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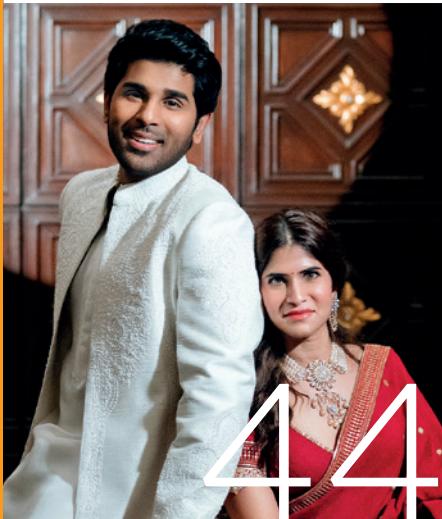
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nightlife 40



FOCUS

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WE TOOK A WALK IN THE NEWLY-OPENED GANDIPET LANDSCAPE PARK that is picturesque and will stun you with its greenery and sunset views



ON THE COVER: ALLU SIRISH AND NAYANIKA

MANAGING EDITOR
Deepti Reddy

EDITOR
Manju Latha Kalanidhi

FEATURE WRITER
Ipshita Raman

COPY EDITOR
Minal Khona

DESIGN
Vijay Narang

MARKETING
K V Krishna

CIRCULATION & ACCOUNTS
Subbarao
Swamy

EDITORIAL & MARKETING OFFICE
WOW! Hyderabad
7-1-27, Third floor, (Next to Green Park)
Ameerpet, Hyderabad-16
Tel: 6651 1956
email@wowhyderabad.com

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Our guide to the exciting happenings in town



GUITAR MAESTRO

FEBRUARY 4

One of the world's foremost guitarists in the tradition of Django Reinhardt, Stephane Wrembel has toured across the globe, released over 20 albums, and has had his compositions feature in well-known films such as *Midnight in Paris* and *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*.

Selected by acclaimed composer Hans Zimmer to perform at the Academy Awards, Wrembel has collaborated with artists like Elvis Costello, Patti Smith, and Esperanza Spalding. He now brings his wide-ranging body of work to the city to serenade the Hyderabadi audience.

Venue: Windmills Craftworks, HI-TEC City

Timings: 7.30 pm onwards

Price: Rs 750 onwards (bookmyshow.com)



TERRARIUM WORKSHOP

FEBRUARY 8

Bring nature indoors with the hands-on terrarium workshop that will teach you how to design, layer, and care for your very own little ecosystem within a glass bowl.

The workshop requires no prior experience. Whether you are a plant lover or someone simply seeking a relaxing creative experience, this event is open to everyone with a curious mind.

Venue: Underdoggs Hyderabad, Sattva Knowledge Park

Timings: 1 pm onwards

Price: Rs 899 onwards (bookmyshow.com)

A POETRY SHOW

FEBRUARY 6

Safar, Hyderabad's open-mic community presents The Safar Show – an evening that celebrates heartfelt connections formed through powerful words, recited by ten selected artists.

These artists will be reciting poems, shayaris, and different kinds of stories, making for an intimate and immersive experience.

Venue: Rangbhoomi Spaces and Events, Gachibowli

Timings: 4.30 pm onwards

Price: Rs 199 onwards

(bookmyshow.com)



THE MEISNER TECHNIQUE

FEBRUARY 7

An approach to acting developed by American theater practitioner Sanford Meisner, the Meisner technique's goal is for an actor to not focus on themselves, and instead direct that concentration to actors around them.

Bringing this method to their workshop, Meisner for Improv, actors Ankur Sardana and Jayashree Raj offer their expertise to those serious about their craft. The training will guide aspiring actors to tune in to their scene partner, respond honestly in the moment, and increase emotional availability, etc.

Venue: Aromale – Café and Creative

Community, Film Nagar

Timings: 12 pm onwards

Price: Rs 1,750 onwards (bookmyshow.com)

SOUNDS OF OUR ROOTS

FEBRUARY 8

Emmy-winning stand-up comedian, Vir Das attempts to take his audience to their roots with his new act, *Sounds of India*. With an immersive audio-visual stand-up experience, the event aims to celebrate the small nuances of our lives by exploring the vibrant sounds of our country that contribute to it.

Venue: Shilpkala Vedika, HI-TEC City

Timings: 11 am to 6.30 pm

Price: Rs 1,299 onwards

(bookmyshow.com)





VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL

FEBRUARY 14

Rediscover your favorite tunes under the gentle glow of candlelight at the famous Candlelight Concerts. The space, which is lit up with over a thousand flameless LED candles, offers a live, multi-sensory musical experience, and this Valentine's Day, they will be presenting a mindful curation of timeless romantic tunes.

From songs like *Pyaar Hua Ikraar Hua* from the film *Shree 420* to *Lag Ja Gale* from the film *Woh Kaun Thi?*, the experience set entirely under candlelight promises to present an evening of pure musical magic.

Venue: Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Banjara Hills

Timings: 7 pm onwards

Ticket: Rs 1,399 onwards (liveyourcity.com)



CRICKET SHOWDOWN

FEBRUARY 15

Gather your friends for the live screening of the ultimate cricket showdown – the T20 India v. Pakistan match. Hosted by Buffalo Wild Wings among a community of cricket lovers, this uproarious event will feature giant screens, electrifying vibes, great food, and ice-cold drinks.

Venue: Buffalo Wild Wings, Jubilee Hills

Timings: 7 pm onwards

Price: Rs 2,000 onwards (district.in)

REKHA BHARDWAJ LIVE

FEBRUARY 22

National Award-winning Sufi, Bollywood, and ghazal singer Rekha Bhardwaj is all set to light up the city of Nizams with her seasoned vocals. Known for her unique voice, the *Sasural Genda Phool* and *Kabira* singer's concert, *Jazbaa*, will offer a showcase of her impressive catalogue and her range as a performer.



Venue: Shilpakala Vedika, HI-TEC City

Timings: 7 pm onwards

Ticket:
Rs 1,000 onwards
(bookmyshow.com)



ECO RUN

FEBRUARY 22

A purpose-driven running festival, the Mindspace Eco Run is designed to inspire fitness, community participation, and environmental responsibility. Blending the excitement of distance running with a commitment to sustainability, this initiative encourages participants to not just stay active, but also contribute to the planet.

Venue: Mindspace Business Park
Timings: 5 am onwards
Price: Rs 600 onwards
(bookmyshow.com)

MUSIC WITH A MISSION

FEBRUARY 28

Acclaimed musical duo Vishal-Shekhar are bringing their iconic music to Hyderabad for a cause. Known for hits from films like *Pathan*, *Om Shanti Om*, and *Student of the Year*, the musicians are set to blend Bollywood anthems with a mission to restore India's mangrove cover, offering entertainment while championing for a greener future.

Venue: Boulder Hills, Gachibowli

Timings: 7.30 pm onwards

Price: Rs 799 onwards
(bookmyshow.com)



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



START-UP

MOWO Fleet, helmed by city biker Jai Bharathi, is driving change, one woman and one bike at a time

Women on Bikes

MOWO Fleet was born from a simple but unsettling observation: Indian roads remain overwhelmingly male, even as conversations around women's empowerment grow louder. Founder Jai Bharathi, a long-distance biker from Hyderabad with over a decade of riding experience across India and abroad, noticed a striking contrast while riding through Assam, Thailand and Vietnam in 2018. "Women on scooters, tractors, and motorcycles were part of everyday life there. Back home, that visibility was missing," she recalls.

That gap sparked the idea that mobility itself could be a powerful enabler. Not just for movement, but for dignity, income, and independence. MOWO stands for Mobility for Women.

SCALING UP

The journey began with MOWO (Moving Women), a not-for-profit initiative

focused on training women to ride two-wheelers and three-wheelers. Over seven years, MOWO trained close to 5,000 women across multiple Indian cities, with an impressive completion rate – almost every woman who enrolled finished the training.

"Women are supported at every step: driving training, licence facilitation, digital literacy, app navigation, and financial onboarding including bank accounts and PAN linkage"

– Jai Bharathi, Founder

But training alone wasn't enough. "While the demand for women drivers existed, very few women were willing to

step into driving as a profession due to social stigma, safety concerns, and lack of structured opportunities," says Bharathi.

BUILDING THE ECOSYSTEM

To solve this demand-supply mismatch, Bharathi launched MOWO Fleet in 2022 as a for-profit start-up. Unlike conventional ride-hailing platforms that rely on an existing driver pool, MOWO Fleet builds the ecosystem from the ground up, prioritizing women drivers from day one.

MOWO Fleet was shortlisted for the Britannia Marigold Her Start-up 2025, where it was scouted out rather than selected after applying through the usual routes. The association provided mentorship and helped her transition to a scalable start-up.

As part of the program, MOWO Fleet received a Rs 10 lakh grant, which was used to develop its app for women drivers. The collaboration continues beyond the show, with mentors and jury members offering ongoing guidance and strategic support. "We focus on the last-mile mobility and neighborhood-based logistics, areas where women can work safely, predictably and close to home," she explains.

DESIGNED AROUND WOMEN'S REALITIES

MOWO Fleet's work hours are capped between 8 am to 8 pm, with flexible shifts. Routes are limited to an average radius of 5 to 8 kilometers, recognizing caregiving responsibilities that many women shoulder.

The platform offers roles such as last-mile delivery partners, subscription-based school and hobby class rides, and neighborhood shuttles. Women are supported at every step: driving training, licence facilitation, digital literacy, app navigation, and financial onboarding including bank accounts and PAN linkage. "Entry-level earnings typically range from Rs 15,000 onwards, with steady growth over time," she informs.

THE ROAD AHEAD

As of early 2026, MOWO Fleet has around 90 active women drivers across Hyderabad and Delhi. The goal is to scale to 300 women drivers by the end of 2026, supported by partnerships with logistics companies and institutions that need reliable last-mile transport. ■ MANJU



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SPORTS

At just 10, **Aaryash Singh Bhadoria**, the Chicago-based junior golfer with deep Hyderabad roots, is already making winning putts in his home city

Early Tee-Off to Big Dreams

Fresh off a standout performance in Hyderabad, 10-year-old Aaryash Singh Bhadoria is fast becoming a name to watch out for in junior golf circles. His recent podium finish at the Boulder Hills IGU South Zone collaboration in Hyderabad was more than just another medal. "It was a homecoming moment," he says.

"My father was my very first coach. Watching him play and spending time on the course is how I slowly fell in love with the game"
— Aaryash Singh Bhadoria

"Although my father moved to Chicago a few years ago for study and work, our roots are in Hyderabad. At heart, we are still pakka Hyderabadis," says Aaryash, who trains across continents but considers Hyderabad an emotional anchor.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE GAME
Aaryash's tryst with golf began in 2020, when he was just five. What started as tagging along with his father to the golf course soon turned into fascination, then passion. "My father was my very first coach. Watching him play and spending time on the course is how I slowly fell in love with the game," he recalls. That curiosity quickly evolved into commitment, laying the foundation

for a serious sporting journey at an age when most children are still discovering hobbies.

BIG WINS

Over the last two years, Aaryash has achieved the following results:
YDP 18-Hole #1 Event – Pinecrest
| 1st Place; European Junior World Championship – Muscat, Oman | 1st Place US Kids Golf Regional Tournament
| 1st Place; Boulder Hills IGU South Zone Collaboration – India | 3rd Place.

LEARNING THE LONG GAME

Today, Aaryash follows a rigorous and disciplined routine. Home-schooling gives him the flexibility to balance academics with competitive training and travel. His practice schedule is intense, five hours a day on the course or range, at least six days a week, along with two hours of physical training focused on strength, stamina, and flexibility.

In Chicago, he trains under Jeff Williams, while in India he works closely with Amit Khaitan. When in the US, his base is the Schaumburg Golf Club and nearby public courses; in Hyderabad, he trains at the Hyderabad Golf Association and the Boulder Hills Golf Club, where he is a proud HGA member. His father continues to mentor him, offering both technical guidance and emotional support.

DRIVEN BY FOCUS

Despite his age, Aaryash understands the sacrifices the sport demands – restricted diets, fewer casual outings, early mornings, and relentless practice. "There are days when nothing goes as planned. Golf teaches patience and perseverance," he says. Inspired by Anirban Lahiri, Tiger Woods, and Rory McIlroy, his goals are clear: to compete at the highest international levels, represent India globally, and create awareness about golf as a serious career option for children. "My dreams are carefully lined up, one shot at a time," he tees off. ■ MANJU

Among the wins he is proud of are the European Junior World Championship, Meijer Callaway Junior Golf Tournament US Kids Golf Regional Tournament. "Winning first place in all three was very special for me," he says.

PROFILE

How **Deepti Akki**, owner of the Hyderabad Honey Badgers team, is reshaping basketball in the state

Owning the Court



When Deepti Akki bought a Hyderabad basketball team at a league auction, it was not a vanity purchase, but a deliberate act. In a country where basketball survives on thin resources, owning a professional team was her way of placing a stake in the ground. "It felt surreal, but also necessary," she says. "I know how hard basketball players struggle in India, and I knew this was a chance to do something tangible," she says, a few months after she bought the Hyderabad Honey Badgers, a team that won the Basketball Premiere League a few weeks ago.

"I did not want to own a team I could not emotionally invest in. If I was doing this, it had to make sense to my city and my work"

— Deepti Akki

THE DISRUPTOR MOVE

The Telangana Pro Basketball League in December 2025 marked the state's first professional league in a decade. Deepti entered knowing exactly what she wanted. She bid only for the Hyderabad team, insisting that ownership had to connect with home. What began as curiosity ended in commitment. She

walked away owning the Hyderabad Honey Badgers, which would go on to win the league in its very first season. "I did not want to own a team I could not emotionally invest in. If I was doing this, it had to make sense to my city and my work," she says.

THE BACKSTORY

Her entry into team ownership is rooted in a long engagement with fitness and sport. She has spent over two decades working across training, sports strategy and infrastructure, setting up basketball courts, advising associations and designing performance-focused fitness spaces. "I am among the early movers who brought the global functional fitness brand, F45, to Tamil Nadu 10 years ago, and later worked on high-performance centers for professional teams and corporate wellness programs," she recalls. Much of this work involved planning training environments, sourcing equipment, and structuring programs around athlete load, recovery, and sustainability. That experience now shapes how she approaches basketball ownership.

BUILDING A TEAM

Players were auctioned; and strength and conditioning coaches, a nutritionist,

a physiotherapist and mental training experts were brought in. Practice sessions included visualization and recovery protocols that most Indian basketball players rarely experience. "The investment went well beyond jerseys and shoes. Loss of pay during training periods was covered, and bonuses were announced after the win. It was a professional ecosystem built almost from scratch," she informs. Deepti is clearly at the intersection of entrepreneurship, fitness and basketball!

THE HONEY BADGER MATTERS

There is an interesting story behind the name of the team. "The honey badger is small, resilient and unafraid of larger predators. It survives via endurance, not spectacle. That animal fights far bigger opponents and still walks away. That is exactly how Indian basketball feels to me," she adds. "Sport moves fast today. Basketball fits the attention span of modern audiences, and that is its biggest advantage."

GAME ON

Owning the team is a four-year commitment, with multiple seasons ahead. For Deepti, the ambition stretches further, toward national leagues and international exposure. But the intent remains steady. "If more states do this right, basketball will not be a fringe sport anymore," she says. "It will finally be taken seriously." For now, the court belongs to her. ■ MANJU



CAUSE

SheBuildsTech helps girls pursuing science understand, learn, and use technology to build careers, businesses and confidence

WHERE INTENT MEETS OPPORTUNITY

SheBuildsTech was founded 11 years ago with a specific objective: to widen the definition of technology-centric careers for women. At the time, technology was largely equated with IT or desk-based roles. “We created SheBuildsTech to expand how careers in technology are understood and accessed, particularly for women outside traditional elite institutions,” says Sree Divya Vadlpudi Prasanna, Founder of the not-for-profit organization. A strategy consultant who shuttles between Hyderabad and Delhi, Divya is a qualified techie (a Srinidhi alumnus) and a social activist.

“The early focus was on awareness, introducing students to the breadth of technology across hardware, automation, mobility, and emerging fields – and correcting long-held misconceptions around who could participate in these sectors,” says Divya.

“Hiring followed naturally once companies saw the quality of work participants were producing”

— Sree Divya Vadlpudi Prasanna, Founder

BUILDING AN INTENT-DRIVEN COMMUNITY

The organization began modestly, running small events and outreach programs across city-based and rural colleges. Their biggest flex: Empowering women in rural India through hackathons, ideathons and return-to-work bootcamps, leading to them bagging projects, programs and placements.

“Till date we have directly impacted over 8,000 girls/women including under-served communities with special focus on Tier II and Tier III cities,” she adds.

LEADERSHIP MEETS TECH

A key phase in the organization’s evolution came through leadership-and-technology programs designed for college-going women. These initiatives combined technical exposure with leadership training and encouraged participants to work on projects with social relevance.



“We did not design our programs around placements,” Divya notes. “Hiring followed naturally once companies saw the quality of work participants were producing.” As application numbers grew from a few hundred to several thousand for limited seats, industry partners began adopting similar models independently.

RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

As the network grew, women began approaching the organization with issues unrelated to careers, including workplace harassment and violence. While SheBuildsTech did not formally reposition itself, a group of senior members began addressing these concerns independently. The organization became an informal support group for women facing issues at work place or violence.

“Addressing safety issues was not part of the original plan,” Divya says. “It emerged because women trusted the community and reached out when they needed support.” This work has included counselling, referrals, legal guidance, and collaboration with external experts, primarily through word-of-mouth channels.

She is working on a women’s safety bill and preventive measures to be implemented in the Parliament. ■ MANJU



Sree Divya Vadlpudi

How You Can Help

1. Become a volunteer with SheBuildsTech
2. Encourage women in your life to be part of the cause
3. Sponsor an event
4. Lead a vertical at the events/programs

K-BEAUTY DIDN'T JUST ENTER THE GLOBAL MARKET—IT CONQUERED

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Clinic Locations

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Tel: 95519 33333

Chennai

Old No:50, New No:16, Chevalier Sivaji Ganesan Road (South Boag Road), T.Nagar, Chennai-600017

Tel: 95519 33333

Bangalore

Esteem Plaza, No 356/20, 13th Cross, 4th Main, 1st Floor, Sadashivanagar, Bangalore, Karnataka - 560080

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“I like art that leaves space for interpretation rather than spelling everything out – work that stays with you quietly”

PHOTOS: AADYAM HANDWOVEN; BANARASI JAMDANI WEAVE KORA SILK COTTON SAREE WITH REAL ZARI PAIRED WITH A KANI WEAVE HANDSPUN PASHMINA SHAWL FROM KASHMIR

Actor **Sobhita Dhulipala** talks about the roles she chooses, her creative inspirations and love for handlooms

“This year is about consolidation, rather than expansion”

From winning the Femina Miss India Earth title in 2013 to quietly building one of the most interesting careers in Indian cinema, **Sobhita Dhulipala** has done things on her own terms. She made an assured entry into Bollywood (*Raman Raghav* ten years ago) before carving a distinctive space in Telugu cinema (*Major* in 2022), and choosing roles that value restraint over noise. Her global recognition grew through acclaimed web series (*Made in Heaven* and *The Night Manager*) that showcased her poise and emotional intelligence. She recently wed actor Chaitanya Akkineni; Sobhita continues to be admired for her grace, dignity, and self-possession. In this exclusive interview, she reflects on her journey so far.

LOOKING AT YOUR FILMOGRAPHY TODAY, WHICH CHOICES ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF? WHAT DO YOU STILL WANT TO EXPLORE AND WHICH PROJECTS ARE IN THE PIPELINE?

I'm most proud of the choices that allowed me to play women with interior lives and agency – characters who weren't designed to be immediately likeable, but truthful to their context. *Made in Heaven*, *Kurup*, *Goodachari*, *Major*, *The Night Manager* and now *Cheekati Lo* (an Amazon Prime original movie) all sit in that space for me in different ways.

Going forward, I'm interested in characters who deal with power and consequence. I'm less drawn to repetition and more to roles that feel purposeful. As for Telugu cinema, I remain very connected to it and am reading selective scripts. I'm taking my time with what comes next.

YOUR PRESENCE TODAY EXTENDS BEYOND CINEMA INTO FASHION AND CULTURAL SPACES. HOW DID THAT EXPANSION COME ABOUT FOR YOU?

It's been a natural progression. I've always been interested in aesthetics, storytelling and culture beyond films. Fashion and cultural spaces allow me to engage with craft, history and ideas in a different way. I gravitate towards arenas that value originality and depth rather than trends, so the overlap feels quite organic.

WHAT DOES THE COMING YEAR HOLD FOR YOU – IN TERMS OF WORK, PERSONAL GROWTH, OR INTENTIONS YOU'RE SETTING FOR YOURSELF?

This year is about consolidation, rather than expansion. I want to work with clarity, be selective, and stay close to material that feels necessary rather than noisy. Personally, I'm interested in cultivating patience – allowing things to evolve without forcing momentum. That intention applies to both work and life.

Apart from my most recent Telugu release on Amazon, *Cheekati Lo*, I'm looking forward to sharing my Tamil work with master director Pa Ranjith in the next few months.

WHAT ART FORMS, INDIAN OR GLOBAL, DO YOU FIND YOURSELF RETURNING TO FOR INSPIRATION?

I'm drawn to cinema, literature, photography and music that rely more on mood than spectacle. Indian poetry, old film songs, and contemporary photography often inspire me as much as global cinema does. I like art that leaves space for interpretation rather than spelling everything out – work that stays with you quietly.

BEING ROOTED IN TELUGU CULTURE, WHAT ASPECTS OF ITS TRADITIONS OR EVERYDAY RITUALS CONTINUE TO SHAPE YOU TODAY?

Telugu culture has given me a strong sense of rhythm – in language, food, and everyday life. Storytelling, especially, plays a big role. There's a directness and emotional clarity in the way stories are told, whether it's through folklore or family conversations. That sense of grounding still shapes how I approach my work and my relationships.

GADWAL KUTTU WEAVE SAREE IN A FINE COTTON BODY WITH SILK ZARI BORDER AND PALLA JOINTING





TELL US ABOUT YOUR ASSOCIATION WITH AADYAM HANDWOVEN. YOU SEEM DRAWN TO HANDCRAFTED ELEGANCE AND INDIAN TEXTILES. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE WITH SAREES AND ETHNIC WEAR?

My association with Aadyam Handwoven comes from a shared appreciation for craftsmanship and authenticity. Handloom carries time, labor and history within it, and wearing it feels like participating in a living tradition rather than just consuming fashion.

“Telugu culture has given me a strong sense of rhythm – in language, food, and everyday life”

When it comes to sarees and ethnic wear, my style is relaxed and intuitive. I love natural fabrics, comfortable drapes, and colors that feel rooted – earthy tones, metallic neutrals, and the occasional deep jewel shade. I like clothes that feel effortless and real, not over-styled. That's when I feel most like myself.

WHAT ROLE HAVE HANDLOOMS PLAYED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE, BEYOND RED CARPETS AND FILM PROMOTIONS?

Handlooms have always been part of my everyday life, not just something I wear for appearances. I grew up seeing them as clothes meant to be lived in – worn repeatedly, adapted, passed on. Even now, I gravitate towards handloom pieces because they feel familiar and grounding. That's also what draws me to Aadyam Handwoven – the way the sarees feel honest, lived-in and worthy of an heirloom rather than styled for the moment. They're comfortable, they age beautifully, and over time, they begin to feel deeply personal.

■ MANJU

A Hyderabad Photographer's Perspective on Modern Weddings



Hyderabad, July 2025 – In a world of curated wedding aesthetics and viral reels, a Hyderabad-based photography team is taking a different route – one rooted in legacy, love, and emotion.

Founded by Siddhu Soma, Vows by SiddhuSoma has spent over years redefining wedding photography through storytelling that transcends trends. Operating from Jubilee Hills, the team has captured more than 1,000 weddings across India, the U.S., Dubai, Bali, Italy, Thailand, and other luxury wedding destinations – each frame a reflection of deep cultural understanding and heartfelt emotion.

"Over the years, we've come to realize that weddings aren't just about a single day – they're about love, legacy, and the generations that follow."

This philosophy is what sets Vows by SiddhuSoma apart in Hyderabad's vibrant wedding industry. Formally launched in 2017, the brand is co-led by Siddhu and his partner, Bhargavi. Together, they've built a reputation for capturing weddings with emotional honesty and artistic restraint.

Before starting his own venture, Siddhu honed his craft under some of the industry's most respected names, refining his eye for storytelling and his

sensitivity to the nuances that make each wedding unique. Today, his work strikes a balance between editorial elegance and human intimacy – a style that favors fleeting, authentic moments over posed perfection.

"Every wedding is a legacy in the making," Siddhu often says, a sentiment that guides his approach behind the lens.

Over the years, Vows by SiddhuSoma has been featured in You & I Magazine and recognized by Times Business and Business Mint awards. Their clientele includes celebrity families such as Allu Arjun and Niharika Konidela, yet their philosophy remains rooted in simplicity – every story, regardless of scale, deserves to be archived with care.

With each assignment, the team goes beyond documentation – they create emotional heirlooms. "Wedding photography is an investment in love," says Bhargavi. "It's about preserving emotions, fleeting moments, and raw connections that will live on for generations."

In a time when weddings are often seen as content opportunities, Vows by SiddhuSoma offers something quieter and far more enduring – not just memories, but meaning.



Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.
Vows Wedding Photography & Filmmers
HELLO@VOWSBYSIDDHUSOMA.COM
Tel.: +91 9199009999

The National Film Award winner for *12th Fail* and Bollywood actor **Vikrant Massey** shares some gems of wisdom at the FLO Hyderabad's session on 'Success Without Shortcuts', while in conversation with Prathibha Kunda, Chairperson of FLO Hyderabad

“Learn, unlearn, and relearn must become the new normal”

At 38, Bollywood actor **Vikrant Massey** represents a rare blend of talent, discipline, and quiet conviction. Having stepped out of home at 16 to support his education and ambitions, Vikrant built his career steadily, beginning with television (with *Balika Vadhu*), transitioning seamlessly into films and web series such as *Mirzapur*, and earning critical acclaim for performances in *The Sabarmati Report* and *12th Fail*, a biographical film for which he won the National Film Award for Best Actor in 2023.

“I don't agree with people who say money doesn't make you happy. Money does bring happiness”

— Vikrant Massey

With over two decades in the industry, he believes success is shaped not by shortcuts, but by consistency, resilience, and repeated self-renewal. Vikrant values talent over visibility, family over fame, and contentment over external validation, principles he spoke about candidly at a recent interaction with FLO Hyderabad where he addressed a gathering of over 250 women.

HERE ARE NINE LIFE LESSONS FROM VIKRANT MASSEY:

1. Money was the reason I stepped out of my home at the age of 16. My goal then was simple: to earn for education, a home, and eventually make a lakh a month. I bought my house at 24. But over time, my definition of success changed. Today, after 21 years in the industry, I am the most content actor.
2. Success is the compound effect of repeated failures.
3. Success doesn't come easily. You have to work relentlessly for it. I don't have an uncle in the industry who could produce a film for me. For every role, I must perform and position myself as a strong contender.
4. Shape up or ship out. We constantly update our mobile phones, but we forget to update ourselves. Learn, unlearn, and relearn must become the new normal to survive in today's competitive world.
5. Good health is a big success. No matter how expensive the
- clothes you wear are, without energy from within, they don't matter.
6. I don't agree with people who say money doesn't make you happy. Money does bring happiness. It gives you confidence which in turn can make you feel good.
7. I'm not a social media person. I don't party, nor do I believe that socializing gets you work. What truly matters is what you do in front of the camera.
8. My home is sacred to me. My mother is my greatest inspiration. Though not connected to the film world, I deeply admire Rahul Dravid for his values and integrity.
9. My non-negotiables: spending weekends with family and keeping my personal life out of the media spotlight. ■ MANJU





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Theta Theta Telugu is an interesting culinary experiment where every dish has a story and an innovation



SAMPATH TUMMALA AND VIGNESH RAMACHANDRAN



Telugu Food, Reimagined

Sometimes it is not about the food, but the people behind it that makes a place worth going to. Sampath Tummala of Spicy Venue and Chef Vignesh Ramachandran, previously with Once Upon a Time at Green Park, are two such people who are formidable with their food brands. And when they come together, like for the newly-opened **Theta Theta Telugu** or T3, for short, it was bound to be standout fare. (PS: It's pronounced theyta theyta Telugu, not theeta theeta Teylg).

QUIRK AND WHIMSY

Opened in December 2025, T3 is about Telugu food, but with a progressive twist. "Not fusion, not remixed, but reimagined," says Sampath, the man who's on the speed dial of every Hyderabadi foodie, thanks to the iconic fare at his flagship restaurant, Spicy Venue in Jubilee Hills. T3 is his new passion project that brings quirk and whimsy to classic Telugu fare. For those who want a café style eatery, T3 has an alfresco space called Coffee Sangam that serves all-day fare.

TASTING MENU

We started off with rasam shots, a hyper clear rasam that looks like wine. "It's a tribute to Chennai's iconic ITC Avartana," says Chef Vignesh. Served in a transparent glass, it's a shot you want to repeat. Sampath advises us to save our appetite for the rest of the food. The menu is exhaustive and is a tasting one, so brace for a variety.

Next in line was another reimagined classic called the Grilled Ghee Upma with Tomato Pachadi. Vignesh calls it Telugu food without boundaries. It was like digging into a square upma cake drizzled with cashew powder. We give it a rating of 10 on 10 for this cool version of upma. We then moved on to their famed Chintapandu Ghee Prawns served with Karepaku Brioche; it definitely deserves to be their signature dish.

ELEVATED EXPERIENCE

The other specialities such as Pappannam Khowsuey and

Avakai Rice Aranchini stood out from the menu for their novelty, yet loyal to their origins. Sampath shows us around the 96-seater 4,500 sq. feet two level restaurant and shares his future plans for the space. "The food may look different, but the flavors are familiar. T3 is an elevated experience," says Sampath.

GOOD VIBES ONLY

We ended the meal with the rich and indulgent Kobbari Rasmalai which was the star of the desserts. The Mysorepak Crumble looked tempting at the next table, but we want to come back again and try it next time. ■ MANJU

Meal for two: Rs 2,000

Road No. 10 A, Gayatri Hills, Jubilee Hills

Timings: 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm; 6.30 pm to 10.30 pm

Details: @theta.theta.telugu



WOW!
Recommends
Chintapandu
Ghee Prawns

Celebrating bold native flavors, this unique café called **Andhra Paris** serves dishes that tell stories of fiery passion, aromatic masalas, and the artistry of homegrown tastes

Glocal Fare

Andhra spices converge with the timeless elegance of Parisian aesthetic at this all-day Telugu café. Giving Andhra recipes a cosmopolitan twist, **Andhra Paris** does not shy away from experimenting and thinking differently. It embraces the new and is worth a visit for doing so.

"Andhra Paris reflects modern elegance and the contemporary café culture. I come from a place called Tenali; it is also called Andhra Paris which symbolizes Andhra cuisine presented with global sophistication. The name bridges regional pride with international appeal. It stands for tradition, creativity, and refined experimentation," explains the owner, D. Sathwik.

MODERN, MINIMAL AND CAFÉ CENTRIC

Upon entering, we first notice a shimmering chandelier hanging off the ceiling. Spread across two floors; the vegetarian restaurant's aesthetic is made up of warm lighting and calming hues.

Expanding on the well-decked interiors, Sathwik says that it is "modern, minimal, and café centric. Design elements subtly reference Andhra culture without being heavy. Warm lighting, clean lines, and earthy accents create balance. The space encourages relaxed dining and culinary exploration."

SOULFUL BITES

One soulful bite at a time, Andhra Paris aims to bring together the warmth of home and the thrill of discovery. From the masalas and pickles to the spice blends and condiments, everything at this vegetarian fare only café is crafted with care, consistency, and creativity.



WOW!
Recommends
Pulusu Glazed
Paneer
Skewers

Famished and ready to dig in, we had the Guntur Chili Tomato Basil Soup, Pulusu Glazed Paneer Skewers, Pulihora Noodles, Hara Bara Kebab Biryani, Karampodi Hash Brown Burger, and Kalakand Croissant – all unlike anything we have tried before. Crafted with precision, they each offer a singular blend of heritage and innovation.

A pleasant surprise to the palate, the experimental food left us fully satiated. This is especially true for dishes: Pulusu Glazed Paneer Skewers, Pulihora Noodles, and the Kalakand Croissant.

■ IPSHITA

Meal for two: Rs 800 onwards

Plot No. 455, 100 Feet Road, Madhapur

Tel: 94909 87789

Timings: 11.30 am to 11 pm





Bhojanam in Jubilee Hills has a region-specific menu that foodies will relish



PRANAVI CHEKURI

Thalis, but make them regional

Usually, thalis in the city are divided into North Indian and South Indian. At **Bhojanam** in Jubilee Hills, the thali becomes a regional map – offering distinct platters from the Krishna, Godavari, Rayalaseema and Telangana regions, each rooted in its own food culture and culinary logic.

ONE STATE, MANY TABLES

Spread across 8,000 sq. feet, Bhojanam is the brainchild of Pranavi and Teja Chekuri under Fullstack Ventures (popular for the Prost Brewery in Madhapur). The space is expansive, with a good mix of outdoor and indoor seating and a high ceiling vibe. The walls have Telugu motifs – from Kondapalli toys to Cheriyal masks. Tollywood songs from the 1980s playing on the mega screen lends the space a quiet sense of nostalgia.

THALI FOR EVERY PALATE

Each thali is region-specific, built around flavor profiles that locals instantly recognize. “This is not fusion or reinvention. It’s Telugu food the way it has always been cooked at home,” says Pranavi. We tried the Krishnamma Thali and loved the Guntur-Vijayawada flavors, especially the Gongura Pachadi and the Kodi Pulav.

BEYOND THE MAIN PLATE

Alongside the thalis are optional small plates – meant as add-ons rather than full portions – and signature dishes. We loved the Pachi Mirchi Kodi Vepudu, Gongura Mutton and Fish Pulusu. Desserts such as Bellam Junnu and Palakova Samosa round off the meal.

■ MANJU

Meal for two: Rs 1,200 onwards

Junction of Road No. 36 & Road No. 59, Jubilee Hills

Tel: 98388 44999

Timings: 12 pm to 3.30 pm and 7 pm to 10.30 pm

WHAT'S IN EACH THALI

Krishnamma Bhojanam: Coastal influences and signature comfort dishes

Godavari Bhojanam: Rich, festive and staples from the river belt

Rayalaseema Bhojanam: Spicy, bold and fiery, and built around robust masalas and iconic accompaniments for big appetites

Telangana Bhojanam: Highlighting age-old Telangana culinary traditions wrapped in earthy, rustic and bold flavors of comfort.

Every thali comprises starters, mains, accompaniments, condiments, desserts and signature house-made beverages that trace their roots back to traditional kitchens.

Pro Hack: Also try their live customized pot pulavs.

WHAT'S NEW

Mazzo's new menu is all about blending a temple town's wisdom with a toddy shop's twist

Madurai Meets Malaysia



The new menu at **Mazzo**, the rooftop restaurant at the Marriott Executive Apartments focuses on the kitchens of the Indian peninsula, stitched with temple-town wisdom and toddy-shop bravado.

Curated by Chef de Cuisine Suresh Rajan Pillai, the menu celebrates his Malaysian lineage and Madurai's festive streets.

Among the highlights are the Wild Mushroom Cappuccino, with truffle and crisp goat cheese crostini; the Tarbooz-e-Murabba, where watermelon meets pickling spice; and the Rajwadi Dhungar Paneer, smoked and aromatic, bringing depth to a contemporary table. The fiery Mangalorean Ghee Roast and the inventive Shahi Chicken Burger balance comfort with craft.

Desserts like Sheer Khurma offer a touch of indulgence without overwhelming sweetness.

The cocktail menu too reinterprets the soul of the South, using ingredients like filter coffee, curry leaf, gongura, palm jaggery, vetiver, and kodampuli.

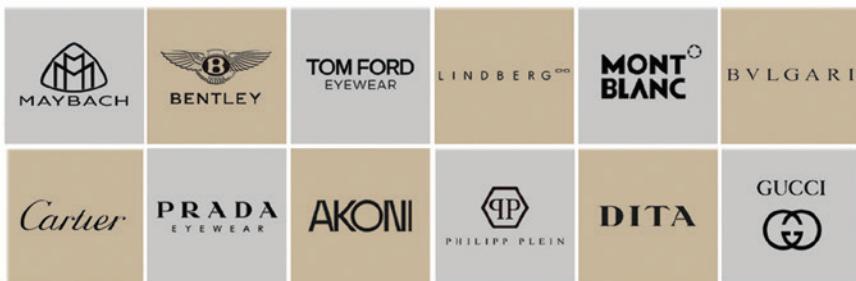
■ MINAL

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WOW!
Recommends:
olive green and
grey lehenga



ONLINE PICK

Everyday activewear
with a fun twist

Comfort, On Priority

Actor and wellness advocate Samantha Ruth Prabhu, along with co-founders Harshita Motaparthi and Pravishtha Nadella, have introduced

Mile Collective, a contemporary Indian activewear and lifestyle label shaped around a comfort-first design.

DESIGNED FOR REAL DAYS

"Mile Collective is built on the idea that clothing should feel good from morning to night," says Samantha. Moving beyond performance-led activewear, the brand focuses on pieces that transition easily between movement and rest. Soft, breathable fabrics, intuitive fits, and easy silhouettes make the clothing suitable for morning walks, travel days, work-from-anywhere hours, and downtime at home.

COMFORT AS THE STARTING POINT

Designed for Indian bodies and climates, the collections prioritize wearability over trends. The colour palette stays muted

The **House of Masaba** unveils its new collection for those getting married in 2026

Sabr, Shukr and Sukoon for Brides

The **House of Masaba** store unveiled its new bridal collection for the upcoming wedding season. The recently-opened 3,800 sq. feet two-level store has curated a complete shopping experience with multiple categories to shop, from fine jewelry and luxe wedding wear to festive ready-to-wear, and makeup from their Lovechild cosmetic collection.

WOW! loved the store's soothing white walls paired with accents of their signature Masaba red and the bindi symbol. The store is deliberately uncluttered and serene, allowing women and families to navigate decisions with ease and clarity. The result is a modern bridal destination that is bold yet calm, rooted yet forward-looking, distinctly *House of Masaba*," says Masaba.

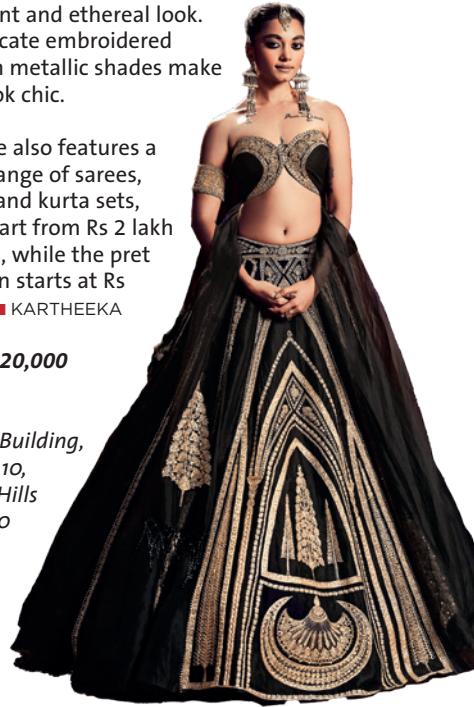
The store also unveiled its latest bridal collection titled *Sabr, Shukr and Sukoon*. The collection is rich with designer wear made of tissue, organza and raw silk, giving the lehengas a subtle sheen, and

an elegant and ethereal look. The intricate embroidered motifs in metallic shades make them look chic.

The store also features a festive range of sarees, kaftans and kurta sets, which start from Rs 2 lakh onwards, while the pret collection starts at Rs 20,000. ■ KARTHEEKA

Price: Rs 20,000 onwards

Solitaire Building,
Road No.10,
Banjara Hills
Tel: 77380
07478
Timings:
11 am to
8 pm



SAMANTHA RUTH PRABHU, ALONG WITH CO-FOUNDER HARSHITA MOTAPARTHI



CO-FOUNDERS HARSHITA MOTAPARTHI AND PRAVISHTHA NADELLA

and versatile, with refined cuts that feel natural rather than attention-seeking. "The result is clothing that fits seamlessly into daily routines without demanding constant outfit changes," say Harshita and Pravishtha about the online brand.

FROM MILE ACTIVE TO MILE COLLECTIVE

The brand began in 2023 as Mile Active, founded by Harshita Motaparthi with a small range of four products addressing gaps in fit and comfort in the Indian activewear market. As the label evolved, Pravishtha Nadella joined as co-founder, expanding its focus from activewear to a broader lifestyle approach. Samantha

later came on board as co-founder, drawn to the brand's emphasis on balance, intentional living, and comfort-led design.

THE ONTHEGO COLLECTION

Mile Collective launches with its debut OnTheGo collection, capturing women moving fluidly through their days. Clean silhouettes, subtle colors, and versatile pieces anchor the range, reinforcing the brand's focus on clothing designed to be worn, repeated, and lived in. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 1,200 onwards

Website: www.milecollective.in

This design-driven brand aims to bridge the polarity between loud and plain designs, allowing both to exist and thrive together

VIBE WITH XTACY

Tapping into a space where designs neither feel too loud nor too plain, and instead are more balanced and inclusive, Hyderabad-based **XTACY** is built on the belief that a truly great piece speaks for itself and never shouts.

"XTACY is for anyone who connects with minimal graphics and clean designs. If you vibe with it, you vibe with us" — Aayaz Ahmed and Ali Khan Sandozai, Founders

FOUNDERS WEIGH IN

Blending street sensibilities with refined craftsmanship, the brand's journey began in 2019 by co-founders, Aayaz Ahmed and Ali Khan Sandozai. Discussing the inception, they tell us,

Madihah Home brings its considered approach to home and wedding gifting to Hyderabad

Luxe Gifting

In an age of last-minute online orders, physical stores continue to matter when it comes to gifting. They allow for pause, comparison and the kind of 'touch and feel' decision-making that gifting often demands. That's the logic behind the opening of the Delhi-based home décor and lifestyle brand, **Madihah Home**, by Shikha and Kritarth Bhasin, in Banjara Hills.



"We began as a custom print idea and gradually transformed into a design-driven brand." Elaborating on the brand name, they add, "We knew we needed a name that was simple, modern, and easy to say. After a lot of brainstorming, we zeroed in on XTACY, a name that felt cool, effortless, and right for the times we live in."

CATERING TO A VIBE

Catering not to any specific type but purely to a vibe, XTACY offers clean designs, premium fabrics, and comfortable fits that one can wear every day. Its unisex and non-age-restrictive pieces include oversized tees and hoodies.

Crafted in French terry cotton (weighing up to 450 GSM for superior comfort and structure), the brand's current catalogue includes: the Lost Love and the Club Xtacy tee, Crafted In Silence hoodie, and the acid washed Sinners tee.



WOW!
Recommends:
The Lost Love
t-shirt

Versatile, timeless, understated, and unapologetically bold are just a few ways to describe them.

"As the brand grows, we'll be expanding into more tees, hoodies, track pants, joggers, caps etc., building a lineup that stays true to the XTACY vibe while evolving with the community," share the creative minds behind the young brand.

■ IPSHITA

Price: Rs 700 onwards

Website: xtacyproductions.com

Instagram: [@xtacy.clothing](https://www.instagram.com/xtacy.clothing)



TANGIBLE RANGE

From large statement pieces to smaller accents, the emphasis is on variety and choice rather than impulse buying. "We have our own manufacturing unit, which allows us to experiment with form, finish and trends without relying entirely on external sourcing," say Shikha and Kritarth, Founders and Directors of Madihah Home. As we walked past, we saw handcrafted boxes and trays in wood, metal and fabric, layered with gourmet sweets, artisanal snacks, tableware, candles and keepsakes. Materials lean towards natural fibers, kansa, brass, ceramics and

fine paper, arranged for the touch and feel experience.

GIFTING, BEYOND OBJECTS

The brand also houses its in-house gourmet and sweets range, including dry fruits, traditional sweets and snack assortments designed for gifting. At the Hyderabad launch, these were displayed alongside décor pieces, reinforcing the idea of gifting as a complete experience rather than a single object. Curated hampers and invitation boxes form a significant part of this offering.

WEDDINGS AND OTHERWISE

While weddings remain central to the brand's identity, the collections extend comfortably into corporate and personal gifting. A 36-piece kansa dinner set stood out for its finish and presence, reflecting the kind of purchase that benefits from being seen in person. "Hyderabadis appreciate scale and detail, and a physical store helps make decisions easier," says Kritarth. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 3,000 onwards

GK Colony, Road No. 10, Banjara Hills

Tel: 98999 70038

Timings: 11 am to 8 pm

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

trends

WOW! tells you trending styles to look for while shopping for **Valentine's Day**!

DATE DRESSING

As Valentine's Day approaches, so does the frustrating part of finding and planning your outfits for a romantic date. If you're confused about what to shop for that is in fashion, and a good addition to your wardrobe, here are the trends of Spring/Summer of 2026 that help you make the right choice.



CAPE IT UP

Capes add a certain elegance with their fluidity as you walk and are great in the breeze for an outdoors dinner date. This year, they are trending in different variations from the usual cape sleeves, to one-sided asymmetric capes and those adding a layer flowing from the chest to the back.



CLASSIC LBD

Immortalized by the likes of Audrey Hepburn and her iconic collaborations with the House of Givenchy, the classic Valentine's Day LBD (Little Black Dress) never goes out of style. Described by fashion designer Sarah Burton as peeling back the structure of tailoring to reveal skin and a sense of lightness and ease, this contemporary LBD from Givenchy's Spring '26 collection gives a nod to its notable past while paving the way for newer interpretations.



FEATHERS WITH AN EDGE

Catapulting to fame by becoming the first ever Indian to open a Chanel show after being discovered on a New York City subway, Hyderabad-born Bhavitha Mandava power-walked across the runway in a significant black dress. It featured gold feather-like tassels and pink feathers at the hem, making for an edgy V-day look.

A CLEAN LOOK

French luxury brand Hermès chooses straight lines, sharp angles, and neat contours to represent its Spring '26 RTW collection. Simple yet modern, the clean and breathy silhouettes adorned with silk scarves give off an air of sophistication while remaining casual, making it an interesting choice for a romantic evening out.



A DATE WITH MAXIMALISM

Embracing maximalism, Indian future vintage brand Kartik Research unveiled its Spring/Summer '26 collection for its runway debut at Paris Men's Fashion Week. Encouraging you to dress loudly, the pieces introduced at the event included embroidered jackets and voluminous shirts in bold prints.



MINIS IN SILK

Sometimes, simplicity is the best option and silk minidresses are chic, confident and versatile. The fabric adds a touch of luxury while moving along your body and the hemline keeps the look playful and fun. Pair it with heels for a dinner and Mary Janes for a casual outing. It's perfect for when you want to put together an outfit without overthinking and be effortlessly chic.

■ KARTHEEKA



A reflective and fun three-hour workshop by **Sainikpuri Social** sets the tone for manifesting and goal enthusiasts



Vision Boarding into 2026

The first weekend of the year has its own softness to it. January 4th felt particularly symbolic! Early enough to still believe in your resolutions, late enough to admit what you're tired of carrying. That mood shaped a three-hour vision board workshop hosted at Ci Gusta by **Sainikpuri Social** and organized by wellness expert Nitya Naresh. Sainikpuri Social is a community that brings fun activities to this part of Hyderabad.

ONBOARDING IN PROGRESS

The workshop didn't begin with magazines or scissors, but with a pause. Participants were asked to think about what they wanted to consciously leave behind from the previous year – habits, emotional weight, self-doubt – and what they were ready to move forward with. The idea was simple: what you leave out, what you leave behind, and what you walk ahead with. The 30 participants, mostly from around Sainikpuri, carried out the instructions. The age group ranged from teenagers to senior citizens and diverse professions – entrepreneurs to DJs and media professionals.

NO RULES, NO PRESSURE

As the evening progressed, the tables filled up with images, words, half-sentences, colors, and instinctive choices. Every participant got a kit that comprised a laptop-sized cardboard, sheets with dreams and desires, scissors, glue stick, glitter pens and more. Some boards were neatly structured – career here, health there, travel neatly mapped out. Others were messy, intuitive, and driven by images that simply felt right. Mountains sat next to affirmations, dream homes next to reminders to rest more, slow down, or say no without guilt. "No wrong answers here," said Nitya when participants asked about the dos and don'ts of vision boarding.

OFFLINE WINS

What really worked was how relaxed everything felt. Conversations flowed easily – about changing goals, uncertain plans, and desires that felt personal but relatable. There was laughter, shared eye-rolls over familiar struggles, and long stretches of quiet focus. "The physical act of cutting and pasting feels grounding, especially in a time when most planning happens on screens," says Rishika E, a participant.

THE TAKEAWAYS

By the end of three hours, it was clear the real takeaway wasn't the board itself, which was pretty and colorful, by the way. It was the shift. People walked out with clarity – not always loud or dramatic, but honest. It was light, creative, and quietly meaningful, proving that starting a new year doesn't need dramatic resolutions. Sometimes, all it needs is time, a table full of cut-outs, and the willingness to be truthful with yourself.

After pizzas, conversations and selfies, the participants returned home with their vision boards "Let's meet in June to see the progress we've made," they all promised each other. My vision board has a promotion, a hike, a new car, sponsored vacations, a secret lottery win, a pair of gifted sunglasses and more. Stay tuned to see how that went. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 699 per head (includes vision board kit, stationery and gift)

Timings: Weekends at popular cafés
Check @sanikpurisocial for the next workshop date



Mehfil-E-Mohabbat

An evening of love awaits at Jewel of Nizam – The Minar. Savour a chef-curated five-course menu with a heart-shaped red velvet cake, as romantic instrumental melodies fill the night with warmth and charm.

Friday, 14 February
1900 hrs – 2330 hrs

INR 4999/- per person



A spot to unwind with friends over craft beer and conversations, this latest nightlife joint offers an escape from the sensory overload of city life

A Room with a Brew



With ample space to unwind, the **Red Rhino Taproom** opens in Hyderabad, defined by its craft beer, complementing versatile bites, upbeat music, and vibrant community spirit.

THE VIBE

This day-and-night spot aims to inspire in its customers the same effortlessness with which it was passionately conceptualized. A taproom that wants you to feel at home and not be too bothered by appearances; Red Rhino

offers up its sizable space for connections and conversations to brew alongside its craft beers.

The overwhelming response to this 350-seater can also be attributed to its generously spacious and relaxing ambience, one that offers DJ nights and live acoustic music which doesn't overpower private conversations.

Spread across multiple floors; the seating options are varied, and to our pleasant



surprise, incorporates a pet-inclusive outdoor area that serves some pet-friendly bites in popsicles.

FOR BEER ENTHUSIASTS

Crafted in Bengaluru, Red Rhino's five default brews include the Bangalore Daze IPA, the Soul Surfer, the Belgian Wit, the GPB, and the Black Pearl.

Offering flavors of ripe mangosteen and bitter orange is the Bangalore Daze IPA; Soul Surfer is a traditional German hefeweizen filled to the brim with flavors of banana, classic bubblegum, and clove; Using coriander and imported orange zest is the Belgian Wit or White Beer; an American Lager, the GPB is a classic all malt lager that has a light and crisp taste with a bright floral aroma of fresh cut grass and meadow flowers; and finally, the Black Pearl is a rich and roasty American robust stout, infused with flavors of chocolate, coffee, and deep caramel.

VERSATILE BITES

In small plates, highlights include the Nachos a la Rhino, served with jalapenos, guacamole, and tomato salsa; the Cheese Jalapeno Bomb, golden fritters with melted cheese and a hint of spice. In large plates the highlights include the Grilled Salmon, the Buffs Fillet Mignon, and locally-inspired spreads in the Gongura Mamsam, and the Nellore Chapala Pulusu.

We end our feast on a familiar note with the Classic Tiramisu that is rich in cocoa, espresso, mascarpone, and includes light sponge layers and a hint of rum. ■ IPSHITA

Night out for Two: Rs 1,800 with alcohol

4th floor, 205, Myscape Road, Near Financial District

Tel: 98857 98579

Timings: 12 pm to 11.30 pm (Sunday to Thursday), 12 pm to 12.30 am (Friday and Saturday)



WOW! chats with **Martin Barth**, an acclaimed German Brewmaster and the new Head Brewer of the microbrewery chain Ironhill India, to learn more about beer and brewing

Spirit of Hyderabad

WHAT'S THE FIRST THING ONE SHOULD NOTICE WHILE HAVING A BEER?

Look at the glass of beer against the light to check the clarity and haziness, and then smell it for the aroma. Then take a big sip of it to feel the maltiness, and the mouth feel of the beer to have a full experience of the beer.

WHAT MUSIC DO YOU USUALLY LISTEN TO WHILE BREWING?

Electronic music, which keeps me pumped with energy while I'm working.

HYDERABADI BIRYANI IS RICH AND SPICY. WHICH IRONHILL BEER WOULD YOU PAIR IT WITH?

The Lager, as it's more carbonated, and complements the flavorful dish well.

WHAT ARE THE FOOD PAIRINGS YOU RECOMMEND ALONG WITH ANY PARTICULAR IRONHILL BEER?

I'd pair the Belgian beer, which is wheat-based and has orange peels and coriander seeds, with fish or chicken. The Koli Chips famous at Ironhill Hyderabad would be a great pairing, too.

FOR SOMEONE NEW TO CRAFT BEER, WHERE SHOULD THEY START?

If you're a person not used to the bitterness of beer, or have no idea of the taste, then the cider is a great start. It is light and has a sweet taste, and you can move up the scale or try out one of our samplers to find which suits your taste buds best.

WHEN SOMEONE FINISHES AN IRONHILL BEER, WHAT DO YOU HOPE THEY WALK AWAY FEELING?

I hope they walk out happy and satisfied after enjoying a good beer and appreciating the different brews we have that are passionately made to create a great experience. ■ KARTHEEKA

Seafood and Japanese Pizzettes are the new additions at **Whisky Samba**

Global with a touch of Indian



WOW!
Recommends:
Edamame
Black Truffle
Dumplings

Whisky Samba's new menu leans into Indian flavors, while continuing to play with Japanese, pan-Asian, and other global techniques across its dishes. While classics such as Signature Dal Whisky continue to feature in the menu, there are new entrants such as the Aloo Avocado Chaat and Japanese Pizzettes (baby pizzas, but more flavorful and with more greens than the usual ones).

SEAFOOD TAKES CENTER STAGE

Seafood emerges as a key component of the new menu with additions such as Tandoori Salmon Tikka, Prawn Dynamite and Singapore Soft Shell Crab. We loved the fact that the focus is on clean flavors and restrained use of spice. For the vegetarians, there is Tandoori Avocado with Jamun Hummus and Edamame Black Truffle Dumplings, adding contrast and variety. The latter's nutty and umami flavors went well with the spirits. There are also healthier grilled options such as Mutton Seekh Kebab and Murgh Aftabi Boti.

PAIR IT WITH CLASSICS

The new menu is paired with a curated selection of signature cocktails including Whisky Samba Ayahuasca Sour, Hyderabad x Manhattan, Jane's Crush, Malta Picante, Matcha Mia, Mr. Spice and Nice, and the house favourite Whisky Samba Sour. ■ MANJU

Night out for two: Rs 2,500 with alcohol

Gate 3, Salarpuria Sattva Knowledge City,
HI-TEC City
Tel: 88860 11553
Timings: Sunday to Thursday: 12 pm to 12 am; Friday and Saturday: 12 pm to 1 am



When comfort knows no borders, love travels far. Global modular concepts arrive home, shaped into interiors that feel deeply personal—crafted for moments of closeness, quiet indulgence and everyday ease.

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Single, Taken or Talking to AI

DATING, DESIRE AND DIGITAL INTIMACY IN A YEAR WHERE LOVE REFUSES TO FIT INTO ONE BOX. WOW!'s Valentine's Day special takes a fresh look at love, relationships and AI-assisted romance tools

By Manju Latha Kalanidhi





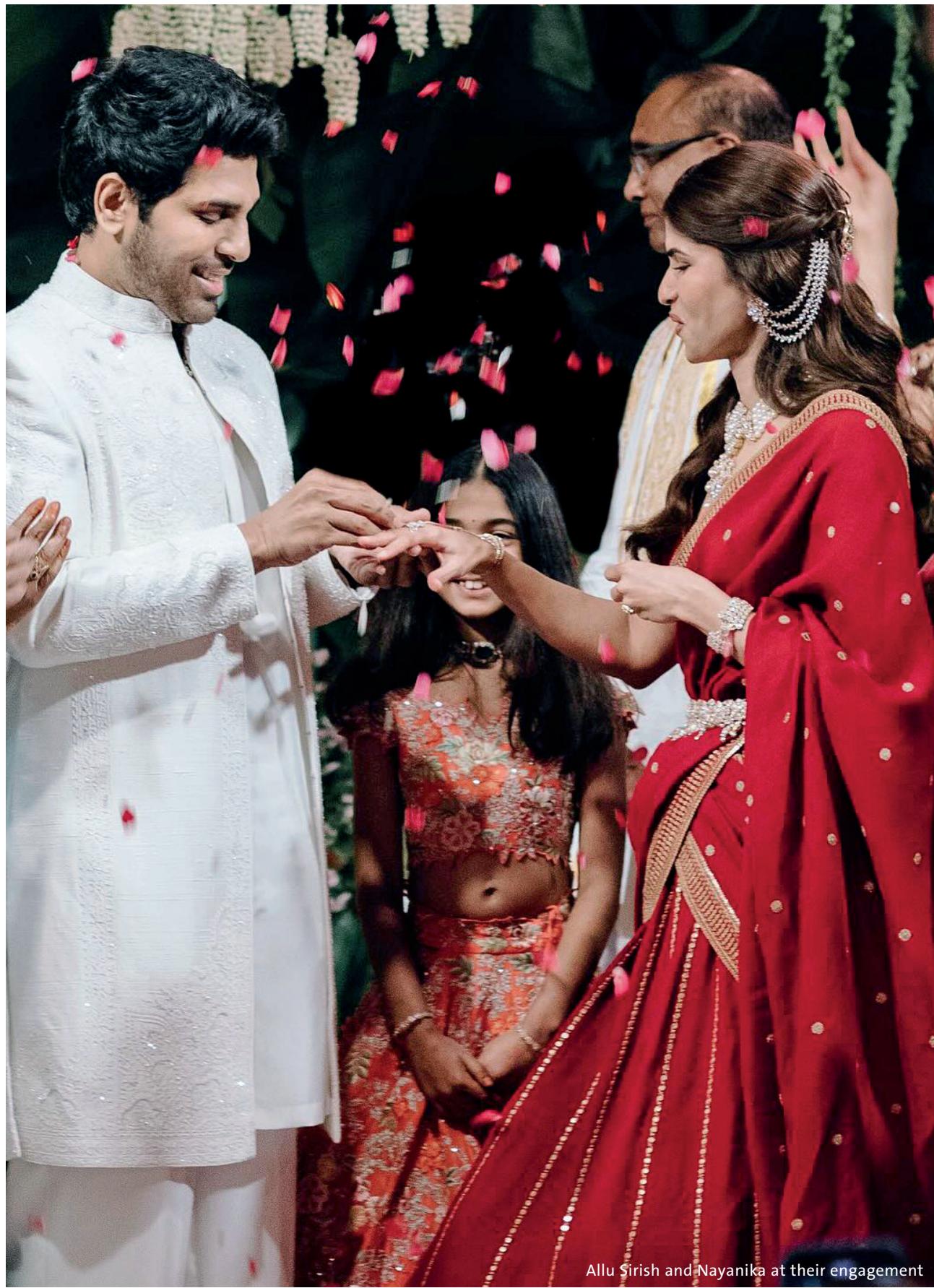
Love in 2026 is fluid, layered, and complex. We crave connection, yet guard our independence fiercely. We swipe, ghost, commit, un-commit, and start again – sometimes all in the same week. From celebrity romances dissected frame by frame on social media – think the hyper-visible love lives of stars like Taylor Swift, to quieter, more intentional partnerships emerging off-camera, relationships today are as performative as they are personal. Love is in the air, with Valentine's Day talk all around, rumors of celeb couples (actors Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna and Dhanush and Mrunal Thakur) tying the knot; and others announcing their divorce after 25 years of being married. Looks like 2026 has the space for every permutation and combination.

The dating scene has splintered into many lanes: casual dating, intentional dating, hooking up with clarity, and even “dating to marry” apps that promise filters for values, not just looks. There’s even speed dating at get-together events for singles where you

chat with someone for a few minutes, then exchange numbers if you click. If not, you move on to the next table! Commitment is no longer rushed, but neither is loneliness accepted. In this evolving landscape, a surprising new companion has entered the dialogue –literally. A growing number of singles are turning to ChatGPT as an emotional sounding board, confidant, or even an imagined partner, finding comfort in conversations without judgment, pressure, or heartbreak.

Is it escapism, experimentation, or emotional self-preservation? Maybe all three.

At WOW!, we track these shifting patterns closely – studying trends, listening to real-life voices, and decoding how love, intimacy, and connection are being redefined in a world where algorithms coexist with aching hearts. Because if there’s one thing that hasn’t changed, it’s this: the need to be seen, heard, and chosen – whether by a person, a screen, or something in between.



Allu Sirish and Nayanika at their engagement

COUPLE UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Actor **Allu Sirish** talks about his dating app days, finding love IRL and saying yes to his fiancée **Nayanika**

“I did discuss my love life with ChatGPT”

Tollywood actor Allu Sirish and his fiancée Nayanika have been under the spotlight ever since romantic photos of Sirish's dreamy proposal in Paris went viral in October. The couple is now set to tie the knot in March. WOW! talks to the actor to find out his thoughts about love in the times of AI!

“With time, things fell in place, I felt aligned with her and we decided to get married. I said yes when I felt the alignment”

– Allu Sirish

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NAYANIKA HAS BEEN WIDELY ADMIRE. WHAT MADE YOU SAY YES?

Nayanika and I met for the first time at my cousin Varun and Lavanya's party hosted by actor Nithiin Reddy and his wife Shalini Kandukuri. We were introduced casually and there was no pressure to impress each other. Our connection did not feel forced, but organic and natural. We started dating, but not really with the idea of getting married, rather to get to know each other. Still no pressure! With time, things fell in place, I felt aligned with her and we decided to get married. I said yes when I felt the alignment.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE DATING APP SCENARIO? HAVE YOU EVER TRIED IT?

I was absolutely on dating apps and met interesting people, but it wasn't enough to translate into a relationship. Sometimes fireworks happen, sometimes they don't. I think I'm old-fashioned. Dating apps are good windows to meet people, but dating can be very physical (as we swipe right based on their photograph) and not always enough to turn into a relationship.

FOR SOMEONE ABOUT TO PROPOSE, WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE GREEN FLAGS THEY SHOULD LOOK FOR?

Green flags depend on whether you're dating or thinking of marriage – they're different. When it comes to marriage, conversations around career plans, children, finances, where to live, views on living with parents, and values become important. While dating, these things don't matter much to me, but when it escalates to marriage, it does.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF PEOPLE FORMING EMOTIONAL BONDS THROUGH AI CHATS OR IMAGINARY PARTNERS?

To each their own! My partner and I have discussed this. Surprisingly, I did discuss my love life with ChatGPT. Every minute, you can't talk to your parents, friends or siblings. ChatGPT is designed like a counsellor, and I felt it helped me, especially during conflicts. At a basic level, it helps. It's

fine to take advice, but you still need to use your brain. It's like having a therapist available on call, but it should never override human connection.

YOUR TAKE ON THE IDEA OF CELEBRATING VALENTINE'S DAY?

I love it. A lot of couples don't remember their anniversaries, but February 14 reminds us of love in our lives. It is cute and romantic. It becomes a combined global, collective experience – love is in the air.

IF YOU AND NAYANIKA WERE TO ACT IN A LOVE STORY IN TELUGU CINEMA, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I want our love story to be worth turning into a film, not the other way around.

WHAT ARE THE WEDDING PLANS?

The wedding is on March 6 and we will follow all the Telugu customs. It's the last wedding in the Allu family. Nayanika's father passed away 13 years ago and her sister got married 14 years ago. So this wedding is special as it's happening after more than a decade. We would have preferred a 30-person intimate farmhouse wedding, but we are close knit families. So it will still be a wedding with over 100 people followed by a big, fat reception.



COUPLE CORNER

Bollywood actor **Prateik Babbar** and his actor wife **Priya Banerjee**, about navigating love and life

“You’ve got to have each other’s back at all times”

HOW DID YOU TWO MEET? WAS IT AT WORK, COMMON FRIENDS OR DATING APPS?

We connected on Instagram as we had many common friends. We followed each other and got talking. Prateik was going through a separation and I had recently called off my engagement in Canada, and the timing just happened to be right. We met and we hit it off.

YOUR THOUGHTS ON DATING APPS AND AI APPS TO GENERATE FLIRTY TEXTS, ETC.:

We have been lucky to find each other in real life, so neither of us have been on a dating app.

TWO RED FLAGS THAT ONE SHOULD SPOT IN A RELATIONSHIP:

One is any kind of secrecy. A marriage should have 100% transparency and honesty. Second, not respecting or standing up for your partner in difficult situations. You’ve got to have each other’s back at all times.

THINGS YOU DID IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP THAT WORKED OUT FOR YOU:

We had the most uncomfortable conversations, stayed honest and made up super quick when we hit a hurdle. Communication is the key to any healthy relationship. Also, a strong bond of friendship plays a key role. We often joke around and laugh about the fact that we are literally each other’s only best friend.



“We had the most uncomfortable conversations, stayed honest and made up super quick when we hit a hurdle. Communication is the key to any healthy relationship” – Priya Banerjee

REAL LIFE ADVICE

Celebrity photographer **Ishaan Giri** about how balance is vital in a marriage

“Preserving love means choosing understanding, respect and commitment”



HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR WIFE AND WHAT MADE YOU SAY YES?

My wife Architha and I met through an arranged marriage setup. We spent time getting to know each other through conversations before making the decision. What mattered most to me was compatibility, mutual respect, and being on the same page about values and life goals.

AS A TOP PHOTOGRAPHER IN THE COUNTRY, LIFE MUST BE HECTIC. HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN A WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

My work often involves long hours and travel, so balance is something I consciously work on. I stay connected when I'm away and make it a point to spend quality time together whenever I'm back; whether that's family time, small celebrations, or simply being present.

FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE, CAN YOU TELL ME THE RED AND GREEN FLAGS PARTNERS MUST NOTICE IN EACH OTHER AND FIX OR WORK ON IT ACCORDINGLY?

A major red flag, in my experience, is lack of communication or respect. Green flags include emotional maturity, honesty, and the willingness to grow together. No relationship is perfect, but many things can be worked on if both partners are open and supportive. Love is important and deserves effort, patience, and care. In a fast-paced world, preserving love means choosing understanding, respect, and commitment every day.



MILLENNIAL LOVE

India's top playback singer, **Sid Sriram**, on why he believes in old school love

“Ready for my partner”

I'm very much single at the moment – no girlfriend on the scene. The last decade of my life has been a deep dive into music, which has taken up most of my time and focus. While dating apps are how many people my age meet partners today, I'm pretty old-school. I'd love to meet someone organically, in real life, build a genuine connection, and eventually have a family. I'm absolutely ready to make time and space for the right person when she comes along.

LATE BLOOMERS IN LOVE

Actors **Naresh** and **Pavitra** found love late in their lives but are grateful for it

“Real love doesn't follow a timeline”

Actor Naresh, 63, married thrice before he got married to his longtime partner and actor, Pavitra Lokesh, 44, who was also married twice. They believe they finally found true love. “For me, remarriage was never about age or the stage of life I was in; it was about love, understanding and emotional readiness. Real love doesn't follow a timeline – it happens when two people are in the right space to choose each other. Our journey came later in life because that's when we were truly ready, not because of the number of years behind us. Marriage, to me, is a union of hearts – the physical act of getting married doesn't define a relationship; the connection, commitment, and understanding between two people do,” says actor Naresh. The couple were last seen in a movie titled *Malli Pelli* starring them in a role that mimicked their real-life relationship. He says his family is complete with their three children from their previous marriages.





ORHAN YALMAN OKAN WITH HIS WIFE ASLIHAN OZMEN OKAN

Orhan Yalman Okan, Consul General of the Republic of Türkiye in Hyderabad, and his wife **Aslihan Ozmen Okan** share the secret to their marital bliss

“Happy wife, happy life”

HOW LONG HAVE YOU AND MRS ASLIHAN BEEN MARRIED? CAN YOU TELL US BRIEFLY WHERE YOU BOTH MET?

Aslihan and I have been happily married for 21 years and we have two children. We both hail from the beautiful city of Izmir, Türkiye. We met through a common friend in Izmir. At the time, I was residing in Ankara, the capital, but from time to time, returned to my hometown to visit my ailing father. During one of my trips back to Izmir, I met Aslihan by chance, and fell in love with her at first sight. Although frankly speaking, she did not feel the same way immediately. So, I came up with a plan, and spent an entire year conquering her heart. It was a challenge, but entirely worth it.

The amusing part of our story, however, was the resistance from her parents. They had hoped their daughter would marry someone from the same hometown so they could remain close to her. Nonetheless, a diplomat son-in-law, with a life abroad, definitely did not fit that plan. Fortunately, I owe a great deal to my wife, as she managed to convince her parents with grace and determination, without my needing to intervene. That's how our story found its happy ending.

“I am forever grateful to my wife in this regard, as she truly accepted and infused the responsibility of the representation required by profession from the very beginning”

– Orhan Yalman Okan

LOOKING BACK, HOW DO YOU REMEMBER LOVE IN YOUR EARLY YEARS TOGETHER, AND HOW DO YOU SEE RELATIONSHIPS IN 2026, SHAPED BY CONNECTIVITY, DATING APPS, AND EVEN AI-ASSISTED COMMUNICATION?

Once we got married, we noticed a funny and bitter reality. I come from a father-dominated family, while Aslihan grew up in a mother-dominated one. Hence, many of the dynamics we brought from our households surprised one another, naturally leading to what I like to call a funny and friendly “battle” at home: who would be the boss? Believe me, it was a challenging process for me. At the end of the day, I lost the battle. You know why? Because God blessed us with two daughters in full support of her. Now I am the minority at home, serving the ladies.

We overcame our differences with love, tolerance, and self-sacrifice, creating a space for our shared values. If you strike two stones together, one is bound to break. But if you strike a stone against the ground, nothing breaks. When I was the stone, Aslihan became the ground. When she was the stone, I became the ground. That's what love does to people.

Unfortunately, today if there is material wealth, there is happiness. Couples no longer tolerate each other. Of course, if there is genuine incompatibility, people should not be forced to remain together, and a divorce may be the right decision. No one is obligated to stay in an unhealthy relationship. However, divorces should not be normalized either. Preserving the family should always be a priority. Infidelity is also one of the problems of this age, unfortunately. Over the past 50 years, while the global environment has emphasized freedom in many areas, sexual freedom has also been encouraged. For the sake of future generations, we must embrace the institution of the family wholeheartedly.

IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

Twenty-one years of marriage has taught me this: Happy wife, happy life. In other words, I learned that I need to focus on my wife's happiness and needs as much as my own. A person who finds peace and satisfaction in their own heart does not seek it elsewhere. Therefore, my advice is this: know how to be happy with what you have in your hands, don't be greedy, be content, and don't neglect your partner's needs. That way, neither of you will seek other adventures outside the relationship. Remember that emotions like love, passion, and excitement also need to be nurtured, and sometimes even small gestures and surprises are enough to nurture them.

WITH THE DEMANDS OF DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC LIFE, HOW DO YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE FIND TIME FOR EACH OTHER?

Diplomacy is actually a profession you pursue with your spouse. Because ultimately, you represent your country, your nation and your culture. Therefore, you need to be in the public eye with your spouse and children. I am forever grateful to my wife in this regard, as she truly accepted and infused the responsibility of the representation required by my profession from the very beginning. My children, on the other hand, were simply born into this lifestyle.

My profession is not limited to working in the office or collaborating with relevant individuals and organizations. Organizing social, cultural, and tourism activities is also part of my job. At this point, I must admit that I receive tremendous support from Aslihan. She is even better than me at organizing things. Therefore, in the natural flow of life, we accomplish many milestones, and attend many events together. For that, I am truly grateful.



DATING TRENDS 2026

Dating app **QuackQuack's** latest survey throws light on how Hyderabidis are matching ambition and nostalgic memories etc. before making it official

The Sunset Clause for Dating

Nearly 35% of daters from metros and suburbs are adopting the “sunset clause” in their dating life to ensure that their romantic pursuit does not aimlessly go on for ages. QuackQuack's Founder and CEO, Ravi Mittal, says, “Young daters are doing regular check-ins to see if a match is just not going anywhere and changing things up based on deep introspection; they are looking for compatibility that isn't just values and hobbies. Careers have become a significant factor in their compatibility.”

AMBITION MATCHING

Over 41% of daters in 2026 prioritize career rhythm, ambition matching, and work-life balance while looking for a partner. It isn't about finding a partner in the same field, but one understands the unpredictability that comes with being married to a start-up founder.

RETRO COMPATIBILITY

Millennials above 30 are looking for their future in the past. Three in five millennial daters from Tier one and two cities are seen matching based on shared nostalgia: music from the 90s and early 2000s, pop culture, movies, similar childhood rituals, and having lived through almost identical phases of life growing up.

CHAT AUTOPSY

Three in five daters from Tier one and two cities disclosed revisiting old chats to see where things went wrong or pinpoint the flaw in them for better conversational skills on their next try. This trend is more commonly seen among daters who experienced sudden ghosting, almost-relationships, and unintentional situationships.

THE PLUS ONE PANIC

The end of the year doubles up as the busiest wedding season, creating a slight panic among the singles who are bound to hear the almost ominous, “You are next.” Approximately 27% of women and 31% of men above 26 shared feeling increased dating anxiety during this period. Panic has also led to some form of clarity for many daters.

EMO GOES MAINSTREAM

While couples are exploring physical boundaries within their relationships, they are now also exploring emotional boundaries. Hyderabad is among the cities with the highest levels of emotional involvement. In most cases, couples are not necessarily looking to end their existing relationships; instead, they are looking to fulfil their emotional needs in ways they do not typically define as “infidelity” or “cheating” but rather as “connecting with another person.”

A SPACE FOR FANTASIES

Almost 40% of respondents in both Tier one and two towns have admitted to thinking about someone else they know, while being sexually intimate with their current mate. Hyderabad shows the strongest indication of this trend followed by Mumbai and Indore.

FLIRTING AS EMOTIONAL AIR CONDITIONING

Flirting is being acknowledged as a harmless experience for emotional release. More couples realize that flirting can be an uplifting experience, boosting their self-esteem and creating light-heartedness, not necessarily acting as infidelity.

ONE-NIGHT CURIOSITY GOES URBAN

About 40% of couples in Tier one and two cities reported that they may consider having a “one-night stand”. Even cities that have traditionally been viewed as conservative, like Jaipur and Kochi, have demonstrated an increase in acceptance of these types of encounters.

GIFTING ADVICE

Esshitha Guna, Founder of Andal Gems and Jewels, Jubilee Hills, tells us what kind of gifts are trending

Pink sapphires, rubies and onyx, for V-Day

WHAT JEWELRY STYLES ARE TRENDING RIGHT NOW FOR VALENTINE'S DAY DATES AND GIFTING?

Fine jewelry has evolved from 'occasion-wear only' to effortless everyday-wear. Consumers are now looking for designer and custom-made jewelry that is versatile, dainty and artisanal to dress up their every day or gift a loved one.

WHICH STONES MAKE THE BEST VALENTINE'S GIFTS THIS YEAR AND WHY ARE PEOPLE CHOOSING THEM?

This year the popular choices in stones are natural diamonds combined with gemstones such as pink sapphires, rubies, mother of pearl, onyx and a refreshing blend of more such gemstones that reflects one's personality and style.

ARE COUPLES LEANING TOWARDS EVERY DAY, WEARABLE PIECES OR STATEMENT JEWELRY WHEN GIFTING FOR DATES?

It's a balanced pick in statement pieces as well as custom-made everyday wearable jewelry. Customers are now very creative in designing a stack of their own, layering both types of jewelry in their own style and sizes either to gift themselves or a loved one.

IF SOMEONE IS BUYING JEWELRY FOR A FIRST VALENTINE'S TOGETHER, WHAT'S A SAFE YET THOUGHTFUL PICK?

A jewel that can effortlessly transition from day to night is a win, Andal's latest Candy collection is all about everyday luxury with a variety of gemstones, metal tones and sizes to pick from.



REAL-TIONSHIP ADVICE

Young couples share how they met and came together in these days of dating apps and AI

Swiped Right, Stayed Real

When Ananya Rao and Krishna Karthik Reddy matched on a dating app, it was supposed to be a casual coffee in Jubilee Hills, nothing more. Two hours, three filter coffees, and one shared obsession with late-night pani puri later, they forgot to check their phones again. Ananya, a UX designer, liked how Karthik didn't pretend to be cooler than he was. Karthik, a product manager, loved that Ananya laughed mid-sentence and owned it. Dates turned into long drives on the ORR, then meeting friends, then quietly planning weekends together. "We still joke that the algorithm did its job, but the effort is all ours."

BAR-HOPPED INTO LOVE

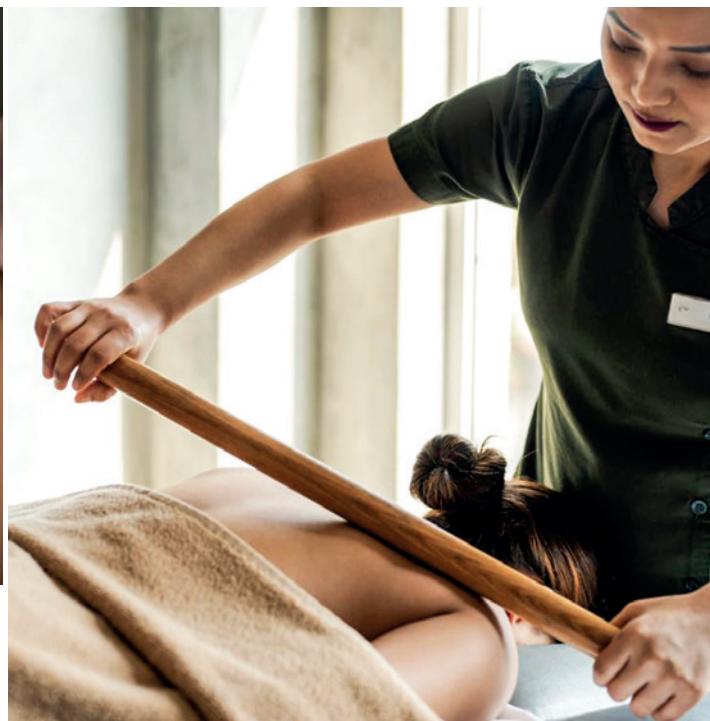
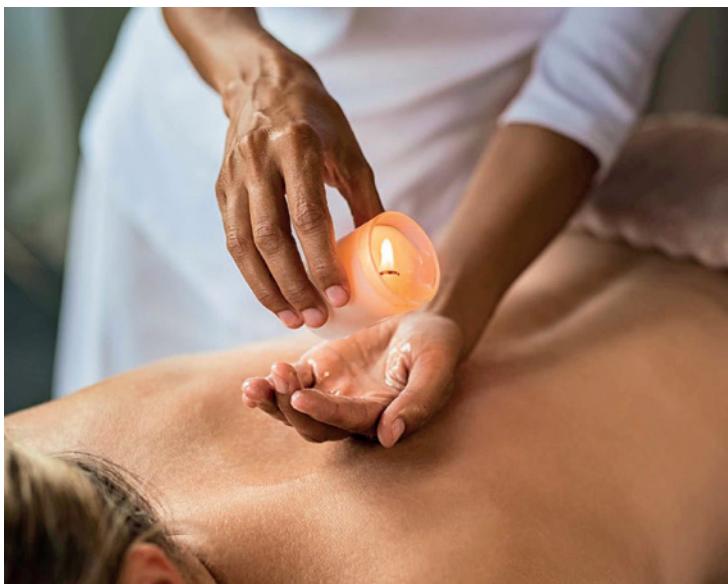
Rohit Goud and Sravani Bharadwaj met on a Saturday night while bar-hopping in Gachibowli with separate friend groups and identical "just one drink" plans. "She spilled her cocktail, said sorry and an hour later, we were debating the best Irani chai in Hyderabad like old friends. Numbers were exchanged by midnight and things started rolling," says Rohit. What started as flirting over loud music turned into gym texts, morning selfies and weekend Netflixing. "They say it wasn't destiny or drunken courage, just being open at the right moment. Sometimes, love really does walk in between bars," says Sravani. The duo plan to get married in October this year after Rohit launches his tech start-up in June.

EXPERT TALK

A psychologist's take on the new age support system to make love happen

AI tools will disappear in a year

"Imaginary partners and AI companions are a phase, much like horoscope matchmaking or quiz apps that once promised to decode love. They offer temporary comfort, but human connection – with all its unpredictability – is something technology can never replace, and people eventually return to the real thing," says Dr Koushiki Ram, a relationship counsellor and psychologist in Hyderabad.



At **Sashtra Wellness Spa**, warmth takes the lead, with hot stones and bamboo used to slowly draw the body into a state of deep calm

HOT MASSAGES WE LOVE

Heat has a way of cutting through fatigue quite like nothing else does. At the newly-opened **Sashtra Wellness Spa**, tucked inside the Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC, warmth becomes the core of massage techniques. Here's a first-hand experience of these massages that rely on hot stone, bamboo and a wand to rejuvenate us.

HOT STONE MASSAGE

WHAT'S IT ABOUT:

Smooth, flat and round heated basalt stones are placed and glided over the body to allow warmth to seep deep into stiff muscles. The heat improves circulation, softens tight areas and gently coaxes the nervous system into slowing down.

THE EXPERIENCE:

This 90-minute massage unfolds at an unhurried pace. The first sensation is the contrast – hot, flat stones moving steadily across the back, their weight and warmth sinking in far deeper than hands alone. Midway through, while lying prone, you're asked to hold a warm stone in each palm and lie still. Soon after, half a dozen stones are placed along the spine, and for a few quiet minutes, a wave of bliss passes through the spine, the high point of

the massage, where the body fully gives in. The warmth feels expansive rather than intense, and when the stones are finally lifted, the muscles feel loose, almost melted.

IMPACT:

A deep sense of physical relaxation, a noticeably quieter mind, and a lingering calm that stays well beyond the session.

HOT BAMBOO MASSAGE

WHAT'S IT ABOUT:

Gently warmed bamboo rollers are used in rhythmic movements to work deeper into muscles without sharp pressure. The natural firmness of bamboo helps release tension, improve circulation and support lymphatic drainage. Ideal for those into sports and athletics and have any nagging aches in their body.

IMPACT:

The body feels lighter and more mobile, with a subtle boost in energy paired with lasting relaxation. This massage is more for curative rather than relaxing purposes.

KANSA WAND THERAPY

WHAT'S IT ABOUT:

Using a traditional metal alloy wand, this

therapy focuses on balancing the body's energies. The warmed-up wand is glided across the body or face to stimulate key points and encourage circulation. Let the therapist know about the pressure you can take for best results.

IMPACT:

The effect is grounding rather than dramatic – leaving the mind centered, the body relaxed, and the senses gently reset.

HOT CANDLE MASSAGE

WHAT'S IT ABOUT:

A specially formulated massage candle is warmed and poured as oil, combining heat with hydration. Slow, flowing strokes ease muscular tension while aromatic botanicals quietly engage the senses. The sensation is novel and deeply relaxing.

IMPACT:

A cocooning, comforting experience that leaves the skin nourished and the body deeply at ease. ■ MANJU

Price: Rs 5,500 for 90 minutes

Sashtra Wellness Spa, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC, HITEC City
Tel: 95703 45678
Timings: 8 am to 10 pm

Nitya Naresh, who conducts group and one-on-one healing sessions explains why the mind understands, but the body holds on

What Psychodrama Feels Like



Over the last few years, conversations around mental health have moved beyond stress and burnout to address a deeper, less visible reality: psychodrama. While the term is used more frequently today, its meaning – and its impact – is often misunderstood.

Psychodrama refers to the psychological and emotional imprint left behind when an experience overwhelms a person's ability to cope. These experiences are not always extreme or dramatic. They may include childhood emotional neglect, repeated invalidation, bullying, unsafe relationships, prolonged stress, or sudden loss. What defines trauma is not the event itself, but how the nervous system absorbs and stores it. "Trauma is not about what happened," says Hyderabad-based creative art therapist Nitya Naresh. "It's about what the mind and body learned they had to do to survive."

WHY DOESN'T THE PAIN FADE WITH TIME?

Unlike everyday stress, trauma does

not dissolve with time. It often settles into the body as heightened alertness, emotional numbness, anxiety, anger, or difficulty forming safe relationships. Many people can explain their pain rationally, yet continue to feel stuck.

"People often say, 'I know why I feel this way, but it hasn't changed anything,'" she explains. "That's because pain doesn't live only in thought – it lives in sensation, memory and emotional response."

"It doesn't live only in thought – it lives in sensation, memory and emotional response"
– Nitya Naresh

IS TALKING ENOUGH TO HEAL?

This is why mental health practitioners are increasingly recognizing the limits of talk-based therapy while working with psychodrama. Though insight and conversation are important, trauma

frequently operates beneath conscious language. Healing therefore may require therapeutic approaches that engage experience, not just explanation.

WHAT DOES THE THERAPY ACTUALLY INVOLVE?

Trauma-informed practices often include structured role exploration, guided movement, visual expression, and body awareness. These methods allow individuals to safely encounter parts of themselves shaped by past experiences – fear, anger, withdrawal, hyper-responsibility – and understand the protective role they once played.

"What we label as 'problem behaviors' are often intelligent survival strategies that no longer serve us," Nitya says.

WHY DOES GROUP HEALING MATTER?

Group-based trauma work can also play a significant role. Being witnessed without judgement helps reduce shame – one of trauma's most enduring effects. Shared experiences create a sense of safety, normalization and belonging.

"Healing accelerates when people realize they are not broken or alone," she adds. "Being seen and held by others is deeply regulating."

DOES HEALING REQUIRE RELIVING THE PAIN?

Crucially, trauma-informed therapy does not push people to relive painful experiences. Safety, consent and pacing come first. The aim is not to erase the past, but to transform one's relationship with it.

"Trauma work isn't about reopening wounds," Nitya says. "It's about creating enough safety to finally let the body stand down."

In a post-pandemic world marked by emotional fatigue, recognizing psychodrama – and responding to it with care rather than judgement – may be one of the most important shifts in contemporary mental healthcare.

■ MANJU

@nityanaresh on Instagram

WOW! chats with the women behind the **Wellness Fair**, which offered experiences ranging from sensory tastings to movement-led practices

Holistic Good Health



Arriving hot on the heels of its success in Bengaluru, the **Wellness Fair** made its way to Hyderabad last month, dedicating three days to the exploration of health and well-being. Enlightening minds with its approach to food, movement, breath, and beauty, the fair brought together experts in the field of wellness for conversations, practices, and experiences grounded in nourishment, curiosity, and transparency.

Held at Foodstories, Banjara Hills, and curated in collaboration with Mudita Tribe, founded by Miheeka Daggubati, the Wellness Fair is built upon a shared belief that holistic wellbeing is not achieved through extremes or trends, but through small, consistent choices made every day.

“Be mindful of where you get your ingredients from and be aware of what is actually in them; try to eat fresh as much as possible; and be present when you eat” – Miheeka Daggubati

“We are very excited to see what people take away from this fair. The idea was to introduce the fair in the beginning of the year so that people can start 2026 with the right intention and practice it

throughout the year,” shares Aakansha Singhal, Brand Manager of Foodstories.

WOW! had a chat with Miheeka and Aakansha at the event, both of whom offer deeper insight into their collaborative effort.

WHAT DOES WELLNESS MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY?

Miheeka: Wellness is an overall holistic approach to life, whether it is physical, mental, emotional, professional, or personal. Only when you tick all these boxes does it all come together.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TOGETHER TO ESTABLISH THE WELLNESS FAIR?

Aakansha: The motive was to build a lot more awareness about mental health, right food practices, and healthy habits in general. The experiences both the teams have put together are easy ones which you can follow in your daily life with a busy schedule.

WHAT HAS THE RESPONSE BEEN LIKE SO FAR?

Miheeka: It has been very interesting to see what different people are connecting to. When people respond to what you’re excited about in a positive manner, it doubles the excitement; it makes you think that it’s not just you and that people are reciprocating, which is lovely.

“The motive was to build a lot more awareness about mental health, right food practices, and healthy habits” – Aakansha Singhal

WHAT ARE A FEW SMALL, CONSISTENT CHOICES MADE EVERY DAY THAT CAN LEAD TO HOLISTIC WELLNESS?

Miheeka: Be mindful of where you get your ingredients from and be aware of what is actually in them; try to eat fresh as much as possible; and be present when you eat. We have gotten into this habit of scrolling on our phones. You can put it aside; it’s just 10-15 minutes of your time. These small choices that you make through the day can go a long way.

HOW CAN ONE INculcate DISCIPLINE IN THE AGE OF INSTANT GRATIFICATION?

Miheeka: I think wellness is a personal journey, and you come to it when you are ready. Until that realization and shift come from within, you won’t be able to sustain it. I also think you find what works for you. And if you do it long enough, it becomes a habit.

Aakansha: Start small, because if you overload your system, you will get overwhelmed on day one. If you create big goals for yourself, it could become a task in your head. So, start small, do it consistently for a while, and increase the pace. ■ IPSHITA



MIHEEKA DAGGUBATI & AAKANSHA SINGHAL

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7

Two young architects, **Amulya Gullapalli** and **Prashanthi Narapasetty**, designed this house with color, nature-inspired motifs, tactile textures and rooted materials to create symmetry in perfect balance

7 REASONS TO LOVE THE HOUSE OF WHIMSICAL WHISPERS

1 WHERE LOCATION BALANCES HISTORY AND URBAN ENERGY

Located between the historic Golconda citadel and the bustle of Jubilee Hills, this apartment finds itself at a unique crossroads of old and new Hyderabad. Aptly named the 'House of Whimsical Whispers', the home mirrors its setting: quiet, layered and introspective, yet firmly rooted in the city.

2 DESIGNED AS AN URBAN RETREAT FOR MODERN LIVING

Designed by Amulya Gullapalli and Prashanthi Narapasetty of Design Dialogue for Kavya Reddy, the home was conceived as an urban haven. The edupreneur divides her time between her educational institutes and working remotely from home. This apartment represents a meaningful pause in their journey, a thoughtfully designed city home before their long-cherished plan to eventually move to the outskirts of Hyderabad. "The



name reflects the lived experience of the apartment itself: a series of soulful spaces that invite you to slow down, pause and notice the thought and craftsmanship embedded into every corner," says Prashanthi.

3 A SIMPLE, HONEST DESIGN BRIEF

"The couple's brief to us was clear: the home should be full of character, highly functional and, above all, feel good to live in," say Amulya and Prashanthi. This clarity, they reiterate, reflects in the design approach. Color, nature-inspired motifs, tactile textures and rooted materials act as connective threads, weaving the apartment together cohesively without visual clutter or excess.

4 ANCHORED BY MATERIALS

The architect duo's favorite area is the entrance that opens into a sun-drenched foyer on the 18th floor, where a magnolia motif appears on the home's plaque; it is a recurring feature in the house. The drawing room is defined



FACT SHEET

Project Name: The House of Whimsical Whispers

Location: Shaikpet

Interior Design Firm: Design Dialogue

Principal Designers: Amulya Gullapalli and Prashanthi Narapasetty

Design Team: Nikhila Gollapudi and Rohit Chaudhary

Photography: Nayan Soni

Project Styling: Fymin Naif and Nimutha Harith



by a book-matched Bianco Acropolis marble screen. A monochrome palette of beige, black, white and soft gold flows through the space. Ivory Chesterfield sofas rest on a carpet from Jaipur Rugs, paired with a pedestal coffee table topped with Lemurian blue granite. "Sandstone wall panels etched with flowing patterns add texture, while abstract artwork introduces color with restraint," they reveal.

ELEVATED TWILIGHT ZONE

5 Skirting the western edge of the apartment, the living and dining areas merge into one long, continuous space. "This is where the home truly comes alive, especially at twilight, when the last rays of sunlight flood in. It is also where they spend most of their time with family and friends," says



ARCHITECTS AMULYA GULLAPALLI AND PRASHANTHI NARAPASETTY

"Designed in monochromes with metallic accents, it shifts effortlessly between a quiet coffee corner and an intimate gathering space" – Amulya

"This is where the home truly comes alive, especially at twilight, when the last rays of sunlight flood in" – Prashanthi

Prashanthi. The designers addressed an earlier challenge here: a ceiling cluttered with criss-crossing structural beams. Replacing it with a clean, rectilinear ceiling instantly amplified the sense of scale and openness, allowing the space to breathe.

MONOCHROMES WITH METALLIC ACCENTS

6 Textured wall finishes extend into the living area. Furniture in emerald green, tan and warm blues adds depth without overpowering the palette. We love the nature-inspired dragonfly-shaped hardware on the TV console. Custom partition systems made of brass, tinted glass and textured veneer frame a personal gallery of family photographs. The hero of the house is the balcony which offers sweeping city views and west-facing sunsets. "Designed in monochromes with metallic accents, it shifts effortlessly between a quiet coffee corner and an intimate gathering space," adds Amulya.

MAGNOLIA MURALS AND MORE

7 Deeper into the plan, the dining area is anchored by a magnolia mural by artist Mandakini Rao, reinforcing nature as a recurring design influence. A square onyx dining table on a slatted brass base and shell-like pendant lights complete the setting. The kitchen continues the neutral palette, with blue onyx porcelain surfaces flowing from walls to countertops, accented with black and gold. A small breakfast counter creates a seamless link to the dining space. The pooja room, tucked behind fluted glass veneer doors, reveals a serene interior with Sabyasachi wallpaper and sandstone arches inspired by Deccan temple architecture.

In the private quarters, the primary bedroom channels a tropical escape with jungle-themed wallpaper, green-stained veneer and brass inlays. A calm, light-filled home office completes the layout, thoughtfully designed to support the couple's work-from-home routine. ■ MANJU





How food stylist **Eeshaan Kashyap** turns tableware into an immersive visual experience in his debut show *Mise-en-scène*

A Table Transformed to Art

PLAY, first presented last year at The Stands in Mumbai, was an immersive presentation where objects, food, and spatial design came together like a live composition. Building on that idea, tablescape specialist and food stylist Eeshaan Kashyap now brings *Mise-en-scène* to Hyderabad. The show marks the city's first encounter with his evolving practice and shifts the focus from performance to mood.

FOOD ARTIST AT WORK

Eeshaan works across food, design, and experience-making. Trained as a chef, he approaches plating, objects, and environments with the same attention and intent. His tablescape line extends this thinking beyond the dining table, translating culinary instincts into ceramics, metal, and textile-based forms that sit somewhere between functional and expressive.

"I am fascinated by the moment where imagination becomes physical, when something dreamlike slips into the everyday," says Eeshaan. "These objects are meant to be used, but also to slow you down, to make you more

aware of how you see, touch, and arrange your world."

"These objects are meant to be used, but also to slow you down, to make you more aware of how you see, touch, and arrange your world" –
Eeshaan Kashyap

OBJECTS SHAPED BY IMAGINATION

At *Mise-en-scène*, Eeshaan presents one-off pieces in ceramic, brass, resin, stoneware, cloth, and metal. Expect woven metal baskets, graphic plates, hand-shaped thalis, vases, candle stands and cutlery. Rooted in his interest in how we gather and eat, the objects feel familiar yet slightly offbeat, inviting both use and curiosity.

MATERIAL AS EXPERIMENT

One of the key ideas driving the show is metal behaving like textile. "I am applying techniques such as bandhani-



style, tie-dye, kantha-inspired stitching, knitting, and loom weaving to brass, copper, steel wire, and layered metal sheets," he explains. These experiments appear as wall panels and sculptural forms that play with ideas of weight, softness, and surface.

SPACES THROUGH COLOR

The exhibition unfolds through a series of rooms, each guided by a distinct color palette. Neon pinks and golds lead the way, followed by earthy browns and copper glazes, luminous yellows, and finally deep ultramarine blues. Each space has its own rhythm, encouraging viewers to pause and take it in. Developed with creative strategist Maithili Ahluwalia, the show is brought to Hyderabad by art curator Supraja Rao and entrepreneur Nitya Reddy. ■ MANJU

The show will be held on February 27 and 28.

Venue: Kadari Art Gallery, Plot No. 97/A, Road No. 14, near Chiranjeevi Blood Bank, Jubilee Hills

Timings: 11 am to 7 pm

Details: @eeshaan_kas on Instagram



How storyteller **Neelima Penumarthy** uses audiobooks and young narrators to retell big ideas

Reimagining Indian Stories to be Heard

Neelima Penumarthy's work today sits at an intersection of storytelling, sound and culture. Her most widely recognized project, **The Story Hour**, has earned international attention for its distinctive audio-led approach, particularly a one-hour long *Ramayana* audiobook narrated by teenage voices. Recorded by her sons, the audiobook stood out for its unpolished honesty rather than studio finesse. "It didn't sound rehearsed," she says. "That sincerity struck a chord." The work went on to receive recognition in the UK and was later featured on international airline in-flight playlists, even being listed among the top 10 audiobooks of 2017.

AUDIO NOTES

Her recent appearance at the Avakai Festival 2026 by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism held in January in Vijayawada further reaffirmed her growing connect with audiences back home. Her next project was an audio book titled *A brief history of Indian independence from the Mughals to the Mahatma*. "Guess what? That book again got selected in British Airways for their in-flight entertainment, and none other than Dr Shashi Tharoor reviewed it as a must-listen," she adds. Later, she even had it translated into Hindi and Telugu. During her visits to Hyderabad, Neelima has worked with schools, including visually impaired children, producing audiobooks in English, Hindi and Telugu.

CONNECTING CULTURES

Hyderabad is where Neelima's story begins and where it repeatedly returns. Born and raised in the city, she moved to the UK in the mid-1990s but has continued to treat Hyderabad as one of her two homes. The seeds of her storytelling practice were sown while raising children outside India. Frustrated by English retellings of Indian epics that felt either too dense or overly simplified, she challenged her sons to write their own versions. That experiment eventually became the foundation of **The Story Hour**, which she describes as a project connecting cultures between India and the UK since 2016.

SIMPLIFYING LANGUAGE

"My aim is to introduce complex topics in an easier way. It could be a book on Telugu proverbs or one where I explain Sanskrit shlokas in a simpler, contemporary language to the tweens and teens or today," she says. Neelima is open to conducting storytelling and audiobook workshops at schools, colleges and cultural spaces. ■ MANJU

Details: [@storyhourglobal](#)

French choreographer and performer, **Gilles Chuyen**, talks about performing *Bollywood Love Story: A Musical*, in India for the first time at Avakai 2026; and falling in love with Indian music and dance

"Dance was always my language"

WHAT WAS IT LIKE, PERFORMING THE BOLLYWOOD MUSICAL IN INDIA, FINALLY?

This year marked a first for me. After performing *Bollywood Love Story: A Musical* over 300 times across 16 countries, I finally brought it to India. Standing on an Indian stage felt emotional and surreal. In many ways, this is where the journey began, even if it took decades to arrive here.

TELL US ABOUT INDIA'S INFLUENCE ON YOUR CRAFT.

I hail from France and trained formally in the performing arts, specializing in ballet and modern jazz. Dance was always my language, but I was equally drawn to questions of meaning and spirituality. As part of my final year at university, I chose to work with the French Embassy in Delhi. That decision changed my life. I fell in love with India instantly. I am a seeker, and India felt like the perfect place to blend dance, philosophy and inner exploration.



WHICH INDIAN DANCE FORMS HAVE YOU LEARNT THROUGH YOUR CAREER?

Alongside Western training, I spent two years immersed in Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam, while also working in theater and contemporary dance. I explored garba, bhangra, and countless workshops, slowly understanding how rhythm, emotion, and storytelling live in the Indian body.

HOW DID THE BOLLYWOOD LOVE STORY: A MUSICAL COME ABOUT?

While researching and teaching dance in Delhi, I met Sanjoy K Roy, CEO of Teamwork Arts (that conducted Avakai Festival), through our meditation group. When his theater company received an invitation from the Edinburgh Festival to create a Bollywood musical, he asked if I could choreograph it. I was terrified. I was Western-trained and had never choreographed Bollywood. But I said yes and the rest is history on the stage. The musical has over 500 people working, including 100 dancers on stage performing live for two-and-a-half hours in a colorful and musical setting.

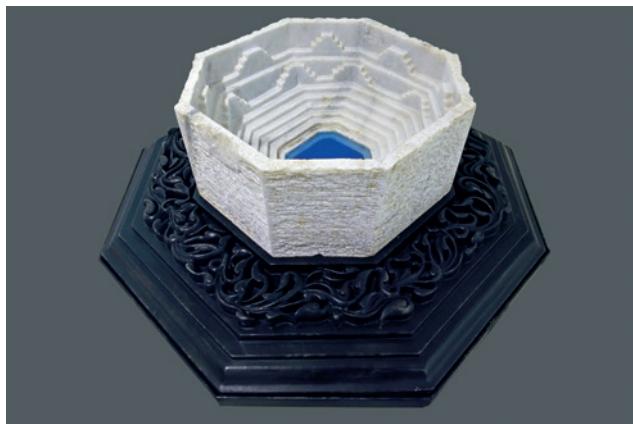
WHAT'S NEXT?

I am currently working on *Devdas* while stepping into a new chapter as a healer and spiritual teacher.

WHEN ARE YOU PERFORMING IN HYDERABAD?

Invite us and we will come and perform. ■ MANJU

Details: [@gilleschuyen](#) on Instagram



A sculpture exhibition throws light on migration and technology influencing how we survive

HERITAGE THROUGH PERSONAL STORIES

What happens when heritage is reimagined, and not as static monuments, but as a living process shaped by memory, adaptation and contemporary practices? Ideal for sparking meaningful discussions in your classrooms? That is what sculpture exhibition **What Remains: Heritage between Memory and the Present**, held at Dhi Contemporary seeks to answer.

SHARED HISTORIES

Featuring artists Manu N, Martand Khosla, Sangam Vankhade, Saruha Kilaru, Sayantan Samanta, and Sewali Deka, the show looks at heritage not as something frozen in the past, but as something that keeps changing with us. "The exhibition brings together works that sit between memory and the present, showing how personal stories, shared histories, and today's social and digital realities constantly reshape what we inherit," says assistant curator Amit Kumar Vishwakarma.

Rather than offering one official version of history, the show embraces fragments, gaps, and forgotten moments, asking what gets remembered and what disappears along the way. It also explores how migration, technology, and environmental changes influence the way traditions survive and evolve.

At its heart, *What Remains* invites viewers to think about their own relationship with the past – and how it continues to shift, adapt, and take new forms in the present. The exhibition also includes a talk with researchers and scholars, a screening of the film, *Dream Your Museum* followed by an online interaction with contemporary visual artist Ohida Khandakar. "We also have a workshop led by one of the participating artists, an exclusive heritage walk and a book reading with the author exploring these themes through the eyes of Hyderabad's heritage," adds Amit.

■ MANJU

The exhibition is on March 5, Dhi Contemporary, Bodhi House, Madhapur.

Tel: 83410 63908



Five artists depict folk legacies through their works

Line of Traditions

Lines of Traditions being held at Sublime Galleria is an evocative group exhibition that brings together five contemporary voices reimagining classical and folk legacies through modern expression.

Curated by Naresh Bollu, the show features works by Masuram Ravikanth, Udaya Lakshmi Chiluveru, D. Jayaprakash, Saraswathi and Naresh himself. He has shaped the exhibition's vision, blending tradition with innovation so that each piece becomes a dialogue between past and present.

Naresh's own artistic practice reflects this duality. "In my paintings at *Lines of Traditions*, the works, rich in texture and layered imagery, demonstrate how traditional aesthetics can inform modern visual language without being constrained by it," he says. ■ MANJU

The exhibition ends on February 2.

*Sublime Galleria, First Floor, Prestige Skytech, Nanakramguda
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Unwind at this eco and pet-friendly park to spend quality time away from a busy city life

A WALK IN THE PARK

Facing the limitless waters of the Osman Sagar Lake (also known as Gandipet Lake), the **Gandipet Landscape Park** is a well-maintained and organized green haven. Opened in 2023 and developed by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), the eco-friendly recreational park covers 18 acres and is home to vibrant colors and solitude.

PEACEFUL GETAWAY

A 40-minute drive from central Hyderabad and via scenic views of the Outer Ring Road, we visit the park on a relatively warm weekday for a peaceful getaway. The peak afternoon heat is met with wafting cool breezes under the open skies, keeping the experience enjoyable and relaxing.

EXPERIENCES

Lush green spaces welcome you upon entering. Walkways, gazebos, viewing decks, picnic zones and family friendly nooks, food courts, and an open-air theater with a seating capacity for 1,200 are just some of the experiences the park offers. Night lighting is installed to elevate and enrich the time spent viewing the gardens and the lake.

The walkways take us on a journey through this pet-friendly park. We take in the view, clicking pictures, admiring vast stretches of water and foliage from the viewing decks, with breaks at the gazebos to shelter ourselves from the sun and to grab a quick bite — snacks that start at Rs 50 and range from French fries and ice cream to samosas and sandwiches.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Scenic views and solitude
- Pet-friendly appeal
- Minimal crowd presence
- Delicious snacks
- Good parking space

■ IPSHITA

Entry fee: Rs 50 (Adult), Rs 20 (Children)

Near Osman Sagar Lake, Gandipet

Timing: 7 am to 7.30 pm



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Misty Mornings

Winters and Hyderabad is a great combination. WOW! captures the city's dreamy landscape during sunrise.
Photo: Srinivasa Prasath



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MOVIES

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WUTHERING HEIGHTS (ENGLISH)



The film is inspired by Emily Brontë's book by the same name, but has been made more intense, modern and scandalous, with music by Charli XCX. Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi play Catherine and Heathcliff, who

share a passionate relationship that intensifies and becomes obsessive when they reunite after their tragic separation, navigating betrayal, desire and obstacles.

Date: 13th February



EUPHORIA (TELUGU)

Sara Arjun plays the main character Chaitra, an IAS aspirant who attends a party which turns her life upside down when she is assaulted. Also starring Bhumika Chawla and Gautham Menon, the film is a social drama that revolves

around the themes of crime and drug abuse by minors, while emphasizing society and parental responsibility and how justice is served with a twist.

Date: 6th February

FUNKY (TELUGU)

Vishwak Sen plays Komal, an ambitious film director who's making a film named *Funky*. Things take a chaotic turn when Kayadu Lohar as Chitra, an actress, who is also the daughter of a wealthy film producer, joins the cast. The movie promises to be a satirical comedy entertainer with Anudeep KV, who also directed the film *Jathi Ratnalu* helming this project too.

Date: 13th February



O'Romeo (HINDI)

The film has a star-studded cast with Shahid Kapoor, Tripti Dimri, Nana Patekar, Vikrant Massey, Randeep Hooda, and Tamannaah Bhatia. An action-romance thriller inspired by true events of the Mumbai underworld, Shahid plays Hussain Ustara, a gangster who falls for Afsha, played by Tripti. She seeks revenge against Dawood Ibrahim for the murder of her husband, as they team up to rise against the chaos of the gritty Mumbai underworld.

Date: 13th February



TU YAA MEIN (HINDI)

The Bollywood survival thriller follows Shanaya Kapoor and Adarsh Gourav, acting as a famous influencer and an underground rapper, who wants her for a collaboration to gain more momentum. This leads to a romantic getaway in the wild that turns deadly as they must fight against nature and each other to survive from a dangerous crocodile.

Date: 13th February

STRAY KIDS: THE DOMINATE EXPERIENCE (KOREAN, ENGLISH)

The concert film documents the K-pop group's sold out show at the SoFi Los Angeles stadium and the upbeat performance part of their Dominate tour. It has exclusive behind-the-scenes footage of the preparation and interviews of the members of the K-pop group. It showcases their hard work and creative process and is an opportunity for the fans to experience their music and energetic concert in theaters.



Date: 6th February



Tollywood's Sweetheart

There's something quietly magical about Mrunal Thakur. She's become a Telugu sweetheart without trying too hard, just by showing up, delivering, and letting her work speak. She's finally being seen and heard, and it feels overdue. From her upcoming Telugu outing *Dacoit* opposite Adivi Sesh, to a Bollywood project with Siddhant Chaturvedi, she's straddling industries with ease. And now, the buzz around her possibly teaming up with Ram Charan in *Peddi* only adds to the excitement. Soft, strong, and seriously watchable, we want to see more of her.

Strength Amid Chaos

In the middle of political chaos, packed schedules, and constant public scrutiny, superstar Pawan Kalyan quietly went and earned a martial arts certification. No big announcements, no chest-thumping. Just discipline, focus, and showing up. It feels very on brand for someone who has always worn his philosophy on his sleeve, that strength is as much mental as it is physical. While most people would use chaos as an excuse to pause, he chose to train harder. It's a reminder that learning never stops, no matter how loud life gets. Honestly, it's inspiring in the most understated way.



Quiet Power

Huma Qureshi, the talented and versatile actor seems to be wildly underrated. She's one of those actors who slips into characters so seamlessly that you forget it's Huma on screen. From the sharp, self-aware humor of *Single Salma* on Netflix to the steely, no-nonsense authority she commanded in *Maharani*, she's always played women with bite and backbone. And now she switches gears yet again as Elizabeth in *Toxic*, a role that already feels intriguing and layered. Range, risk, reinvention. Huma's doing it all. Maybe it's time we hype her the way we should have all along. ■ MANJU

Women Back Women

There's something genuinely heartwarming about the camaraderie between Alia Bhatt and Rani Mukerji. In an industry obsessed with competition, watching two leading women openly support each other feels refreshing. Rani applauding Alia's fierce, transformative turn in *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, and Alia championing Rani's unapologetic strength in *Mardani*, is the kind of mutual respect we love to see. It's not performative or polite, it feels real. Different generations, different journeys, same admiration. Women lifting women, loudly and proudly. Honestly, this kind of bonding deserves as much spotlight as the films themselves.



entertainment

SERIES

Streaming Online



BRIDGERTON S4 PART 2

(ENGLISH)
NETFLIX

The series continues the search for the Lady in Silver from the masquerade by Benedict Bridgerton, only to find out it's Sophie Baek, a maid working for Lady Araminta Gun. It brings the Cinderella-like romance with class conflict and Benedict's turmoil as he digests the truth and rising questions about the acceptance of their differences.



56 DAYS

(ENGLISH)
AMAZON PRIME

It is a thriller mystery series which follows Oliver and Ciara played by Avan Jogia and Dove Cameron, when they randomly meet in a supermarket and start falling for each other dangerously fast. But everything changes 56 days later, when an unidentified and decomposed body is found in their apartment by homicide investigators, leading to the question of who killed whom between them.



The Last Thing He Told Me Season 2

(ENGLISH)
APPLE TV

The season continues the mystery and follows the storyline of Laura Dave's sequel, *The First Time I Saw Him*. Jennifer Garner plays Hannah, the wife of the missing Owen, who suddenly reappears after his mysterious disappearance after years. It leads Hannah and her stepdaughter to search for the truth behind his disappearance and discover his dark past connected to dangerous crimes. The duo must protect themselves as they dig to uncover the consequences of Owen's past actions.



THE ARTFUL DODGER SEASON 2

(ENGLISH)
JIOHOTSTAR

The series is inspired by the world and characters of Charles Dickens' book *Oliver Twist* and is a modern continuation of the story. Thomas Brodie Sangster returns as Dr Jack Dawkins, the artful dodger and a former naval surgeon in 1850's Australia. He is being hunted by Port Victory's new lawman, Boxer and meeting his love, Lady Belle, would guarantee his hanging, as Boxer is also after her affection. Dawkins is in turmoil as his troubles seem to have no end, when he's dragged into another dangerous heist with a new lawman and a mysterious killer in town. ■ IPSHITA



A man with a feminine voice, **Dr Adhyaa Hanumanthu**, India's first male-female dubbing artiste and is now the voice behind Sai Pallavi in *Ramayana*

The Voice That Stayed

Dr Adhyaa Hanumanthu doesn't arrive with apologies. He lets the work speak first. In an industry that is quick to categorize voices and even quicker to reject what doesn't fit, Adhyaa made a deliberate choice early on: he would not fight his voice, nor soften it to make others comfortable. He would sharpen it instead.

Based in Hyderabad and working across Telugu, Kannada and Tamil cinema, Adhyaa's voice, often mistaken for a woman's, is not a novelty or

a workaround. "My voice is a tool I understand intimately, technically and emotionally. So, I decided to leverage it," says the qualified psychiatrist who is also passionate about voice acting. "My parents Mahima and Kurva Honnappa Gowda and guardians Dr. Pankajakshi Ravish and Balakrishna Pasupuleti have shaped me," says.

LEARNING EARLY

Adhyaa's relationship with performance began in childhood, when he appeared

as a child artist in television serials. Even then, his voice stood out. As he grew older, that same quality invited curiosity, hesitation, and resistance in equal measure. "Opportunities did not come easily. They came after repeated

"My voice is a tool I understand intimately, technically and emotionally. So, I decided to leverage it"
— Dr Adhyaa Hanumanthu

auditions, test recordings, and long, invisible hours inside dubbing studios," he adds.

What began with children's roles gradually expanded into full-fledged dubbing for feature films. Each project added range, confidence, and credibility, helping him move from being "different" to being dependable.

ACROSS LANGUAGES, WITHOUT LOSING TONE

Over the years, Adhyaa has lent his voice to several leading actresses across industries. His recent work includes dubbing for Rukmini Vasanth in *Sapta Sagaralu Daati*, along with multiple projects featuring Sai Pallavi and Mrunal Thakur in Kannada. He often delivers the same character across Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil.

WHERE SCIENCE MEETS SOUND

What quietly strengthens Adhyaa's artistry is his medical training. As a psychiatrist, he understands breath, emotional recall, and psychological rhythm. For him, dubbing is not mimicry. It is performance anchored in character psychology.

TURNING POINTS

His involvement in large-scale pan-Indian films such as *Ramayana* and *Toxic* marks a decisive shift. These projects demand restraint, sensitivity and spiritual grounding, qualities that align naturally with his approach.

Today, he is selective, exploring modelling and writing alongside voice work. He knows the industry is still learning to make space for voices like his. But he also knows this: the very thing that once made him stand out is now what makes him indispensable. The year 2025 ended on a high note for him, with his photograph appearing in *Vogue India* for his achievements. "I want to be a model as well. Adhyaa means the beginning. Perhaps, I will be a pioneer in this too," he quips. ■ MANJU

BOOKS

Here's publishing company **HarperCollins'** titles to look forward to this year

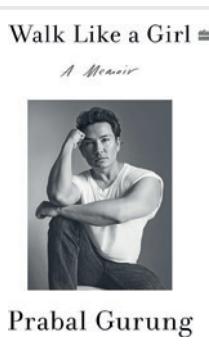
10 Books to look forward to in 2026

If 2026 is the year you want to read more and read better, these upcoming titles offer strong storytelling, lived experiences, and ideas that speak directly to everyday life. From memoirs and self-help to food, history, and social change, here are ten books worth bookmarking.

1. WALK LIKE A GIRL

Prabal Gurung
A deeply personal memoir tracing Gurung's journey from Nepal to New York, this

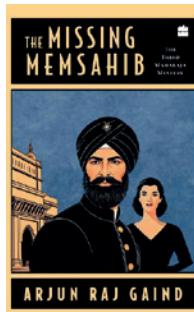
book blends identity, ambition, and resilience, making it as emotional as it is inspiring.



Prabal Gurung

2. THE MISSING MEMSAHIB

Arjun Raj Gaind
The book blends a compelling historical puzzle with sharp social insight bringing colonial Bombay and its hidden lives vividly to the page. The story is as absorbing as it is humane.



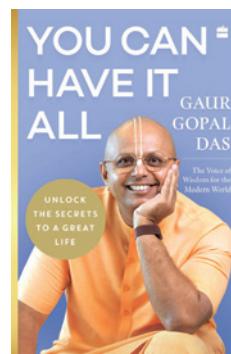
ARJUN RAJ GAIND

3. BUILDIT: STORIES FROM BUILDING A BUSINESS IN INDIA

Albinder Singh Dhindsa
From grocery delivery to billion-dollar scale, this is a clear-eyed account of building a business in India, full of lessons for founders and dreamers alike.

4. LIAR, LIAR

Rhea Mukherjee
A gripping true-crime narrative about deception in the digital age, this book questions trust, belief, and how easily stories can be manipulated online.



5. YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL

Gaur Gopal Das

Blending philosophy with practical advice, this book explores balance, purpose, and emotional clarity for readers juggling ambition and inner peace.

6. THE ZEN HUSTLE CODE

Bhasker Jaiswal with Anupam Mukherji

A refreshing take on career growth without burnout, this book speaks to professionals tired of toxic hustle culture and endless deadlines.

7. OUTLAWS WITHOUT IN-LAWS

Preeti Prakash

Sharp, funny, and unapologetic, this book reframes divorce in India through humor, honesty, and lived female experience.

8. THE LIVER DOCTOR

Dr Cyriac Abby Philips

Medical science meets human storytelling in this accessible book on liver health, recovery, and the body's astonishing capacity to heal.

9. HOW TO EAT BETTER

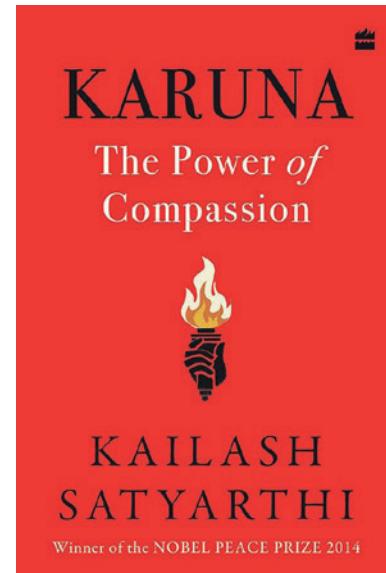
Natasha Gandhi

Designed for modern Indian kitchens, this book tackles gut health, clean eating, and realistic food habits without preaching or guilt.

10. EVERY LAST GIRL

Safeena Hussain

An inspiring account of Educate Girls and grassroots change, this book shows how persistence and community action can transform lives. ■ MANJU



KARUNA: THE POWER OF COMPASSION

Kailash Satyarthi

Rs 300; Amazon

The book is the relentless work liberating over 1,38,000 children from child labor and exploitation and giving a voice to the marginalized communities. The book challenges readers to view compassion not as a soft sentiment but as a disciplined, actionable force capable of transforming societies. Through personal narratives, philosophical insights, and practical frameworks, Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi argues that compassion must be cultivated systematically to address the world's most pressing challenges, from child labor and human trafficking to environmental degradation and social inequality.

Satyarthi said that while the West has given concepts such as IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient), India is now offering the world a new concept – the Compassion Quotient (CQ). Unlike other quotients, it does not instill feelings of inferiority or superiority in a person. Instead, it reveals many dimensions of life that individuals often remain unaware of or untouched by. He also shared that he will soon be launching a new tool to measure CQ.

MEKONG

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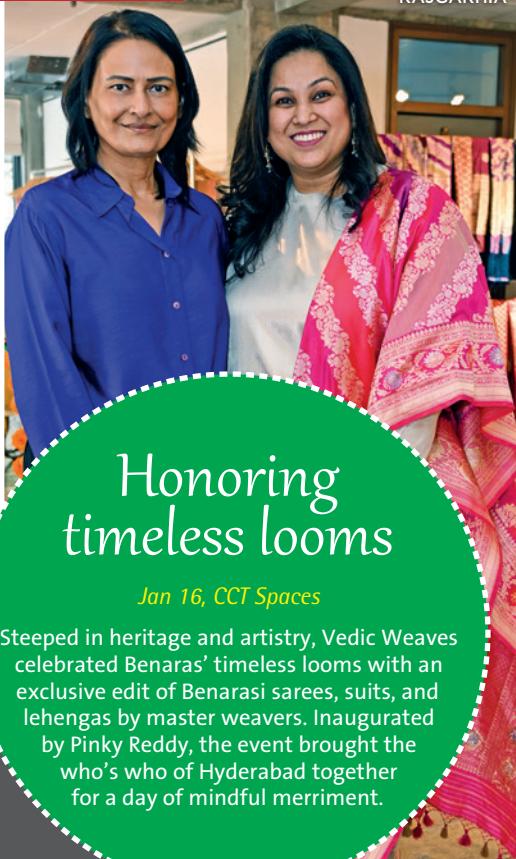


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Marigold Hotel, Greenlands, Hyderabad. Ph: 99511 22214

Hotel Greenpark, Waltair Main Road, Visakhapatnam. Ph: 0891 661 5151

KAMINI SARAF
AND NEHA
RAJGARHIA



Honoring timeless looms

Jan 16, CCT Spaces

Steeped in heritage and artistry, Vedic Weaves celebrated Benaras' timeless looms with an exclusive edit of Benarasi sarees, suits, and lehengas by master weavers. Inaugurated by Pinky Reddy, the event brought the who's who of Hyderabad together for a day of mindful merriment.



RADHIKA JALAN AND SNEHA JALAN



PINKY REDDY

PHOTOS: BHAVIK MONANI



MUKUDAN SATY NARAYANAN



CAROLINE PRABA REDDY



SADHANA BASANGAR



NIVETHA
PETHURAJ

K-pop glam

Jan 8, Jubilee Hills

VCare – the K-Beauty specialist known for its single-day facial architecture treatments – has just opened its shiny new Centre of Excellence in Jubilee Hills. The space was recently unveiled by Tollywood actor Nivetha Pethuraj, adding a dash of glam to the launch.

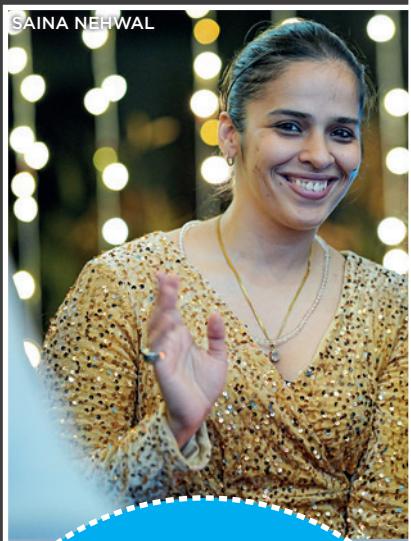


BHARGAVI KUNAM

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Evening in blue

Jan 15, Jubilee Hills

Coffee and cocktails had the evening buzzing at the launch of Blue Tokai Coffee Roasters.

Co-hosted by content creator and stylist Tanusha Bajaj, the event attracted a sprightly gathering of well-wishers who joined the merriment as DJs Swarup Varma and Ankita Anand added to the vibe and set things in motion.

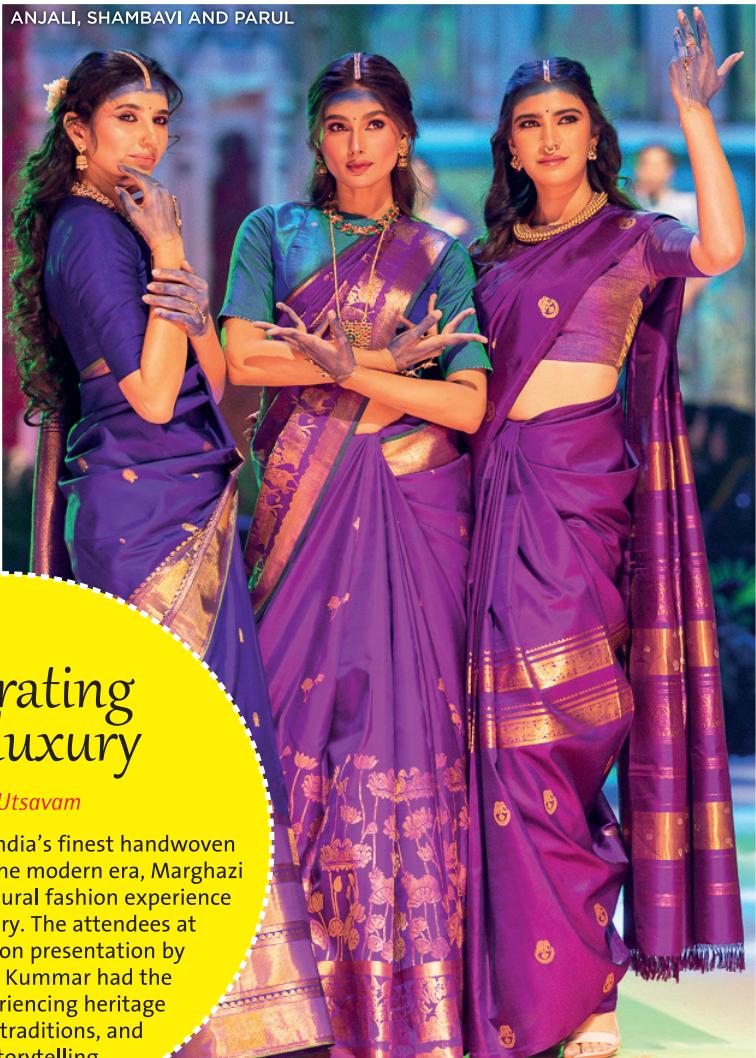


SHRAVAN KUMMAR WITH MODELS



SMITHA WITH A FRIEND

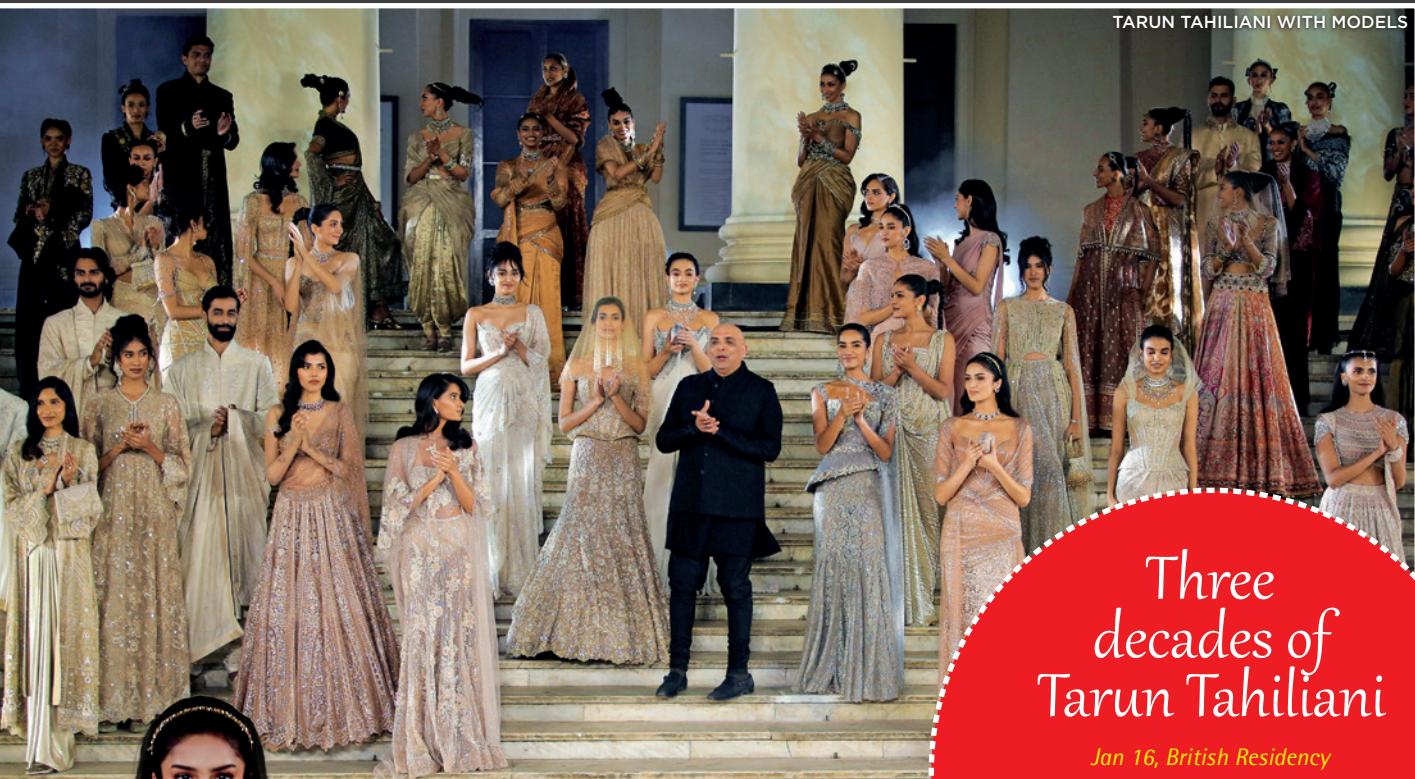
ANJALI, SHAMBAVI AND PARUL



Celebrating quiet luxury

Jan 10, Utsavam

Shining a spotlight on India's finest handwoven textiles reimagined for the modern era, Marghazi brought together a cultural fashion experience rooted in quiet luxury. The attendees at the exclusive fashion presentation by designer Shravan Kumar had the pleasure of experiencing heritage sarees, sacred traditions, and graceful storytelling.



Three decades of Tarun Tahiliani

Jan 16, British Residency

Marking 30 years of shaping India's contemporary fashion vocabulary, prolific designer, Tarun Tahiliani, celebrated the milestone with a landmark couture show last month. The evening brought together fashion, architecture, craft, culture and history in an immersive tribute to the modern India philosophy.



SIDDHANT



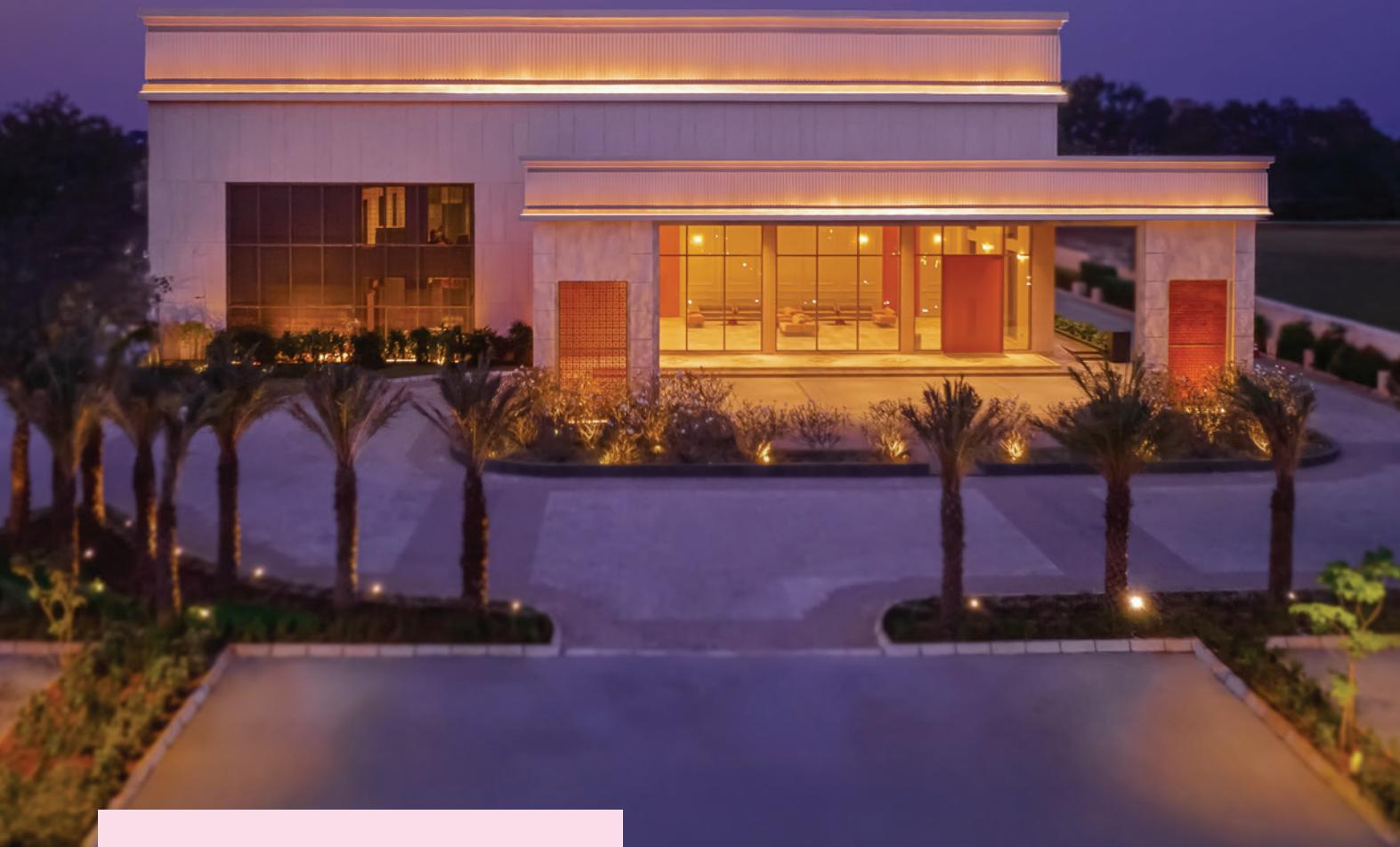
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