

WOW!

HYDERABAD

23rd
Anniversary
Issue

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& MAKERS
OF 2025

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LANDMARKS

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Priyanka Chopra:

THE GLOBAL PHENOMENON

WHAT
CELEBS
ARE SAYING
ABOUT
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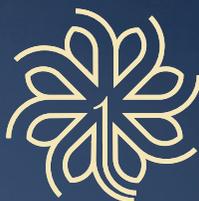
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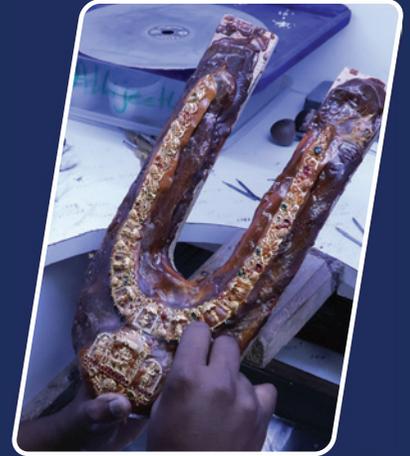
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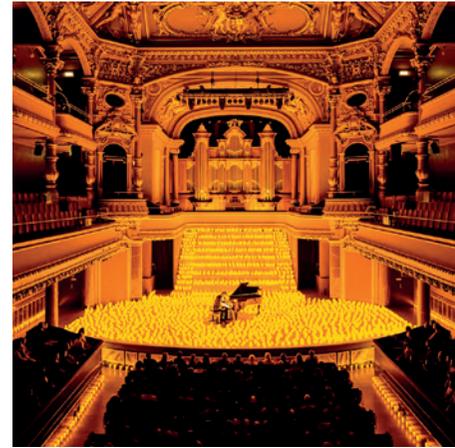
34 feature

Read about our cover girl Priyanka Chopra, her move to Telugu cinema, how she has been straddling Hollywood and Tollywood and why we think she's a global phenomenon



74 living

Hyderabad has always been synonymous for its heritage landmarks such as Charminar and Golconda Fort. We check out the mega structures in HITEC City that are the city's new landmarks



78 tourist info

Hyderabad is a treasure trove of special experiences and we put together 23 unique ones you must savor, from midnight cycling to a live event at the heritage stepwell

CONT

28 food

We check out new eateries: Orlo, VGO and Taamara. Plus, our anniversary special of 23 streetside eateries you must eat, before 2025 ends



62 trends

As the year ends, well almost, we take a look at the year's most memorable fashion statements that may set the trend for 2026 too



32 shopping

A quick look at the new sneaker store VegNonVeg that opened in the city recently; and more about what the luxe leather brand Akkina has to offer





40 focus

We bring out our annual list of 23 changemakers from diverse fields, from performing arts to literature, from startups to social activism, from social media to food. Read on and get inspired



104 spotted

A roundup of the most happening parties this month, from a global movie event to the launch of a pub and a shopping pop-up that attracted the city's elite

EVENTS

86 entertainment

Here's our list of this year's 10 must-watch shows and OTTs; Plus our list of emerging actors who are trending in Tollywood now



72 nightlife

We have reviews of the city's new nightlife spots – Asembli, touted to be one of the biggest in the city and Highball, with its sweeping views of the lake



92 people

Interview with director Rahul Ravindran, the maker of *The Girlfriend* that is making a buzz now for its take on complex human relationships

22 celeb greetings

It's that time of the year when our favorite celebs, some of whom have graced our covers, and our readers, tell us what they think about WOW!

18 from the editor's desk

Meet the faces behind the names in WOW! Hyderabad. Our Founder and Editor, Deepti Reddy talks about her journey since its inception in 2002 and what the future holds for her



ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

Celebrating 23 Years of Voice, Vision & Growth

As we unveil our 23rd anniversary issue, I am reminded of the remarkable journey that has carried us to this moment. Twenty-three years is a meaningful milestone – one shaped by consistency, resilience, and the unwavering sense of purpose that has defined our publication from the very beginning.

The media landscape has evolved dramatically since our first issue went to print. Through every transformation – digital acceleration, shifting reader expectations, and an increasingly dynamic cultural environment – we have remained anchored to our founding vision: to offer credible storytelling, thoughtful curation, and a platform that mirrors both the aspirations and the realities of our times.

This anniversary edition reflects that commitment. Within these pages, you will encounter profiles that celebrate talent and leadership and features that capture the energy of today's Hyderabad. Each story has been chosen with intention, guided by the values that continue to shape our editorial identity.

Reaching year 23 is not merely a marking of time; it is a reaffirmation of trust – your trust. Our readers, contributors, partners, and team have been essential to this journey. Your belief in our work propels us toward excellence and inspires us to evolve with thoughtfulness and integrity.

As we look toward our 24th year, our focus remains on innovation, inclusivity, and depth. We are committed to expanding our reach while upholding the quality and authenticity that define us. The next chapter holds new challenges and exciting possibilities, and we step into it with clarity, curiosity, and confidence.

Thank you for being part of this chapter, and every chapter before it. This milestone belongs to you as much as it does to us!

Deepthi Reddy
Publisher and Editor

“As we look toward our 24th year, our focus remains on innovation, inclusivity, and depth”

WOW! TEAM



THE STARS ARE ALIGNED

The date, 23, is my birthday and my lucky number – so celebrating the 23rd anniversary of WOW! feels like the stars are all aligned.

The last two years have been a thrilling chase: the city growing, trends shifting every second, and us choosing print in an era where everyone's just scrolling. But hey, while they scroll, we roll – learning, evolving, and levelling up one issue at a time.

MANJU LATHA KALANIDHI
Assistant Editor

DEPTH IN BREVITY

I've been with WOW! for several years now, and even after taking a break last year, coming back to editing copy about a city I call home, is part of my comfort zone. It is amazing how much Hyderabad has changed over the last decade, and WOW! has been documenting the milestones across all aspects of society. And to stand tall with a strong identity in the age of 15-second feeds, is a huge achievement. Here's to the next milestone.

MINAL KHONA
Copy Editor



POWERING THROUGH

A 23-year milestone is no small feat. In the age of AI and fast-food content creation, WOW! powers through defiantly – a fight not possible without the dedicated efforts of its team and its leader, Deepti Reddy.

As we near the end of yet another year, I am again filled with gratitude for the work I get to do and the people I get to do it with.

IPSHITA RAMAN
Feature Writer



ENRICHING AND INSPIRING

Working with WOW! for so many years has been an enriching and inspiring journey. I've collaborated closely with the team to design visually engaging layouts, and develop strong cover concepts. This long-term experience has strengthened my creativity, adaptability, and ability to maintain a consistent visual identity under deadlines.

VIJAY NARANG
Lead Designer

ACCOUNTS & CIRCULATION TEAM



SUBBARAO, SWAMY AND NARESH

GROWING AND INNOVATING

Having had the privilege of working with WOW! for 23 years, I have witnessed its evolution, its resilience, and the unwavering spirit that has kept it at the heart of the city's lifestyle landscape. To the management, thank you for your trust; to our valued advertisers, partners, and well-wishers, thank you for standing with us through every edition, every challenge, and every triumph. Your belief in our platform has allowed us to grow, innovate, and deliver content that truly reflects the vibrant pulse of Hyderabad.

KV KRISHNA
Head - Marketing





ON THE COVER: PRIYANKA CHOPRA
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 HAIR: LUKE PLUCKROSE
 NAILS: MICHELLE HUMPHREY
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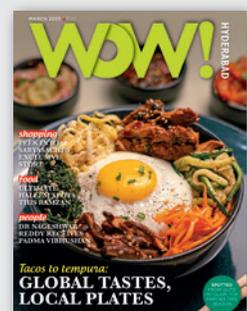
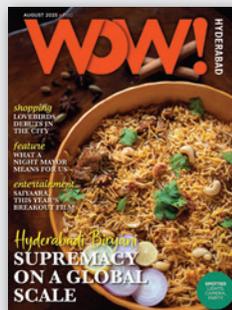
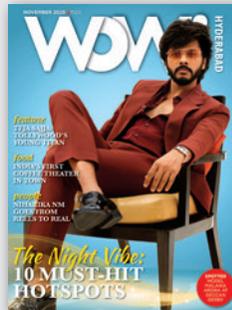
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Keep Going, WOW!

Celebs, and those who got featured in WOW! send us their greetings

THE MAGAZINE HAS COME A LONG WAY

WOW! Hyderabad has come a long way. It's amazing what they have achieved and where they have come and the hard work they put in. I am very proud of Deepti, and of the entire team.

SHRIYA SARAN
ACTOR



SO RELEVANT EVEN AFTER 23 YEARS

My journey with WOW! began with a cover shoot when I was in school. So, it's been a very long association and it's quite remarkable to see how you all have grown from strength to strength. It is amazing that you are still relevant and giving out the best information there is about the city and everything happening around.

MIHEEKA BAJAJ DAGGUBATI
INTERIOR DESIGNER,
ART ENTHUSIAST,
MENTAL HEALTH
ADVOCATE

“Seeing Doodle Kabra’s journey in WOW! Hyderabad feels like a dream come true. Thank you, WOW! Hyderabad for giving our story a place in your pages.”

Atul Kabra
Founder of Doodle Kabra

NOT IN THE KNOW IF YOU DON'T READ WOW!

Congratulations on yet another milestone. I cannot congratulate you guys enough for your consistency and always putting out the best content, be it lifestyle, restaurants, or what's happening in the city. You're not in the know if you don't have WOW! by your side. All the very best and wishing you a stupendous, successful year and many more to come.

LAKSHMI MANCHU
ACTOR



“A heartfelt thank you to WOW! Hyderabad for beautifully capturing our story and bringing it to life on your pages. Your support inspires us to continue preserving and sharing the rich heritage of the YK Krishna Murthy collection.”

YK Antiques Home Museum

I GET MY FITNESS AND FASHION FIX HERE

It felt amazing to be the cover girl for an OG Hyderabad magazine. My favourite human and designer, Asmita Marwa, dressed me up as a modern-day bride – and for once, I actually felt tempted to get married, simply because the look (and the cover!) was that stunning. Thank you, WOW magazine, for letting me live this beautiful moment in time and for capturing it forever on your cover.

TEJASWI MADIVADA
ACTOR,
PODCAST HOST



SOUL, STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

Congrats WOW! Hyderabad on turning 23. It's an honor to be part of this platform which brings true artistry every time. Deepti and her team bring soul, substance and style to every edition they bring out. It was an awesome experience to have been under the spotlight and receive love as the cover star in one of the editions.

VISHWAK SEN
ACTOR, PRODUCER,
DIRECTOR

“We express our gratitude and extend our heartfelt thanks to WOW! Hyderabad magazine for giving us an opportunity to connect with a broader audience. It helped immensely that they highlighted our initiatives aimed at uplifting the underprivileged segments of society by fostering a culture of sports among them, alongside other community members.”

SPARS Foundation

MOST LOVED CITY MAGAZINE

Congratulations WOW! on turning 23. I have been reading the magazine since its inception and it is amazing to see that it continues to uphold quality in its content, story selection, design and paper quality. Not surprisingly, it is the most loved city magazine. WOW! is the go-to magazine for anyone who comes to the city as it covers everything, especially food, nightlife, fashion, parties, etc. exhaustively. Congratulations Deepti and team, on the anniversary.

PINKY REDDY
PHILANTHROPIST AND
PRODUCER





LOVED OUR COUPLE PIX

We are now married, but when we posed for the fitness cover in a hip health club, we were engaged and it felt special to be featured as a couple on the cover of WOW! We tried out multiple looks and hair dos and every one of it was amazing. I check out their Insta page for the latest in food, fashion, events and cinema.

BHAVANA RAO AND AKSHAY ALAGANI MODELS AND FITNESS ENTHUSIASTS

“It was a pleasure to be interviewed by WOW! magazine. The experience was insightful and I truly appreciated the opportunity to learn from the interviewer.”

*Queen Victoria Gandam
Swimmer*

We are beyond thrilled to see The Pink Circle Foundation featured in WOW! Hyderabad magazine. A huge thank you for shining a light on our work.

THE PINK CIRCLE FOUNDATION



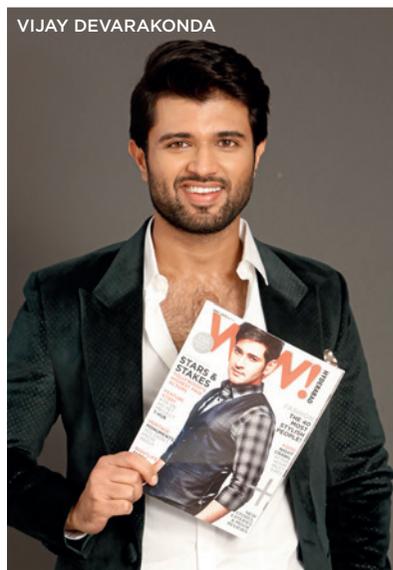
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

IT'S PLAY TIME, FOLKS!

DECEMBER 12, 13 AND 14

A celebration of storytelling, drama, and culture, the inaugural Hyderabad Theatre Festival, held at Shilpakala Vedika, promises iconic plays, veteran performers, and timeless stories. Stage legends taking to the stage include Naseeruddin Shah, Anupam Kher, Ratna Pathak Shah, Lillette Dubey, Suchitra Pillai, etc.

ISMAT APA KE NAAM (HINDI, URDU)

DECEMBER 12 AND 13

An ode to Indian novelist Ismat Chughtai, *Ismat Apa Ke Naam* is a series of three solo acts –

- *Gharwali* told by Naseeruddin Shah
- *Mughal Bachcha* told by Ratna Pathak Shah
- *Chhui Muee* told by Heeba Shah

Cast: Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah, Heeba Shah

Show Timings: 8 pm (on 12th) and 1 pm (on 13th)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY (ENGLISH)

DECEMBER 13

Autobiography is a highly acclaimed play by Marathi playwright, Mahesh Elkunchwar, that follows a conversation between an ageing and charismatic writer (Anantrao Rajadhyaksha) and a bright sassy PhD researcher (Pradnya). They talk about the writer's controversial book in which he discusses his contemporaries, his troubled 30-year-old relationship with his wife, his brief affair with his sister-in-law, and other topics.

Cast: Denzil Smith, Lillette Dubey, Suchitra Pillai, Sarah Hashmi

Show Timings: 8 pm onwards

KUCH BHI HO SAKTA HAI (ENGLISH, HINDI, KASHMIRI)

DECEMBER 14

Kuch Bhi Ho Sakta Hai is a theater production by Anupam Kher who



recounts and dramatizes the important events in his life, from his personal relationships to his failures and successes, which include his journey from a small-town man making it big in Bollywood.

Cast: Anupam Kher

Show Timings: 7:30 pm onwards

Ticket: Available on bookmyshow.com

FOR ART LOVERS

NOVEMBER 20 TO JANUARY 4

Organized by Light Craft Foundation and hosted by the State Art Gallery, the 11th edition of the Indian Photo Festival (IPF) opened its doors to art lovers in late November and is on track to spill into December and January.

From Brazil to Iran, South Korea to India, this year's lineup features solo exhibitions, group showcases, workshops, documentary film screenings, and artist talk.

KEY EXHIBITIONS:

- *Impermanent Masks* – Alessandro Celante (Brazil): An immersive meditation on perception, mortality, and identity in the age of images.
- *Rain Dogs* – Rohit Chawla (India): Where dogs become storytellers of survival.
- *Better Days* – Seunggu Kim (South Korea): Captures leisure and collective life through the philosophy of slow photography.
- *Murky Waters* – The Caravan x M.

Palani Kumar (India): Five decades of industrial pollution and human resilience in Ennore.

- *Sudan: In Time of War* – Giles Clarke (UK): Life and loss amid Sudan's devastating civil conflict.
- *Lingering Shadows* – Nazanin Alipour Jeddi (Iran): A contemplative portrayal of women's inner worlds and strength.
- *Slash and Burn* – Glorianna Ximendaz (Costa Rica): Healing generational trauma through nature and ritual.
- *Frontlines of Dignity, Shredded Skies and Other Love Stories* – Marylise Vigneau (France): Life, loss, and love in war-torn Ukraine.
- *No Man's Land* – Elke Scholiers (Belgium): Hidden lives of Kurdish women fighters in Syria's underground tunnels.
- *Cooking with Taboo* – Hridya Sadanand (India): Confronting menstrual stigma and memory in Kerala's domestic spaces.

Take as many exhibitions as you can.

Venue: State Art Gallery, Madhapur
Registration: indianphotofest.com



SHE'S INDIA PAGEANT

DECEMBER 7

Watch fearless dreamers in their 20s to radiant trailblazers in their 70s take part in She's India, a pageant for women from all walks of life. The event will feature talent rounds, curated workshops on civic sense, social security and self-awareness, all culminating into the grand finale that will conclude with a crowning ceremony.

Venue: Shourya Convention Centre, Hyderabad

Timings: 6 pm onwards

Tickets: Rs 1,000 (<https://shesindia.in/>)





MEET THE G.O.A.T FOOTBALLER

DECEMBER 13

Lionel Messi, the football legend himself, is coming to Hyderabad this month as part of his GOAT India Tour 2025. The Argentinian athlete's visit to the City of Nizams promises to have an unprecedented turn out as it will mark a highly rare opportunity for longtime fans to meet the icon in the flesh.

Venue: Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Uppal
Timings: 7 pm onwards
Ticket: To be announced on district.in

A TRADITIONAL CONCERT

DECEMBER 22

Conceptualized by Kuchipudi dancer Yamini Reddy and choreographed by Padma Bhushan awardees Raja and Radha Reddy along with Yamini Reddy, *Surya* is not just a stage

production, but an artistic prayer for conservation.

The event is guided by the artistic direction of Kaushalya Reddy and will be performed by the Natya Tarangini Hyderabad repertory.

Venue: Shilpakala Vedika, HITEC City
Timings: 6.30 pm onwards
Ticket: Available on bookmyshow.com



TRANSFORM THE PLANET

DECEMBER 21

The Meditation and Ahimsa Run 2025 celebrates unity between body, mind, and spirit. Held on World Meditation Day, the event offers the opportunity to walk or run with the purpose of promoting ahimsa (non-violence), meditation, and plant-based living – all with the mission to transform the planet for the better.

Venue: Sanjeevaiah Park, Khairatabad
Timings: 5.30 am onwards
Ticket: Rs 699 onwards (bookmyshow.com)



GOLCONDA FORT FESTIVAL

DECEMBER 12

Rooted in the ethos of reintroducing heritage spaces through immersive artistic experiences, the Golconda Fort Festival brings together the timeless traditions of Indian classical and folk music – interweaving rhythm, lineage, and legacy.

By transforming the magnificent 13th-century Golconda Fort into a living, breathing space, the one-day celebration seeks to connect history with the present, creating a memorable and meaningful cultural experience.

Venue: Golconda Fort, Hyderabad
Timings: 7 pm onwards
Ticket: Free Registration on bookmyshow.com

A COMEDY SPECIAL

DECEMBER 20

Standup comedian Daniel Fernandes makes a stop in the city this month as part of his tour and third comedy special, *Do You Know Who I am?*

Described as being different, the special explores a major personal event in the comedian's life which, he acknowledges, instead of communicating with his therapist, he decides to share with his audience.

Venue: Rangbhoomi Spaces & Events, Gachibowli
Timings: 6 pm onwards
Ticket: Rs 499 onwards (bookmyshow.com)



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.



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Orlo is your go-to for a ‘mess-style’ regional thali, starting with Rajasthani, Punjabi and East Indian meals this December

Regional Thalis on Rotation

At first glance, you might assume Orlo is a Spanish or Italian word. But Vikaas Passary, the founder of **Orlo** and the man who gave Hyderabad the gem called Little Italy, quickly clarifies: “No, it’s desi for aur lo, or have more.” Even before your meal arrives, the sweeping views of Durgam Cheruvu Lake set the tone at this spacious restaurant with both indoor and outdoor seating.

MESS-STYLE FARE

A veteran of Hyderabad’s F&B scene, Vikaas has clearly thought this concept through. “Most places in the city offer South Indian mess meals, but very few do homestyle, authentic North Indian fare. Orlo seeks to fill that gap,” he says of the new restaurant that opened this November.

ROTATIONAL MENU

The idea is simple: a rotational regional menu. “You may eat a Rajasthani thali in the first week of the month and an Eastern thali the next. We deliberately don’t hype what we’re serving each week because we want to see if Hyderabadis enjoy surprises. So, you walk in, discover a new cuisine, and eat the thali with

dishes from that region,” he adds.

RAJASTHAN IT IS

The inaugural Rajasthani thali impressed us with homestyle specialties – from Annakoot ki Sabji (a medley of seasonal vegetables) and Junglee Maas (tender slow-cooked meat with ghee and red chillies) to bites like Shakkarkand aur Til ki Chaat. Sipping on Baajre ki Raab (fermented millet in buttermilk) was a soothing, earthy delight.

COMING UP NEXT:

“You may find a Sindhi thali being served the next time you visit,” Vikaas hints temptingly.

PRO TIP:

Orlo transforms into Highball, a bar by night with a la carte dishes, pan-Indian specialties and creative sodas. (More in the Nightlife section.) ■ MANJU

Meal for two: Rs 1,200

3rd Floor, R Quad, Opposite Durgam Cheruvu Lakefront, Madhapur
Details: @orlo.india on Instagram
Timings: 12 to 4 pm; 7 to 11 pm

3 AMAZING FACTS ABOUT THE RAJASTHANI THALI

Dipali Khandelwal, a passionate food researcher and a *Forbes* Under 30 honoree associated with Orlo, reveals:

1. Rajasthan has over nine distinct cuisines, each shaped by its unique geography and culture.
2. The homestyle Kankri Mirch, made with edible gum, peppercorn and nuts, is a nutrient-rich preparation that could easily be called a desi granola.
3. Singhade ka Achaar and many other Rajasthani pickles are sun-dried (taking advantage of the abundant sunlight) before being pickled for the best flavor.

An extension of **Velvet Pâtisserie & Cafe**, this new venue introduces a DIY Dessert Bar and Fusion Bites

FOOD ON THE GO

Desperate for a quick meal or a takeaway while working crazy hours? The Financial District's **VGO Gourmet Express** – a café perfect for worker bees with no time to waste – might just do the trick.

VIBE CHECK

An extension of Velvet Pâtisserie & Cafe, VGO (short for 'Velvet on the go') incorporates a unique DIY dessert bar and serves fusion bites. Founded by Potlapally Shailaja, VGO opens to a semi-intimate 1,510 sq.ft. space complete with natural light, comfortable seating, and contemporary music, which together contribute to the vibrant yet peaceful ambience.



QUICK BITES

We begin our lunch with fusion snacks like the Drumstick Puff that oozes drippy stuffing, the crispy Ulavacharu Egg Puff, and the excellent VGO Croizza Pizza of which one is just not enough; you will definitely want a second helping. Balancing the quirky dishes with some known ones, we included into the mix, the tender Sausage Roll and the creamy Penne Pasta. We washed the dishes down with the Oreo Boba Shake and the Iced Matcha Latte.

To end our outing on a high note, we tried VGO's signature DIY desserts that involved the selection of a Chocolate Brownie, topped with dark chocolate ganache, choco chips, Oreo crumble, and chocolate flakes; and a Mille Fille-Puff



WOW!
Recommends
Drumstick
Puff

Pastry, topped with orange honey syrup, custard cream, chopped nuts, kunafa, and pistachio praline. ■ IPSHITA

Meal for two: Rs 500 onwards

Myscape Stories, Ground floor, Financial District

Tel: 90595 35252

Timings: 8.30 am to 10.30 pm (weekdays), 8.30 am to 11.30 pm (weekends)

Taamara in Gachibowli is as much about the aesthetic as it is about the variety and taste in the food it offers

Manduva Meals

and abundant greenery give it an easy, home-style warmth that makes you settle in instantly. A frangipani tree, huge planters, the taamara (lotus) motif all through and a wooden table with a vintage mirror add to the ambience.

COASTAL AND LOCAL

The menu leans into comforting South Indian and coastal flavors. The Railway Mutton Curry with Coorg Rice is the standout. We loved the tender, slow-cooked meat in a flavor-rich gravy paired with the mildly aromatic rice that soaks it up beautifully. The menu helpfully adds the name of the town a dish hails from, thus making it easy to choose. Malabar Paratha or Erode Japan Chicken? We went with Rajahmundry Fry Piece Biryani and Hyderabadis are going to love it for its spice levels. End the meal with a Filter Coffee Pannacotta, that's colorful and flavorful. Sweet meets bitter for best results!



WOW!
Recommends
Railway
Mutton Curry

Opening with its Manduva-style (a traditional house with an open-to-the-sky courtyard in the center) charm, **Taamara** feels like stepping into a leafy little pocket of calm in Gachibowli. The verandah-style layout, low seating



PRO TIPS

Keep an extra 20 minutes for selfies in the green restaurant. On a weekend, you could also find a Little Master Chef workshop in progress. ■ MANJU

Meal for two: Rs 1,200

The Rooftop, Lumbini Avenue, Diamond Hills, Gachibowli

Tel: 96665 16677

Timings: 12 pm to 4 pm, 7 pm to 11 pm

Hyderabad now has the **Pazirai** experience, where food, art and history connoisseurs get to dine in heritage homes featuring heirloom recipes

A Bite of Heritage



Sometime this year, Samiya Shakir, who's been in hospitality for the last 15 years and Yunus Lasania (popular as writer and historian @ThatHyderabadBoy on social media) found themselves having a conversation about how Hyderabad, a city steeped in history, architecture, and food, rarely sees these worlds come together at the same table. They decided to join their forces – her experience in hospitality and his expertise in history to start **Pazirai**.

THE BIG IDEA

Pazirai meaning to welcome in Persian and to pamper in Urdu was born at the intersection of those two worlds. "The idea is to bring people together in historic homes and reintroduce mehman nawazi, the Hyderabad tradition of hospitality through intimate sit-down dinners that celebrate authentic gharana cuisine, culture, and conversation," says Samiya.

THE STORY SO FAR

Pazirai began in June 2025 with a sit-down dinner at Aziz Bagh, a 126-year-old Hyderabad heritage home. The evening featured an immersive meal accompanied by Urdu poetry, a short talk about the family that still lives there, and a four-course menu recreating dishes from old Hyderabad and Lucknowi households.

"We also host Hyderabad high-tea in art deco homes with a community talk"
– Samiya Shakir

The second Pazirai was at a 124-year-old Gujarati haveli, a vegetarian edition that paid homage to ritual Gujarati fare and the start of the Hindu festive calendar. Each home brought with it a new story, a new cuisine, and new people who helped build on the idea of preserving living heritage.

"We also host Hyderabad high-tea in art deco homes with a community talk. Their first was with renowned architect Srinvas Murthy, a man who has extensively documented art deco homes in Hyderabad. We are also building community along with culture and documenting Hyderabad's vast architectural heritage," the founders add.

THE EXPERIENCE

Every Pazirai begins with the home itself. The team spends weeks understanding its history, who built it, who lived there and what memories it holds. "Once that story emerges, we design the menu

and the atmosphere around it. For example, our dinner at Aziz Bagh was a parallel Hyderabad and Lucknowi gharana experience complete with chefs from both cities, Urdu shayari with live translation, and a short historical talk on the family that continues to live there. The home became part of the storytelling, its furniture, silverware, and chandeliers carried the evening as much as the food did. We let the home breathe and the stories unfold naturally," explains Samiya. It's nostalgia served on a plate.

FUTURE FORWARD

Hosting more dinners in historic homes and havelis across Hyderabad, and eventually taking these experiences to other Indian cities. We are also working on an edition set inside a palace, one that will explore the grandeur of royal dastarkhwans and the evolution of the Nizami cuisine, they add. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 3,000 onwards per person (Varies based on the venue and the experience. Pazirai is not a commercial venture, each homeowner is monetized and the organizers prefer keeping pricing personal, much like the experience itself. Details: Check @Pazirai.hyd for the next event



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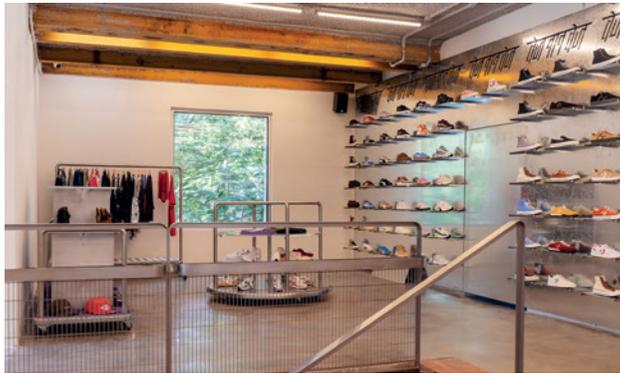
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Offering everything from sneakers and streetwear to music and pop-ups, this new flagship store fearlessly flexes its creativity

Streetwear Upgraded



VegNonVeg represents the coming together of two opposing entities to create something steeped in meaning and novelty. What began as a destination for sneakers has now transformed into a space where fashion, art, and music give way to individuality, expression, and a sense of community.

Bringing that spirit to Jubilee Hills is the brand's fifth and largest flagship store. "Hyderabad has always had a creative undercurrent of music, food, sneakers, and design, and it's all connected here," says Abhineth Singh, Co-Founder. "We wanted to build a space that feels open, real, rooted in the city's rhythm and feel part of something bigger."

ALIVE WITH CREATIVITY

Conceived as a space that is culturally hybrid in its essence, VegNonVeg adapts to Hyderabadi sensibilities with a mindful depiction of its culture sprinkled over streetwear and the design across the two floors that hold them.

Natural light seeping in breathes life into the space where terracotta brick meets steel, hand-painted plaster is layered with concrete, and ikat softens the industrial edge.

ATHLEISURE ON DISPLAY

Spread across 4,200 sq. ft. area, doors open to a wide range of sneakers crafted from leather, suede, nylon, and canvas; a lineup of unisex comfort wear which includes hoodies, jerseys, shorts, pants and tees in cotton and denim; and accessories in eyewear, shoe care, and bags.

Functioning as a shrine to sneakers that spotlight limited drops and collaborations, the multi-brand boutique curates products from diverse global brands. From Japan and Korea to the USA, the space highlights exclusive pieces by Momotaro, Shinya Kozuka and Vandythepink. The labels BBC Icecream and Fenty – both created by musicians turned leading fashion designers – Pharrell Williams and Rihanna respectively, are also on display. VNV's clothing line and collection, VenusFlyTrap alone, are worth a trip down to the streetwear haven. ■ IPSHITA

Price: On Request

Road No. 22, Jubilee Hills
Timings: 11 am to 9 pm
Instagram: @vegnonveg



ONLINE PICK

Luxury leather accessories from **Akinna** show a thoughtful balance of design, quality and conscious sourcing

Italian Design with an Indian Heart

Co-founded by Annika Saraf, **Akinna** is an online leather accessories label bringing together Italian design influence and Indian craftsmanship. An LSE alumna with a Master's in Luxury Accessory Design from Istituto Marangoni, Milan, Annika has previously worked with European brands like Borbonese – the experience that now shapes Akinna's clean, structured accessories.

THE INSPIRATION

Talking of the inspiration behind the brand, she says, "Growing up, I watched my mother and sister carry bags that held their worlds together, strength, chaos, elegance, all at once. But I often felt there was a gap between functionality and emotion in what women carried. I wanted to bridge that space. To create pieces that are bold yet grounded, structured yet soulful."

CRAFT AND RESPONSIBILITY

"All products are handcrafted in India at SA8000-certified workshops that follow fair labor practices. The brand uses Leather Working Group (LWG)-certified leather to ensure responsible sourcing," she explains why their brand stands out. Akinna's range includes shoulder and crossbody bags, minis, business totes, wallets, purses and belts – functional pieces designed for everyday use besides chains and charms.

THE STAR ATTRACTION

"Italy brings the art of minimalism and bold structure, while India adds depth through craftsmanship and soul. The pieces are imagined with a European eye for design and brought to life by Indian artisans whose skill has been perfected over generations," she adds. Her favorite in the line? Vanessa Petite, a sleek women's bag that was reimagined to be bigger, bolder, and broader based on consumer feedback. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 7,000 onwards
Details: www.akinna.com

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With a Telugu debut alongside international heavyweights, **Priyanka Chopra**, the icon who has transcended Bollywood effortlessly, proves once again why she's a powerhouse without borders – balancing films, OTT, fashion, family, and more with grace. Read more about WOW!'s cover girl for the 23rd anniversary edition

Priyanka's Power Move: LA Lights to Telugu Screens

ON THE COVER: PRIYANKA CHOPRA
MAKE UP: BUSTER KNIGHT
HAIR: LUKE PLUCKROSE
NAILS: MICHELLE HUMPHREY
OUTFIT: RAHUL MISHRA
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARCO BÄHLER



“I don’t
want to be
defined by where
I come from;
I want to define
a global space
for myself”

When actor **Priyanka Chopra** confirmed her Telugu cinema debut in *Varanasi*, a film directed by SS Rajamouli, a filmmaker of international repute, and starring Mahesh Babu, a superstar with a massive worldwide following, the announcement was a landmark cultural moment. Not merely a casting coup, it felt like a milestone: a global icon returning to Indian cinema through an international project. Rajamouli’s films travel across borders, and Mahesh Babu commands fans from Tokyo to Texas. And Priyanka is a known name in OTT shows in the US.

For Priyanka, whose career has consistently pushed at the edges of geography and genre, this movie signals the unmistakable arc of a phenomenon – someone who transcends industries, markets and expectations. While we await the big release in 2027, PeeCee, as she is fondly called, has been giving her fans glimpses of her life in Hyderabad, on the sets, through her Insta stories; whether it was her LED mask as part of her skincare routine or how her daughter Malti Marie was having fun in the city. And when the production house released the poster of *Mandakini*, in a yellow saree and kicking butt, the internet exploded! “By the time *Varanasi* is completed, I’ll know enough Telugu to deliver a full speech,” she promised the audience at the Globetrotter title-reveal event in November. Can’t wait!

THE RISE AND RISE OF PEECEE

Her journey to this point has always had the sweep of an adventurous narrative. As a teenager, Priyanka left India for the United States, studying in Massachusetts and Iowa, before returning home and unexpectedly entering beauty pageants. Winning Miss World 2000 placed her on a global stage early, yet it was Bollywood where she made her first mark, choosing roles that were bold for their time.

From *Aitraaz* to *Fashion* and *Dostana* to *Saat Khoon Maaf*, she gravitated towards characters that required grit and demanded range. She later experimented with music, collaborated with international artists, transitioned to American television with *Quantico*, broke into Hollywood, and established herself as a multi-hyphenate entrepreneur. Marrying Nick Jonas, a celebrated American musician ten years younger, was another chapter she owned with composure and clarity, asserting that self-defined choices are a form of power.

All eyes on Priyanka Chopra who is now making a big leap into Telugu cinema as *Mandakini* in *Varanasi*

Today, Priyanka Chopra is not merely a star. She is an ecosystem – an amalgam of talent, courage, global resonance, and an unapologetic sense of identity. Here are five reasons this hard-working girl remains a phenomenon across continents.

REDIFINING SCALABILITY ACROSS INDUSTRIES

Very few entertainers from India have operated at Priyanka’s scale. Her decision to debut on American television with the series *Quantico* occurred at a time when no South Asian actor had ever headlined a major network drama. This year, she surprised everyone by embracing Telugu cinema and giving a very ‘back to the roots’ vibe, juggling her Hollywood projects and now a full-fledged Indian movie. When she decides to do that, she chooses no less than working with Superstar Mahesh Babu and blockbuster director SS Rajamouli. She’s winning hearts learning Telugu and attempting to say ‘Tagalabetteydamma?’ (meaning: shall we rock it, folks). All eyes on *Mandakini* now, the spunky girl she plays in *Varanasi*.



WITH HER *VARANASI* CO-STAR MAHESH BABU



Priyanka Chopra's 5 Fundas

- 1. I want to be able to open doors for others that were not open for me.*
- 2. I don't want to be defined by where I come from; I want to define a global space for myself.*
- 3. The one thing I've learned is that you have to be fearless about failing.*
- 4. I like to make choices that scare me a little – that's where growth happens.*
- 5. I think my ambition has always been bigger than my circumstances.*

BOLD CHOICES, SANS SAFETY NETS

The defining foundation of Priyanka's career is courage and hard work. She was never interested in convenience or comfort zones. From playing deeply flawed characters to starring in films anchored on women's inner worlds, she embraced unconventional roles long before such scripts became commercially fashionable.

Even her off-screen decisions reflect this boldness. A global music career. Producing regional cinema. Launching an international beauty line. Entering markets and roles where Indian actors had little representation. These moves were not guaranteed successes, but they were undeniably visionary.

BUILDING A GLOBAL IDENTITY, YET, A DESI GIRL AT HEART

Many actors become global. Priyanka became so while remaining recognizably, proudly Indian. Her red-carpet appearances frequently include Indian designers. She speaks about her upbringing, her family's values, and her cultural identity with ease. Her public presence – whether at the Met Gala, Cannes, or the UN – carries her unmistakable cultural identity.

TURNING FASHION INTO LANGUAGE

Priyanka is not merely stylish. She uses fashion as expression, storytelling, even a declaration. Whether it's her avant-garde Met Gala looks, dramatic couture gowns, or impeccably structured formal attire, she communicates intention through what she wears. Fashion houses trust her. Photographers love her angles. And audiences recognize her sartorial clarity. Her recent Bvlgari's Serpenti Infinito appearance was the talk of the country and her look trended for a month online.

LIVING WITH UNCOMPROMISING AUTHENTICITY

The final, and perhaps most compelling reason that Priyanka is a phenomenon is, her life – personal and professional – is entirely self-authored. She married someone younger, from another culture, and another continent, and handled the global spotlight with grace. She speaks about motherhood, identity, and ambition with honesty. She owns her narrative, instead of letting headlines define it.

Priyanka Chopra is a phenomenon not because the world discovered her, but because she continues to discover herself – and bring the world along for the journey. And we at WOW! celebrate her on all fronts – 'cos there ain't nobody like our desi girl! ■ MANJU

QUICK TAKE

Favorite Breakfast: Parathas

Comfort Cuisine: Indian

Must-have Item: Achaar

Childhood Dream: Aeronautical Engineer

Unwind Mantra: Binge-watching movies

Her Inspiration: Music

Creative Outlet: Writing

Core Identity: Desi Girl

Passionate About: Philanthropy

(Compiled from her various public interviews)



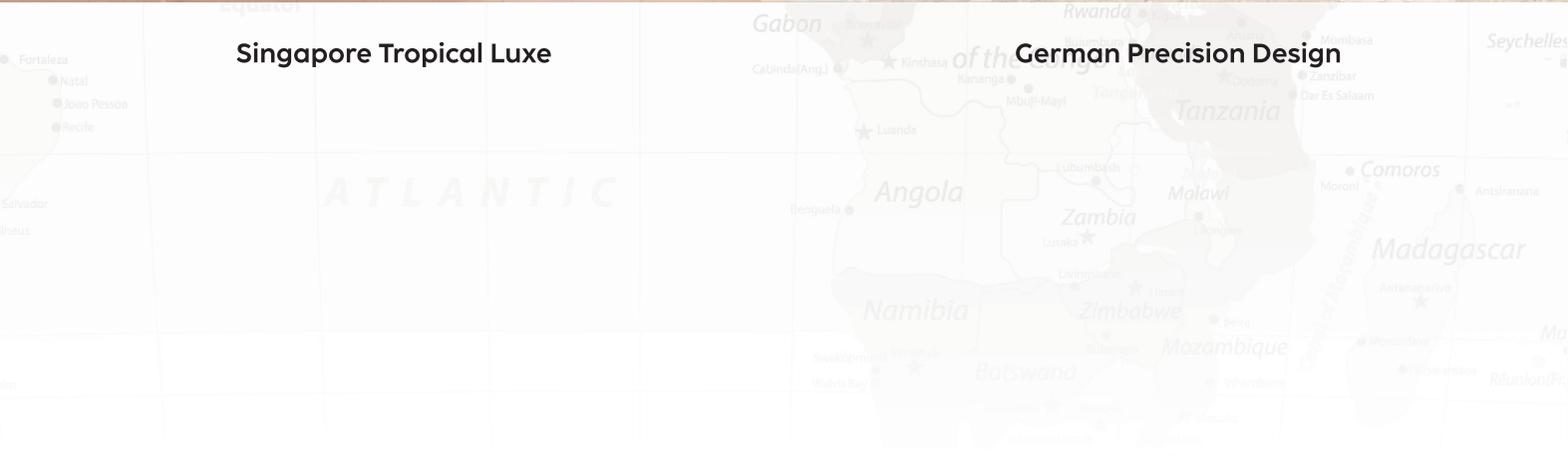
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ENTERPRISING TEENAGERS WHO ARE MAKING FIGHTER DRONES FOR THE INDIAN ARMY, ATHLETES WHO HAVE CONQUERED THEIR DISABILITIES, TO PERFORMERS WHO HIT A LOW BUT ROSE BACK TO WIN NATIONAL ACCLAIM, all from Hyderabad of course, are part of WOW!'s 23rd anniversary annual list of changemakers. Read their stories which will wow you with their innovation and attitude

BY MANJU LATHA KALANIDHI

23



MOVERS AND MAKERS OF 2025



#230F2025



“Frustrated Telangana Pilla exploded on social media and opened doors to Telangana creators who no longer had to polish themselves to fit in”
– Alekha Harika

ALEKHYA HARIKA

QUICK BIO: ENTERTAINER, ACTOR, VIRAL VIDEO STAR

Alekha Harika is one of Telangana’s most recognizable digital faces – an actor, dancer and content creator who turned everyday relatability into a full-fledged career. From being a part-time dance teacher and Amazon associate to becoming a viral sensation, her journey has been shaped by hustle, instinct and an unshakeable belief in her own timing. After her breakout with *Frustrated Telangana Pilla*, she delivered *Vellakey*, a track that sparked 1.2 million reels on Instagram. Her recent return with *Koyila* – after a year-and-a-half of holding back for the right projects – signals a refreshed, confident second inning.

THE IMPACT

Harika’s rise mirrors the wave of regional creators who came into their own by simply being themselves. Her 50-million-view YouTube music video, and her ability to switch effortlessly into the Telangana dialect, made her instantly relatable. While doing tiny roles in short films for friends, one of those clips caught the attention of Tamada Media, who saw her spark and pulled her into their 2018 digital series zone. “*Frustrated Telangana Pilla* exploded on social

media and opened doors to Telangana creators who no longer had to polish themselves to fit in,” she says.

THE BACKSTORY

Before the recognition, Harika led a life filled with part-time jobs, dance classes and small acting gigs squeezed into whatever time she could find. She didn’t plan a digital career – she stumbled into it through consistency and curiosity. Every reel, role and short film sharpened her confidence until the industry finally noticed.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Dance remains the backbone of her routine. Her days are a mix of workouts, look tests, shoots, brand collaborations and planning the next big idea. Harika keeps her head down and stays in her lane – “I’m too busy working” is her standard answer to trolls. Reinvention, she believes, is the only way to stay relevant.

FUTURE FORWARD

Harika begins shooting for a new film in December and is set to lead a mainstream Telugu project and an upcoming music video.

2

VOLETI KARTHIK

QUICK BIO: FOUNDER & CEO, FLASHOOT, THE UBER FOR INSTA REELS

Hyderabad-based entrepreneur Voleti Karthik has been building things for the creator economy long before content became a buzzword. In 2024, he launched Flashoot – a simple idea that lets people book a videographer the way they’d book a cab. Today, he runs the fast-growing platform that helps anyone get a quick, polished Insta reel without hunting for a photographer. For Karthik, the app is not just tech; it’s a way of giving young creators steady work while helping users get professional content on the go.

THE IMPACT

This year has turned out to be a defining one for him. Flashoot secured a fresh investment of Rs 24 million, taking its valuation to Rs 220 million. Around the same time, the platform onboarded over 1,000 new creators in just a month, expanding to 12 cities in India and four countries. “For a bootstrapped idea that began as a local experiment, Flashoot handles real demand from influencers, small businesses, event-goers and everyday Instagram users who simply want nice videos without the fuss,” he says.

THE BACKSTORY

The idea came from what Karthik saw at events – people constantly asking photographers, ‘Can you shoot a quick reel for me?’ “I realized that there is a real gap between professional photography and the fast-paced world of social media. Along with a small group of friends, I pooled talent, built a basic version of the app, and got it running with an initial investment that mostly went into tech development,” he says. His earlier stints in fashion and food businesses helped him understand branding, speed, and what customers actually expect today.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Flashoot now works with a growing community of photographers, many of them students or independent creators. The idea is simple: the nearest professional gets a ping, reaches the pinned location in about 40 minutes, shoots, edits and delivers the reel within an hour. Most of the earnings go directly to the photographer – a model Karthik insists on keeping fair and transparent.

FUTURE FORWARD

The plan for 2026 is clear: expand deeper into metro and tier-2 cities, bring in more creators, and cut wait times even further. For Karthik, the focus is on building a service that feels quick, useful and accessible – an everyday tool for a generation that lives online.



“Flashoot handles real demand from influencers, small businesses, event-goers and everyday Instagram users who simply want nice videos without the fuss”
– Karthik Voleti



3-4

JAYANT KHATRI AND SOURYA CHOUDHURY

QUICK BIO: FOUNDERS OF APOLLYON DYNAMICS THAT MAKES KAMIKAZE DRONES WHICH THE INDIAN ARMY HAS DEPLOYED IN ITS WARFARE

THE BACK STORY

Apollyon Dynamics is a Hyderabad-based student-led defence-tech startup founded by 20-year-old mechanical engineer Jayant Khatri (Ajmer) and 21-year-old electronics engineer Sourya Choudhury (Kolkata) at BITS Pilani, Hyderabad. The journey started in a hostel room and drone race circuits. Jayant and Sourya, both third-year engineering students, began building high-speed kamikaze drones using off-the-shelf parts, motivated by modern asymmetric warfare and global conflicts. “We emailed defence contacts and used LinkedIn to pitch our idea. Within months, the Indian Army and paramilitary units showed interest,” they share.

THE IMPACT

Apollyon Dynamics has designed kamikaze drones capable of destroying vehicles and operating in asymmetric warfare scenarios. They demonstrated their systems in the presence of the Minister of Home Affairs, Amit Shah, at a defence event in Bhuj to engage with Army and defence establishments. Their mindset: “We reach out to units, ask their pain-points,

*“Network is your net-worth”
– Jayant Khatri and
Sourya Choudhury*

then deliver solutions in days or weeks.” They’ve raised four crore rupees and aim to go global. The tech has already been showcased before BSF and other armed forces.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Their team of 17 works out of Hyderabad, combining mechanical, electronics and systems engineers. Their ethos: “Network is your net-worth,” say the duo. They began with drone races, built credibility, then pivoted to defence. They focus on real-world pain points of tankers, artillery regiments, and frontier units. The age of the founders (20 & 21) and the speed of prototyping have turned heads.

FUTURE FORWARD

Their next aim is export-ready solutions, rapid deployment for international defence markets, and a full ecosystem of drone platforms (trainer, kamikaze, fixed-wing, VTOL). They plan to strengthen India’s defence-tech ecosystem and win global customers by offering turn-key delivery. The message: a marathon not a sprint – for young startups to stay the course.

5

KADALI SATYANARAYANA

QUICK BIO: WRITER, LYRICIST, SCREENWRITER;
A TELUGU STORYTELLER WITH VIRAL CLIPS TO
HER CREDIT

THE IMPACT

In a landscape where Telugu literature often struggles for visibility, Kadali has carved out a rare space – six commercially successful books, no financial losses, and one of the strongest digital reach among young Telugu authors. A true one-woman show, she writes, illustrates, designs, and promotes her books herself. Her work resonates especially with women who read between the lines – those looking for stories that acknowledge love, pain, survival and societal pressure without judgement. Her other day job is to work for movies – dialogues, screenplay, lyrics, etc.

THE BACK STORY

Storytelling runs in her blood. Her father Ravi was an avid writer, and her parents are steeped in Telugu literature. The sea – kadali – is her metaphor, her compass. But the 29-year-old's real turning point was deeply personal: a misunderstood phase of her life when she was leaving an abusive relationship. "It was more about finding a safe space – paying my own rent, reclaiming my autonomy," she says. Trolls selectively misread her words until a video clarified her intent, and the flood of support that followed solidified her voice. "The country needs another 100 Kadalis to set things right for women," she says.

She credits feminist icon Kamla Bhasin and Nigerian writer Chimamanda for shaping her thinking. When an online meme reduced her to a 'moral policewoman', Kadali pushed back: "Howcome women alone are held responsible? I will forever speak the truth." The backlash once affected her father so deeply that he felt socially humiliated. Yet, she continues – steadfast, fierce, unshakably honest.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Her anthology *Kadali Kathalu 2* and *Chick Lit* was launched at the Book Fair, featuring stories that mirror society's hidden layers. She insists her readers are her strength – the community that keeps her grounded.

FUTURE FORWARD

Her creative universe now includes songs and scripts. She has written for *Mahendragiri*, the *Varahi Devi* title track, collaborated with performer Raja Kumari, and penned lyrics considered by Yuvan Shankar Raja, Mani Sharma and Keeravani. As a dialogue writer for *Love in Ee Rojullo*, she has now signed a full-fledged movie.

"Say no to suicide. Don't lose yourself. Speak aloud – even when it shakes the room," adds this fearless feminist.

*“The country needs
another 100 Kadalis to
set things right for women”
– Kadali Satyanarayana*





6

VAMSHI KURAPATI

QUICK BIO: PODCASTER, STORYTELLER AND CREATOR OF RAW TALKS WITH VK

THE IMPACT

In a digital world crowded with influencers, Vamshi carved an unexpected niche: long-format, unfiltered conversations with achievers. With two million subscribers, his podcast stands out for sincerity, depth and emotional honesty. “I think my non-journalistic, insight-driven approach has helped leaders, founders and actors connect more meaningfully with audiences,” he says.

THE BACK STORY

A finance graduate who transitioned into brand strategy, Vamshi had been consulting nearly 40 brands before he picked up a mic. During Covid, he realized the internet was the new public square and that powerful stories were going undocumented. Telugu digital content felt fragmented – cooking, fashion, vlogs – but lacked sharp, grounded, meaningful interviews. “So, I built *Raw Talks*: a show that invites people to open up rather than perform,” he adds.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Early episodes featured stalwarts like Cyient’s BVR Mohan

“Experience isn’t your years; it’s the situations that make you grow”
– Vamshi Kurapati

Reddy, Rapido co-founder Aravind Sanka and tech guru JA Chowdary. Within 25 episodes, the channel hit three lakh subscribers. Today, with over 110 episodes, two-thirds are with achievers outside the celebrity bubble. He pushes actors to go beyond promotions and engage emotionally.

Off-camera, Vamshi runs a data-driven content engine: analyzing thumbnails, golden-hour metrics, formats and audience patterns. His team helps him scale multiple IPs simultaneously. Recently, he paused the channel for two weeks – sacrificing revenue – to refocus and upgrade production.

FUTURE FORWARD

Expanding into five IPs, consulting brands and leading a fast-growing team, Vamshi’s roadmap lies in regional creator ecosystems, entrepreneurship content and deeper storytelling formats. His mantra remains unchanged: patience pays. “Experience isn’t your years,” he says. “It’s the situations that make you grow.”



MEGHANA GAVIREDDYGARI

QUICK BIO: AN AWARD-WINNING INTERDISCIPLINARY VISUAL ARTIST THE NEW GENERATION OF ART LOVERS ARE WATCHING CLOSELY AND BETTING ON

THE IMPACT

With shows in India and abroad, working across multiple mediums, this young, interdisciplinary artist from Anantapur has made Hyderabad her home and is thriving in the city's art scene. Her thesis show was based on censorship and colonization in which she created a library of sorts and all her artworks iterations of books.

Her artworks speak boldly about subjects such as censorship and colonization, a commentary on the Indian society and polity

THE BACK STORY

"I find joy working in multiple mediums, as each medium has its own visual vocabulary. For instance, at my solo show 'Traces to Return' at Blueprint12 last year, I worked on metal and ceramics. I equally love working with wood and pigment, cement and clay. Variety does it for me," she says. A full-time artist since 2020, last year, she was busy with shows in London, Delhi and Mumbai, Meghana practices painting, printmaking and sculpture. Upon receiving her Master's in Interdisciplinary Fine Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2020, she received the Mount Royal Emerging Artist Award.

BEHIND THE SCENES

In the last five years, her work was exhibited at several galleries, including Blueprint12 and Dhoomimal Gallery, New Delhi, Art Mumbai and Space118 in Mumbai; Dhi Contemporary, Hyderabad, and at large-scale exhibitions such as India Art Fair (2022, 2023) and Delhi Contemporary Art Week, in New Delhi.

In 2022, this 29-year-old artist received the YFLO Young Achiever's award in the field of Fine Arts. She recently spent a year-and-a-half in London to further her practice and conduct research.

FUTURE FORWARD

She is working on an all-women group show in Delhi in 2026 with Blueprint12 in New Delhi. She was also awarded a Vermont Studio Center Fellowship and she will be attending a fully-funded artist residency in March 2026.





8 GONGADI TRISHA

QUICK BIO: INDIA'S RISING CRICKET STAR AND U19 T20 WORLD CUP PHENOMENON

THE IMPACT

At just 19, Gongadi Trisha has rewritten the script for Indian women's cricket. In the U19 T20 World Cup final in Kuala Lumpur, she delivered a match-winning performance – three crucial wickets, a commanding nine-wicket victory over South Africa, and twin honors: Player of the Final and Player of the Tournament. Hyderabad erupted in celebration, with the Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy awarding her a cash prize of one crore rupees. Soon after, the ICC nominated her for the global Player of the Month award, thereby cementing her place in world cricket.

*“Dreams demand dedication –
and it's worth it”
– Gongadi Trisha*

THE BACK STORY

Born on December 15, 2005, in Bhadrachalam, Trisha's tryst with cricket began before she could hold a spoon – literally. Her father, G. Rami Reddy, placed a bat in her hand at age two and trained her in the courtyard. Recognizing her spark, the family made a life-altering decision: they sold their four acres of land,

moved to Hyderabad, and enrolled her at St. John's Cricket Academy under coach Srinivasan. By age eight, she was already playing in the Hyderabad's Under-16 squad. Many questioned the family's gamble – but her century (110* off 59 balls), the first ever in the history of the Women's U19 T20 World Cup, silenced every doubt.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Trisha credits her discipline to her father. “He never let a day go without practice. He believed muscle memory builds champions,” she shares. Her rise continued through India B, Challenger Trophy tournaments and senior-level exposure. The nation watched heartwarming visuals of her family celebrating her World Cup triumph – a reminder of the sacrifices behind the success.

FUTURE FORWARD

Trisha now trains at Coaching Beyond in Marredpally, splitting her day between cricket, fitness conditioning and her private intermediate studies. She dreams of representing India at the senior level and inspiring young girls across Telangana. “I want them to know that dreams demand dedication – and it's worth it,” she signs off, heading to another round of interviews and fan meetings.

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SHANMUKHA SHIVA CHANDRA

QUICK BIO: INTERNATIONAL YOGA THERAPIST AND FOUNDER OF THE 'HEALTH EDUCATION FIRST' MISSION;

THE IMPACT

For over a decade, Shanmukha Shiva Chandra has been bringing science-backed yoga to thousands across India and abroad. His recent collaboration with Singareni CMD, Balram Naik, marks a landmark initiative: taking an ancient, research-based yogic health routine to 71,000 Singareni employees and their families – especially during the high-risk heart attack season months of November to January. His approach has made deep inroads among laborer communities, demystifying yoga and proving its life-changing impact.

THE BACK STORY

Based in Madhapur, he spent five years in Singapore teaching yoga to staffers at JP Morgan, Nestle, Standard Chartered, Citi, IBM, Sonata and the National Geographic Channel. There, he treated thousands struggling with neck pain, back issues, sciatica, obesity and lifestyle stress. His training is rooted in 15 years of research by his guru, Subramanyam – work that

“India needs health literacy more than anything else”
– Shanmukha Shiva Chandra

culminated in the 200-page *Ancient Yogic Routine*, a book ordered in bulk by health exponent GBK Rao. His warning against harmful practices, especially head rotations, has earned him national attention.

BEHIND THE SCENES

His method blends yogic wisdom with physiology: Here are three hacks from him: Drinking warm water rapidly to clean the alimentary canal and prevent inflammatory disorders; Microyoga for safe warm-ups and therapy poses for pain relief.

FUTURE FORWARD

Shanmukha is expanding his 'Health Education First' movement nationwide, merging scientific research, digital resources and community programs. His goal is to make preventive health a household practice. "India needs health literacy more than anything else," he says – a mission he plans to scale through workshops, digital content and institutional tie-ups across states.





10 PVNS ROHIT

QUICK BIO:

PLAYBACK SINGER, WINNER OF 71ST NATIONAL AWARD FOR BEST MALE PLAYBACK SINGER

THE IMPACT

PVNS Rohit's musical journey is a story of setbacks, breakthroughs and self-discovery – crowned this year with one of Indian cinema's highest honors. In September, he won the 71st National Award for Best Male Playback Singer, a milestone that validated years of persistence and quiet belief. His turning point came earlier with *Poraga Poraga*, a song born out of heartbreak that became therapy, clarity and emotional release all at once. That creative spark led to *Kahani Meri* with Sonu Nigam – a collaboration that reignited his confidence and brought him back into full form.

“Every human has flaws. Mine don't erase my brilliance. This shift transformed my music”
– PVNS Rohit

THE BACK STORY

An engineering college dropout, Rohit first caught public attention on *Indian Idol* in 2017. “However, the years that followed were filled with intense self-criticism and anxiety. In 2019, I reframed my entire approach with a simple truth: “Every human has flaws. Mine don't erase my brilliance. This shift transformed my music,” he shares. His indie track *Katuka Kallalo* reached listeners organically and caught the ears of jury members, quietly rebuilding his artistic identity.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The year 2023 began with emotional chaos – delayed song releases and a personal heartbreak. But intuition told him a breakthrough was coming. Director Sai Razesha confirmed that instinct when he offered Rohit the final, emotionally heavy track in the film *Baby*. “I remember recording this song six times; it was perhaps the toughest song of my life. And audiences felt every note. *Premisthunna*, composed by Vijay Bulganin, went on to fetch me the 71st National Film Award for Best Male Playback Singer this September. It has been a landmark year for me,” he says.

Life also brought unexpected joy. A marriage proposal he once declined returned – and this time, the moment he met her, everything shifted. Shreya became his strongest source of grounding. “Believe in your craft, not your appearance,” she told him – words that stayed.

FUTURE FORWARD

Rohit is now working on a new heartbreak track set to release in December – a bold blend of Hip-Hop, Carnatic and EDM, which he calls “raw, real and me.” With 100+ songs behind him and a National Award anchoring his journey, he knows one thing for sure: music was never his backup plan. It was always his calling, not his Plan B. “That's why I never went back to complete my graduation because I wanted music to be my Plan A, B, C and Z.”



ALUVALA KEERTHAN CHAND

QUICK BIO: CO-FOUNDER, VP AVIONICS, A SPACE STARTUP THAT LAUNCHED HIS FIRST SATELLITE ONBOARD COMPUTER ON PSLV C51; ALSO WORKED ON FIVE MORE SATELLITE MISSIONS

THE IMPACT

At 23, Keerthan Chand is already the Vice President of Avionics and one of the four co-founders of Catalyx Space. Born and raised in Hyderabad, this Moula Ali boy graduated in Computer Science from Bharath University in Chennai.

“My journey into electronics began in school after a leg injury left me bedridden for a month. During that time, I discovered microcontrollers and spent every single day experimenting, breaking things apart, and rebuilding them. That phase changed my life. What started as a distraction became a deep passion. I began writing code for drone flight computers and helping engineering students with their projects,” says Keerthan.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Later, while studying, he was also working at Space Kidz India in Chennai as a Lead Avionics engineer. There he built avionics for six high-altitude balloon missions. “At 18, I

designed and launched my first satellite on PSLV C51 and later worked on five more satellite missions,” he says.

“I travelled through every gully of Koti searching for components to build my early projects. I also visited several colleges across Hyderabad to teach students about electronics and software. My family still lives in Hyderabad and the city continues to feel like home,” he says as he jets across the country on work.

FUTURE FORWARD

He recently co-founded Catalyx Space in San Francisco, raised Rs 63 crore in funding, and set up a 25,000-square-foot facility in Ahmedabad, where he is building a team of more than 40 engineers. “My long-term vision is to solve the downmass logistics problem because space isn’t one way, enabling complex experiments to return after months in microgravity, and truly advance research that can benefit humanity,” he says.

“At 18, I designed and launched my first satellite on PSLV C51”
—Aluvala Keerthan Chand



QUICK BIO: TELANGANA'S YOUNGEST, MOST-FOLLOWED WEATHERMAN; SOCIAL MEDIA SENSATION ABOUT AN UNLIKELY SUBJECT



THE IMPACT:

Why is a 21-year-old JNTU engineering graduate the go-to voice for Hyderabad's unpredictable climate? Because T. Balaji, better known online as Telangana Weatherman, has turned a childhood fascination into a public service. With over three lakh followers on social media (X, Instagram and WhatsApp) hanging on to his updates, residents, students and even officials check his posts before planning their day. GHMC roped him in as a consultant through its WhatsApp channel during the 2025 monsoon preparedness drive – three months where his predictions supported on-ground teams. His accuracy record is extraordinary: over the last five years of increased flooding events, he scores himself a 9/10.

THE BACK STORY:

Balaji grew up tracking cloud movements, colors of the sky and the dance of atmospheric systems out of his own passion for all things weather. During Covid, while most teenagers were indoors scrolling, he immersed himself in climate science – reading books, learning satellite interpretation, engaging with senior weather bloggers, and mastering global weather models. He launched his X handle in October 2020. What began with hours of painstaking study now takes him less than an hour thanks to instinct, experience and a keen eye.

Over three lakh people in Telangana hang on to his weather updates, with even weather officials checking his posts before planning their day

BEHIND THE SCENES

Weather is dynamic, and Balaji is the first to admit it. In August 2025, he predicted 100 mm of rainfall; the city saw only 40 mm, triggering unnecessary trolling on Aug 13–14. "I took the feedback," he says simply. "You learn and move on. When you deal with so many people, ignore the naysayers. Keep doing the work," he says.

FUTURE FORWARD

Though he's preparing for the GATE exam and hopes for a solid engineering career, Balaji knows weather may eventually turn into a more professional service. Monetization is still minimal. Instagram barely gives him one or two collaborations, content on X earns pocket change, but he is not desperate to make money. "I am happy to have credibility in this field. That is what matters," he says.

QUICK BIO: PARA SHOOTER, WORLD CUP BRONZE MEDALLIST



THE IMPACT

Seventeen-year-old Pavani is one of India's emerging para-shooting athletes. She first came into the spotlight with a World Cup Bronze Medal and has now represented India at the World Ability Sport Games 2025 in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. Competing on the world stage at such a young age, this teenager who is affected by congenital dysmelia (associated with limbs) brings a calm focus to the sport and carries the hopes of many young athletes who see themselves in her journey. "If I can play with one hand, I can achieve anything in my life," she says.

At the 2025 Games, Pavani competed in the R4 – 10m Air Rifle Standing Mixed SH2 category and secured Rank 3, earning an individual bronze. She was also the youngest competitor in her event, a fact that underscores both her skill and her composure in high-pressure international arenas. "This speaks not just about my personal success but the growing strength of India's para-sport ecosystem," she says. Support from Invesco, Alcon, and GMMCO – partners of the Aditya Mehta Foundation – has played a central role in enabling her training and exposure.

THE BACK STORY

Pavani's path to global competition began far from the spotlight. "I worked my way through challenges that often limit young athletes. Instead of slowing down, every hurdle pushed me forward," she adds. Joining the Aditya Mehta Foundation gave her access to structured training and a community that believed in her potential. Her family's resilience and her own determination shaped the athlete she is becoming.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Under the guidance of Coach Vijay Singham at the Foundation, Pavani has built her discipline around consistency. "My day involves long hours on the range, mental conditioning, and learning to handle the intense precision required in shooting. My journey is shaped as much by quiet perseverance as by medals and rankings," she remarks.

FUTURE FORWARD

Pavani is now preparing for her next milestones – the Asian Games and the 2028 Paralympics. Focused, grounded, and steadily improving, she aims to carry the tricolor onto even bigger stages. Her journey reminds young girls across Telangana and India that dreams are not limited by circumstances but lifted by courage and effort.

“I worked my way through challenges that often limit young athletes. Instead of slowing down, every hurdle pushed me forward”
– Pavani Banoth



14-15

ZAIN SAMDANI AND FARIA ZUBAIR

QUICK BIO: SIBLINGS WHO DEVELOPED EXOHEAL, A ROBOTIC GLOVE THAT HELPS PATIENTS WITH HAND PARALYSIS TO EXPERIENCE A FASTER, MORE COMFORTABLE AND AFFORDABLE REHABILITATION PROCESS

THE IMPACT

This year, the siblings won the Gold Award at the World Government Summit in the United Arab Emirates and first place at the Global Health Exhibition in Saudi Arabia for Exoheal development. “These achievements have given ExoHeal global visibility, credibility, and access to leading clinicians and health system partners,” they say. Watching an uncle struggle through his day-to-day activities inspired the duo to come up with a practical solution for him, leading to the design of ExoHeal. They first floated the seed idea for this innovation at a Google Science Fair a few years ago.

THE BACK STORY

Zain, 25, is the CEO and leads product, partnerships, and overall strategy. Faria, 23, is the Chief Design Officer and leads product design. “Our biggest wins so far include receiving the Microsoft Imagine Cup Global Award and being mentored directly by Satya Nadella,” say the siblings born in Hyderabad. They have

been supported by Google, Microsoft, Samsung Germany, and the German Government through various innovation, mentorship, and ecosystem programs. “This support has helped us accelerate product development, access expert networks, and build a strong foundation for scaling,” they say. Zain has delivered over 50 talks in four countries in the last few years.

BEHIND THE SCENES

From taking part in international seminars, startup workshops, to TEDX platforms, the duo has been globetrotting in 2025. Zain was also featured in Forbes Under 30 and he believes that such exposure will help him network better. “Our motto is to transform lives through technology and social impact,” they say.

FUTURE FORWARD

Focused on bringing ExoHeal to patients at scale. “We are finalizing our regulatory pathway, expanding clinical and commercial partnerships in Europe and the Middle East, and preparing for our pre seed round in early 2026. Next year, we aim to manufacture our next-generation glove, deploy it across multiple regions, and launch an AI-enabled home rehabilitation platform that delivers high-quality therapy directly to patients,” says Zain.

“Our motto is to transform lives through technology and social impact”
– Zain and Faria

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**SHRIVALLI RASHMIKA
BHAMIDIPATY**

QUICK BIO: CURRENT INDIA #2 IN WOMEN'S SINGLES IN TENNIS, WTA RANKING 300 AND NOW IN TENNIS PREMIER LEAGUE 2025

Hyderabad's own sporty crush, and one of India's fastest-rising players, Shrivalli Rashmika Bhamidipaty is currently ranked India No. 2 in women's singles, with a career-high WTA ranking of 300. She now enters the spotlight of the Tennis Premier League (TPL), picked by SG Pipers Bengaluru for a strong Rs 8.60 lakh at the 2025 auction. "This moment is a huge boost for me," she says, adding, "The Indian women's cricketing team picking up the World Cup this year has added to the overall sports vibe this year."

THE IMPACT

A two-time Women's National Champion, she swept both singles and doubles titles at the Fenesta Nationals 2023. Internationally, she has won medals at ITF circuits including \$25K Bengaluru, \$15K Hua Hin (singles), and \$25K doubles titles. She made her Billie Jean King Cup debut in Pune earlier

*“TPL is a huge boost for me”
– Shrivalli Rashmika Bhamidipaty*

this year, making a mark by winning all five matches to help India qualify for the playoffs. She is also the third India woman (after Sania Mirza and Ankita Raina) to win the Billie Jean King Cup Heart Award for Asia.

THE BACK STORY

Growing up in Banjara Hills, the 23-year-old the love for tennis during her summer holidays. Her parents, Prasad and Rajshri, both former sportspersons, encouraged her to pursue professional coaching at LB Stadium, later training under AR Anand Kumar (Shri Pallavi Anand Tennis Academy) and Vishal Uppal.

FUTURE FORWARD

Next up: A high-octane TPL season. "Of course, winning a Grand Slam," she adds.



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RAGHUVAMSH CHAVALI**QUICK BIO: AWARD-WINNING WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER, MUSICIAN, IT CONSULTANT****THE IMPACT**

Raghuvamsh's work reflects the tension between cities and nature. Wings Over Concrete – his ongoing visual study – explores how birds like sparrows and crows adapt to shrinking habitats and altered landscapes. His images capture the distinct flight patterns and behavioral shifts that arise when wildlife responds to concrete expansion. Recognized by Nature in Focus and published by *The Guardian* (UK), his work has also travelled to international competitions. At a global photography meet in Italy featuring 200 photographers from 80 countries, he emerged as one of the theme winners among 11,000 submissions – earning admiration from senior photographers intrigued by his approach.

“I began wildlife photography six years ago at the very local Ameenpur Lake – my first muse – and now I spend every Canadian weekend in the wild”
– Raghuvamsh Chavali

THE BACKSTORY

Hyderabad-born, Canada-settled product manager and IT consultant, 35-year-old Raghuvamsh Chavali is a wildlife photographer, musician, and creative constantly juggling multiple passions. “I began wildlife photography six years ago at the very local Ameenpur Lake – my first muse – and now I spend every weekend in Ontario in the wild, shooting solo with my Nikon 150–500 mm and Sony 200–600 mm lenses,” he shares.

BEHIND THE SCENES

A mechanical engineering graduate from JBIT (2011), Raghuvamsh's love for wildlife took him deeper into India's forests. Over 20 reserves, from Tadoba and Ranthambore to Mudumalai, influenced his eye and discipline. Tadoba, in particular, shifted his mindset – watching photographers attempt six safaris in three days for one perfect headshot taught him patience, passion and photographic grit. When he's not working or shooting, he is composing independent music.

FUTURE FORWARD

Raghuvamsh is now building Wings Over Concrete into a full-length photo book. Parallely, his music journey continues: he composed *Oh Priya Jabili* for singer PVNS Rohit (2024), tracks for Soujanya Bhagavathula, and twin compositions for Kalyan Vasanth and Vaishnavi Kovvuru. A Carnatic music student since age six under Molagaleti Gopalakrishna, he's also crafting a retro-style independent single.

He shoots from 5:30 am to 8:30 am every day in the woods near his home, works till 4 pm, and composes during travel. “I manage 48 hours in a 24-hour day,” he jokes. He travels with his three weapons wherever he goes: laptop, camera, and phone in tow, ready for the next frame or melody.





“My writing has opened a literary space for tribal narratives, inspiring young readers and writers to honor their identity and reclaim their stories”
– Ramesh Karthik Nayak

18 RAMESH KARTHIK NAYAK

QUICK BIO: WRITER, POET, TRANSLATOR, KNOWN TO BE THE VOICE OF THE GOR BANJARA COMMUNITY IN TELANGANA

Nunnavath Karthik, known in the literary world as Ramesh Karthik Nayak, who hails from Jakranpally Thanda, has emerged as one of the most important young voices documenting the Gor Banjara experience. “Writing across Telugu, English and Gor Boli, I could bring the lived realities of my community into the national discourse,” says Karthik. His body of work spans poetry, short stories, essays and translations, with a commitment to preserving indigenous memory and language.

THE IMPACT

Karthik’s childhood poetry collection *Balder Bandi* being included in the MA Telugu syllabus at Andhra University marked a turning point – proof that stories from the margins could enter the academic mainstream. His short story collection titled *Dhavlo* captured the emotional landscape of the Banjara community and earned widespread recognition, including the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2024. “My writing has opened a literary space for tribal narratives, inspiring young readers and writers to look inward, honor their identity and reclaim their stories,” he believes.

THE BACKSTORY

Karthik grew up in a family dependent on farming and daily wages. After Class 10, financial constraints pushed him into distance education, and he worked a string of part-time jobs – pasting pamphlets, assisting caterers, helping AC mechanics, working in photocopy shops and selling books. These formative years gave him a deep awareness of labor, dignity and resilience. His mother tongue, Gor Boli, became the emotional anchor of his writing, and his desire to document the stories he never saw represented shaped his creative path.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Every poem and story carries fragments of his hamlet. His bilingual and multilingual shifts are deliberate, honoring both the intimacy of Gor Boli and the reach of English and Telugu. For Karthik, writing is not performance but responsibility.

FUTURE FORWARD

He proudly shares that *Dhavlo* will be published in English by Penguin Random House next year, and he now has a literary agent championing his work. With more translations and original manuscripts underway, he aims to take Gor Banjara literature to national and international readers while staying rooted in the community that shaped him.



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PAVAN ALLENA

QUICK BIO: FOUNDER, BOWER SCHOOL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, A STARTUP SCHOOL

THE BACK STORY

Pavan Allena has spent the last decade building ideas that sit at the intersection of innovation, education and community. A serial entrepreneur and technologist, this VIT graduate has led ventures in the ed-tech and impact spaces, always driven by one belief: entrepreneurship is not taught, it is experienced. Before launching Bower, he worked on Metamorphosis and other ventures that shaped his thinking about how young founders should be nurtured, supported and challenged.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Bower School of Entrepreneurship in Madhapur, as Pavan describes it, “India’s first dedicated institution designed to shape the next generation of startup founders.” His vision is simple: students shouldn’t just learn about startups; they should build them. Bower bridges the classroom with the real world through hands-on programs in design thinking, practical problem-solving and mentorship from industry leaders.

Their programs (full-time to weekend classes) are designed for ages six to 45 years which handholds and teaches them everything from making a business plan to connecting with global mentors, finding investors and helping them find collaborative projects through exchange programs. “We already have over 12 startups that have taken root here and are up and running,” says Pavan.

Pavan’s other pet innovations are the Founders Library and B Café. The Founders Library is India’s first curated library exclusively for entrepreneurs: a community-built collection of titles recommended by founders, business leaders and changemakers. They also have on-campus therapy and wellness activities.

FUTURE FORWARD

His larger dream is to build Bower into a lifelong learning ecosystem – one where creators come to learn, return to contribute and stay to build.

“We already have over 12 startups that have taken root here and are up and running”
– Pavan Allena



“Resilience has been my biggest strength. Every setback taught me to adjust and keep going”
– Lalitha Dutta

20 LALITHA DUTTA

QUICK BIO: SERIAL FOODPRENEUR AND MANAGING PARTNER OF FIREWATER NEO BAR & KITCHEN

THE IMPACT:

She debuted in the F&B industry by launching Habanero Hyderabad in 2015, which went on to win the Best Mexican Restaurant at the Indian Restaurant Congress that year. She also started Manchi Baphe during the 2020 pandemic and built it into one of Hyderabad’s top buffet destinations. Then she went on to open Firewater Neo Bar & Kitchen this year.

THE BACK STORY

She was born and raised in Banjara Hills, where family gatherings, celebrations and casual evenings were centered around food. “Growing up around such familiar and comforting flavors shaped my love for cooking. Even now, the dishes I create are influenced by the food I enjoyed as a child,” she says.

Lalitha began her journey with an MBA in Seattle and a decade at Microsoft, where she gained experience as a team player. She later transitioned to hospitality when she moved to India, taking on the challenges of leading diverse teams in F&B and adapting her leadership style to a very different environment. She sees dining as more than just food, it’s about sharing stories, celebrating culture, and creating experiences people remember.

Moving from the corporate world to F&B, however, brought its own set of complexities. Leading a team where many members had limited formal education was vastly different from her previous environment. She also found that, despite the industries being different, the thought processes and egos she encountered often carried surprising similarities, further testing and shaping her leadership approach. Mentoring women has shown her the power of shared opportunities, shared learning, and working together, she says.

“Resilience has been my biggest strength. Whether it was changing careers or starting a business during Covid, challenges like supply disruptions or industry biases only pushed me to reinvent and improve. Every setback taught me to adjust and keep going,” she shares.

FUTURE FORWARD

“I’m really excited about my next venture, Katha by Lalitha Dutta, which I’m launching in early 2026. It’s a bespoke event planning and décor company, something I’ve wanted to build after spending years crafting memorable dining experiences,” she shares.

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ADITYA BANSAL

QUICK BIO: ENTREPRENEUR, INNOVATOR AND HEALTH FOOD ENTHUSIAST

For Aditya Bansal, food has always been more than a business. It's a responsibility. Unlike most youngsters who choose to open a fancy café, at 39, he leads one of South India's long-standing flour enterprises and also runs a young, nutrition-focused startup that explores alternative grains and cleaner eating. Aditya is the Director at Sree Sai Roller Flour Mill (aka Minar), and the Founder of Impact Foods (Flour Craft) in Hyderabad. His work moves between large-scale staples that feed thousands daily and small-batch mixes created for people seeking healthier options. "What drives me is a simple idea: everyday food should quietly make people's lives better," he says.

THE IMPACT

Over the past few years, this MBA graduate has helped expand the family milling unit into a modern, efficient operation, introducing systems that give consistency and quality to something as fundamental as flour. "One of my favorite personal wins has been fortifying wheat to address nutritional gaps among children – an initiative that earned recognition from the Roller Flour Millers Federation of India in 2025.' Awards and listings followed, but for him, the real impact is knowing that small improvements in a daily staple can ripple into public health.

THE BACK STORY

Aditya grew up around grain, mills, and conversations about yield and quality. But taking over the reins wasn't automatic. He spent years learning the ground realities, questioning old assumptions, and reworking processes without disrupting what generations had built.

BEHIND THE SCENES

His newest venture emerged from listening to consumers who felt underserved: those seeking gluten-free options, mindful eating, and trustworthy everyday products.

FUTURE FORWARD

Working on a proposed Food Park in Telangana is part of his long-term plan to build a space where innovation in nutrition feels accessible, not elite. Good food doesn't need hype. It just needs honesty, intention, and the courage to keep improving what people eat every single day.

“One of my favorite personal wins has been fortifying wheat to address nutritional gaps among children”
– Aditya Bansal





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MANDADI SREEHA REDDY

QUICK BIO: INSTRUMENTAL IN FETCHING THREE GI TAGS FOR TELANGANA WHICH ARE POWERFUL TOOLS TO TURN LOCAL HERITAGE INTO A GROWTH ENGINE

THE IMPACT

Instrumental in enabling Telangana to secure three significant GIs: Tandur Red Gram, Hyderabad Lac Bangles, and Warangal Chapata Chillies which translates into fairer markets, better pricing and stronger protection of those associated with them and their traditional knowledge.

THE BACK STORY

Born in Nalgonda and raised in Hyderabad, Sreeha, currently Director – Geographical Indications & Toys Industry, Nodal Officer – VVMP (Vehicle Scrapping) I&C Department, Government of Telangana, believes these two places shaped her identity and purpose.

A gold medallist in MBA (Technology Management) from Osmania University, she started her career with global organizations, but her real journey began when she chose to work for the people of Telangana.

“My focus is on strengthening Geographical Indications (GIs) – a simple yet powerful tool. To me, GI tags turn local heritage into a growth engine,” she says. She believes that each GI is not just a certificate; it is protection for tradition, respect for communities, and value for local identity.

*“To me, GI tags turn local heritage into a growth engine”
– Mandadi Sreeha Reddy*

BEHIND THE SCENES

What exactly does it take to earn a GI? “The process is tedious. It demands evidence, community consent, verification and a rigorous national examination. I have handled each step patiently and with purpose, ensuring that every application goes beyond paperwork and truly reflects the community’s identity and aspirations. This work gives me immense satisfaction because it uplifts entire communities – farmers, weavers, artisans, everyone,” she says.

Sreeha’s work has had a wide impact. “Over 63,500 families connected to the Tandur Red Gram value chain; 20,000+ farmers were linked to Warangal Chapata chilli cultivation; and 6,000+ artisan families’ lac bangle craft now holds official recognition,” she reads out the facts and figures. With the support of state and central schemes, these communities are now accessing fairer markets, better pricing, and stronger protection for their traditional knowledge.

FUTURE FORWARD

Working towards filing six more GI applications, including Hyderabad pearls. Each one has the potential to protect livelihoods, create pride, and place Telangana’s heritage on the global stage, she adds.



23

RAJESH KATIKALA

QUICK BIO: HUMAN RIGHTS DIRECTOR AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATE TRANSFORMING JUSTICE DELIVERY

THE IMPACT

For 14 years, Rajesh has stood at the junction of advocacy, government systems and vulnerable communities. His work aligns closely with the UDHR and UN SDGs, focusing on justice, equality and institutional accountability. He has collaborated with government agencies, police, NGOs, law departments and civil society networks across the Telugu states – protecting human rights defenders, combating discrimination and driving awareness in underserved regions.

THE BACK STORY

Rajesh's journey began with student activism, where he realized that citizens often suffer simply because they don't know their rights. "Determined to bridge this gap, I moved into formal human rights leadership. My philosophy: humanize institutions and institutionalize empathy," he says. This year, Rajesh has served as a bridge between the Telangana government and Padma Shri awardees, helping them navigate challenges, access benefits and receive the honor they deserve.

“A society rises when its weakest citizen feels seen, heard and protected”
– Rajesh Katikala

“From folk artists to weavers and agricultural innovators, I ensure their needs are not forgotten after the award ceremony,” he says.

BEHIND THE SCENES

At other times, Rajesh acts as liaison with Human Rights Commission leaders across both Telugu states, protecting activists and vulnerable groups, collaborating with IPS officers like Anjana Sinha and thought leaders like Amala Akkineni, supporting survivors of violence, etc. He has conducted monthly rights-awareness workshops for 7,500+ citizens and has facilitated dialogues with global and national leaders.

FUTURE FORWARD

Rajesh aims to expand human rights literacy into rural schools, digital platforms and government institutions, ensuring rights awareness becomes a cultural habit. “A society rises,” he says, “when its weakest citizen feels seen, heard and protected.”

From stunning haute couture moments on the red carpet to trends we hope will age like fine wine, WOW! bids farewell to 2025 with a nostalgic look at the year's most memorable fashion statements!

THE YEAR IN STYLE

FROZEN IN TIME: *Looks of 2025*

MAXIMALIST BLACK DANDYISM

Bollywood icon Shah Rukh Khan turned heads as he walked the red carpet at the 2025 Met Gala, clad in Sabyasachi. The designer and his muse perfectly adhered to this year's theme – Superfine: Tailoring Black Style – that explored the history of black dandyism and its cultural significance. They added their own maximalist touch to it with a floor length coat in Tasmanian superfine wool, a crepe de chine silk shirt, superfine wool trousers, and a pleated satin kamarbandh – all layered with a custom Dandy Stack and a Bengal tiger head cane crafted in 18k gold.



TRIBUTE TO PUNJABI HERITAGE

Also present at the Met Gala was Diljit Dosanjh representing his Punjabi heritage. Dressed in a regal ivory and gold Prabal Gurung sherwani, the musician/actor was dripping in jewels from the diamond-layered turban to the lion-headed, jewel-studded sword.

A REGAL DEBUT

Ishaan Khatter had the cameras flashing at his first attendance at the Cannes Film Festival. Celebrating the premiere of his film *Homebound*, the young actor made a fashionable debut at the Croisette in a custom Gaurav Gupta ensemble that included a deep Bordeaux velvet bandhgala, which he paired with a black wrap silk shirt and tailored trousers.





SAREE À LA CROISSETTE

Making a debut at the Cannes Film Festival too this year alongside Ishaan Khatter was Janhvi Kapoor. The Bollywood and Tollywood It girl looked ethereal in Tarun Tahiliani. The custom-made ensemble resembled a contemporary saree featuring a handwoven real tissue skirt and corset crafted in Benares.

OLD HOLLYWOOD MEETS INDIAN HERITAGE

Conceptualized by Vogue's editor-in-chief Anna Wintour, *Vogue World* – an annual event, set on the Paramount lot in Los Angeles this year and featuring an open-air fashion show with models and celebrities – saw the who's who of the entertainment industry put their most stylish foot forward. Among them was Maitreyi Ramakrishnan. Decked in one of Manish Malhotra's more subtle and delicate works, the young actress looked like she had walked straight out of a fairytale in an elegant, hooded silhouette where old Hollywood glamor met Indian textile heritage.



NEW AGE & TIMELESS: Trends of 2025

MAXIMALISM

The year 2025 will forever be marked with an undeniable adoration for going all out – or wanting a little extra. Indian designers came out of the woodwork to celebrate maximalism unapologetically. From Sabyasachi's landmark 25th anniversary fashion show to Louis Vuitton's Men's Fall/Winter 2025 collection featuring logomania and archival influences with contemporary symbols, "More is More and Less is a Bore" became the fashion mantra of the year.



MOCHA MOUSSE

As we bid farewell to 2025, we also tip our hats one last time to this year's Pantone hue grounded in the delicious Mocha Mousse. A runway hit, the warm color offers the comfort of chocolate and coffee that will surely be revisited even after Pantone announces its choice of color for 2026.



Y2K RE-EMERGENCE

The Y2K style with the trendy one-shoulder crop tops, denim-on-denim ensembles, news-boy caps and more reigned supreme in the fashion world this year. The timeless aesthetic had trendsetters getting nostalgic and even had clubs like Mindspace SOCIAL hosting Y2K-themed parties in the city.



IT JEWELRY OF 2025

This year the anklet (or the payal as it is traditionally known) became the most coveted and worn piece of jewelry. The defining heirloom ornament widened its influence on an unprecedented scale and received a well-deserved shoutout from the likes of Rihanna and Gigi Hadid through reinterpretations.



BUCKETS, BUCKLES AND SLINGS

From Outhouse Jewelry's Scarlet Spell and Sabyasachi's Tropical Slings to Hermes' Doctor Holdalls and Prada's glorious Buckle Leather Bucket Bag, 2025 delighted us with a taste of the trendiest and quirkiest handbags out there.

■ IPSHITA





CINNAMON VOGUE
Road 44, Jubilee Hills
Above Eucalyptus Home Store

Tuesday - Sunday | 11am to 8:30pm



Cinnamon Vogue

APPAREL | FURNISHINGS | SAREES

WOW! ASKS TWO PASSIONATE HYDERABADI FOOD BLOGGERS, VAIBHAVI MITTAL AND DIMPLE WADHWANI to recommend 23 iconic street food spots in the city. The list has a mix of new – street side Laphing and Cheesecake and old – Classic Chicken 65 and Patthar Ka Gosht



STREET EATS TO SAVOR THIS SEASON

1. TIBETAN LAPHING

IDL Lake, Kukatpally

Stuffed Laphings are the newest trend on Hyderabad's street food scene, especially at this eat street. Made with cold noodle sheets rolled like kathi rolls, this dish may remind you of Chinese spring rolls (or even a Frankie) with a spicy, tangy filling. Both chicken and vegetarian versions are drizzled generously with soya sauce, vinegar, sesame and chilli oil.

Its Laphing Time by the lakeside also has a few fun variations.

Price: Rs 120 per plate



PICS BY LAKSHMI PRASATH

2. LINGAIAH IDLI

Mallepally, Nampally Crossroads

Famous for its unique peanut chutney, they serve only melt-in-the-mouth butter idlis with that soothing chutney. It blew up after the singer Rahul Sipligunj recommended it on a podcast. Instagram has multiple versions of it! They serve idli and vada until lunchtime. Fun fact: Other idli joints buy kilos of this chutney to serve at their own bandis.

Price: Rs 35 per plate



3. PAVAN TIFFINS

Under the Narayanguda Flyover

Hot vadas in steaming sambar—this is the only thing they serve, and they get sold out by 10 am. The vadas sit soaking in simmering sambar for over an hour, and another ladle of hot sambar is poured on top when served. Pure bliss. They also add grated cheese to the sambar and that could be partly why it tastes creamy and nice. It has no parking, so ditch the car and take the Metro train ride instead.

Price: Rs 40 per vada





4. MAHARAJA CHAAT

Behind Madhapur Police Station

A busy, bustling spot with at least a 30-minute wait. Expect chaotic parking and steel chairs, but their Pav Bhaji – with a spicy bhaji – will distract you from everything else. They also serve the usual chaat items. Want it served in your car? A generous tip usually does the trick.

Price: Rs 125 onwards

5. RAM KI BANDI

Mozamzahi Road, Nampally

This legendary street-side eatery has been dishing out over 12 varieties of dosas from 5 am to noon every day for 35 years. Though they have franchise outlets, this is the OG. Don't miss their Upma Dosa.

Price: Rs 70



6. PANCHAKATTU DOSA

Annapurna Studios Lane, Jubilee Hills

Though there's a sit-down outlet on KBR Road, this small lane near Annapurna Studios feels more authentic. Their Nellore Ghee Karam Dosa is the showstopper, but you may have to wait for at least 20 minutes. If you're in a rush, opt for idli or Pongal – served instantly with fantastic chutneys and podis.

Price: Rs 150 onwards



7. MUNTHA MASALA

Near KPHB Metro Station

This Vizag specialty is a favorite among Telugus from Andhra. Try their Brinjal Bajji – an entire brinjal deep-fried and topped with masalas, onions and coriander. They also do variations with aloo and onion bajjis.

Price: Rs 100



8. VIRAL MILK BOBA

Opp NTR Gardens

Grab a quick drink from this stall near Pillar No. 15 – whether it's the Desi Masala Cola, the viral Milk Boba, or a range of mocktails with popping boba. The vendor mixes his own blend of tapioca pearls fresh on the spot. Perfect to sip as you walk towards your next food stop.

Price: Rs 100





9. MIYAPUR MINI PURIS

Near Miyapur Metro Station

These tiny puris are a rage thanks to the delicious Bombay Chutney (potato curry in a rich onion gravy) served alongside. The puris are as small as idlis – and fans say that’s their charm. One puri per gulp! You definitely won’t stop at one plate.

Price: Rs 50



PIC: AKSHITHA KOMPALLY

10. ARAKU CHICKEN KUNDA BIRYANI

ITC Kohenur Road

Chicken cooked in bamboo meets rice cooked in an earthen pot at this makeshift biryani spot in Madhapur. You’ll have to wait around 20 minutes for a fresh, piping-hot pot. One pot serves three. Ask for double dum if you like extra spice.

Price: Rs 400



11. FRIENDS SHAWARMA

Nagarjuna Circle, Under Punjagutta Flyover

This is the go-to place for a quick Special Chicken Shawarma (Khuboos/Pita or Samoli/Hot dog bun). Ordering on Swiggy is easier – parking is non-existent as it sits in the middle of a crazy traffic junction.

Price: Rs 100

12. RM DAHI WADA

Charminar

While shoppers may eat chicken 65 or paya elsewhere, everyone stops here to cool off the spice with their Hyderabadi-style Dahi Wada with a hint of garlic. Served in a deep saucer, this sweet-spicy vada with chilled yoghurt and fresh tadka is a must-try.

Price: Rs 50



13. AMBIKA ONION KACHORI

Behind Krupa Complex Bus Stand, Secunderabad

This tiny nook got its 15 days of fame after the Telugu hit *Little Hearts* featured their kachoris in a love story. These onion kachoris, served with a sweet green chutney, vanish before 6 pm every day.

Price: Rs 30



14. CHEESECAKE

Khajaguda Sunset View Point, Eat Street

Lotus Biscoff and cheesecake made street-friendly! A couple who quit their IT jobs now sell Tiramisu and Blueberry/Red Velvet Cheesecake on Friday and Saturday evenings. They’ve become so popular, they even take birthday cake orders now.

Price: Rs 150



15. ANDAL KERALA PAROTTA

Malkajgiri, Secunderabad

They reportedly churn out 4,000 parottas a day from 300 kg of dough. Each plate has two freshly made, flaky Kerala parottas served with a spicy vegetarian soya curry. Eat it hot off the tawa, or it can get chewy.

Price: Rs 45



16. BALDEV CHAAT

Nampally Clock Tower

A favorite for North Indian fried snacks, they start as early as 6 am for tourists visiting the Clock Tower. Try their puri masala or samosa made fresh every hour. Thick lassi and thandai help balance out the fried indulgence.

Price: Rs 50

17. NAGENDAR RAO MIRCHI POINT

Lane Opp St Ann's High School, Tarnaka

This 50-year-old stall makes only Mirchi Bajji from 4 pm to 9 pm. The average wait time is 30 minutes, but totally worth it. Their double-fried bajjis come with a unique tangy filling and fresh salad (not just onions). A signboard reads: "No photos, no videos, no UPI, only cash." His stall, his rules!

Price: Rs 25 for two bajjis



18. RAINBOW NON-VEG SNACKS

Near Petrol Pump, Abids

This joint is famous for its ultra-spicy, brightly colored Chicken Manchuria. Located right next to the petrol pump, most people pick up their food and drive off quickly – thanks to traffic cops hovering around.

Price: Rs 100

19. AL AKBAR FAST FOOD

Charminar

Chicken 65 with Warqi Paratha or Ginger Chicken Fry is the crowd favorite here post-sunset. Weekends get packed as visitors to Charminar drop by. Despite the notorious food coloring, loyal fans return for the spice kick.

Price: Rs 120 onwards





20. KUMARI AUNTY

Opp ITC Kohenur, Madhapur

Sai Kumari, aka Kumari Aunty, went viral three years ago and hasn't slowed down since. She serves hearty Telugu non-veg meals packed with chicken, mutton, prawns and spicy vegetarian curries with sambar. Chicken Rice with liver fry remains the hot-selling combo.

Price: Rs 110 onwards

21. CHACHAJI VADA PAV

Sindhi Colony, Secunderabad

A college-goers' favorite for its Mumbai-style Vada Pav. Easy to grab, with a hot aloo bajji stuffed inside, spicy garlic chutney and a fried chilli. This bandi has been around for 40+ years.

Price: Rs 50



22. MAYUR JUICE CENTER

Bogulkunta, Abids

A family-friendly spot to enjoy chaat and fresh fruit juice. Their Masala Pav Bhaji and Aloo Toast are legendary, as are their ABC juice (Apple-Beetroot-Carrot) and seasonal custard apple or mango juices with chunks of fruit.

Price: Rs 120 onwards

23. BADE MIYAN KEBABS

Tank Bund

This 65-year-old street-side spot – now spruced up with tables and chairs – is a must-visit when strolling along the stunning Tank Bund promenade. Foodies swear this is the only authentic Patthar Ka Gosht in the city, cooked on stone over hot coals. It can be noisy and brightly lit, with masala aromas wafting around the live counters. But with no artificial colors or masalas, the Nizami flavors shine through. ■ MANJU



Price: Rs 350



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This new nightlife venue is a multi-dimensional experience

Assemble for the Vibe

With an aim to redefine how Hyderabadis celebrate, **Asembli** – a first-of-its-kind experiential venue – brings together food, beverage, music, design, and technology in a way that turns every gathering into a sensory journey.

“We didn’t just build a venue; we assembled a feeling,” says Nagineni Srikanth Rao, the Founder. “Asembli is where people come together to celebrate boldly and meaningfully; where Hyderabadis from all walks of life can create memories for a lifetime.”

UNDER THE DOME

Situated beneath a majestic dome and programmable lighting, Asembli opens to

a whopping 40,000 sq. ft. of space spread across two floors. The ground floor offers a celebratory vibe with live music and dance, enhanced by programmable lighting. Genres the in-house DJ plays around with include deep house, techno, and afro.

Resembling the grandeur of the world-renowned Colosseum, the floor above accommodates premium amphitheater-like seating that overlooks the heart-stopping view of the entire place and the performances it hosts.

DELISH SPREAD

Exciting libations we begin with include Silk Road and a watermelon-infused

concoction; both vodka-based cocktails, one rather heavy on the palate and the other soft. Next, we try the rum-based Asembli Special Cocktail that blends flavors of coconut and jaggery, perfectly balancing both strong and subtle flavors.

WOW!
Recommends:
Asembli Special
Cocktail



We pair the drinks with a global cuisine based menu curated by celebrated chef, Varun Inamdar. Making broccoli exciting, Asembli’s Cheesy Malai Broccoli is a must-have. Next, we try the Chiu Chow Chilli Hakka Noodles, perfect for both meat and non-meat eaters, and dim sums like the Truffle Edamame and Hibiscus Crystal Dumplings.

To end a very good meal, we stuffed ourselves with the delightfully smooth Pecan Pie, and the Tom & Jerry Cheesecake that includes raspberry compote and edible fondant. ■ IPSHITA

Night out for two: Rs 2,000 onwards

Asembli Survey No. 92, Nanakramguda
Tel: 72074 26699

Timings: 4 pm onwards (Mon to Saturday),
12 pm onwards (Sunday)



Panoramic views, playful desi cocktails and regional plates make **Highball** the city’s newest favourite

High Five for Highball

By day, it’s a charming fine-dining space serving regional cuisine, but once the sun slips behind Durgam Cheruvu, Orlo reveals its nocturnal alter-ego, **Highball**. Named after the tall, slim, straight-sided cocktail glass in a bar, Highball’s biggest flex is an outdoor space with panoramic views of the Cable Bridge twinkling in the distance.

SIGNATURE SPIRITS

Founder Vikaas Passary says their concept is based on how the average Indian enjoys their evening drink. “Buy alcohol, buy a soda. Mix and down it. We have developed our own signature, flavorful sodas, jamun, amla, kokum, etc., to complement the spirits,” says Vikaas. We started with their signature cocktail, the Madurai Rasam, a tequila-based drink that draws flavors from tomato, dill pickle and a rasam mix.

SIDES AND THE MAINS

The food keeps up the local flavors with an à la carte dinner featuring six sections including chaats and churmur,

open-sigree kebabs (the Orlo pumpkin-goat cheese kulcha was the best), and hearty plates such as the Bengali style Thakurbarir Mutton Mangsho.

THE NOTES

Unlike most Gen Z-focused bars with loud music, here the music stays ambient, letting the conversations and cocktails take center stage. This new nightlife spot that opened in November promises to host home-chef showcases and a strong community vibe. “It’s a place where three generations of Indians can unwind,” says Vikaas. ■ MANJU



WOW!
Recommends:
Madurai
Rasam

Night out for two: Rs 3,000

3rd Floor, R Quad, Opposite Durgam
Cheruvu Lakefront, Madhapur

Tel: 90631 6991
Timings: 7 pm to 11 pm

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THE MINAR

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the royal tastes of the Nizams.



A look at the iconic buildings and new high rises in **HITEC City** that will mark the era of Google Street, Meta Avenue and Microsoft City

The City's New Age Landmarks

The sunlit boulevards around the Financial District now echo a bold new ambition: streets named not after bygone figures, but global tech giants. The Telangana State Government, led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, recently proposed to rename major roads with names like Google Street, Meta Avenue or MS City, signalling Hyderabad's

transformation from a Nizami city-of-palaces to a 21st-century tech metropolis. The city is asserting itself as a global one – not by erasing its past, but by layering the future atop it.

Even superstar Rajinikanth had pleasant things to say about Hyderabad's "Cyberia", the part where India's

IT-engine pulses. We get a bird's-eye view of these landmark campuses that anchor the city's new identity.

AMAZON DEVELOPMENT CENTER INDIA PVT LTD

Located in Nanakramguda in the Financial District, this campus is nothing short of monumental. Spread over approximately 9.5 acres, the building accommodates more than 15,000 employees and features a built-up area of around 1.8 million sq. ft. The structure is designed with an eye on recreation as much as work: there are indoor games, a helipad, and dedicated EV-charging floors. As Amazon's first-owned global office outside the United States, it symbolizes Hyderabad's leap into the global corporate arena.

Wow Factor: It is built with 2.5 times more steel than the Eiffel Tower (by weight).

MICROSOFT INDIA (R&D) PVT LTD

Nestled on 54 acres in Gachibowli, Microsoft's campus comprises three buildings and stands as one of its largest R&D hubs outside its Redmond



PIX: LAKSHMI PRASATH



headquarters. In February 2025, the company opened a new 1.1 million sq. ft LEED-certified building in Hyderabad, aiming to hire an additional 2,500 employees and partner with the Telangana government in AI training programs. The campus showcases how global tech firms are embedding the city into their innovation ecosystem.

Wow Factor: The campus uses air-to-water generators that produce nearly 2,000 liters of drinking water every day from humidity – saving groundwater for the city.

DALLAS CENTER CIRCLE

Along the stretch from Sattva Knowledge Park through Dallas Center and onward to T-Works in HITEC City, Hyderabad pulses with high-rise ambition. Glass towers glow under evening skies, swiping access cards for black-clad Gen Z tech squads, and rapid rides to street-food carts bustling just steps away from elegant lobbies. This neon-lit boulevard isn't just an IT park! It's a social runway for Hyderabad's tech avatar.

Wow Factor: This office corridor is home to campuses carrying 150,000+ tech professionals daily, making it one of India's largest live-work-play zones.

WAVEROCK

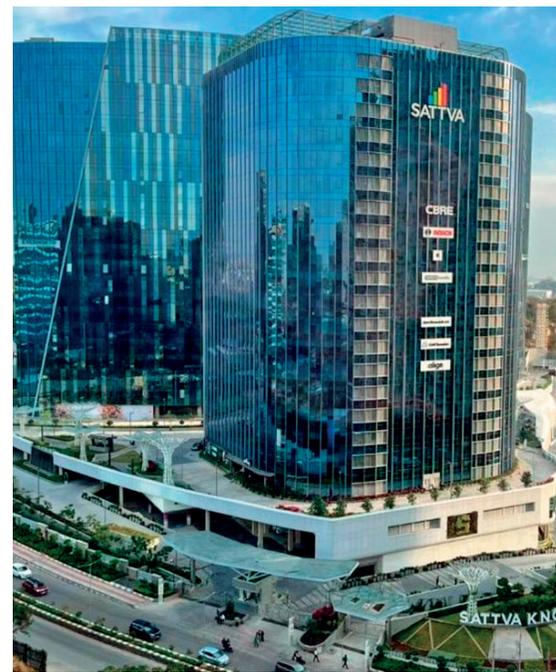
WaveRock is a landmark SEZ office complex in Gachibowli, developed from 2010–2017 by the New York-based infrastructure giant, Tishman Speyer. Spanning around 2.4 million sq. ft, it hosts major multinationals such as Apple, TCS, Accenture and DuPont.

Wow Factor: It is routinely ranked among the top three IT office assets in India, setting global-quality workplace standards in Hyderabad's tech corridor.

VANGUARD GLOBAL CAPABILITY CENTER

This November, the American investment-services firm Vanguard, inaugurated its first India Global Capability Center in Hyderabad. The facility is expected to scale to over 2,300 professionals by 2029 and will focus on AI, cloud modernization and analytics – a sign that our modern buildings aren't just for tech giants, but for global finance too.

Wow Factor: This center is set to become Vanguard's largest tech and analytics hub globally outside the U.S.





DELOITTE

Deloitte’s Hyderabad presence in modern office zones like Gachibowli and HITEC City aligns with the city’s evolution into a hub for global professional-services campuses. The company’s state-of-the-art workplaces accommodate analytics, consulting and global delivery teams – adding diversity and scale to its skyline.

Wow Factor: Deloitte has grown to become one of Hyderabad’s largest employers in the knowledge economy, adding professional-services strength to a tech-heavy skyline.

TCS

Located at Plot No. 1, Software Units Layout, HITEC City, this campus was inaugurated back in 2003 as India’s largest global development center for TCS. Built over 11 acres with 320,000 sq. ft, and with a new one-million-sq.-ft lease underway in the Financial District, the expansion continues.

Wow Factor: Designed by world-renowned Swiss architect Mario Botta, the building resembles a massive monolithic rock emerging from the landscape – an architectural landmark in its own right.

RMZ NEXITY + MCDONALD’S CORPORATION

The RMZ Nexity complex in HITEC City’s tech corridor became home to McDonald’s new global office – spanning four floors and 156,496 sq. ft – reportedly the company’s largest office outside the U.S. Its teams here work on solutions impacting 43,000 restaurants and 65 million customers every day.

Wow Factor: The campus features wellness rooms, modern collaboration zones and a futuristic design – far from what you’d picture when you think “fast-food office”. ■ MANJU





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WOW! curates a to-do list when visiting the city that are sure to stay with you for a long time

BY IPSHITA RAMAN

23 EXPERIENCES THAT DEFINE HYDERABAD

1 Walk through the Residency

Built by James Achilles Kirkpatrick (a soldier of the British East India Company), The British Residency is a palatial monument established during the Nizam's reign two centuries ago. Designed by Lt Samuel Russell, the historic gem was constructed by local artisans, blending locally sourced materials with Palladian and classical portico flourishes. Post Independence, the 63-acre property is also home to Osmania University College for Women.

Located in Koti, the structure's 22 marble stairs lead you up to the porch where majestic columns stand almost 40 feet tall. Inside, the hallway is designed with stairs on either side. It heads up to the grand Durbar Hall – the British Residency's main draw which features 200-year-old Burma teakwood flooring, a papier-mâché ceiling, and chandeliers and mirrors imported from France and Belgium.

Instagram: [theresidency_hyd](#)
Price: Rs 100



2 Experience a multi-sensory musical event

Rediscover your favorite tunes under the gentle glow of candlelight at the famous Candlelight Concerts, held inside the Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel. The space, which is lit up with over a thousand flameless LED candles, offers a live, multi-sensory musical experience.

A globally acclaimed series produced by brand Live Your City, Candlelight Concerts have been hosted in over 150 cities where audiences are treated to the works of musical maestros across time, from Mozart and Chopin to Queen and A.R. Rahman.

Note: The series presents an integration of local musical traditions and talents with renditions that feature a fusion of Indian instruments with classical arrangements to resonate with discerning and diverse listeners.

Instagram: [candlelight.concerts](#)
Price: Rs 1,399 onwards

3 Spend quality time at the Bansilalpet Stepwell

Make some time to visit the Bansilalpet Stepwell that was built during the reign of the Kakatiya Dynasty in the 17th century. The historic stepwell went into a state of ruin around the 1970s, but with help from the local government, today it stands revived, reflecting its former glory.

Restored in 2022, this gem of a place incorporates a new lit up arch, three galleries, a garden area, an amphitheater, and soulful live music. The peaceful ambience makes for a perfect spot for families to relax and spend some quality time.

Instagram: [bansilalpetstepwell](#)
Price: Rs 50





4 Explore a bygone era

In a city so vast and rampant with fleeting consumeristic offerings, one often yearns to feel grounded in something simple and meaningful. One of Hyderabad's hidden gems – the YK Antiques Home Museum – comes to mind.

A safe haven for antique pieces that are mindfully collected and curated by founder Y Krishnamurthy, the home museum, located at Saraswathi Nagar, Lothukunta, acts as a bridge to a bygone era. Each with a unique story to tell, the antiques are housed within a 2,600 sq. ft. area, a setting that holds over 1,000 pieces.

Highlights include ancient food vessels; an antique cot with four posts and a canopy; ankusam, a tool used to guide war elephants; Gangalam, used to store water; and Ghantam, a stylus used to carve writings onto a palm-leaf manuscript.

Instagram: ykantiques

Entry: By prior appointment only

5 Book a cabin designed with repurposed shipping containers

Soak in the pleasures of nature at the environmentally conscious resort, The Wilderness Retreat, situated in Gandipet, just 15 kms from the heart of the city. Described as a 'rustic nature getaway', the pet-friendly space offers a perfect balance between a luxury and camp experience with cabins uniquely designed from repurposed shipping containers.

Highlights: Shipping container cabins, intimate celebrations amidst rustic charm, an intimate date under stary skies in the wild, deep relaxation at The Silence Studio, cycling across the expansive property, quiet nature walks, and a private bonfire at night.

Instagram: wildernessretreat.hyd

Price: Rs 2,000 onwards



6 Sculpt your very own clay model

Attend a two-hour pottery workshop at MSN Pottery Studio – a creative hub at Kokapet that offers sustainable and handmade ceramics under a vintage roof.

Named after its Founder, ceramic artist Manpreeth Singh Nishter, the eco-friendly studio is built using industrial waste. The 1,000 sq. ft. space features reused and upcycled wood and houses old doors and cabinets giving the space an earthy touch.

Crafted primarily from three different clays: porcelain, stoneware, and terracotta, the workshop involves learning techniques like hand building and the use of the wheel. Inspired by nature, Manpreeth often crafts pieces featuring flowers and animals.

Note: The studio hosts corporate events, kitty parties, family outings, and birthday parties for both children and adults.

Instagram: msnstudio.in

Price: Rs 250 onwards



7 Pick up your paddle

A global phenomenon, the pickleball fever dominated the first half of the year, and the second half saw the baton passed onto Paddle Ball – a sport that even football and film stalwarts like Lionel Messi and Rafael Nadal; and back home, Ranbir Kapoor and Aryan Khan have given it a shot.

Played mostly in doubles, paddles use solid racquets without strings and are used to play inside a fully enclosed court that is about one-third smaller than the lawn tennis court.

Note: The Hyderabad Paddle Park, Padel India Club, The Kitchen: Pickleball & Padel Club, Pipa Arena, and Bend It Turf are some places to dabble in a friendly game of paddle ball in the city.

Price: Rs 400 onwards





8 Cycle in the cool midnight air

Take an adventurous midnight spin along the outer ring road on the 23 km solar cycling track, Healthway, that promotes sustainable transportation. Take your bike along or book one on the SmartBike app and collect it at the Narsingi Cycle Hub for a duration of one hour.

Perfect for those who wish to unwind after a long day with no traffic to wade through, no cacophony, only cool air and peace; the fun activity doubles as an effective therapeutic experience.

FUN FACT: Riders have been known to pedal over to nearby street food stalls for a quick break, and they've even celebrated birthdays by cutting a cake before riding off into the cool night air.

Entry: Free

9 Say a prayer at this Shivling

Greeted by a 21 feet high Lord Shiva statue upon entering, Sri Baba Koteshwar Mandir can be found tucked away from the bustling city and situated on a hillock at a height of 50 meters near Bolarum.

The temple's origins are rooted in the Vedic period. It also receives a mention in the *Shiv Purana* which refers to the natural formation of a Shivling nine lakh years ago. The total area covered by the temple is roughly 300 square meters. On the landing, one can locate the cave within which the famous Shivling is situated.

Note: Aarti is performed twice a day; in the morning between 5 am and 6 am and the evening between 6 pm and 7 pm.

Entry: Free



10 Try the city's heirloom sweets

Predominantly associated by many with its biryani and pearls, Hyderabad is also rich in sweetmeats that are, like precious heirlooms, passed down through generations. Badam Ki Jaali, Maske Ke Lauz, Badam Kund, Ashrafi, Double Ka Meetha are just some of the best-known desserts.

Places to check out: Working with century-old royal recipes is Khassa by Shahnoor Jehan, who makes a mean Qubani ka Meetha; an initiative by NGO Safa, Luqma Kitchen Studio's Sheer Khurma is one to try; the Nizami desserts spot, Meetha Miya's Ande ke Lauz is to die for; and the 100-year-old Hameedi Confectioner's timeless Jauzi Halwa will leave you wanting more.

Price: Rs 400 onwards

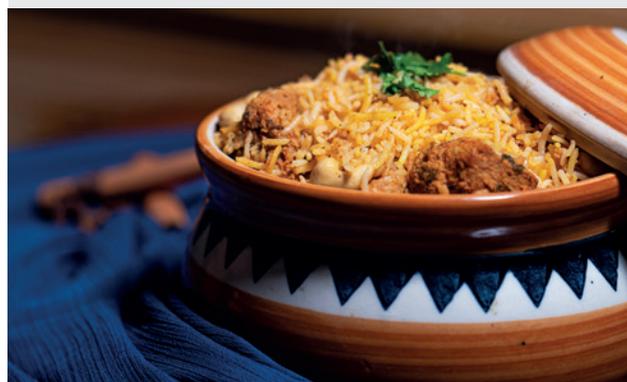
Hyderabadi Biryani – Need we say more?

The pride of the city of Nizams, the soulful biryani, is an all-timer that keeps on giving. No amount of pan-Asian fare or world cuisine can quench the thirst for this Hyderabadi fave that refuses to go out of style. Its legacy – unparalleled and one for the ages.

Sacred to all local haunts who give it their own personal touch with help from time-tested recipes, the flavorful dish, akin to Irani chai, can be enjoyed everywhere in Hyderabad. From the longstanding Café Bahar and Paradise to homely cloud kitchens like The Kitchen Culture, biryani is an emotion that is served hot with a dollop of love.

FUN FACT: In 2024, the biryani topped order charts on Swiggy with a staggering 1.57 crore orders, and this year it made it onto Taste Atlas's 100 Best Dishes in the World.

Price: Rs 350 onwards





12 Hit the streets!

Mirror-studded jhumkas, bangles, and mojris; handmade jute and canvas bags; vintage home décor; and puja items, including a wide selection of flowers; are just a few many reasons to head to the streets for striking finds.

Note: Wade through Begum Bazaar; Moazzam Jahi Market; Laad Bazaar, that branches out from Charminar; and the 200-year-old Sultan Bazaar. There is no feeling quite like taking to the streets alongside a clamoring crowd of shoppers, vendors and hagglers, be ready to shop till you drop.

Entry: Free



13 A space for free-thinkers and creative minds alike

Hyderabad folks' favorite haunt, Lamakaan is an open cultural center that, as described perfectly on their Instagram handle, promotes arts, literature, theater, debate and dialogue, while remaining committed to being open and accessible.

A friend to all creative minds throughout its 15 years of existence, Lamakaan has played host to theater performances, poetry slams, film screenings, and live music. Set in an intimate space, with both indoor and outdoor seating facilities, Lamakaan contributes to free-thinking and community spirit, while serving up some lip-smacking desi bites.

Instagram: lamakaan_open_cultural_space

Entry: Free

14 Feast your eyes on wacky automobiles

Let curiosity drive you to this museum that showcases handmade automobiles resembling everyday objects. Working around the themes of vintage cars and creative vehicles, as described by Hyderabad Tourism, the Sudha Car Museum offers a completely unique experience for its visitors.

Showcasing a wide range of automobiles, the museum's unique display ranges from an ornament train with its bogies in the shapes of jewelry and cars in the shape of bridal dresses to vintage and modified cars.

Instagram: sudhacars.museum

Entry: Rs 150



15 Boat across this freshwater lake

Glide across the freshwater lake at Durgam Cheruvu and feel time slow down with every splashing second. Head to the Durgam Cheruvu Boating Club that offers various boating options from paddle boats and speed boats to various categories of kayaking.

Tip: While out working the sparkling lake waters, make a day of it by experiencing camping and trekking as well. Hang out at the calm water body and take in the scenic beauty of the vast spaces surrounded by granite rock. Juxtaposed with the concrete jungle it overlooks, the place is a sight to behold.

Price: Rs 100 onwards





16 Nothing quite like a drive across the ORR

Straddle the city limits with a long drive across the Outer Ring Road. There is nothing quite like experiencing the 158-km, eight-lane expressway with the wind in your hair.

Tip: Right before you shift gears and start accelerating, make a quick stop at any local shop and get yourself some easy bites to munch along the way. Put on some music and take in the breathtaking view of the city as you cruise around under the clear blue skies.

Entry: Free



17 Get sun-kissed at Hussain Sagar

Take an evening stroll along the Hussain Sagar lake at Tank Bund as the sun begins to go down on the city and its golden hue sweeps across the majestic statue of Gautam Buddha, standing tall on Gibraltar Rock in the heart of the lake.

Tip: Take a seat on the steps of the gazebo facing the lake and soak in the view as you bite into freshly prepared snacks sold along the Tank Bund road. Take some pictures at the Buddha statue viewpoint and then a boat ride to get a closer look of the towering monolithic statue.

Entry: Free

18 Practice yoga with puppies

Looking to break out of your fixed yoga routine? The presence of cuddly puppies might just do the trick. Puppy Yoga or Doga, as the activity is called, was initiated by BePawsitive's Ravi Teja Sonai with the aim of spreading joy, among puppies and humans.

The sessions begin with some calming yoga to center yourself, then just as you start to find your balance, sprightly little pooches (one- to two-month-old puppies) scatter across the room, inviting giggles and cuddles.

Instagram: [bepawsitive_in](#)
Price: Rs 89g onwards



19 Catch sight of a rare bird

Discover a side of Hyderabad, filled with chirps, calls, and flashes of feathered beauties. Done individually and in groups, bird watching, or birding, is the practice of observing birds, often for recreational purposes. It begins with catching sight of something moving in the trees, and then patience and practice lead to spotting birds like a seasoned pro.

The elusive Shikra, a majestic Indian Peafowl, a dazzling green bee-eater, and the regal painted stork, are a few of many avian lives you would come across during bird walks at the Forestrek Park on the weekends. Another place to spot notable bird species is Botanical Gardens.

Instagram: [tsfdc_forestrek_park_hyd](#), [botanicalgardens_hyd](#)
Entry: Rs 25





20 Heritage Walks, Anyone?

Explore Hyderabad's historical charm with a stroll across its iconic streets. Participate in heritage walks through Mughal architecture that complement perfectly with the bustling marketplaces.

The Deccan Archive conducts curated walks, events, and workshops to reach out to people who are deeply interested in history. Knowledgeable guides share stories from the city's past that are sure to pique your interest.

Note: Follow their Instagram handle to find out when the next walk is conducted.

Instagram: [deccanarchive](#)

Price: Rs 400 onwards

21 Let art inspire you

Visit a gallery, let art speak to you, and get inspired. Every piece of work that hangs on those walls conveys a unique idea, one that may have never struck you before, or one that you create entirely from your own imagination.

Making space for all forms, be it visual art, performance, design, or digital media, the city's numerous art galleries all deserve a shoutout and a visit.

Note: Exhibitions like the LUME/VYANA and the Mazda Art Festival, 2025 saw art celebrate individuality, inclusivity, creative freedom and expression in a big way.

Entry: Free



22 Unwind at an independent bookstore

Take a well-needed break from the outside world and unwind at one of Hyderabad's independent bookstores which shelter stories from across the globe, waiting to be read.

Thanks to Off the Shelf and Luna Books, independent bookstores are currently having a moment. Merging a love for the city with a love for reading and writing is Off the Shelf situated at The Loft in HITEC City.

Similarly, Luna Books is an intimate neighborhood bookstore. Located in Jubilee Hills and established with the belief that cities and neighborhoods need more independent bookstores, Luna finds a balance between housing the books of all time, and the books of the moment.

Instagram: [offtheshelf.india](#), [luna_thebookstore](#)

Entry: Free

23 Explore Hyderabad's thriving theater scene

From imaginative reinterpretations of Shakespearean works to enthralling improvisational acts, the city's theater scene is thriving and rich in content.

Initiatives like the Manam Theatre Festival and the Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Festival contribute to the cause with fervor, capturing the attention of a crowd that is as diverse as their lineups.

Note: Head to Shilpakala Vedika or Rangbhoomi Spaces and Events to catch the theater bug and to get a taste of the variety of stage productions showcased.

Entry: Free





HYDERABAD

CELEBRATING PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

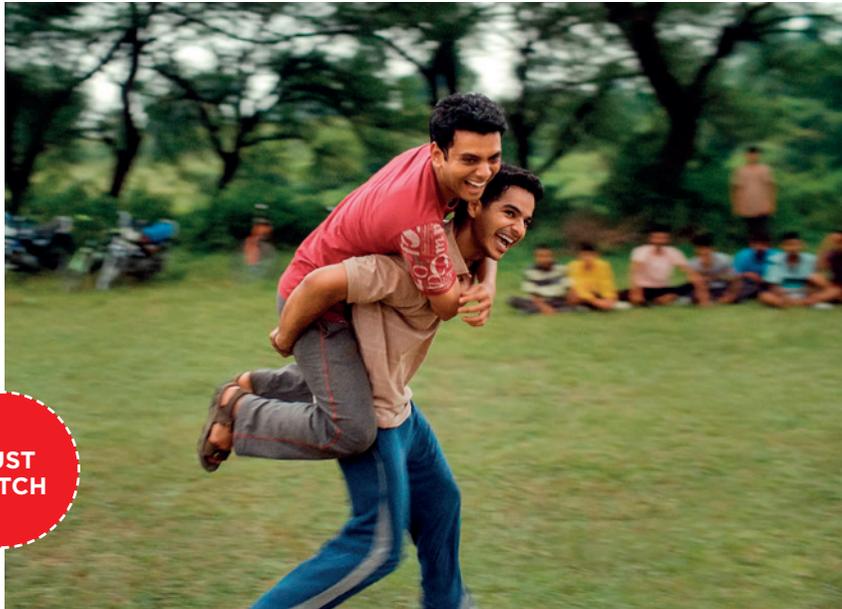
Hyderabad continues to thrive as a metropolis that celebrates its rich heritage while embracing modern times. The 430-year-old Charminar, and the five-year-old Durgam Cheruvu cable bridge together connect the past with the present and future.



Photos by Lakshmi Prasath

MOVIES

Top films for the year 2025



MUST WATCH

#1 HOMEBOUND (HINDI)

Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan of *Masaan* fame, the critically acclaimed *Homebound* explores the lives of two friends from a North Indian village who pursue police jobs and have their friendship challenged along the way. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and went on to subsequently make an appearance at various film festivals including the Toronto Film Festival.

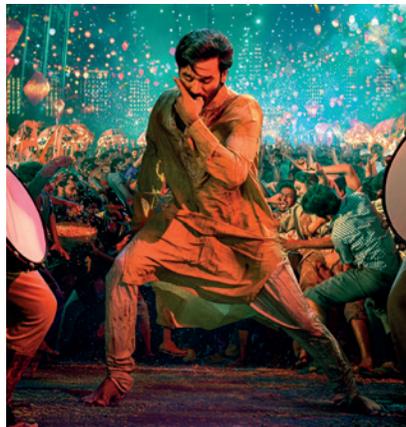


#2 COURT – STATE VS. NOBODY (TELUGU)

Described as a must-watch by viewers alike, *Court - State Vs. Nobody* is a legal drama written and directed by Ram Jagadeesh. The film follows a defense attorney who fights against prejudice and corruption in the justice system, while representing a teenage client wrongly presumed guilty of a serious crime. The cast includes Harsh Roshan, Priyadarshi Pulikonda, Rohini, Sridevi Apalla etc.

#3 KUBERAA (TELUGU)

Spearheaded by director Sekhar Kammula and an ensemble cast that includes Nagarjuna Akkineni, Dhanush, and Rashmika Mandanna, *Kuberaa* is a thriller that explores the life of a beggar who undergoes a dramatic transformation, exploring themes of greed, ambition, and moral dilemmas faced by the characters leading to a quest for redemption.



#4 ANAGANAGA (TELUGU)

Shuddhi Ayodhya grows up in the misty hills of Ooty, loses her father to war and finds solace in the written word and the discipline of martial arts. When Varun enters, love blossoms briefly before heartbreak tests her resilience. Through eight springs of change she emerges, not unchanged – but innately stronger, wiser, and beautifully whole.



#5 DHADAK 2 (HINDI)

A follow-up to the film *Dhadak* released in 2018, *Dhadak 2* stars Siddhant Chaturvedi and Tripti Dimri, and explores issues surrounding caste from the lens of a romantic relationship. Directed by Shazia Iqbal, the film is supported by Deeksha Joshi, Saurabh Sachdeva, Majiri Pupala, and Vipin Sharma.



#6 METRO... IN DINO (HINDI)

Written and directed by Indian auteur Anurag Basu, and starring Sara Ali Khan, Aditya Roy Kapur, Anupam Kher, Neena Gupta, Pankaj Tripathi, Konkona Sen Sharma, Ali Fazal, and Fatima Sana Shaik, the anthology **Metro... In Dino** is the spiritual companion of Basu's 2007 film *Life in a... Metro* that explores love in the contemporary world.



#7 ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER (ENGLISH)

Written and directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, *One Battle After Another* marks a return to form for the celebrated American auteur. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Sean Penn, Regina Hall, Benicio del Toro, Teyana Taylor and Chase Ininiti, the movie tells the story of a former revolutionary who battles the consequences of his past as he scrambles to find his daughter who goes missing after an evil nemesis resurfaces.



#8 FRANKENSTEIN (ENGLISH)

Guillermo del Toro returns with yet another exploration into the psyche of a presumed monster with a fresh adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The gothic tale follows the life of Victor Frankenstein, an egotistical scientist whose experiment in creating new life results in dangerous consequences. The film unmask real monsters, fosters empathy for outcasts, and explores the complicated relationship dynamics between fathers and sons.

#9 WEAPONS (ENGLISH)

Considered the best horror movie of the year, *Weapons* is an American supernatural mystery horror film. It continues to build suspense when all but one child from the same classroom mysteriously vanish on the same night at exactly the same time, and a community is left questioning who or what is behind their disappearance. Directed by Zach Cregger, the film's cast includes Amy Madigan, Julia Garner, Josh Brolin, Justin Long, June Diane Raphael, Alden Ehrenreich, and Sara Paxton.



#10 SINNERS (ENGLISH)

Ever since his first outing with the film *Fruitvale Station* in 2013, Ryan Coogler has become one of the most sought-after filmmakers of the last decade. Showcasing his creative prowess time and again, this summer he delivered the smash hit *Sinners*. Collaborating with his *Fruitvale Station* star Michael B. Jordan, and a lineup of fine actors like Hailee Steinfeld, Wunmi Mosaku, Omar Benson Miller etc., the filmmaker explores the horror/action genre. The screenplay tells the story of twin brothers, who in an attempt to leave their troubled lives behind, return to their Mississippi hometown to start again, only to discover that an even greater evil is waiting to welcome them back. ■ IPSHITA



SERIES

Top shows for the year 2025

DON'T-MISS



#10 ADOLESCENCE

(ENGLISH)
NETFLIX

Created by Jack Thorne and Stephen Graham and directed by Philip Barantini, *Adolescence* came out of left field earlier this year and took the internet by storm. With celebrities across Hollywood and Bollywood supporting the themes it depicts, the show found its audience overnight. Portraying every parent's worst nightmare, the series follows the unravelling of a family when 13-year-old Jamie Miller is arrested for murdering a schoolmate.



#9 MAYASABHA: THE RISE OF THE TITANS

(TELUGU)
SONY LIV

Helmed by acclaimed director Deva Katta, Telugu series *Mayasabha: The Rise of the Titans* is a political thriller set in the Andhra Pradesh of the mid-90's. Starring Aadhi Pinisetty as Kakarla Krishnama Naidu and Chaitanya Rao as MS Rami Reddy, *Mayasabha* is a promising drama loosely inspired by a few landmark political events, and one that explores the brotherly rivalry between two young politicians from opposing parties.

#8 DEVIKA AND DANNY

(TELUGU)
JIO HOTSTAR

The romantic drama series *Devika and Danny* follows Devika, a young woman from a middle-class background whose calm existence is turned upside down when Danny enters her life. He challenges her worldview and introduces her to a deeper emotional realm she never imagined. The series is directed by B. Kishore and stars actors Ritu Varma, Surya Vasishta, Siva Kandukuri, and Subbaraju.



#7 KOBALI

(TELUGU)
JIO HOTSTAR

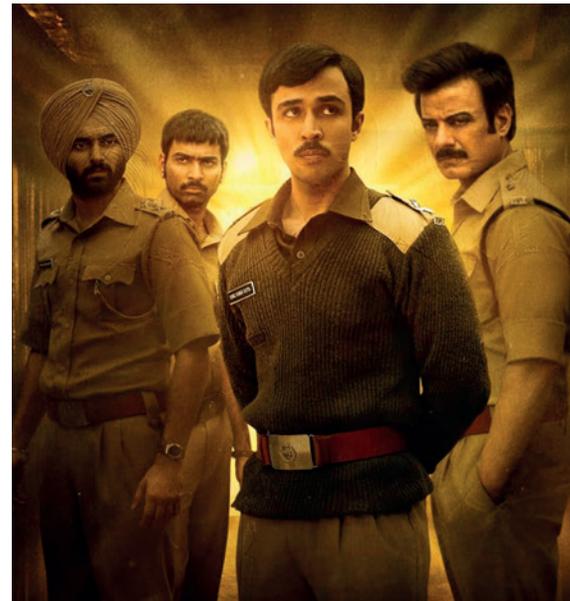
A crime-drama series created and directed by Revanth Levaka, *Kobali* depicts the lives of two families, entangled in revenge, greed, and payback as tensions rise and unearth buried secrets that impact multiple lives. The cast includes Ravi Prakash, Rocky Singh, Tarun Rohith etc.



#6 BLACK WARRANT

(HINDI)
NETFLIX

Among the best of the year is *Black Warrant* created by Vikramaditya Motwane and Satyanshu Singh. The series that received universal praise follows a newly appointed jailer at Tihar prison who confronts widespread corruption and injustice within its walls, forcing him to choose between maintaining the status quo and fighting for reform.





#5 PAATAL LOK: SEASON 2

(HINDI)

PRIME VIDEO

Praised for the continuation of the show's dense storytelling and performances, season 2 of *Paatal Lok* follows Inspector Hathi Ram Chaudhary as he investigates a high-profile murder case that leads him to remote corners of North-East India. Directed by Avinash Arun Dhaware, the show's cast includes Jaideep Ahlawat, Ishwak Singh, Tillotama Shome, Gul Panag, and Nagesh Kukunoor among others.



#4 DELHI CRIME: SEASON 3

(HINDI)

NETFLIX

The fan-favorite *Delhi Crime* returned for an all-new season this year. Shefali Shah steps back into the shoes of DCP Vartika Chaturvedi, who is once again faced with daunting challenges. Promising higher stakes and a darker plot, season 3 that also stars Huma Qureshi shows Vartika leading her team into the dark world of human trafficking that involves young women and children.

#3 BLACK RABBIT

(ENGLISH)

NETFLIX

Created by Zach Baylin and Kate Susman, *Black Rabbit* stars Jude Law and Jason Bateman as brothers haunted by their past. The show follows their chaotic relationship as they are confronted with the challenge of working through their issues together all the while dodging New York's criminal underworld and desperately trying to keep their restaurant business afloat.



#2 STRANGER THINGS: SEASON 5

(ENGLISH)

NETFLIX

The last season of the beloved series, *Stranger Things*, finally arrived this year. This season, the show's ensemble cast go in search of antagonist Vecna and try to protect Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) from government agents. The returning cast includes Winona Ryder, David Harbour, Brown, Finn Wolfhard, Gaten Matarazzo, Caleb McLaughlin, Sadie Sink, Joe Keery, Natalia Dyer, Charlie Heaton, Joe Keery, Maya Hawke, and Noah Schnapp.



#1 THE STUDIO

(ENGLISH)

APPLE TV

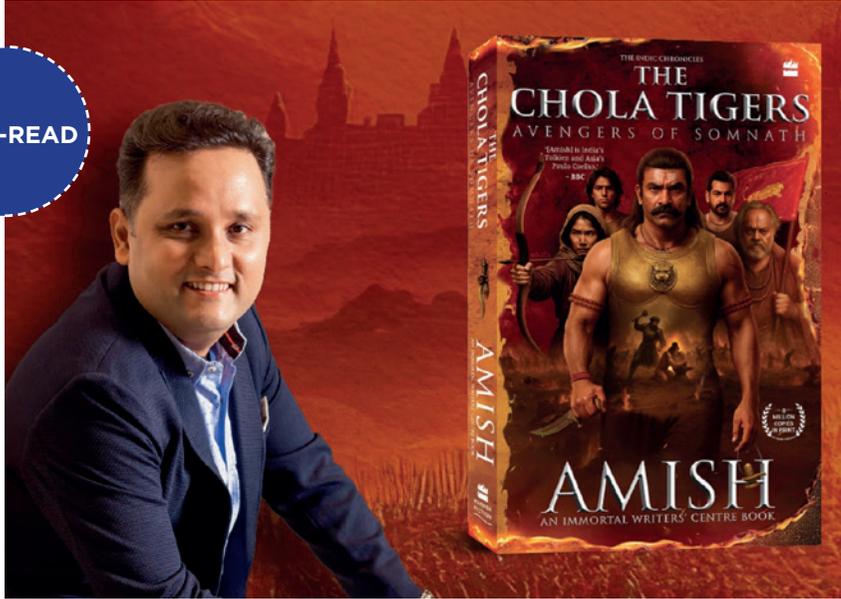
Emmy-winning *The Studio* is an American satirical comedy that explores the inner workings of the Hollywood film studios. The show follows the newly appointed head of Continental Studios, Matt Remick as he juggles his need for making meaningful cinema with meeting the demands of formulaic box-office blockbusters. Written and directed by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, the comedy is anchored by actor Seth Rogen's performance, which is brilliantly supported by the cast – Ike Barinholtz, Catherine O'Hara, Kathryn Hahn, and Chase Sui Wonders. ■ IPSHITA

BOOKS

Top 10 Books to Read Before 2025 Ends

From intimate anecdotes by Arundhati Roy to Mumbai's high-octane film world by Advaita Kala, here is the must-read list from WOW!

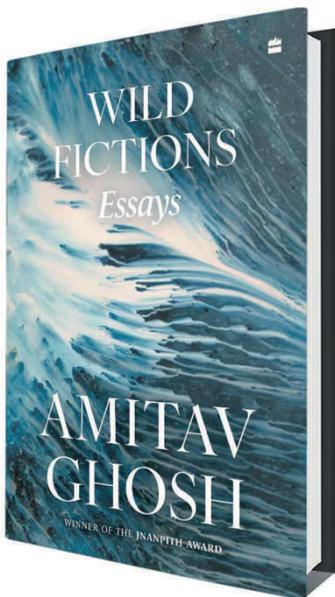
MUST-READ



#1 The Chola Tigers: Avengers of Somnath

Author: Amish Tripathi
Publisher: HarperCollins India
Price: Rs 499

Synopsis: Set in 1025 CE, *The Chola Tigers* is a high-octane historical adventure inspired by Emperor Rajendra Chola I's southern conquests. When invaders desecrate the Somnath Temple, the Cholas strike back with strategy and fire. Tripathi masterfully blends myth and history, crafting a story of loyalty, vengeance, and pride. The novel pulses with energy and cinematic scale – ancient India reimagined with modern swagger. Fast, visual, and steeped in heroism, it's an accessible yet patriotic page-turner from one of India's most popular storytellers.



#2 Wild Fictions: Essays

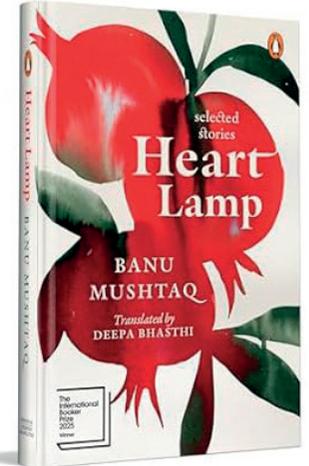
Author: Amitav Ghosh
Publisher: HarperCollins India
Price: Rs 799

Synopsis: Amitav Ghosh's *Wild Fictions* gathers a lifetime of essays exploring the intertwined stories of nature, empire, and imagination. He travels along spice routes, through mangrove forests, and into colonial archives to show how storytelling shapes our understanding of the planet. The essays are lyrical yet urgent, weaving ecology, history, and culture into one seamless tapestry. Ghosh reminds readers that fiction can illuminate truths science often cannot, and that the future of humanity depends on how we narrate our past. A thoughtful, elegant must-read for lovers of intelligent non-fiction.

#3 Heart Lamp: Selected Stories

Author: Banu Mushtaq
(translated by Deepa Bhasthi)
Publisher: And Other Stories
Price: Rs 650

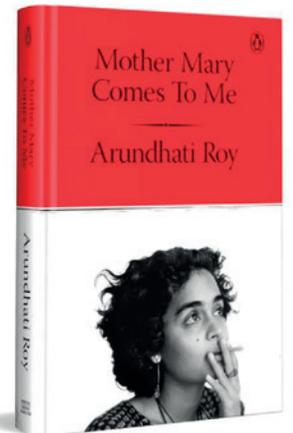
Synopsis: Winner of the 2025 International Booker Prize, *Heart Lamp* introduces readers to the quietly revolutionary world of Kannada short fiction. Banu Mushtaq writes of Muslim women in South India whose lives are circumscribed by custom yet illuminated by courage. In Deepa Bhasthi's supple translation, these stories breathe with humor, sadness, and resilience. Each tale – from domestic quarrels to spiritual awakenings – captures the poetry of the ordinary. Moving, empathetic, and full of warmth, this collection transforms everyday struggles into luminous acts of resistance.



#4 Mother Mary Comes to Me

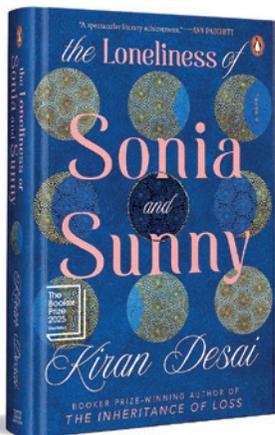
Author: Arundhati Roy
Publisher: Scribner India
Price: Rs 250

Synopsis: In her first memoir, Arundhati Roy turns inward to write about her mother, the legendary educationist and activist Mary Roy. Through intimate anecdotes and sharp reflections, she explores love, rebellion, feminism, and the legacy of dissent. The book moves between Kerala's lush landscape, Delhi's intellectual circles, and the author's political awakening. *Mother Mary Comes to Me* is as poetic as it is personal – a rare glimpse into the making of one of India's most fearless voices. It's both a love letter and a manifesto on womanhood and freedom.



#5 **The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny**

Author: Kiran Desai
Publisher: Hogarth / Penguin Random House
Price: Rs 2,500 (import edition)

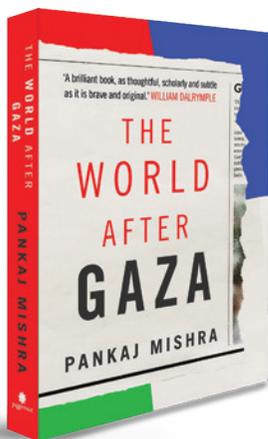


Synopsis: After nearly two decades, Booker Prize winner Kiran Desai returns with a monumental novel spanning continents and generations. *The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny* follows two Indian immigrants as they navigate desire, displacement, and destiny across New York, Mexico, and

Delhi between 1996 and 2002. Desai's prose is lush, witty, and deeply human. She dissects the global Indian experience – how ambition and belonging intertwine, and how love survives migration. A literary masterpiece of 2025, it's intimate yet expansive, cementing Desai's place among the finest contemporary novelists.

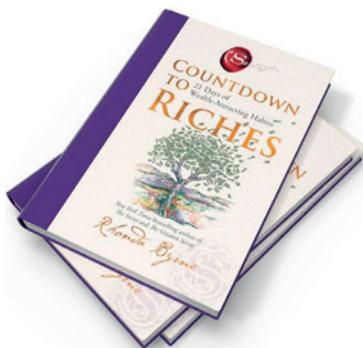
#6 **The World After Gaza**

Author: Pankaj Mishra
Publisher: Penguin India
Price: Rs 699



Synopsis: Pankaj Mishra's latest non-fiction is a searing exploration of geopolitics, morality, and memory in the aftermath of Gaza. Drawing connections between colonialism, modern warfare, and global hypocrisy, Mishra argues that humanity's

moral compass has been fractured by empire and power. With his trademark clarity and intensity, he dismantles Western narratives and amplifies silenced voices from the global South. *The World After Gaza* is both analysis and lament – a timely, courageous meditation on justice and empathy in an unequal world.



#7 **Countdown to Riches: 21 days of Wealth-Attracting Habits**

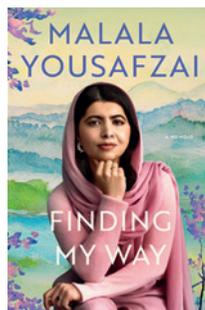
Author: Rhonda Byrne
Publisher: Harper Collins
Price: Rs 899

Synopsis: In her new book, *Countdown to Riches: 21 days of Wealth-Attracting Habits*, the bestselling author of *The Secret* and *The Greatest Secret* shares 21 simple and powerful practices to transform your relationship with money and unlock lasting financial freedom. Drawing on her signature blend of spirituality and self-empowerment, she shows readers how to reprogram the mind to attract abundance and build habits that sustain wealth in every area of life. A powerful reminder that true wealth begins in the mind, this book invites readers to reimagine their relationship with money and discover abundance from within.

#8 **Finding My Way**

Author: Malala Yousafzai
Publisher: Atria Books (Simon & Schuster)
Price: Rs 479

Synopsis: In *Finding My Way*, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai moves beyond her story of survival to reveal her coming-of-age journey. Written with disarming honesty, this memoir explores her university years, friendships, activism, and the quest to balance normalcy with purpose. Malala writes candidly about love, anxiety, and her evolving identity as a young woman shaped by extraordinary circumstances. Both relatable and inspiring, it's a portrait of courage in everyday life and a reminder that healing, like activism, is deeply personal.



#9 **Alchemised**

Author: SenLinYu
Publisher: Del Rey
Price: Rs 2,400 (import edition)

Synopsis: Born from viral fan fiction and now a global publishing sensation, *Alchemised* is a fantasy novel about rebellion, transformation, and forbidden love. In a dystopian world ruled by magical elites, one woman's alchemy threatens to upend centuries of control.

SenLinYu's writing is cinematic, romantic, and intensely emotional. The book has captivated millions for its powerful blend of myth, passion, and revolution. It's the year's most talked-about fantasy phenomenon – perfect for readers craving page-turning escapism with heart.

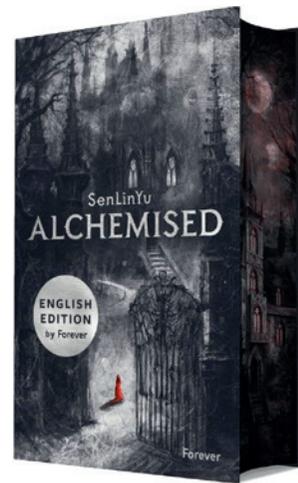
#10 **Onyx Storm**

Author: Rebecca Yarros
Publisher: Red Tower Books
Price: Rs 2,400 (import edition)

Synopsis: The third installment in Rebecca Yarros's globally bestselling Emprise series takes Violet Sorrengail's dragon-riding adventures to new heights. With fiery romance, political intrigue,

and heart-stopping battles, *Onyx Storm* cements Yarros's mastery of emotional fantasy. The novel shattered sales records within days of release, uniting fantasy lovers and romantics alike. It's exhilarating, addictive, and pure fun – a reminder that sometimes, the best escape lies in the sky on dragon wings.

■ MANJU



Director **Rahul Ravindran** on the whirlwind journey of his latest film, *The Girlfriend*, and how its commercial success and critical acclaim is a vindication for good cinema

“Every Ticket is a Vote for Better Cinema”



The year 2025 hasn't exactly been a dream run for Telugu cinema, with more misses than memorable hits. And then, in the final quarter of the year, along came *The Girlfriend*, starring Rashmika Mandanna and directed by Rahul Ravindran, quietly rewriting the mood. First came the wave of glowing reviews, praising its sensitive and unflinching portrayal of toxic relationships from a woman's perspective. Then, almost organically, the box office momentum followed, pushing the film into its third week with audiences continuing to watch, debate, and celebrate it. We caught up with Rahul to talk about the journey of a film that has unexpectedly become one of Tollywood's proudest moments this year.

IT'S BEEN NEARLY THREE WEEKS SINCE RELEASE, AND IT'S RUNNING TO PACKED HOUSES. WHAT HAS THE RIDE BEEN LIKE?

Incredible. These three weeks have been a roller-coaster of extremes. On one side, is the love, the conversations, the sheer emotional impact the film has had. I don't like talking numbers, especially for a film like this, but the fact that it has crossed Rs 30 crore matters because it gives courage to others who want to tell personal, heartfelt stories. Many well-wishers had warned me that "Women don't turn up at theaters," but the sheer number of women showing up, cheering, and the number of men applauding Bhooma (played by Rashmika Mandanna) in the climax has all been unbelievably heartwarming.

AND THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT EMOTIONAL ROLLER-COASTER?

Rashmika and I have been getting DMs and calls every day –

women and men who are going through toxic relationships, harassment, or painful breakups. Some of the stories are far more heartbreaking than Bhooma's. Some people have written saying they're being stalked, threatened, or emotionally broken. It's heavy to process. The only silver lining is that many say the film gave them courage or felt therapeutic. One girl told us her friend, who was entertaining thoughts of suicide, watched the film and said, "I want to fight for my life." When someone tells you your film saved a life, you genuinely don't know how to react.

“When someone tells you your film saved a life, you genuinely don't know how to react”

DID YOU EXPECT THE FILM TO SPARK SUCH SOCIAL CONVERSATIONS?

Yes, but the scale of emotional response has surprised me. Interestingly, Rashmika predicted it. She told me, "As a woman, I know the impact this will create. You wait." And she was right.

WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL SEED FOR THIS STORY? WAS IT INSPIRED BY SOMEONE REAL?

The seed came from an incident in college. A friend had a breakup and was completely shattered – crying, raging, drinking for days. One night, he dragged us to a men's toilet and wrote his ex's phone number on the wall with a marker, adding "For sex call...". He was in a state where nothing we said would reach him, and we were scared of antagonizing him or what he might do. That moment stayed with me. Along with that, for years I observed a trend in South Indian cinema where the jilted lover's revenge was glorified. I wanted to turn the camera around and say, "I get your pain, but it doesn't justify making the girl suffer."

WHAT SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT RASHMIKA ON THE SETS?

What moved me was the the depth of her surrender to her character. Zero tantrums, zero attitude! Honestly, it was easier to work with her than a newcomer. Her reaction shots in the first half – her eyes told entire stories. That was magical to witness.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NEXT?

As an actor, I'm doing *Fauji*. As a director, I've signed two projects and verbally agreed to a third. I'll start pre-production early next year.

IF YOU WERE GEN Z TODAY, WHAT WOULD YOUR THREE PERSONAL DATING RULES BE?

Honestly, these rules wouldn't change with age.

Rule 1: Treat the other person the way you want to be treated. No double standards. If you don't want someone telling you what to do or not giving you space, don't do it to them.

Rule 2: Understand before you react. Hear them out without judgment. That creates a safe space for honest communication.

Rule 3: Love and respect must be absolutely equal and reciprocal.

AWARDS SEASON IS COMING... ANY HOPES?

I'm manifesting that Rashmika wins everything, from critics' awards to the National Award. I'm completely biased, but she deserves them all. ■ MANJU

Advertorial

Shwetha: Building a Generation of Young Innovators

In this candid conversation, Shwetha—founder of XNAUT—shares how her journey from corporate to non-profit to entrepreneurship shaped her mission to ignite creativity in young minds.



Q: You've worked in a corporate, then in non-profits, and now you're launching your own startup. What shaped each transition?

Shwetha: Each phase offered a different perspective. The corporate world gave me structure, discipline, and an understanding of how businesses operate — but it didn't give me purpose. Moving to the non-profit sector changed me deeply. I worked with children for whom even a pencil felt like a privilege. I realized that curiosity exists everywhere, but opportunity doesn't. Entrepreneurship became the natural next step where I could combine corporate rigor with meaningful impact.

Q: How do you keep young students, especially girls, excited about STEM?

Shwetha: We start with imagination, not formulas. We ask, "What do you want to create?" A robot pet, a dancing light show, a smart plant-watering system — once a child has a dream, learning flows naturally. At XNAUT, mistakes are encouraged, experiments are celebrated, and children lead their own projects. Today's young girls are more curious and confident than ever, and that gives me hope for the future.

Q: Tell us about XNAUT.

Shwetha: XNAUT is a creative learning space where children explore STEM, robotics, engineering, and languages through hands-on experiences. For now, we operate from my home — our first learning lab — and we're preparing to launch our first official center soon. It feels like the beginning of something much bigger.

Q: Who inspired you to create XNAUT?

Shwetha: My mother and grandparents, all lifelong educators. Teaching is in my DNA. XNAUT is my way of carrying their legacy forward.

Q: What's your advice to aspiring women founders?

Shwetha: Competence doesn't recognize gender. Build your skills, embrace uncertainty, and have the courage to try, fail, and grow.

E-mail: hey.xnaut@gmail.com Tel: 7815967309

WOW! lists out a new wave of actors who shone in theaters and on OTT – each building a distinct identity in 2025

TEXT: MANJU LATHA KALANIDHI

TOLLYWOOD'S TRENDING NEW VOICES MAKING BOLD CHOICES

1 RAG MAYUR

From a Netflix debut to Bollywood, he's performing across platforms

GROWING, ONE ROLE AT A TIME

Four years ago, in 2021, Rag Mayur made his celluloid debut with *Cinema Bandi*, a small Telugu indie that unexpectedly became one of Netflix's most-watched films that year. His role as Maridesh Babu gave him a memorable first step into the industry and introduced audiences to a natural, grounded performer.

FLASHBACK

Cinema Bandi opened doors – not with noise, but with authenticity. Soon after, a lead role in *Keedaa Cola* by director Tarun Bhascker showcased a different aspect of the actor, helping him move from newcomer to getting noticed in the space of a few projects. "This year has been my busiest. I had *Shubham*, *Paradha* and *Mithra Mandali* and, also got to work with my idol Manoj Bajpayee in *Family Man* in the new season," he says.

BIG BREAK

Raised in Padmarao Nagar, Secunderabad, Rag balanced a regular job in Bengaluru while doing theater workshops and short films. Persistence led to his first break, and the opportunity to play the lead role came with the web series *Sivarapalli* (the Telugu remake of *Panchayat*). Eight episodes centered around him – a responsibility he valued as a genuine test of skill and stamina. The techie-turned-actor believes that patience and hope are two things that he never lost, which is what has got him this far in Telugu cinema.

RELEASING SOON

His next film, *Anumana Pakshi* (Feb 2026), casts him as an over-thinker from Vizag caught in unexpected events in Kashmir, opposite Merin Philip. With two more films lined up for release in 2026 (*Garividi Lakshmi* and *Cotton Candy*), he is focused on his craft and remaining consistent.

TAKEAWAYS

He talks openly about staying level-headed in a business full of highs and lows. "Love and promote your film, but don't place your entire self-worth on its success. I draw my philosophy from the *Bhagavad Gita*. My approach is simple: stay committed, curious, and detached," he says.



2 SRIDEVI APALLA

This Telugu teenager is proof that passion plus opportunity can launch a career overnight

FROM RAIN REEL TO REAL FLEX

Four years ago, a young girl dancing in the rain on a terrace with no makeup or filters caught a casting director's eye. That moment shifted Sridevi's life from quiet hope to real opportunity. "I didn't expect anything that day. I was just dancing." Today, this 18-year-old has earned rave reviews for her sensitive portrayal of Jabili in the much-talked-about film, *Court: State Vs A Nobody* this year.

FLASHBACK

Originally from Kakinada, now based in Hyderabad, she began working at the age of ten. TV reality shows like *Kiraak Kids* gave her early exposure, followed by small roles in *Srinivasa Kalyanam*, *Adi Kesava* and *Bangarraju*. But the journey wasn't smooth. "Even as a seven-year-old, I knew I wasn't great in academics, but the performing arts were my forte. I wanted to give cinema a shot," she says. Then came the reel that changed her fate: that rain dance audition landed her the role of Jabili in *Court*. "Wallposter Cinema treated me like an artist, not a child on a set." The film's success felt like an avenue into a bright future.

BIG BREAK

With *Court*, directors saw a performer who didn't need layers of glamor to command a frame. "Family friends and relatives who once judged me for reels and a career in cinema now come home asking for selfies," she says.

RELEASING SOON

A Tamil-Telugu bilingual crime thriller with Arjun Ashokan, a family drama called *Band Melam* (opposite Harsh Roshan), and another movie in the rehearsal stage. "I want to lead stories that give girls their space on screen," she adds.

TAKEAWAYS

Raised by her single mother Neelima, with strong support from sister Divya, Sridevi carries her journey with gratitude. "From having family friends and relatives advising me against acting in the big, bad world of movies to them coming all the way home to meet and greet me, I think it's been a great journey," she says.



3 ANANTHIKA SANIL KUMAR

This Malayali *amma* is a beauty with brains and big dreams

KICKS, HITS AND COMEBACKS

At 19, Ananthika helmed *8 Vasantalu*, playing Shuddhi Ayodhya, a young writer and martial artist whose life moves through eight emotional “seasons” of love, loss and self-discovery. Off-screen too, she’s a trained Kalaripayattu practitioner and a black belt in karate, disciplines she started in primary school and still credits for her focus and fearlessness.

BIG BREAK

Her real turning point came with this year’s *8 Vasantalu*, directed by Phanindra Narsetti and produced by Mythri Movie Makers. As Shuddhi, Ananthika got to combine emotional range with physical craft – from intense fight sequences shot in Varanasi using Wing Chun techniques to tender, quiet moments of grief and courage.

After the film’s theatrical and OTT run, she said, “I finally feel like an actor,” acknowledging how the role changed her confidence and how she saw herself.

FLASHBACK

A Malayali girl from Thrissur, Ananthika grew up juggling school, classical dance forms such as Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam and, martial arts. Her journey into cinema began with Instagram reels during the pandemic; the videos caught the attention of casting directors and led to early film offers. There were setbacks – a Malayalam debut film that never released, months of training and auditions that went nowhere. But she stayed with it. Her first proper release was the Tamil film *Raid*, followed by *Lal Salaam* and the Telugu coming-of-age hit *MAD*, which put her on the radar of Telugu audiences. Now based in Bengaluru, she is also pursuing a BA and LLB, shuttling between law classes and film sets.



RELEASING SOON

Post *8 Vasantalu*, Ananthika’s filmography is led by Telugu projects like *Rajahmundry Rose Milk* (her first Telugu film, now gaining renewed attention) and future scripts that continue to blend romance, drama and action. She’s vocal about wanting roles that allow her to fight, emote and grow – not just decorate the frame.

TAKEAWAYS

From backflips that caused a spine injury to late-night action shoots and long language rehearsals, she has learnt to treat pain, doubt and fatigue as part of the job. What matters, she often says, is simple: show up, train harder, and let each season shape you into a stronger performer.

4 MOULI TANUJ

Relatable comic energy now leading heartfelt films with surprising ease

YOUTUBE TO YOU-CANNOT-MISS

Recently in the news for his breakout theatrical hit *Little Hearts* (2025), Mouli Tanuj has moved from YouTube skits to cinema presence. The Telugu coming-of-age rom-com has critics praising his natural ease and comic timing. At a time when big movies tanked, Tanuj’s debut won hearts and broke box-office records.

BIG BREAK

Mouli’s first major acting platform was the web series *gos* (2024) on ETV Win, where he played a young member of a middle-class family navigating life. His performance made him widely recognized in Telugu entertainment circles. Soon after, he featured in *Hostel Days* (2023), which further showcased his comfort in front of the camera. Originating as a content creator on YouTube (his channel is called *Hey Mouli*) known for relatable Telugu skits, Mouli built a loyal following online. He

studied engineering but gravitated towards writing, directing and acting in short films during college. He describes those early days as essential training: “They were pretty bad in the beginning... but they helped me learn a lot.” With the success of *Little Hearts* under his belt, Mouli is exploring new script offers and looking to deepen his range. He has spoken of wanting to write and direct his own comedy feature in the future.

TAKEAWAYS

From creating comedy sketches in his bedroom to leading a theatrical Telugu film release, Mouli Tanuj’s evolution is grounded in steady craft – rather than hype. He says: “If I feel entertained while listening to the story, I go for it... We shoot because we believe people will feel something.”





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5 BHAGYASHRI BORSE

Verstatility and visibility have worked in her favor

ELEGANT AND EDGY

From the lively streets of Sambhaji Nagar (earlier Aurangabad) to a childhood spent partly in Lagos, Nigeria, Bhagyashri Borse has always had a global lens. A business management graduate and former model, her first attention-grabbing screen appearance came in *Yaariyan 2* (2023), followed by a cameo in *Chandu Champion* (2024), before she played a lead role in the Telugu outing *Mr Bachchan* (2024).

BIG BREAK

When Bhagyashri stepped opposite Ravi Teja in *Mr Bachchan*, even critics, despite the movie's dull performance at the box-office, hailed her performance as one of its strengths. "After modelling and small parts, this film made me believe I can belong here," she said. The model-turned-actor's big gig, however, is *Kaantha*, opposite Dulquer Salman, where she plays the heroine Kumari in this period film. Those who loved the film compared her to yesteryear legends like Jamuna and Krishna Kumari for her mesmerizing expressions.

RELEASING SOON

Andhra King Taluka (2025) opposite Ram Pothineni.

TAKEAWAYS

Bhagyashri's journey reminds us that the path from modelling to meaningful acting isn't automatic – it's deliberate. Scenes, scripts and auditions build confidence more than headlines. As she says: "Every film is a chance to prove I'm more than a glance."

6 HARSH ROSHAN

A performer proving dance training can translate into compelling drama

BOY-NEXT-DOOR TO BREAKOUT ROLES

Harsh made headlines with his role in *Court: State vs A Nobody* (2025), where he plays Chandrashekar, a 19-year-old wrongly accused under the POCSO Act – a part that allowed him to shed earlier labels and deliver a performance that critics singled out as "stand-out among the strong ensemble."

Although he had appeared in films and TV reality shows earlier, *Court* gave him a meaningful "lead actor in a serious drama" moment. The movie, produced by Wall Poster Cinema and presented by actor Nani, opened up the space for him to be seen not just as a dancer or supporting performer, but someone who can anchor an emotionally heavy narrative.

FLASHBACK

Hailing from Hyderabad, Harsh began his public journey on dance reality shows such as *Dhee Juniors* and *AATA Juniors* on Telugu TV. Those early years gave him discipline and stage presence, and minor film appearances followed, in titles like *Mishan Impossible* (2022) where he played a young actor in

a comic-thriller setting. The transition from dance floor to serious acting was gradual, but intentional.

RELEASING SOON

After *Court*, Harsh is pinning hopes on *Band Melam*, a family love story along with his onscreen sweetheart Sridevi from his previous movie. "I aspire to be a complete entertainer who can sweep people off their feet with my boy-next-door looks and my dancing prowess," he says.

TAKEAWAYS

Harsh says that his success is due to the fact that he took one opportunity at a time and gave it his best. "Whether it was reality shows, or a character role, I believed that it would all pay off." His journey has just begun and it looks promising.



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7 SRI GOURI PRIYA

She juggles fun roles with intense ones to stay in the game

SOUTHERN SPUNK

A Telugu girl from Hyderabad, Sri Gouri Priya first made waves by winning the title of Miss Hyderabad in 2018. From her pageant success she transitioned into acting – taking on a playful role in the film *MAD* (2023) and later delivering a weighty performance in *Lover*.

BIG BREAK

After being crowned Miss Hyderabad, Gouri made her Tollywood debut in *Mail* (2021) followed by cameos in significant films like *Writer Padmabhushan* (2023) and the comic coming-of-age *MAD*. On her role in *Lover*, where her character was caught in a toxic relationship, she told the media she wanted to show “honesty in every role.”

FLASHBACK

This 26-year-old grew up watching films at local theaters in Hyderabad. Winning Miss Hyderabad gave her the visibility to move to acting. Transitioning into films was not only about glamor – she chose projects where her character had substance, leading to roles that challenged her.

RELEASING SOON

On the horizon is her upcoming Telugu film *Visa* which positions her in a fresh genre and builds on her earlier work. She’s talked about picking roles that allow an emotional range rather than just being frame-fillers. While details are still under wraps, anticipation is building among her fans.

TAKEAWAYS

From pageants to playful characters to intense portrayals of relationship dynamics, Gouri Priya’s trajectory is steady and purposeful. With each project, she looks to deepen her craft – and the next chapter is clearly underway.



8 CHAITANYA MADADI

From a mature role in a hit YouTube series to showing his grey side, he’s doing it all

SHIFTING GEARS, SLOWLY AND SURELY

He’s currently trending for his role as the ruthless protagonist in the political web drama *Mayasabha* (Aug 2025), where he plays M.S. Rami Reddy, an ambitious figure shaped by the shifting politics of Andhra Pradesh.

BIG BREAK

Chaitanya’s break came with a YouTube series called *30 Weds 21*, which made him a desi heartthrob for many Telugu girls in 2021. Before the buzz could die down, he appeared in *Keedaa Cola* (2023) as Vaasthu, standing out in that quirky crime-comedy directed by Tharun Bhascker. More recently, he stood his ground as the baddie in Anushka Shetty’s *Ghaati* which earned him good reviews.

FLASHBACK

Hailing from Karimnagar in Telangana, Chaitanya always aspired to become an actor, but he also wanted to earn money and save up enough to be able to follow his dreams. This MBA graduate moved to Australia for three years, before returning to India with savings and a decision to act. He debuted with *Bandook* in 2015, then hustled for visibility: two years that included two films, just three days of work, and countless calls and visits to production houses. But things started looking up with a plump role in the streaming zone.

RELEASING SOON

Two films with director Kranthi Madhav and an anthology by Ramesh Varma called *Kokkorokko*. He’s also excited about *Mayasabha Season 2*, slated for release early 2026 on Sony LIV and the possibility of his hit YouTube series *30 weds 21* being made into a feature film next year.

TAKEAWAYS

Chaitanya’s story is less about overnight stardom and more about steady reinvention. “Struggle is inevitable in every person’s journey, but my mantra is to never give up,” he says, acknowledging the challenging years before visible success.

9 MAMITHA BAIJU

From supporting roles to becoming lead actor material, Mamitha has made her mark

CRAFT OVER CHARM

Recently making headlines with her candid reflections on opportunities across industries, Mamitha has swiftly shifted gears from Malayalam to multi-language projects.

BIG BREAK

Her film *Premalu* (2024) marked a turning point. As Reenu, Mamitha stepped into a lead-character space in a Malayalam rom-com that grew into one of her home-industry's most talked-about releases. The visibility from that film opened doors into Tamil and other regional sectors, bringing new colors to her career palette.

FLASHBACK

A native of Kerala's Kottayam, Mamitha's early credits included supporting roles in films like *Operation Java*, *Super Sharanya* and *Kho Kho*. Those years helped her build authenticity on screen and allowed her to move from ensemble parts into fully-fledged character roles. She has

spoken of waiting patiently, refining her craft, and choosing parts beyond mere glamor.

RELEASING SOON

Currently, she has multiple major projects underway. Among them: *Suriya 46* (with Suriya) and *Jana Nayagan* (with Vijay); both films are predicted to make waves across Tamil and multilingual markets. She appeared in the Tamil rom-com *Dude* (2025), where critics noted her bright presence and chemistry with co-star Pradeep Ranganathan.

TAKEAWAYS

From modest supporting roles to headline-grabbing projects, Mamitha Baiju's career reflects a steady expansion rather than overnight stardom. When asked about shifting industries, she said: "I'm a Malayali girl ... I chose parts that challenged me." Her journey suggests that when craft and patience meet opportunity, the next chapter may be the most interesting of all.



10 KAYADU LOHAR

A young actor who believes she is poised for pan-Indian stardom

FINDING A FOOTING ACROSS BORDERS

Turning 25 this April, Kayadu emerged from a successful modelling and pageant background into cinema, winning *Season 12* of the Everyuth Fresh Face competition and landing a film debut. Her journey from modelling to multi-language South Indian films is steady, serious and unfolding.

BIG BREAK

Kayadu's first major screen role was in the 2021 Kannada film *Mugilpete*. While the film marked her launch, the role in the Tamil-Telugu film *Dragon* (2025) brought her wider recognition, especially in Tamil-speaking markets. Her dance number *Madhuvaram*, of course, went viral making her popular overnight with Telugu fans.

FLASHBACK

Hailing from Tezpur, Assam and educated in Pune, Kayadu began with pageants before stepping into modelling and films. Her early credits include multilingual ventures: the Malayalam film *Pathonpatham*. These roles built her craft – she has spoken about choosing parts across industries rather than sticking to one language.

RELEASING SOON

She has several projects in the pipeline across languages. One highly anticipated film directed by Aakash Baskaran is *Idhayam Murali* (Tamil), where she stars opposite Atharvaa. In Telugu, she has *Funky* opposite Vishwaksen and *Paradise* opposite Nani.

TAKEAWAYS

Kayadu's path shows that modelling titles can open the door, but steady work, selectivity, and willingness to cross linguistic boundaries carry you forward. As she puts it, after *Dragon*, she's no longer the newcomer: "I am here to stay and work in South Indian films." ■



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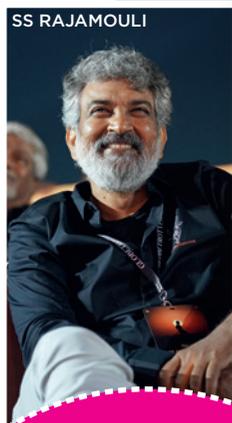
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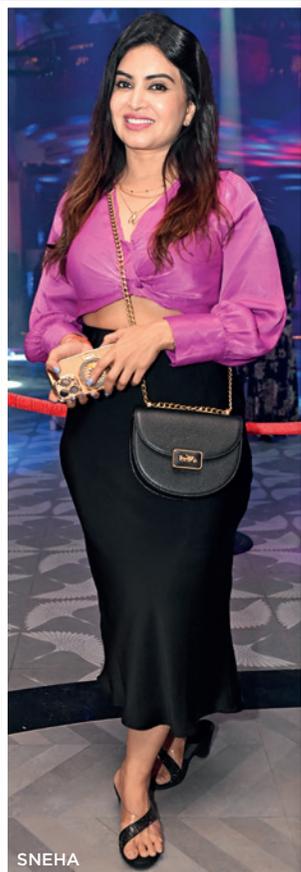
SS RAJAMOULI



MAHESH BABU

PRIYANKA CHOPRA

Global Extravaganza
Nov 15, Ramoji Film City
 Superstars Mahesh Babu, Priyanka Chopra and director SS Rajamouli stole the night with their uber glam appearances at the big reveal of their upcoming movie titled *Varanasi* at an extravagant event titled #Globetrotter.



SNEHA



ASLIHAN



MAHIN

Vibe Check
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