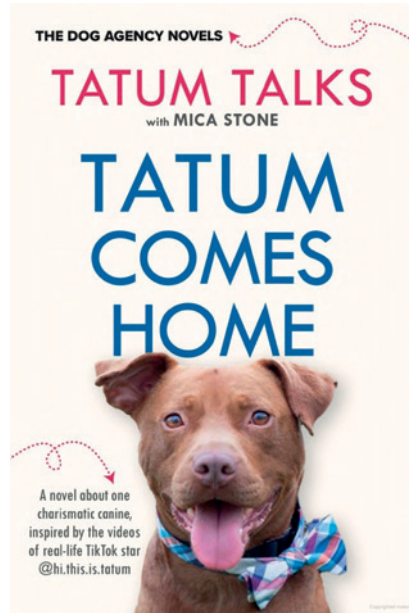
Now, Sameera is set to debut in Indraganti Mohan Krishna's *Sarangapani Jathakam* and Vijay Kumar Kalivarapu's next film, marking her entry into the world of cinema. We are sure she will be as popular in Tollywood as she is on social media. ■ MANJU

BOOKS



AFLAME
Pico Iyer

In 1990, the author Pico Iyer lost everything he possessed in a Californian wildfire. As the fires in LA make news, this is perhaps a timely read. For over three decades, Iyer has sought refuge in the quiet corners of the world, particularly at a Benedictine hermitage perched high above the Pacific Ocean in Big Sur, California. His new book distills these experiences into a meditation on silence.



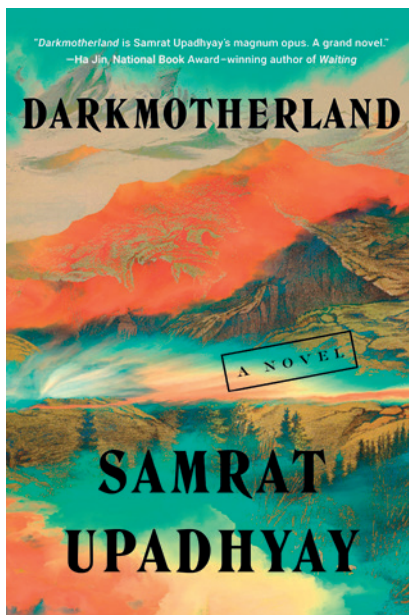
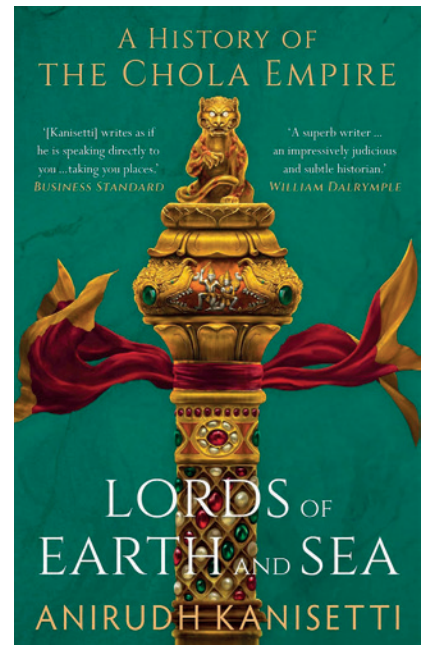
TATUM COMES HOME
Mica Stone

Whether you are a dog lover or not, Tatum (a lost dog) will pull at your heartstrings. This is a fictional story inspired by a real-life dog (@hi.this.is.tatum) who is an Instagram star. He has millions of followers. The plot is simple – lost and found. But what makes this book special is how various kind-hearted people come forward to help a lost dog (Tatum) reunite with his pet parents. Overall, this book is an emotional journey of a 'lost and found' plotline with tearjerker and fun moments.

LORDS OF EARTH AND SEA: A HISTORY OF THE CHOLA EMPIRE

Anirudh Kanisetti

In this book, historian, Anirudh Kanisetti brings to life the world of the Cholas. Not just the world of kings and queens attended by generals and 'service retinue' women – but the stories of the 'little people', whose lives were buffeted by big events. This well researched book is a procession of dazzling kings and queens, and also a portal that transports us to the peasant settlements of over a thousand years ago.



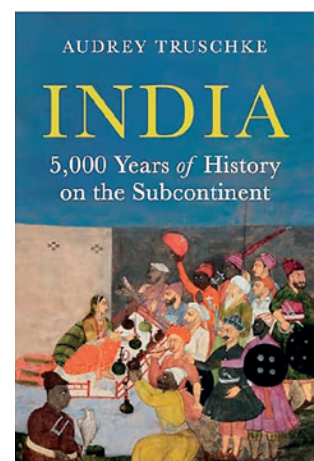
DARK MOTHERLAND
Samrat Upadhyay

The New York Times has not stopped raving about this book. The Nepali-American author returns with an epic tale of love, betrayal, and political violence set in the earthquake-ravaged country of Nepal that is at once familiar and dystopian. With strong women characters and examining how authoritarian regimes affect lives and love, this is a strong and compelling tale of life.

INDIA: 5,000 YEARS OF HISTORY ON THE SUBCONTINENT

Audrey Truschke

Much of world history is Indian. Home today to one in four people, the subcontinent has long been densely populated and deeply connected to Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas through migration and trade. In this magisterial history, Audrey Truschke tells the fascinating story of the region historically known as India – which includes today's India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and parts of Afghanistan – and the people who have lived there. ■ MALLIK



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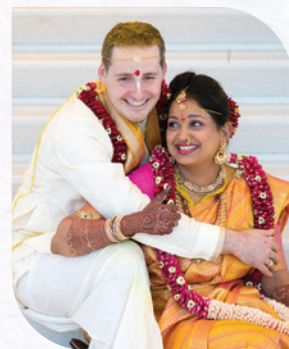
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SAINA NEHWAL AND PARUPALLI KASHYAP



Fire and ice

Jan 17, Firewater Neo Kitchen & Bar

The Firewater Neo Bar & Kitchen launch event added a new party vibe to Financial District, with the sporty couple Saina Nehwal and Parupalli Kashyap making their presence felt. The evening began with handcrafted cocktails and starters and ended with a full-blast DJ and a hearty dinner.



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NORA FATEHI



SANDEEP MOLUGU



SINDHU

Midnight madness

Jan 22, Quake Arena

Bollywood star and dance sensation Nora Fatehi, joined by international icon DJ Snake, lit up the stage, inviting fans to groove with her. The event kicked off close to midnight, but the late-night crowd was left buzzing with excitement.



SHREYA



SNEHA AND MANOGGHNYA

ANUSHKA, RIA AND FRIEND



VENKAT GADDAM AND MANYA CHERRABUDI



AKILA CHUNGI



ASMITA MARWA AND PRIYANKA NARULA



Good vibes only

Jan 24, Black Fuel Roastery

Craft innovation studio Wicker Story celebrated six years of timeless designs in natural rattan and the win of the Red Dot Design Award with an evening titled Shukrana. Founder Priyanka Narula ensured that the event, done in collaboration with One Pot Dish and Black Fuel was brimming with good vibes, with a beautiful installation as the backdrop.

RAVI PRAKASH



RADHA



KIRAN CHUKKAPALLI



NANI



Moving images

Jan 24, Old School Brindavanam

Human rights advocate and photographer Kiran Chukkapalli's photo exhibition, *7 Decades: A Silent Refugee Crisis*, captured his transformative journey of living in refugee camps. The exhibition saw visits from Tollywood celebrities like actors Nani, Ravi Prakash, cinematographer Chota K. Naidu, and entrepreneur Smitha.



PINKY REDDY



AKSHAT KAPOOR



KARISHMA SATHE AND SAMRIDHI



ADITI

Sarees, sangeet and shringar

Jan 10, Frontier Raas

The debut of Shringar Shrinkhala, with entrepreneur and Bollywood diva Riddhima Kapoor Sahni stealing the spotlight, celebrated sarees, shringar, and sultry vibes. Pinky Reddy graced the event, which featured musical renditions by Vidya Shah. Added to all this was a Sankranthi snack spread.



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