

THE ATELIER

MAGAZINE

Supported by G100 Arts Leadership & Films

Volume -1 Issue -1

March 2025

Artful Minds

Maha Kumbh: The World's Greatest Cultural Confluence

*An in-depth exploration of
Maha kumbh's spiritual
significance, cultural grandeur,
and artistic expressions.*

Amoha Galleria

*Glimpses from
The Fifth Dimensional Leap.*

Captivating Madhya Pradesh

A Tapestry of Culture, Heritage, and Nature.

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WHERE HOME MEETS HEART

Melodies bringing life to every corner of your home

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I am an artist before anything else—
a painter who found her breath in every
stroke,
her stillness in colours.
Canvas is the mirror of my mind,
reflecting my prayers.

Art has never just been something I do—
It is the way I live, the way I listen,
My solace in every dull moment
My power behind every bold move
That's where I belong in this world.

Founder's Note

This magazine was born not as a product but as a passion—an expression of something deeper and more sacred. It is a vast, open canvas where anyone can create, question, express, or dream. As I journeyed through transforming my professional life into one driven by passion and purpose, I realised that creating a world solely for myself was not enough. This vision was further shaped and deepened by my meaningful interactions with inspiring women—from the vibrant community of All Ladies League to WICCI and now G100. The voices of other women—raw, tender, powerful, quiet, and radiant—deserved to be seen, heard, and held. And so, The Atelier magazine became more than just a publication; it evolved into a movement of expression. magazine's core lies in commitment to the Art Economy, where creativity and livelihood will walk hand in hand, where art is not a luxury but a vital necessity, and where sustainability finds its voice through storytelling.



Creative energy, a feminine power, is not an idea but a presence in every living being and a wisdom that guides, nurtures, and transforms. The Atelier is a space for connectivity between people, cultures, disciplines, and generations.

To all the contributors, readers, friends, strangers, and cosmic collaborators who made this first step possible—

Thank you.
This is not just my journey.
It is ours.

With love, colour, and fire

Dr. S. Beena Unnikrishnan
Founder & Editor-in-Chief

**The Atelier
Magazine**



Dr. Sandhya Rajasekhar

Executive Editor

Editor's Note

Culture includes personal and societal ways of living, values, ways of making meaning, symbolism through language, art, etc., and spiritualism, religion, and rituals. Art is a representation of culture with symbolic expression of the creative dimensions of human beings, be it drawing, painting, music, literature, poetry, photography, cinema, fashion, or AI.

Starting with the cave paintings of prehistoric times, to the dancing girl of the Indus Valley civilisation to the present AI digital art, creativity has indeed come a long way.

Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious states that there are certain cultural similarities across mankind that are innate in us and make us relate to each other.

The idea of God, the existence of Heaven and Hell, belief in a golden past, the concept of the hero, and the idea of beauty, for example, are comparable across civilisations.

This is what makes culture and art —a creative, symbolic and a higher dimension of culture— so important and crucial in connecting people and the unity of mankind.

For culture to continue and flourish, communication is essential.

When modern media were introduced, sections of intellectuals and philosophers debated on the mass character of culture that was being disseminated through the media, especially cinema and television.

The Internet has created an even and open playing ground for everyone — we are no longer just the audience, we are users of media. People are simultaneously producers, consumers and disseminators of content. In this age of global cultures, cutting across civilisations and generations.

The Atelier e magazine is a unique offering with contributions from eminent artists and culture connoisseurs from across the globe. It also welcomes talented new artists as torchbearers for the future.

Our focus story in the introductory issue is the 45-day Maha Kumbh Mela, the spiritual and religious event in India in January-February 2025, that attracted the largest congregation of people anywhere in the world.

The first edition of the magazine offers topics that range from use of AI in art and cinema, to water art, fashion, art as therapy, spiritualism, poetry and more.

The Atelier is a result of the collective effort and collaboration of various artists who firmly believe that art has a crucial role to play in “shaping global narratives” as Lisa Russell, Emmy-winning filmmaker, AI artist, and arts advocate, emphasises in her article on the role of AI and Art.

We hope to make a difference in this space in the days to come.

Art as Reflection, Film as Expression, Culture and Tourism as Connection, Psychology as Interpretation.

Art and film have always been more than just creative expressions; they are mirrors reflecting our collective emotions, subconscious thoughts, and societal transformations. Culture and tourism, too, play a vital role in shaping these narratives, preserving traditions, and offering new perspectives. In this issue of The Atelier, we explore the relationship between creativity, psychology, culture, and human experience—how art heals, how films provoke, how psychology shapes our interpretation of both, and how cultural journeys influence artistic expression.

From examining the therapeutic impact of colours and textures in art therapy to uncovering the subconscious layers of storytelling in cinema, this edition invites you to see beyond the surface. We bring you conversations with filmmakers who use the lens to challenge perceptions, artists who redefine identity through their work, and psychologists who decode the emotions embedded in creative expression. We also showcase the interplay of textile design, fashion, architecture, poetry and literature – each one is a powerful medium of storytelling and identity. Additionally, we feature both renowned and emerging artists across various disciplines, ensuring a platform for creative voices from all segments of the art world.

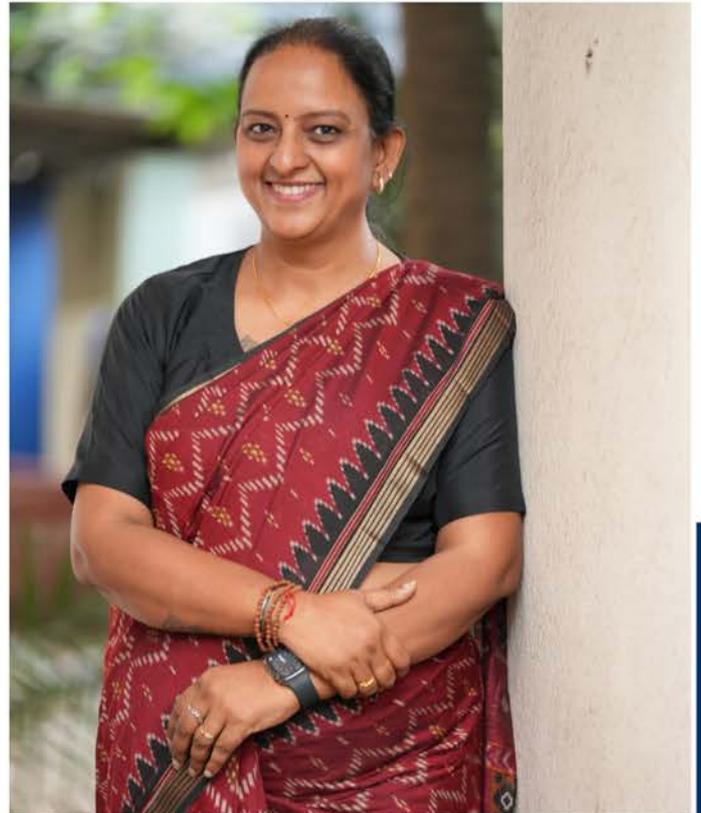
This issue includes thought-provoking contributions from Lisa Russell on AI, Art, and Advocacy, Mihir's Bhandeep's Eye on Maha Kumbh, Suzana on Luxury Fashion, Shannon on Living an authentic Life, and Dr. Edwin on The Neuroscience of Creativity, alongside the works of unseen artist Suganeswaran and emerging talents Manokar, Janavi, and Varsha.

Notes From The Managing Editor

We also take you through the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, the world's largest spiritual gathering, exploring its cultural, artistic, and psychological significance.

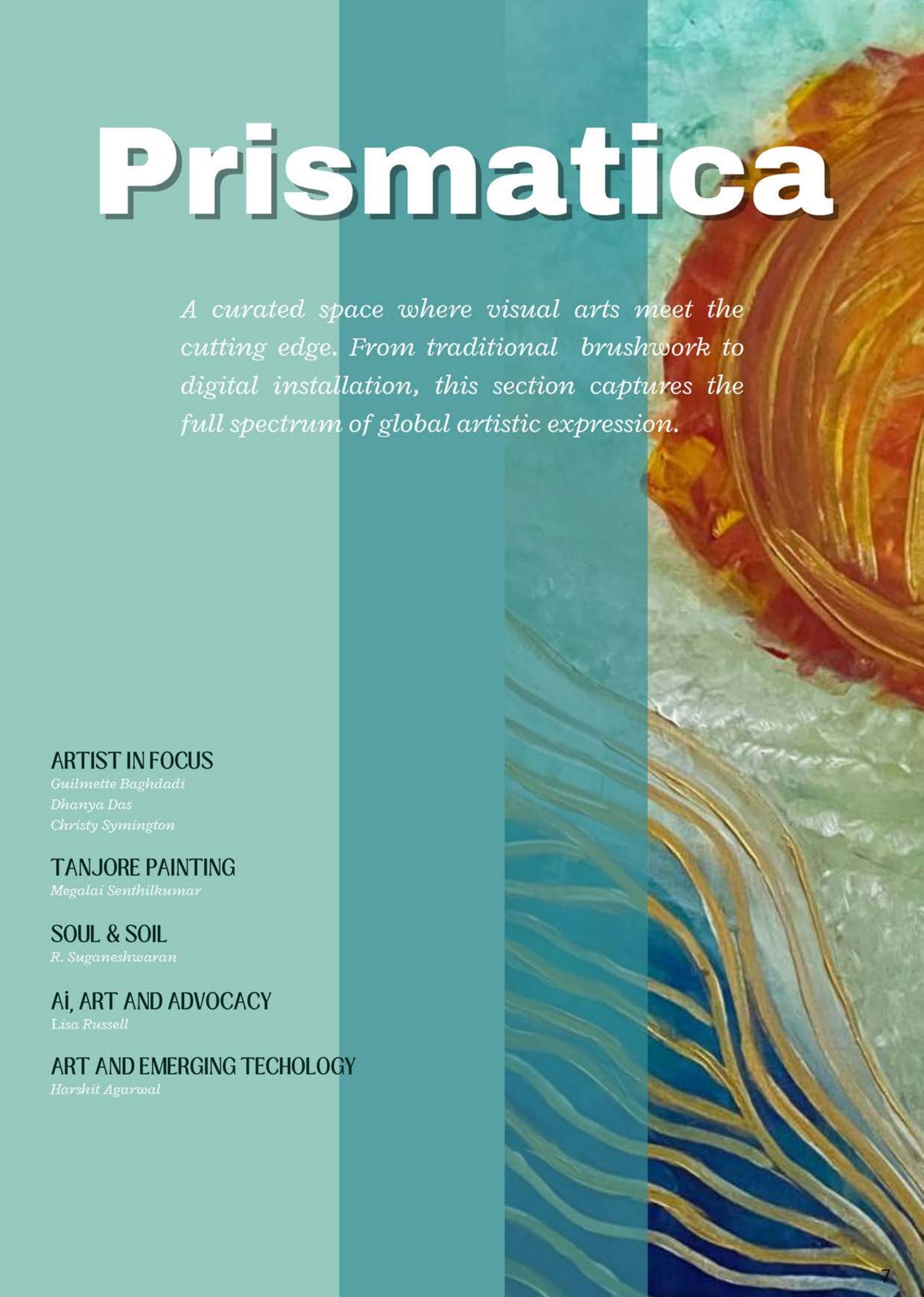
In an era where life moves at an unrelenting pace, art, film, and cultural exploration remain anchors that help us pause, reflect, and feel. Whether you are an artist, a cinephile, a psychologist, a designer, an architect, a poet, a traveller, or simply a seeker of meaning, we hope these pages ignite thought, emotion, and inspiration.

Welcome to The Atelier. Let us create, reflect, and connect.



Dr. Abirami Vivek

Prismatica



A curated space where visual arts meet the cutting edge. From traditional brushwork to digital installation, this section captures the full spectrum of global artistic expression.

ARTIST IN FOCUS

*Guilmette Baghdadi
Dhanya Das
Christy Symington*

TANJORE PAINTING

Megalai Senthilkumar

SOUL & SOIL

R. Suganeshwaran

AI, ART AND ADVOCACY

Lisa Russell

ART AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

Harshit Agarwal



ARTIST IN FOCUS

GUILMETTE BAGHDADI

Throughout her career, Guilmette has seamlessly blended architecture, sculpture, and painting, transcending traditional artistic boundaries. An architect with DPLG and Dipl.Ing. credentials, her passion for drawing and painting dates back to childhood. While studying architecture, she also attended the Beaux-Arts de Grenoble, where she honed her skills in live model drawing and mostly sculpture.

She was mentored by Simone Magnan, the second Grand Prix de Rome laureate in 1954, who became both a guiding influence in her artistic journey and later on a close friend.

Guilmette's background is unique. Born to Iranian parents in North Africa, she later moved to France, where she pursued her secondary and university education. Over four decades, she has applied her expertise as both an architect and an operations manager across France, Germany, Poland, and the United States, working in Arizona and California. Since 2015, she has been residing in Switzerland.

Her artistic signature is defined by the simplicity and purity of line—an essential element in her work. Symbolism plays a significant role, particularly through her restrained use of color, which enhances emotional depth and sensory engagement.

Through her art, she seeks to convey themes close to her heart: the spiritual essence of humanity, unity, gender equality, and the cultivation of virtues. Her creative drive is deeply rooted in her Bahá'í faith.

Guilmette is passionate about minimalist profiles, movement expression, heart symbolism, and live model drawing. Her sculptures primarily celebrate the beauty and complexity of the human form. She has also studied art therapy and conducts soapstone sculpture workshops.





Her work has been featured in magazines in Italy, France, and Switzerland, and she regularly exhibits in solo and group shows across the United States, Switzerland, Great Britain, Italy, and France. Notably, for the past four years, she has showcased her work at Art Shopping within the Salon International d'Art Contemporain at the Carrousel du Louvre and will do so again in 2025.

In 2023, Guilmette received recognition from the Académie des Arts, Sciences et Lettres of Paris. Since 2023, she is the Global Advisory Member of the Arts Leadership and Films wing of Switzerland for G100: Mission Million. Represented in Great Britain by Gabriel Fine Arts gallery, she is the co-author of *Art Without Borders: Impactful Women Artists*, a book highlighting 16 women artists from around the world.◆



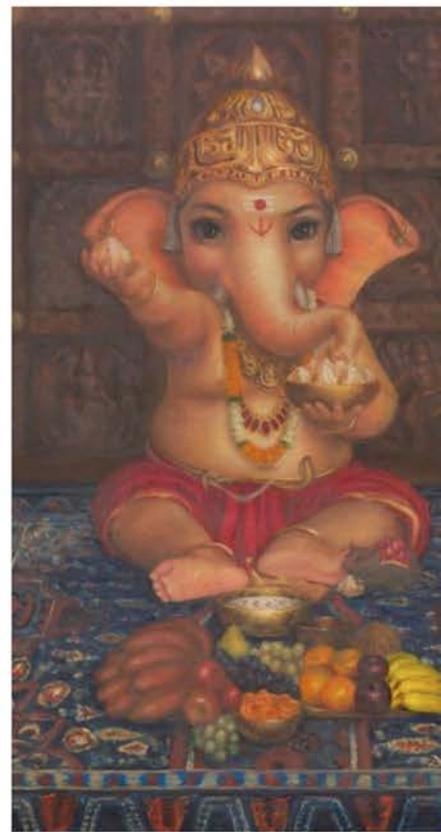
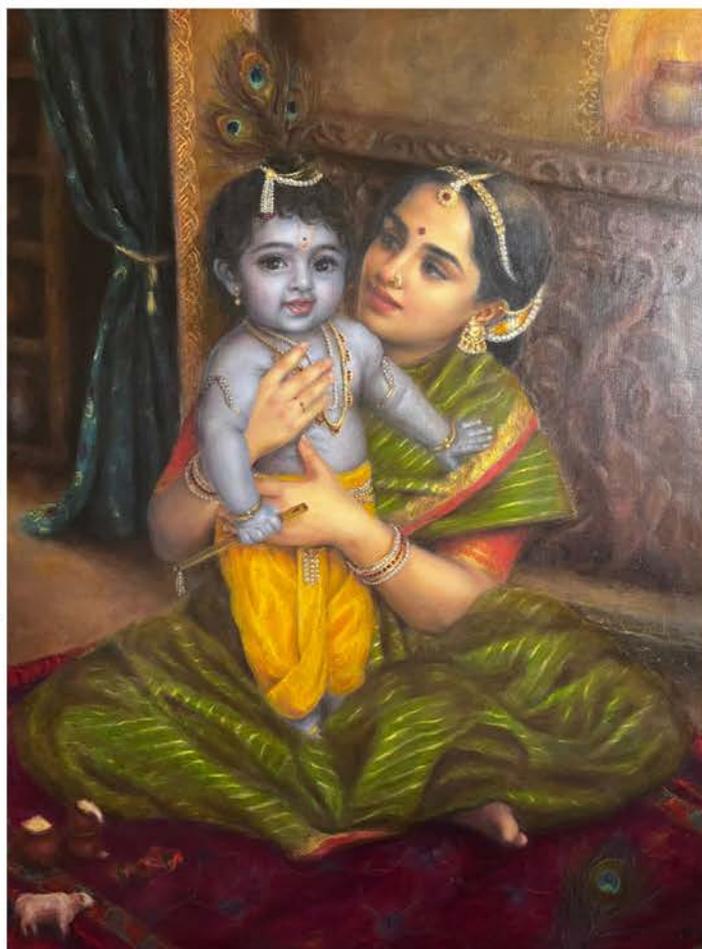


ARTIST IN FOCUS

It is not everyday that someone gives up an Engineering Masters from a prestigious Institution to follow their childhood passion. This is exactly what Dhanya Das, hailing from a small village in Kerala, did. A gifted child, she started painting at the age of three. With an MTech in Environmental Engineering from IIT Kanpur, she chose to follow her passion for art and became a full-time artist, "... who loves to paint Gods and humans."

DHANYA DAS





Dhanya's paintings depict characters from Indian mythology and ancient literature. While her favourite subject is Goddess Parashakti in all her forms, the divinities presented in her art include the Hindu pantheon of Goddesses, Siva, Ganesh, and the various incarnations of Vishnu.

Her unique talent is undeniably her capacity to portray the divine through art in a highly detailed and realistic manner. The exploration and experience of spirituality while painting makes it a "mediative process" for this self-taught artist.

Dhanya currently paints from home; with two children aged three and two respectively, her favourite time to paint is "any free time I get," she says. It takes her anywhere between one and four months to complete a painting.

The artist exhibited her work at The India Art Festival 2022 held in Bengaluru, where she sold 18 paintings. In the future, she hopes to explore the rich cultural heritage of India through its people, festivals and artforms, and paint "indigenous people in their natural setting and attire," she says.

She also aspires to inspire and educate artists "who are focused on realism with Indian soul." Dhanya's paintings are available in Giclée prints which ensure that the prints have the unmatched quality of digital reproduction and last for a century and longer. ◆

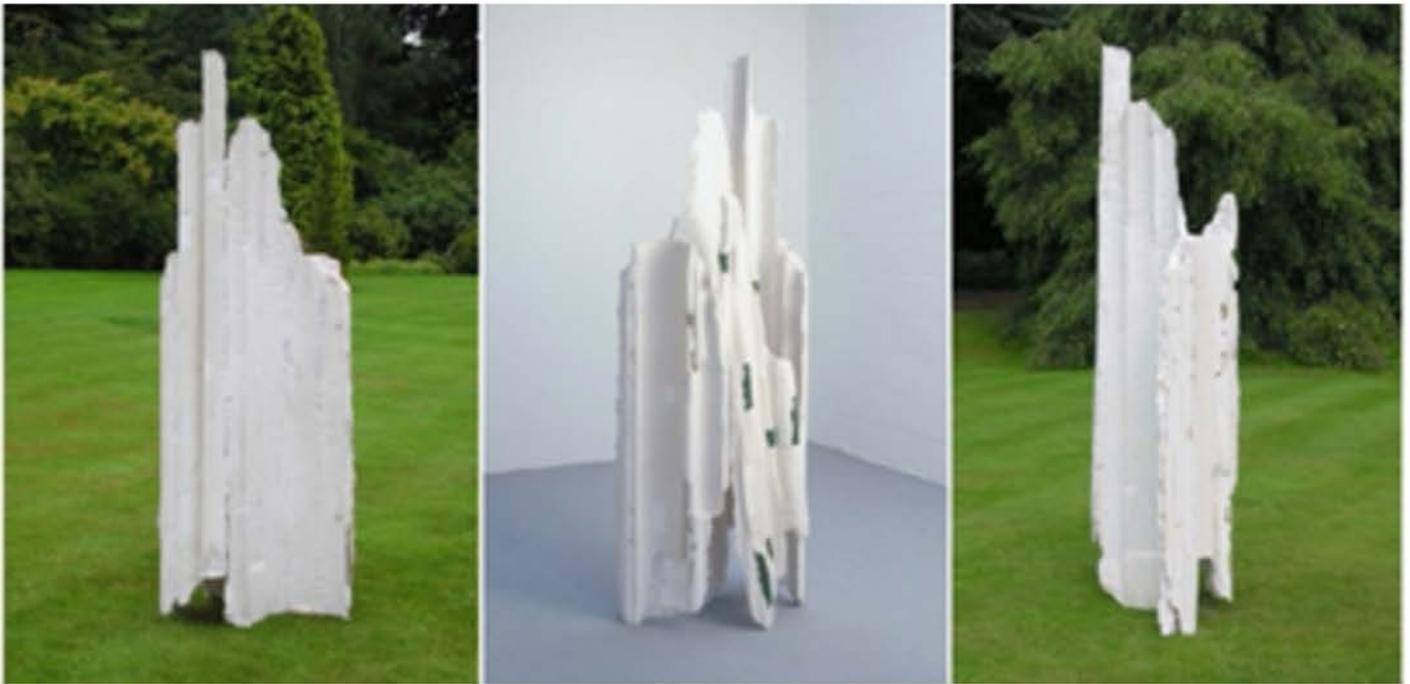


ARTIST IN FOCUS

CHRISTY SYMINGTON

Christy Symington, Member of the Royal British Society of Sculptors, is a prominent sculptor based in London. A senior tutor and Head of Sculpture at the Art Academy, London, she studied art and sculpture in Paris and London. In 2001, she graduated from the New York studio School and left the USA just before the 9/11 attacks. She created 'Remembrance 911' a 7 feet tall sculpture in 2002. It was included in the Permanent Collection of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York in 2024.





After leaving the US, she went on to do her Masters in Fine Art at the University of the Arts, London.

Christy's sculptures are entered as permanent collections in museums in USA and UK. They are also part of private collections in UK, USA and France.

The relief sculpture of black abolitionist, writer and composer, Ignatius Sancho made by Christy in 2024 is a permanent sculpture in the wall of one of the Royal parks of London.

Her bronze sculpture of the African slave, author and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano is permanently sited in the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, London. Editions of the sculpture are in the permanent collections of Royal Museums Greenwich on display in the Queen's House, and International Slavery Museum.

Christy teaches and mentors students in various art colleges and schools in the UK.



TANJORE PAINTING

Megalai Senthilkumar

Manmadha in Tanjore Painting Style

Tanjore painting is a classical South Indian art form known for its richness, vivid colours, and embellishments. Traditionally, these paintings depict Hindu gods and goddesses and are crafted on wooden panels with embossed artwork adorned with 22-carat gold foil and semi-precious stones. The grandeur and intricate detailing make Tanjore paintings a cherished heritage of Indian artistry.

What you see here is an extraordinary unique Tanjore painting created by my mother in the 1990s. This painting portrays Manmadha (Kamadeva), the Hindu god of love, seated on his celestial vehicle—a parrot. This painting is an adaptation from an old Maratha painting, which did not have any precious stones in its embellishments like other Tanjore paintings. Perhaps the subject itself was so captivating that additional semi-precious stones seemed unnecessary.



Symbolism of Rathi and the Four Women

The painting also subtly incorporates Rathi, Manmadha's consort, and her feminine virtues—Acham (fear), Madam (humility), Naanam (shyness), and Payirppu (chastity)—represented through the four women forming the parrot. This portrayal reflects the deeper philosophical and emotional aspects of love and desire.

The Iconography of Manmadha

Manmadha is depicted holding his signature weapons—a sugarcane bow and five floral arrows, each associated with different emotions of love and desire. The five arrows, known as Pushpabana, are:

- Aravinda – White lotus flower
- Ashoka – Ashoka tree flower
- Choota – Mango blossom
- Navamallika – Jasmine flower
- Neelotpala – Blue lotus flower



A Unique Representation of Manmadha

Unlike conventional depictions, this painting presents a fascinating symbolism—the parrot itself is formed by four women, each playing a different musical instrument:

- One with a drum
- One with a tambura
- One with a violin
- One with cymbals

This artistic arrangement aligns with traditional Indian iconography where human forms are used to symbolize different elements. Interestingly, the presence of a violin, which arrived in India through European influence, helps date the original concept of this painting to the British colonial period.

These arrows symbolise the various emotional effects of love, from attraction to deep yearning. Manmadha's story, deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, recounts how he shot an arrow at Lord Shiva, only to be reduced to ashes in Shiva's fury. However, due to Rathi's heartfelt plea, Shiva granted that Manmadha would exist only in an invisible form, signifying the unseen but powerful influence of love.

Manmadha as a Warrior

In this painting, Manmadha is portrayed as a warrior, an unusual yet powerful depiction. He is shown with a dark green complexion, a colour often associated with fertility and beauty in Indian aesthetics. His attire reflects the 18th-century fashion, perhaps people of India, especially the princely class used to wear such clothes

Connection to Ancient Texts and Symbolism

The artistic technique of forming figures using human representations has roots in ancient Indian texts. The Saraswati Mahal Library in Thanjavur, which flourished under King Serfoji II, houses manuscripts like:

- Gaja Śāstram – Elephants depicted in the form of women
- Pakshi Śāstram – Birds represented as women
- Ashwa Śāstram – Horses formed by human figures

This suggests that the concept of a parrot formed by four women in this painting may be inspired by Pakshi Sastram found in these ancient treatises.

This Tanjore painting of Manmadha is now a cherished piece in my niece's lovely home in Los Angeles. It beautifully blends mythology, symbolism, and history, showcasing the timeless story of love—its strength, struggles, and lasting presence in our lives. ◆



Megalai Senthilkumar
Writer, Entrepreneur
Managing Director
LBN Tech Solutions Pvt Ltd.



In the Light of a Guiding Star:

Honouring Bibek Debroy's
enduring Legacy of Wisdom,
Compassion, and Mentorship

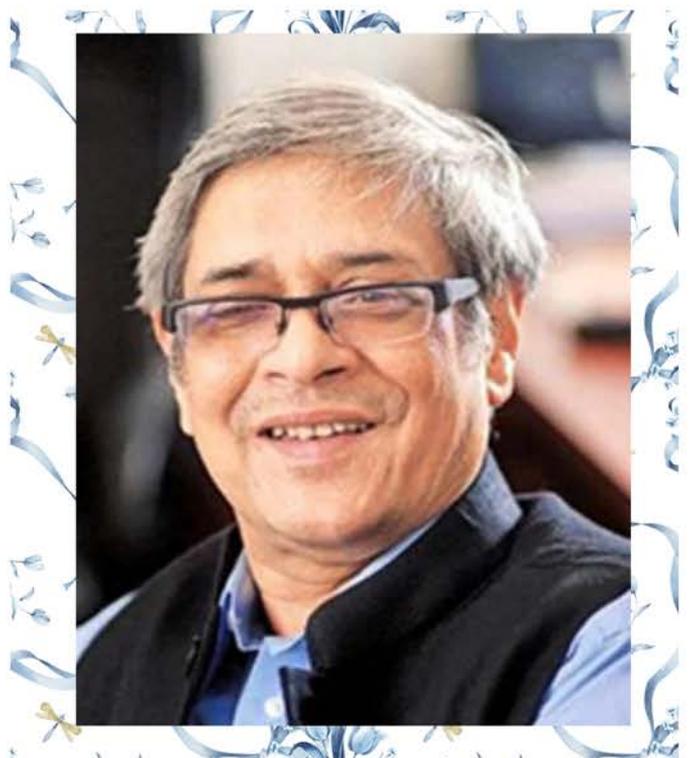
Prof. (Dr.) Hindol Sengupta

Bibek Debroy stands as a luminary in the landscape of Indian thought, a beacon of wisdom whose influence resonates deeply within the corridors of academia and beyond. As I reflect on my journey, I find it imperative to pay homage to him—not merely as a mentor but as a guru whose guidance has been pivotal in shaping my intellectual pursuits.

From our first encounter, it was evident that Bibek possessed an extraordinary capacity to elucidate complex ideas with remarkable clarity. His approach was not confined to mere academic instruction; he embodied a philosophy that intertwined knowledge with compassion. I recall our early discussions, where he would challenge me to think critically, urging me to question established narratives and explore the depths of our cultural heritage. His belief that “policy isn’t merely numbers or data; it’s about stories that reveal the real needs of our people” encapsulates his holistic view of economics and governance, emphasizing the human element behind every statistic.

Bibek's mentorship extended beyond professional realms into personal spheres, where his insights shaped my understanding of life itself. He was not just an economist; he was a storyteller, weaving together the threads of history and mythology to create a rich tapestry that illustrated the essence of Indian identity. His translations of ancient texts were not mere academic exercises; they were acts of reverence towards our collective past, breathing life into narratives that had long been dormant.

In our collaborative work, particularly on *Life, Death and the Ashtavakra Gita*, I witnessed firsthand his meticulous attention to detail and his unwavering commitment to authenticity. He often remarked, “Each word carries weight; choose them wisely,” a lesson that has stayed with me as I navigate my own writing endeavors. His encouragement was both gentle and firm, fostering an environment where creativity could flourish while maintaining intellectual rigor.



As we delved into discussions about contemporary issues facing India, Bibek's insights were always grounded in historical context. He had an uncanny ability to draw parallels between past and present, reminding us that understanding our history is crucial for navigating our future. This perspective was invaluable as I sought to articulate my thoughts on India's socio-political landscape.

Bibek's passing leaves an irreplaceable void in my life and in the lives of countless others who were fortunate enough to learn from him. He was more than a mentor; he was a guiding star who illuminated paths obscured by doubt and uncertainty. In every conversation, every critique, and every shared moment of laughter, he imparted lessons that transcended the confines of academia.

In honoring Bibek Debroy, I recognize not only his contributions as an economist and scholar but also his profound impact as a mentor who nurtured a generation of thinkers. His legacy will endure through the ideas he championed and the lives he touched. As I continue my journey, I carry with me the lessons learned at his feet—a testament to the enduring power of mentorship and the indelible mark left by those we hold dear.



*Prof. (Dr.) Hindol Sengupta,
historian and author,
professor of international
relations,
O. P. Jindal Global
University.*

AI, ART AND ADVOCACY

Lisa Russell

A New Era of Creative Influence

There is a saying that artists are the gatekeepers of truth.

In a world increasingly shaped by algorithms, artificial intelligence, and digital landscapes, I have found myself asking—how do we ensure that artists remain at the center of the story?

For over two decades, I have worked at the intersection of art, advocacy, and global policy, pushing against the institutional barriers that often exclude artists from meaningful conversations. From UN summits to grassroots movements, I have fought to create spaces where diverse artists and storytellers are not just featured as entertainers, but recognized as essential architects of change.

Yet, as AI sweeps into creative industries, I see both the promise and the peril it may bring. Will AI empower artists and storytellers to reach new heights of expression, or will it be another tool for exploitation and erasure?

That question led me to create **ArtsEnvoy.ai**, a platform designed to harness AI as a tool for storytelling, advocacy, and artspreneurship—one that ensures artists have a seat at the table in shaping the future and can create sustainable livelihoods.

It wasn't born in a sterile tech lab, but in the real-world trenches of filmmaking, poetry, music, and global advocacy, where I've worked alongside other global south and BI-POC creatives who are struggling to bridge the gap between passion and profitability.

AI Art and the Future of Storytelling

As I stand on the brink of a new chapter, my AI-generated artwork has been featured at the UN Summit of the Future, COP29, and unDAVOS as part of the Future of Humanity Art Walk. These aren't just exhibitions—they are a declaration that artists belong in the rooms where decisions are made about humanity's trajectory.



At COP29, my AI film *Moving On—Africa's First AI-driven Climate Change Music Video*—was part of a growing conversation about climate storytelling. AI is already being used to model climate scenarios, but what about its role in shaping cultural narratives?

Data alone doesn't inspire action—stories do. That's where AI-driven art, infused with human creativity, can step in, offering new ways to visualize the urgency of environmental justice.

At unDAVOS, my AI-generated pieces *Where the Darkness Meets the Algorithm* are walking alongside bold, radical conversations about decentralization and the ethical use of technology. Art has always been a mirror, reflecting society's greatest struggles and triumphs, but with AI, we have the ability to reshape that mirror, to create reflections that challenge and provoke.

And at the UN Summit of the Future, I had the incredible honor of being the only artist-speaker for the SDG Digital event, showcasing how AI art can translate and amplify climate and sustainability solutions to a room full of Member States, CEOs, UN experts, and other stakeholders. My work became part of a critical dialogue: What role will artists play in shaping AI and the world to come?

The summit wasn't just about policy—it's about imagination, and imagination is where artists thrive.

The Birth of ArtsEnvoy.ai

ArtsEnvoy.ai isn't just another AI platform. It's a **movement**, built from years of experience in creative advocacy, global storytelling, and a deep belief that technology must serve artists, not replace them.

It was born from frustration—watching the creative economy undervalue its lifeblood: the artists themselves. But more importantly, it was born from hope—hope that AI can be a tool for liberation rather than exploitation.

When I first started exploring AI-driven storytelling, I wasn't just interested in what AI could generate—I was interested in who controlled it, who benefited from it, and how it could be used to amplify unheard, marginalized voices.

How can it be used to help us bypass gatekeepers controlled by wealth and power? The more I experimented, the clearer it became:

Artists don't need to fear AI. They need to own it.

Reclaiming AI for the Artist

With the official launch of ArtsEnvoy.ai on the horizon, the mission is clear: to empower artists with AI tools that enhance their creative process, provide ethical pathways for monetization, and ensure that technology serves human expression, not the other way around.

The platform will offer:

- AI-powered storytelling tools to turn advocacy into compelling narratives.



- A marketplace for ethical distribution, ensuring fair pay and recognition.
- Collaborative spaces where artists can co-create with changemakers and build sustainable careers.
- AI mentors, trained to guide artists in refining their practice, without losing the human soul in the process.

This isn't about replacing traditional art—it's about expanding its possibilities. It's about ensuring that artists don't just witness the future unfold, but actively shape it.

A Call to Action!

As I prepare to showcase my AI-generated work at some of the most important global gatherings of our time, I am reminded that art has always been about more than aesthetics—it is about survival, resistance, and transformation. Now, with AI in the mix, the question is: Will artists take control of this new frontier, or will they be left behind?

ArtsEnvoy.ai is my answer to that question. It is an invitation—to artists, advocates, and dreamers—to reclaim AI as a tool of empowerment, to redefine what's possible, and to ensure that in the digital age, the human spirit remains at the heart of storytelling. The future isn't something we wait for—it's something we create.

Join the Movement

For updates on the official launch of ArtsEnvoy.ai, upcoming workshops, and global showcases, visit artsenvoy.ai and be part of this journey to redefine the intersection of art, AI, and social change.

About the Author

Lisa Russell is an Emmy-winning filmmaker, AI artist, and arts advocate with over 20 years of experience engaging artists in global development, sustainability, and UN spaces. She is the Founder of ArtsEnvoy.ai, a pioneering platform that merges AI, creativity, and social impact to empower artists and changemakers worldwide. Lisa also serves as the USA Chair of the Arts and Film Leadership G100 Wing, where she continues to champion the role of artists in shaping global narratives. Her AI-generated art has been showcased at major global summits, including COP29, the UN Summit of the Future, and unDAVOS. ◆





ART AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

Harshit Agrawal

Machine learning-led art and design represent a new form of expression, establishing what can be described as the "human-machine creativity continuum." This innovative approach melds human intentions with machine imaginations, shifting the locus of creativity repeatedly between human and machine throughout the process of creating a work of art or design. It transcends the traditional notion of a tool, as it does not merely execute tasks perfectly but also leaves room for the machine to generate unexpected outcomes.

These outcomes can then be incorporated by the human artist into their overall vision. While the human remains the central driver of the work, the creative process becomes a dynamic interplay between human and machine.

Over the years, the practice of ML art and design has evolved significantly. Initially, the focus was on exploring machine learning as a contributor to imagination. Over time, the scope expanded to include themes such as the cultural underpinnings of ML art, ensuring that it moves beyond the Euro-American-centric aesthetic that dominates due to the demographics of most AI artists and available datasets. Efforts have been made to bring diverse artistic traditions to life in engaging ways, resisting the standardization of art across cultures that technology often imposes.

Other themes include commenting on subjective agency in the age of AI and exploring the malleability of identity through an ML lens.

A recurring thread in this practice is the use of technology to critique technology itself. For instance, an Instagram filter was recently created as a response to the Amazon rainforest fires, highlighting the potential of digital platforms as collaborative spaces for artistic expression.

Inspiration plays a pivotal role in this creative process.

Much of the work is driven by a desire to comment on technology itself, drawing from trends in technological advancements, their societal impacts, and the ethical conversations surrounding them.

The works of other artists, particularly those in the international AI art community, serve as significant sources of inspiration.

Studios like Rhizomatiks and artists such as Daito Manabe, who push the boundaries of what art can achieve, are particularly influential. Additionally, the Human Computer Interaction (HCI) community and academic research in the ML space provide ongoing inspiration.

Poetry, too, holds a special place, offering unique ways of thinking about art and often finding its way into the creative process.



Computation as a material and process offers both liberties and constraints. The vast possibilities of a digital environment open up new creative horizons, allowing almost anything to be explored. The process of working as a computational artist, especially with machine learning, involves alternating between the roles of scientist, engineer, and artist. This includes stages of technical problem-solving, such as setting up servers or tuning hyperparameters, as well as moments of pure artistic exploration.

The time-intensive nature of ML, with models often requiring hours or days to train, demands patience and a willingness to embrace uncertainty. The journey is one of constant discovery, with the artist remaining open to new directions and outcomes.

The human-machine relationship in this practice is central, with the locus of creativity shifting between

human and machine throughout the creative process. This dynamic interplay challenges traditional notions of authorship and creativity, offering new ways to think about the role of technology in art.

The Indian context and narrative play a significant role in shaping the work. As one of the few artists from India working with ML as a core of their practice, there is a deliberate effort to marry Indian visual traditions with machine learning. This includes creating works that resonate with Indian aesthetics, such as bright, colourful Buddhist paintings made with AI or interactive pieces inspired by face painting rituals and mask cultures.

Indian mythological creatures, with their diverse body configurations, also serve as inspiration for exploring non-standard identities and machine enabled capabilities.



To inspire more people to explore ML based tools, the key is to showcase the magic and possibilities of what these tools can achieve. People are more likely to engage with ML when they are excited about its potential. Tools like RunwayML and Teachable Machines, along with online learning resources, have significantly lowered the entry barrier. Workshops and community events also play a crucial role in introducing people to these tools and encouraging experimentation.

The city of Bengaluru has been a nurturing environment for this practice. Known for its blend of technological innovation and cultural richness, the city offers a unique space for artists working at the intersection of art and technology. The vibrant community and the city's openness to technological discussions have made it an ideal home for exploring and sharing ML-driven art.

Harshit Agarwal
is an Indian Artist working with Artificial
Intelligence and Emerging Technologies

In summary, machine learning-led art and design represent a dynamic and evolving field, where human creativity and machine intelligence intersect to create new forms of expression. By drawing inspiration from diverse sources, embracing the possibilities of computation, and engaging with cultural narratives, this practice continues to push the boundaries of what art can be. ◆





Where Creativity Meets Purpose

Amoha, meaning "pure," reflects the vision of the Amoha Galleria. On 26th March, 2025, Amoha Gallery launched an extraordinary exhibition—"The Fifth Dimensional Leap", a powerful collaboration that brings together artists worldwide to explore the deeper meaning of art.

This exhibition is not about creativity alone but also about what art can do. Encouraging the artists and viewers to feel, think, and act.

Shahzada Khurram curated the show, bringing various voices, styles, and cultures together. Each artist adds a piece to the larger story—a story of unity, kindness, and awareness. Every artwork has been carefully placed to create conversations between artists, cultures, and viewers, and it is a journey of connection.

The global artists of this exhibition form a powerful, emotional and intellectually stimulating experience that will leave a lasting impression.

Art with a Divine Purpose: Inspiring Creativity with Compassion. What makes this exhibition truly meaningful is its partnership with Project DAAN. Through this initiative, Amoha Galleria turns creativity into compassion.

Artists have donated their work, and 50% of all art sales will feed the underprivileged. Each artwork purchased supports the mission to end hunger.

This movement is part of a larger vision launched by Vinay Rai—a respected industrialist, educationist, and social entrepreneur. On his 75th birthday in 2024, he announced the Zero Hunger Mission, aiming to serve nutritious meals daily to 3 billion people.

It gives an artist the blessing to create meaningful and life-changing experience. Art becomes more than expression—it becomes action.

The show is taking place at the majestic Bikaner House. Its elegant halls now hold stories that go beyond canvas and colour. Here, art is not just for viewing. It is for feeling, for giving, and for growing. Even as a visitor, your presence will support and contribute to the success of this initiative.

Amoha Galleria believes that art can transform people and societies. It believes that creativity has a purpose. And this exhibition is a testament to the inspiring power of art, proving that it can change the world when it meets intention. ◆

Norberto Noschang (Brazil) captures the forces of nature through bold and textured canvases.



Sol mas praia -120 x 180 cm -Acrylic and Epoxy Resin



Praia Cristalina -120 x 180 cm -Acrylic and Epoxy Resin

Andrea Ehret (Czech Republic)
paints dreamlike landscapes that speak
to the subconscious.



Play with me, 200 X 150 cm ,Mixed Media on Canvas



Play with me, 200 X 150 cm ,Mixed Media on Canvas

George Farah Makhlouf (USA) explores
the meeting point between culture and
commerce.



Red District Idol, 122 X 92 cm, Acrylic on canvas

Fintan Raymond Whelan (Germany)
explores the balance between chance
and control in fluid abstract forms



Elision skies, 200 X 100 cm, Mixed Media
on Canvas

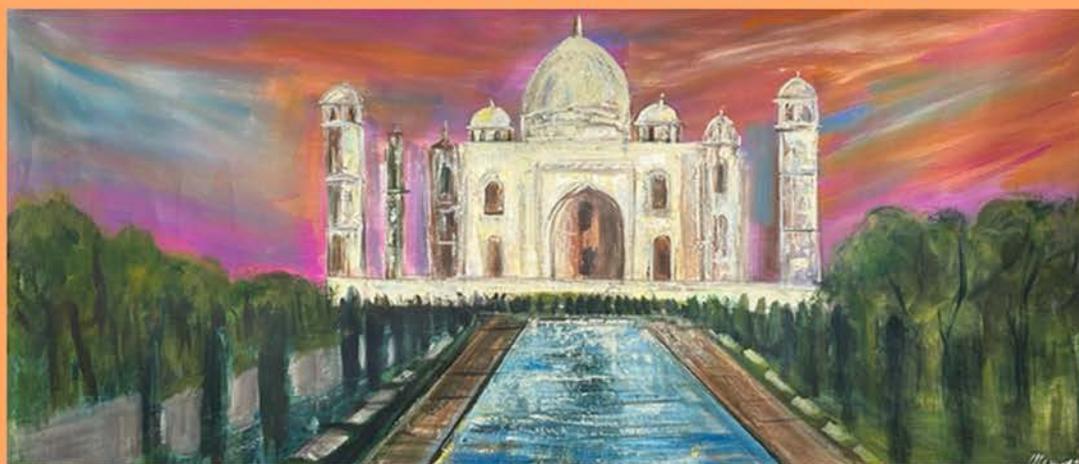


Please Peace, 92 X 77 cm ,Acrylic on canvas

Esteban Marrugo Carreazo (Colombia) brings the energy of culture to life through vibrant colours.



Marina De Cartagena, 120 X 50 cm, Acrylic on canvas with spatula



Tribute to the Taj Mahal , 170 X 80 cm, Acrylic on canvas with spatula

Margarita Sammitoa (Venezuela/Spain) tells stories of identity and migration through expressive, emotional works.



120 X 145 cm, Acrylic on Canvas



120 X 145 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

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Luca Dei Savini (Italy) challenges how we see reality with bold visual perspectives.



Series of dots #13, 70 X 50 cm, Acrylic on 50% fabricano cotton paper



Series of dots #4, 50 X 70 cm, Acrylic on 50% fabricano cotton paper



Series of lines (Gold and Red), 61 X 86 cm, Acrylic on canvas

Paula Cecilia Riverro (Argentina) shows cultural encounters and emotions.



Afilada (Sharpened), 120 X 190cm, Acrylic Mixed Media



Geometría Sagrada (Sacred geometry)
180 X 120 cm, Acrylic , Mixed Media



Sin Fronteras (Borderless),
50 X 50cm, Acrylic on Canvas

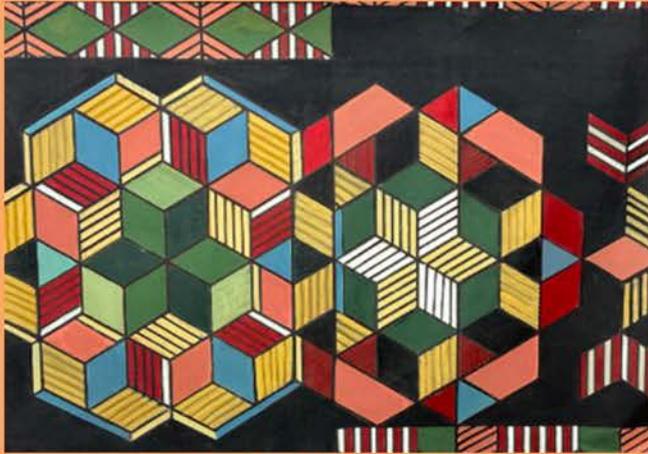
Teófilo Choquechagua Canales (Peru) is a renowned textile artist and painter, celebrated for preserving and innovating Andean weaving traditions.



Parchment, 120 X 75 cm, Textile Artwork



Bird Party, 60 X 95 cm, Textile Artwork



Hexagonal geometric design,
95 X 145 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Slovakian artist Martina Szilágyi found solace in painting during the global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Her abstract creations are narratives of resilience and hope,



Crossroads of hope, 100 X 120 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Pablo Echeverría Castillo (Uruguay) weaves personal and cultural stories through mixed media.



Untitled, 200 X 120 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Griselda Amancay Maymó (Uruguay) works with unusual materials that break traditional rules.



Fan of light, 120 X 145 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Sun in Your Heart, 130 X 160 cm, Acrylic on Canvas



Ramiro Llona (Peru) is a celebrated contemporary artist known for his bold, textured paintings



EL Templo, 160 X 110 cm, Oil on Canvas

Roots & Rhythm

From ancient roots to modern rhythm - a journey through living culture!

A DIP INTO HISTORY - MAHA KUMBH

V M Rajasekhar

REVIEWS

Anuradha Ganesh

Elizabeth Coffey

Dr. Rajashree Krishnaswamy

C M Vivek

Rohan Maclaren

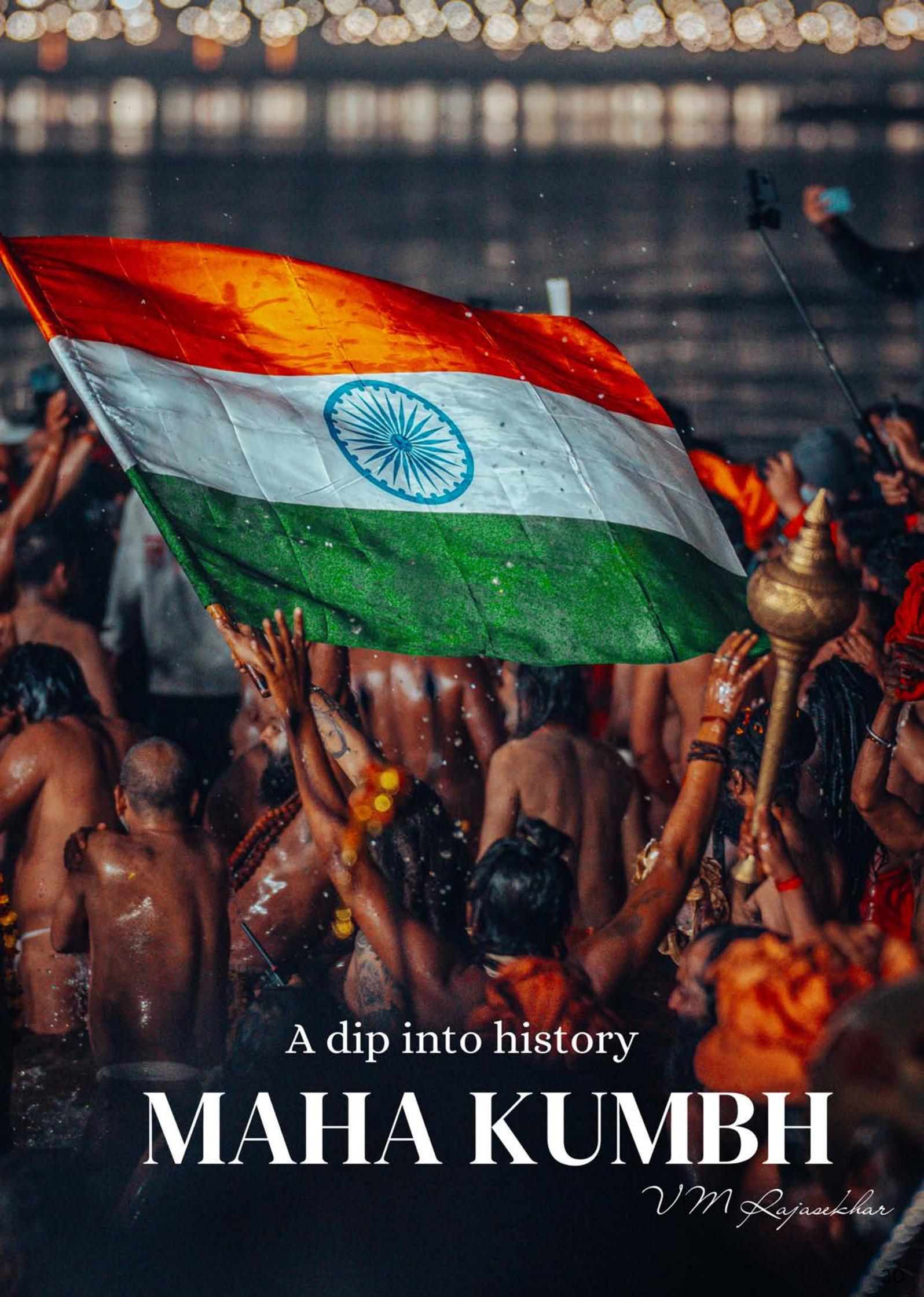
BANDEEP'S EYE, MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Mihir Srivatsava

MAHA KUMBH THROUGH THE EYES OF A CULTURAL STORYTELLER

Jithin Jayanarayanan





A dip into history

MAHA KUMBH

VM Rajasekar



The holy dip at the Sangam once in 12 years has captured the imagination of Hindus and the world while drawing attention to the Naga Sadhus, the warrior saints who are seen as the protectors of the practitioners of the religion.

How did the Kumbh get its name? The mythology of the Samudra Manthan of the Devas and Asuras and what followed is well known but what is not so well understood is how the holy dip at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and the unseen Saraswati at Prayag (now Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh) during specific celestial alignments went on to become the Kumbh Mela, arguably the biggest “brand” for Hindus in their quest for salvation.



In history, one of the earliest references to the Kumbh Mela on river banks in ancient India is in the *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* (1695 CE), a publication in the Persian language during Mughal ruler Aurangzeb's reign, which records that fairs were held regularly at Haridwar, Prayag, and Nashik. In fact, it mentions an annual mela and Kumbh Mela in Haridwar; a mela at Trimbak (Nashik) once in 12 years, and an annual mela at Prayag in the month of Magha.

The Magh mela is possibly the oldest as it is said to find mention in the Puranas. The earliest reference to the holy baths at Prayag was perhaps by the Chinese traveller Huiyen Tsang (Xuanzang) in 644 CE while recording his observations during his stay of 16 years in India.

The path to the Kumbh becoming an "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" as UNESCO recognises it, was laid by the British in 1870 when the Kumbh Mela is said to have got its name. The British, after the experience of 1857 (First War of Independence) and wary of violence by uncontrolled crowds, extended support to the organisers of the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad.

It was also an opportunity for them to earn revenue through taxes on pilgrims, service providers such as barbers, and traders. The melas of Haridwar, Nashik (Trimbakeswar) and Ujjain—the four places where, in mythology, the nectar (amrit) fell when the asuras were fleeing with it—were eventually brought under the Kumbh name.





The British fear of violence was not misplaced for one other reason: the warring monastic groups belonging to the various akharas, which in the early times took the lead in organizing the Kumbh. The akharas argued, sometimes violently, over which of them got precedence for the bathing ritual. Eventually, through British mediation in 1870, an order was agreed upon.

The akharas, said to number 13 now, are an important tradition of the Kumbh Mela, and their monks (Naga sadhus) held centre stage at the bathing melas, managing the crowds, and meeting and blessing pilgrims. The melas were also a main place of recruitment to the Naga Sadhu fold. The akharas and the Naga Sadhus—celibate yogis who have renounced normal living and are adept in martial arts—trace their origins, according to historical writing, to the philosopher-saint Adi Sankara in the 8th century, and at his behest the sadhus took on the role of protectors of the faith.

They smear ash all over their naked bodies—some wear loin cloth and others not even that after they have achieved a certain spiritual detachment from earthly rules—as protection from the cold and live a secluded life away from the public glare.

They number around 2 lakh and the Kumbh, where they lead the snan rituals, is perhaps the only occasion when they meet the common people; during the 2025 Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj they were the cynosure of the television channels.

The 2025 Maha Kumbh was unique in more ways than one. More than 64 crore people took the holy dip during the six shahi snans—on January 13 (Paush Purnima), January 14 (Makar Sankranti), January 29 (Mauni Amavasya), February 3 (Basant Panchami), February 12 (Maghi Purnima), and February 26 (Maha Shivratri). That constitutes around 50 per cent of the 1.2 billion Hindus around the globe. But what made this Maha Kumbh unique was the fact that it marked the completion of 12 Purna Kumbh Mela cycles, or 144 years since a particular celestial alignment of planets, and specifically Jupiter, with respect to the Sun and the Moon.

Predictably, the Sun, the moon, and Jupiter, and the number 12, are important factors in deciding the dates of the Purna Kumbh Mela at the four river sites. One revolution of Jupiter around the Sun takes the equivalent of 12 earth years, hence the 12-year cycle for the alignment of the heavenly bodies that marks the Purna Kumbh. For Hindus this is a time to repent for their sins by taking a holy dip at the Sangam in the hope of salvation and striving for a new path in the remaining life.◆





Rohan MacLaren
Paramarth Niketan Ashram

The Maha Kumbh Mela was not merely an event—it was a sacred immersion in divine grace that transcended the boundaries of the mind, body, and spirit. For 40 days, I stood as a witness to the profound interplay of devotion and transformation. The land of Prayagraj was alive, pulsating with the prayers and faith of over 600 million souls the very air itself carried the palpable charge of a transformative grace open and available to all.

Each time I stepped into the Sangam, where the sacred rivers—the Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati—converge, I felt as though new dimensions of my being were unlocked. Patterns and burdens that had lingered silently began to dissolve, offering space to witness something deeper—the experience of the Self, the eternal essence that resides beyond the mind.

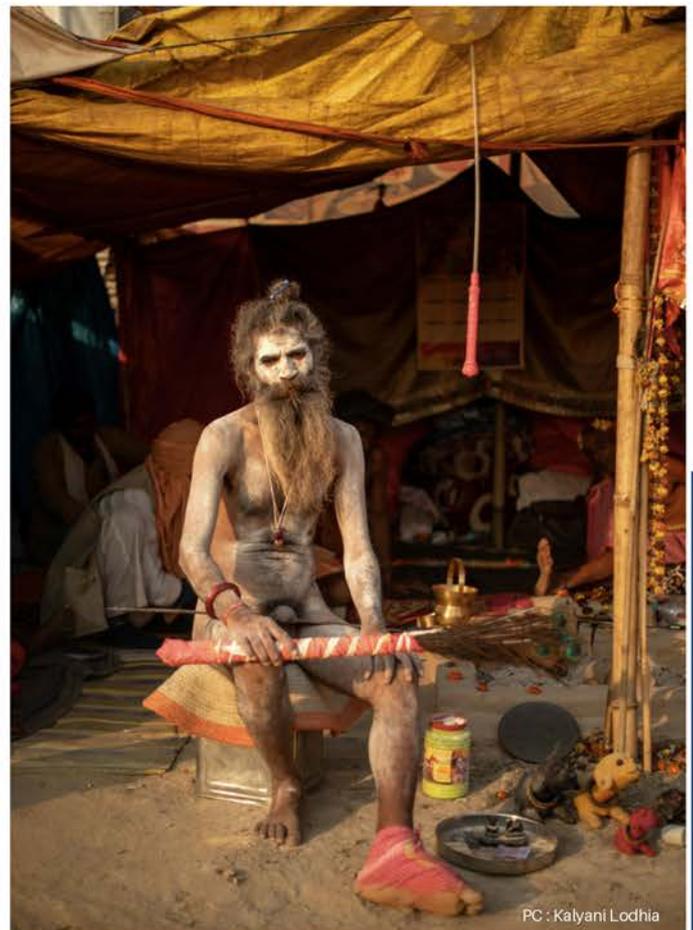


PC : Kalyani Lodhia

Voices from the Kumbh



PC : Kalyani Lodhia



PC : Kalyani Lodhia



PC : Kalyani Lodhia

I witnessed countless miracles unfold before my eyes. Devotees who had carried unseen weights for lifetimes found release, their hearts lightened by the grace that permeates the Kumbh, a grace that echoed in the silence between breaths, in the unspoken communion between souls gathered with a shared longing for liberation.

At Parmarth Niketan Kumbh Camp, we had the opportunity to sit in the divine presence of Pujya Swamiji, Sadhviji, Sri Prem Baba, and many other realised Masters. Experiencing their Presence was like entering a divine garden of wisdom, with each master offered a unique fragrance of wisdom and grace. I was reminded of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching that true wisdom resides in silence—the ineffable presence one can taste simply by being near the divine.

As we all step away from the banks of the Sangam, the call to us all is to carry the blessing of this transformative grace of the Kumbh and to weave this love and wisdom into our lives — and the opportunity that each thought, word, and action brings. ◆



PC : Kalyani Lodhia



PC : Kalyani Lodhia

Voices from the Kumbh

Faces . Faces everywhere. Faces with elation , excitement , anxiety, exhaustion, panic , joy and more that can't be expressed. Miles and miles of traffic jam , miles and miles of people walking , young and old , men and women! All the roads led to one mesmerizing destination ' Maha Kumbh '. We were also one of those millions to experience the blissful nectar. After hours of travel and wait the first sight of The Ganges was beyond imagination. In the dreaded cold night, it was a great challenge to decide, if to take a dip or not . It was so inviting and fearing. Once the first dip is done the rest are divine. And in the Sangam the next day when we could see the Ganga and Yamuna's confluence we could well understand the excitement and elation of everyone. Families gathered together to offer sarees and shringar to Ma Ganga. Flowers and lamps set afloat. Milk and sweets were poured into her. Eyes swelling with tears and hands joined in gratitude all of us had the holy dip . None in the generation 144 years ago none for the next 144 years . We , are the chosen ones and we are the blessed ones. All the roughness of the travel vanished into thin air. Though we were surrounded by millions of people what we felt within was nothing but thankfulness. ◆



Anuradha Ganesh

The sun blazes as our little wooden boat jostles a crush of dingies to dock at the confluence of three holy rivers. We twelve passengers scramble barefoot over two small crafts onto a pontoon crowded with wet grinning pilgrims.

These strangers, reach to ease us into the fast-flowing Ganges and Yamuna at this mid-river sandbar. Around us, hundreds of Hindus immerse themselves in the knee-high sacred waters to purify their souls, held up by friends or other pilgrims.

The energy buzzes – vibrating inside and out. A beach party of gleeful new friends splash and laugh in sun-dazzled waves, sharing this indelible moment of collective bliss. ◆



Dr. Elizabeth Coffey

Voices from the Kumbh

When my wife first mentioned her wish to attend Mahakumbh last August, I knew I had to take her. Though we didn't plan in advance, we made it at the last moment—and what an experience it was!

Despite all the social media complaints about crowds and heat, we had no second thoughts. The sheer scale of the event was overwhelming yet awe-inspiring. Millions gathered, not just from India but from across the world, bound by faith and devotion. The collective belief, the energy, and the unity were beyond words.

Kudos to the government for the meticulous planning and execution. Yes, with such a massive crowd, minor hiccups are expected, but nothing that took away from the divinity of the moment. Standing there, amidst the chants and the flowing river, I felt something shift within—a deep sense of peace, an unshakable faith, and a reminder that beyond all differences, we are all one. ◆



C M Vivek

The holy bath at the Triveni Sangam was nothing short of electric, transporting me to a different sense of liberation and release. As I joined the throngs of devotees, and as I dipped my body into the cool, sacred waters, a deep sense of peace enveloped me. It was as though all my worries and distractions were washed away in that one simple act.

The Maha Kumbh is not just about the holy dip; it's a celebration of life, faith, and the pursuit of enlightenment. During my visit, I witnessed several key rituals that are an integral part of the Mela.

The various akharas (spiritual orders) came together, each one with its own distinct traditions, robes, and rituals. The ganga aarti, a tradition carried out every evening was a testament to the faith, reverence and trust of people in the holy river Ganges.

In all these activities there was an immense peace and a higher spiritual order at work, with no jostling or soliciting, people were peacefully going about their own inner journey.

Attending the Maha Kumbh Mela was not just about witnessing a religious event; it was about experiencing a shift in perspective. As I left the Kumbh Mela, I carried with me a sense of renewal, a deep understanding of the importance of introspection, and a reminder to focus on the spiritual journey rather than the material distractions of life. ◆



Dr. Rajashree Krishnaswamy

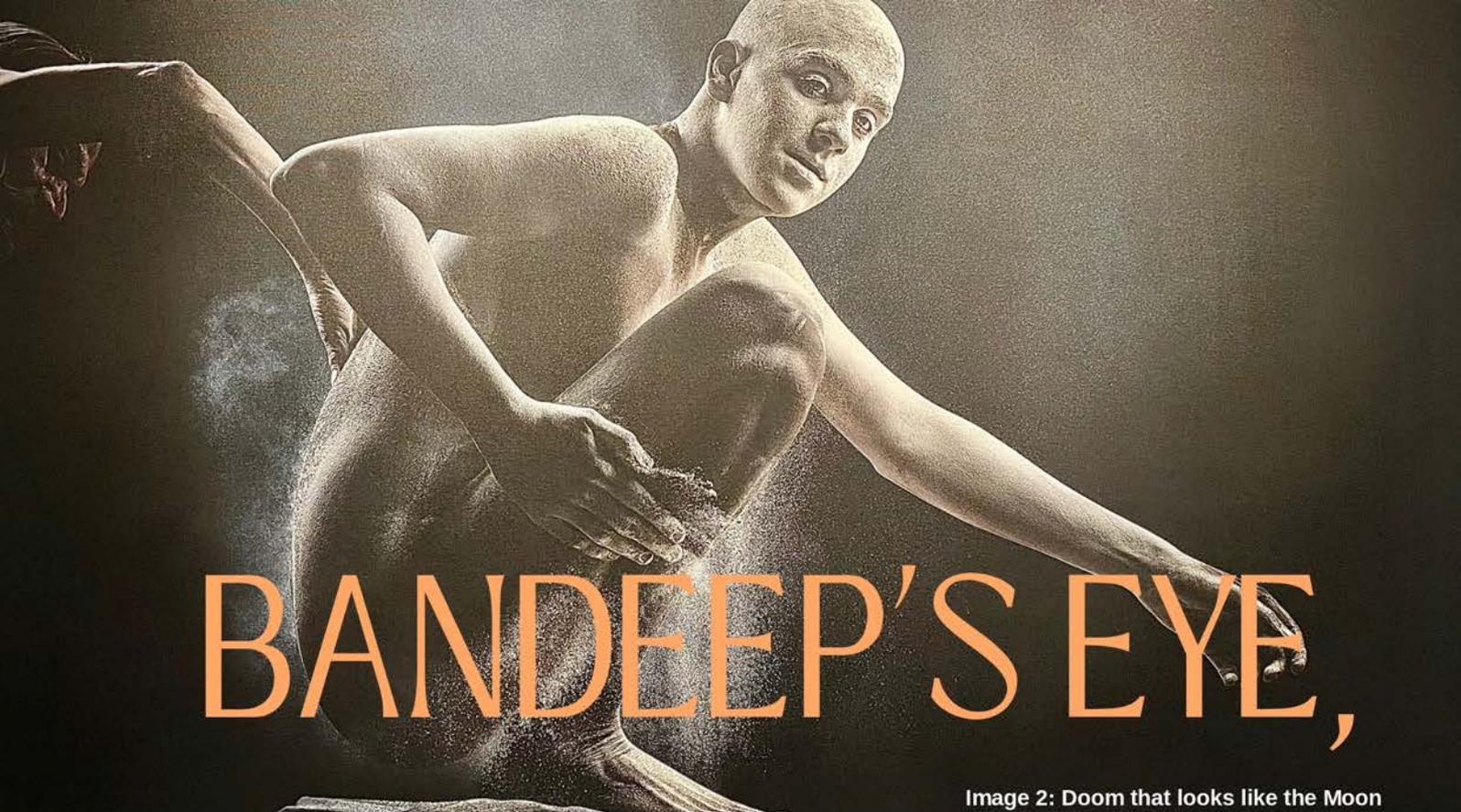


Image 2: Doom that looks like the Moon

BANDEEP'S EYE,

MORE THAN

MEETS THE EYE

Mihir Srivastava

Bandeep Singh is India's best photographer of his generation blessed with divine sight; he sees in the way very few can. He's not doped but high on life. The genius of the man lies in his eyes.

And Bandeep has the uncanny ability to capture his vision by a camera, which is an extension of his eyes.

He hones the images and makes the occult accessible to all and sundry. His pictures then become an experience, manifesting the unmanifest. The evidence is his show *Bhasmang*—The way of the Naga Sadhus.

I set out to describe something that doesn't lend itself to words. Bandeep's eye—the bridge between the mortal and the occult.

It is difficult to describe the indescribable, but Bandeep's pictures came to my rescue. I have picked a few to interpret. It was not easy because every time I walked through the show '*Bhasmang*' that has 34 images of the Naga Sadhus, a different image would enthrall me, and struck a chord. Therefore, my choice is not hierarchical but random in nature. And randomness is the order of the universe epitomised by the life of a Naga Sadhu. Soaking in images, beautifully radical and radically beautiful, I get a glimpse of how Bandeep sees. And his area of enquiry, the cult of the Naga Sadhus was challenging, to put it mildly, for they are not models, and they do and do not do things for no rational reasons

. Bandeep was able to make them face the camera. This is easier said than done. He's a bit of a charmer too. The Nagas Sadhus would be equally amazed to see these images like all of us.

Dispossession is the greatest possession they say, a rich man is endowed with santosh dhan or contentment. The way of the Naga Sadhus is a way of life that makes them the richest people, for they don't have a need, or greed, or ambition, are emaciated from the conditionality of living a mortal life in a social normative set up.

They shun clothes and live in the present moment that extends over a lifetime. They play the game without being a player. They have nothing to gain or lose. They celebrate their being in sync with the cosmic energy, epitomise and dissolve all paradoxes at the same time. They are the followers of Shiva. And to capture them in the way Bandeep did, one has to be a bit of Naga oneself. Fairly evolved, I know for sure he's a Sufi.

I have been documenting people in the nude by way of pencil sketches for more than two decades, and I have come to understand that my subjects reveal a part of me to me in their bareness.

When I look at the images of the naked sages, young and old, brawny or degenerating, I see the beauty that is devoid of vanity, experiential, intriguing, provocative, riveting, and humbling as well. I see their dynamic energy as a static spectacle. And it's not about me anymore, but more. Bandeep's eye, I reemphasise, has demystified the mystics.

Iconic are these images, will remain synonymous with the Naga-hood in the years to come. A visual journey into an age-old tradition where the naked sadhus 'wear infinity' like a blanket, as Bandeep puts it, symbolised by smearing bhasma—the ash of a yagana (the holy fire), which can also be a funeral pyre. Ash is real, rest is maya (illusion). The Naga Sadhus are aggressive because they detest attachments. The moment they feel for a thing or a person, or a sentiment, they rebuff it, rather vehemently. Emaciation from the worldly attachments engages them with the divine. Reality is malleable, one can manipulate reality by smoking pot, for instance, one of the many ways they do it. "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one," was famously said by Albert Einstein. The Nagas have known it for centuries.



Image 3: The Evil Good

. The reality in their mind is very difficult to fathom, these images, however, give you a sense of illusionary reality.

In the stillness of their consciousness, the Naga Sadhus witness the cosmos perform for them. I'm reminded of Fritjof Capra's seminal book

The Tao of Physics, where he explains that the metaphor of the cosmic dance—which is symbolised by Nataraja—thus unifies ancient mythology, religious art and modern physics. Bandeep's eye has accomplished something akin.

Image 1: A star in the womb of the cosmic darkness

The picture of an aged Naga Sadhu raising his right arm skyward; the wrinkles on his emaciated hands and face has a pattern, fractal, and to me look like the bark of a dead tree. Combustible like dry wood. Yearning to be converted into bhasma. Eyes radiating light, like a bright star in the womb of deep cosmic darkness, hope in adversity, vitality in the numbness. There's something trippy about the image, something that I have seen, perhaps experienced, and yet can't put a finger to it. The whole is in the hole of his eye socket. The Ananta (limitless) is confined in a sphere, a glimpse of the divine.

Image 2: Doom that looks like the Moon

There's beauty in the bareness. Austerity and youth and bhasma make a sculpture, for it calcifies in your mind. If Michelangelo was Indian, this would be his David. To me he's moon personified. On another occasion, it seemed like alluring kaal (death) manifesting as life force.

The dynamics of a soul relinquishing an old body to enter a new, the cycle of karma is the force behind. And the uncertainty is the possibility depicted by the dark, the hand extends to embrace uncertainty that has the possibility of renunciation or the moksha. The old life, as it fades away, prepares and propels a new life for another cycle of karma, a bit sceptical yet encouraging. The glitter in the eye is hope; bhasma has a dynamic vitality, only symbolising fallibility, mortality.

Image 3: The Evil Good

This is a powerful image. Mortal life is an intermingling of positivity and negativity, is either driven by love or fear, and the two aspects are so beautifully depicted in this picture. A naga sadhu, perhaps, is able to reconcile the two, annihilate the duality, into innate nothingness—dynamic.

I call negativity fear and positivity is love to me. Fear is always so close to you, like a monkey on your back. To act is to activate it, and the stillness of divine engagement makes fear robust love. Distractions are alluring, engagement has a high threshold, to cross it requires a certain discipline, unflinching faith in the good when surmounted by fear.

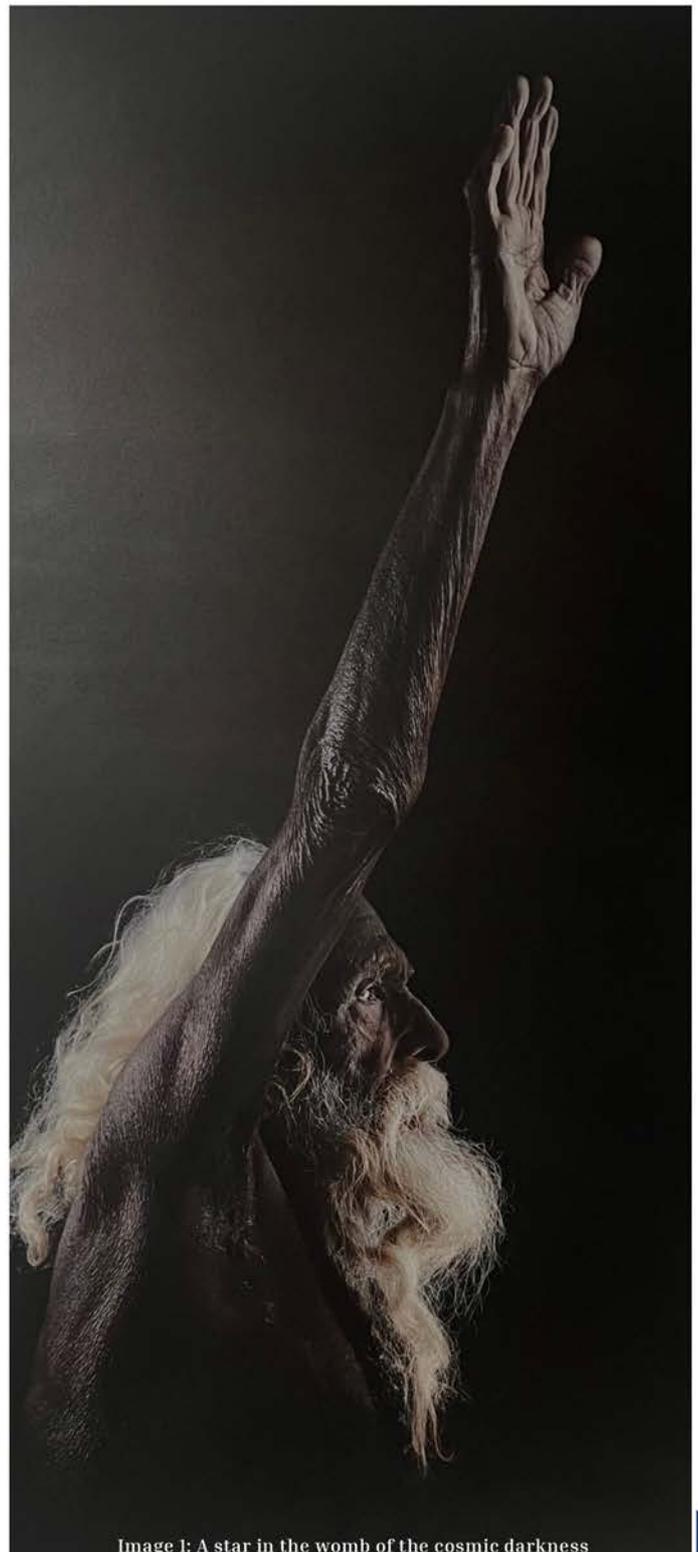


Image 1: A star in the womb of the cosmic darkness

And love is the absence of fear, but in this mortal life, fear is lurking around, waiting to pounce at the slightest opportunity. And sometimes, when conflicted, not acting is a great action. I see the poise of the dark sage so vitalising, darkness visible, festive tranquility. I love this image for it gives a foresight: evil is egotistical and love is annihilation of ego. Yet, they find a way to coexist.



Image 4: The Mergence

Perhaps, now I see what Bandeep saw. The door of perception has to be open to see what he saw. Bandeep's perception, it is fairly obvious, has no doors.

Here there's a mergence of the subject with the context--the Naga Sadhu with the tree and surroundings. And if you look intently at the context, you see the subject variously, multiple Naga Sadhus. And the subject, the body of the Naga Sadhu seems like an arid landscape, embodies the whole context and more.

Nakedness here seems so authentic. In this bareness, you see the same life-force flowing in the Naga Sadhu and the tree and the rest. The subject and the context are so distinctively similar, merging to become one: bhasma.

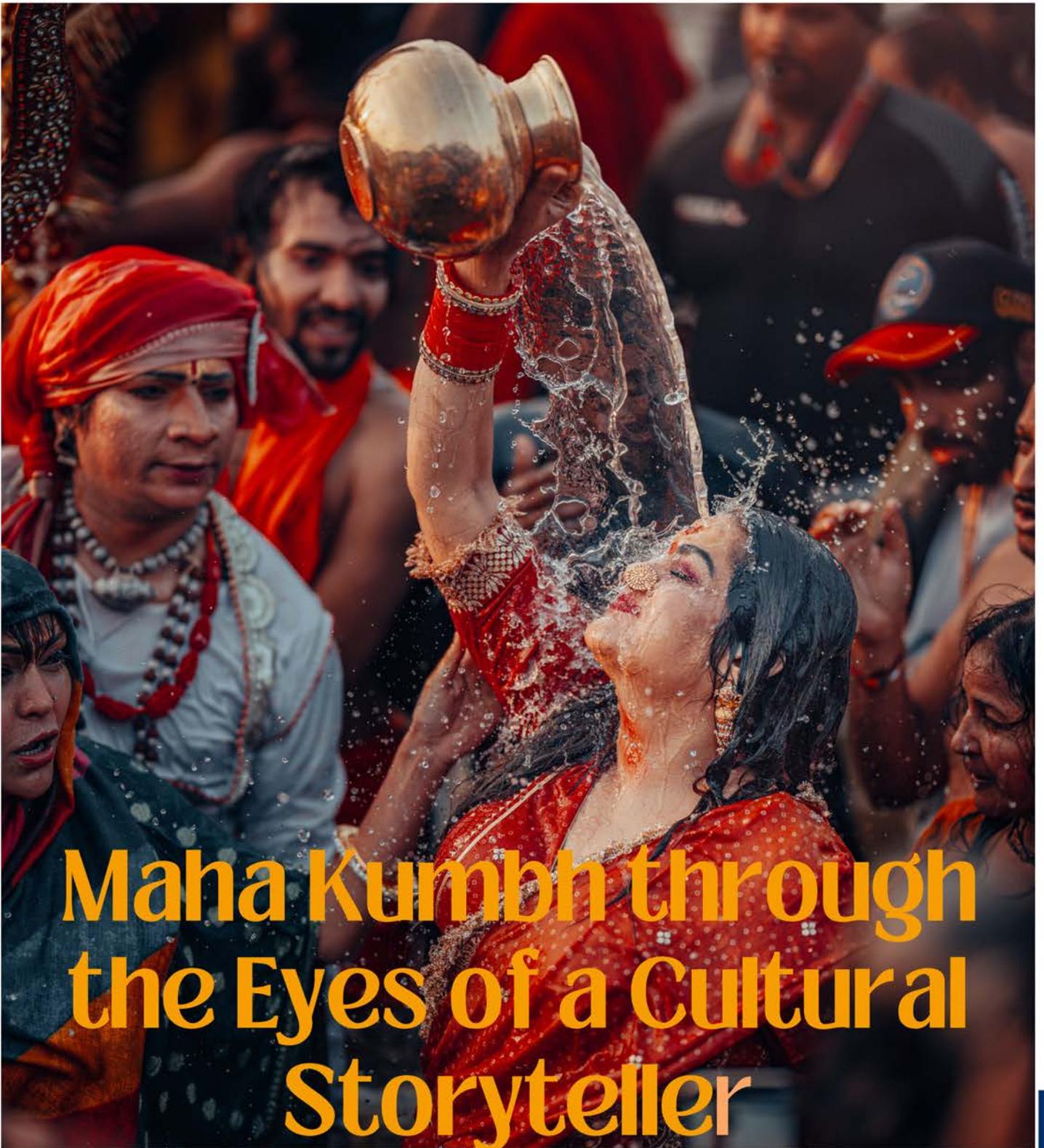
(first published in Vyakti.co.in) ◆



Bandeep Singh
Photographer, Group Photo Editor, India Today Group



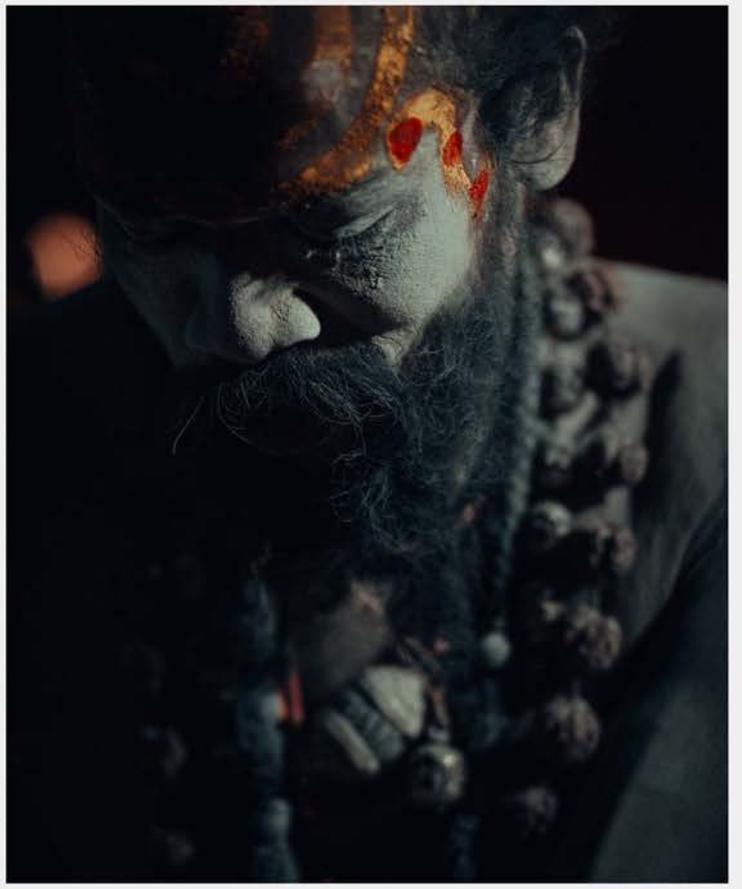
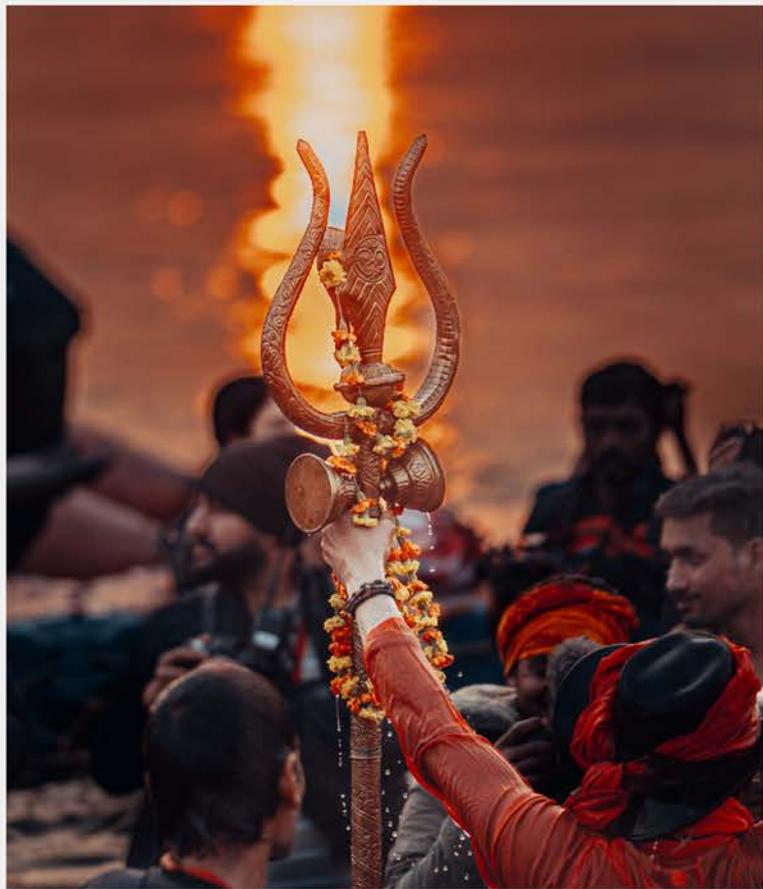
Mihir Srivastava is currently editor Vyakti.co.in. He has worked for more than two decades with leading national weeklies like Tehelka, India Today, Outlook and covered a host of issues ranging from politics, environment, wildlife and investigations. A painter by hobby—documented humanity by way of art, is curious by temperament. To him writing and art are mediums to document people and their times. Journalist by heart, he seeks inspiration in the name of public interest for his writings and art by poking his nose into others' affairs. Travelling is a serious business for him.



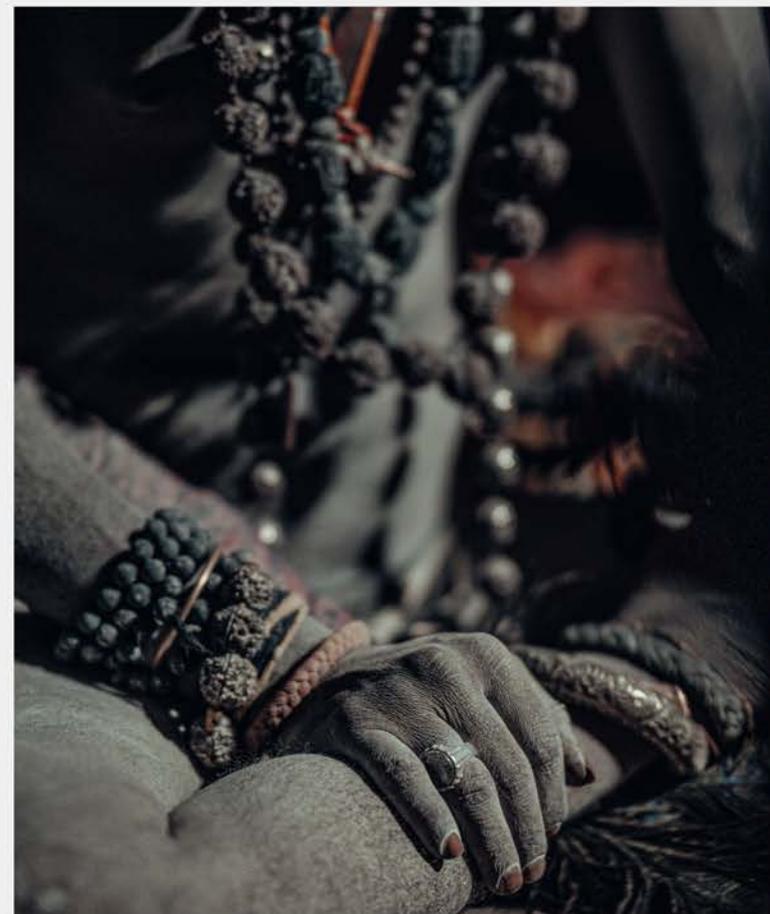
Maha Kumbh through the Eyes of a Cultural Storyteller

Jithin Jayanarayanan, a passionate young photographer from Thrissur, Kerala — a land known for its vibrant festivals, temple arts, and cultural depth — brings that same spirit into every photograph he takes. Growing up in a district where celebration and tradition are a way of life, it's no surprise that he developed a keen eye for capturing the soul of Indian culture.

In this special edition of Mahkum, we showcase Jithin's powerful visual journey through the Mahakumbh. With every click, he captures rare, sacred, and timeless moments—sadhus in quiet prayer, rituals along the Ganges, and the immense spiritual energy that flows through the gathering. His photographs are not just images; they are living stories of faith, tradition, and human connection. ♦

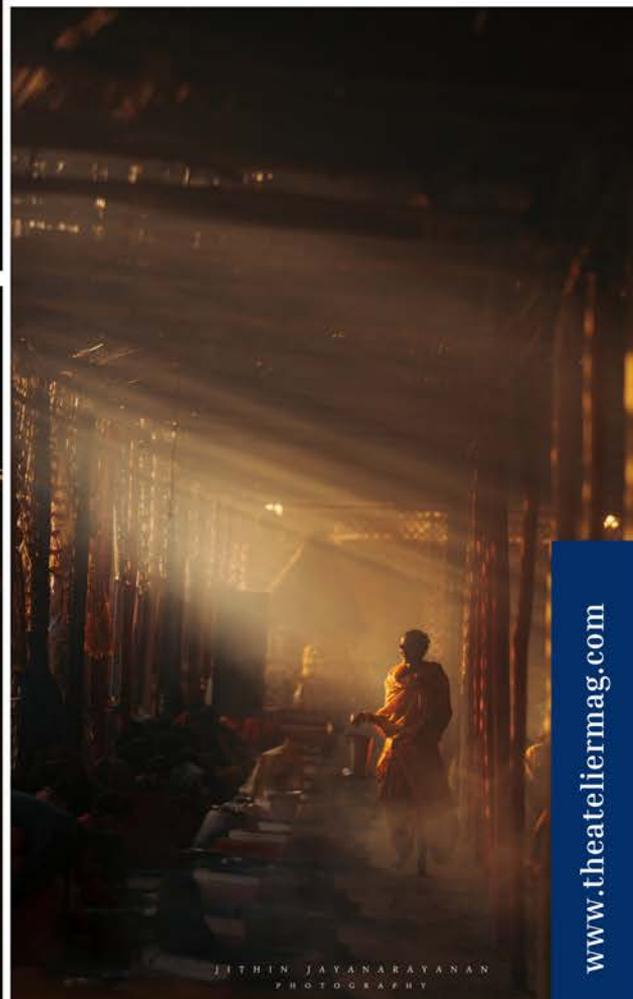


Experience Mahakumbh through the eyes of Jithin Jayanarayanan—where every frame speaks of devotion, color, and the timeless spirit of India.





Jithin Jayanarayanan travels across India documenting the essence of our heritage—from grand processions to silent reflections. His work stands as a vivid celebration of who we are, seen through a lens shaped by his cultural roots and love for storytelling.



JITHIN JAYANARAYANAN
PHOTOGRAPHY

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Performing Arts



Performing Arts – where movement heals, music connects, and stories breathe life. From classical traditions to contemporary expressions, every performance is a celebration of the human spirit. Discover how the arts build bridges to community, well-being, and joyful living.

THE PERFORMING ARTS - A THERAPY FOR MODERN TIMES

Preeti Sondur

BREAKING BOUNDARIES : THE JOURNEY OF CREATING AN ALL-WOMEN THEATRE GROUP

Ramanjit Kaur

THE PERFORMING ARTS A THERAPY FOR MODERN TIMES

Preeti Sundar

In an era marked by relentless schedules, digital overload, and rising stress levels, the concept of mental health and emotional well-being has taken center stage. While traditional therapies and counseling remain essential, an ancient yet ever-evolving remedy is making a profound impact: the performing arts.

Whether through dance, music, theatre, or storytelling, performing arts are emerging not just as creative outlets but as powerful forms of therapy for modern times.

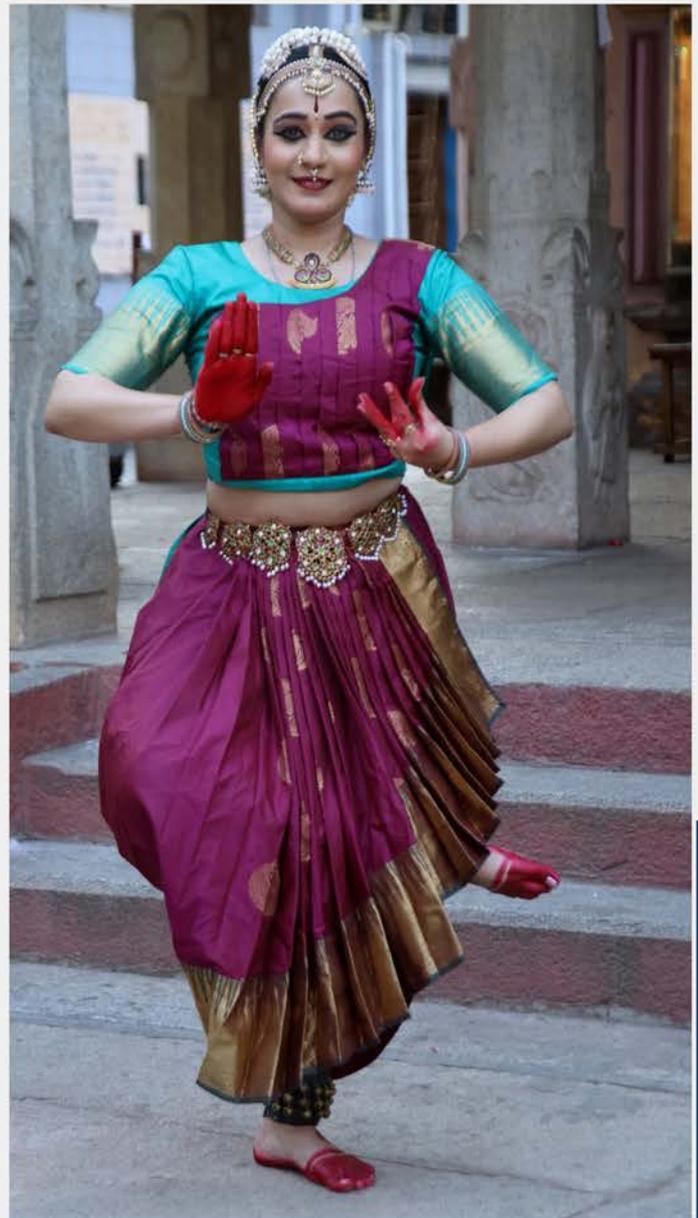
The Connection Between Performing Arts and Mental Health

The performing arts have long been intertwined with human expression and emotional release. From tribal dances of ancient civilizations to classical performances in royal courts, art has always served as a medium to convey emotions, share stories, and build communities.

Today, as mental health concerns rise globally, these traditional forms are gaining renewed recognition for their therapeutic benefits.

Engaging in performing arts activates the brain's reward system, releasing endorphins and reducing stress hormones. Studies have shown that activities like dancing, singing, or acting stimulate areas of the brain associated with memory, emotion, and sensory integration.

This means that not only do these activities uplift mood, but they also enhance cognitive function and emotional resilience.



As a Bharatnatyam dancer, I have personally experienced the transformative power of dance. Bharatnatyam, one of the oldest classical dance forms of India, is more than just a series of rhythmic movements — it is a spiritual journey, a form of storytelling, and a powerful emotional release.

One of the most captivating aspects of Bharatnatyam is the use of hastas (hand gestures). These hand movements, combined with facial expressions (abhinaya) and intricate footwork, create a language of their own — a silent yet profoundly expressive dialogue between the dancer and the audience. For example, the Pataka hasta (a flat hand) can signify anything from a cloud to the act of blessing, while the Katakamukha hasta symbolizes holding a garland or picking a flower.

When a dancer embodies a character — be it a sorrowful lover, a playful child, or a fierce deity — they channel intense emotions through these gestures and expressions. This act of 'becoming' another persona provides a safe space to process personal emotions. It is not uncommon for a dancer to emerge from a performance feeling emotionally lighter, as though a burden has been lifted.

For those battling anxiety, dance serves as a grounding force. The rhythmic footwork keeps one anchored to the present moment, while controlled breathing and fluid movements calm the mind. The very process of learning and perfecting a dance routine fosters discipline, patience, and self-awareness — crucial skills for managing mental health.

Theatre and Music: Emotional Catharsis and Connection



Theatre, another pillar of the performing arts, offers a unique form of emotional catharsis. Acting allows individuals to step outside their realities and explore the full spectrum of human emotions. For those struggling with emotional repression, this is a safe way to confront their inner struggles without judgment.

Music, too, has an undeniable therapeutic quality. Whether through composing, singing, or simply listening, music has the power to evoke memories, soothe frayed nerves, and create a sense of belonging. Group performances, such as choirs or orchestras, also foster collaboration and community spirit, combatting the isolation many feel in today's fast-paced world.

Art as a Social Connector

Performing arts do not just heal on an individual level — they also strengthen communities. Group dance classes, theater workshops, and musical ensembles bring people together, encouraging social interaction and empathy. The collective energy of a live performance, where both artists and audiences share an emotional journey, creates a bond that transcends words.

This communal aspect of art is crucial in a time when loneliness is a growing epidemic. The stage becomes a space where people connect, express, and heal together.

Performing Arts in Therapy: A Growing Movement

Recognising these benefits, many mental health practitioners are now incorporating art-based therapies into their practices. Dance movement therapy (DMT), drama therapy, and music therapy are growing fields backed by scientific research. These therapies empower individuals to explore their emotions through creative expression rather than conventional talk therapy alone. In educational settings, introducing children to performing arts early, fosters emotional intelligence, empathy, and confidence. In rehabilitation centers, art therapy aids trauma survivors in processing their pain in a non-verbal yet impactful way.

A Call to Embrace the Arts

In a world that often prioritises productivity over creativity, it is time we reframe how we view the performing arts. They are not mere hobbies or entertainment — they are vital tools for mental and emotional well-being. Whether one is an experienced artist or a curious beginner, engaging in dance, music, or theater can be a path to healing. For me, every time I step onto the stage as a Bharatnatyam dancer, I am not just performing — I am healing, growing, and connecting with something far greater than myself. And I firmly believe that the arts hold this power for everyone. ◆



Breaking Boundaries:

The Journey of Creating an All-Women Theatre Group

Ramanjit Kaur

The path that led to the creation of the All-Women Theatre Group has been one of passion, perseverance, and an unwavering belief in the transformative power of theatre.

Theatre has always held a unique ability to shape lives, challenge perspectives, and build connections that transcend boundaries. Yet, one truth kept surfacing: not everyone has access to this art form, and sometimes, it's the most unlikely people who need it the most.

When I first ventured into the world of theatre, I had the privilege of being mentored by some of the finest practitioners of our time. Under the guidance of Padmashree Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry, I learned to breathe life into my performances. Theatre became more than just an art form—it became a way of life. But my journey did not end there.

I was fortunate to receive further opportunities to deepen my craft, training under renowned theatre artists like Ariane Mnouchkine and Firenza Guidi. These experiences, coupled with studying at institutions like the London

Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), Birmingham School of Speech and Drama, and the Central School of Speech and Drama in the UK, significantly broadened my artistic horizons. The exposure to such diverse teaching methods helped me develop my own approach to theatre, one that celebrates the complexities of human emotion and expression.

The Creative Arts: Laying the Foundation

In 2002, I founded The Creative Arts in Kolkata. It was an effort to bring professional theatre training to those passionate about the craft but lacking resources or guidance.

Through this platform, I witnessed how theatre could awaken dormant creativity and become a tool for self-expression. What began as a small venture quickly grew as people from different walks of life came forward, eager to embrace theatre.

It was here that I began to see a gap in opportunities for women, particularly those who did not come from artistic backgrounds.



Despite the immense talent within these women, there was a lack of space for them to explore and showcase their potential. I realized that while theatre had the power to heal and empower, it was often inaccessible to women whose lives were confined by societal norms. It became clear that there was a need to create a space where they could step into the light and discover their voices.

Creating the All-Women Theatre Group: A Space for Self-Discovery

In 2012, the idea of the All-Women Theatre Group began to take shape. The women I worked with were not actors by profession. They were homemakers, interior designers, fashion and jewellery designers, teachers, counsellors, doctors, writers, and entrepreneurs. These women had spent their lives fulfilling roles that society deemed "appropriate" for their status, without a platform to express their creativity.

There was a dire need to create a space where women could explore their inner self, build confidence, and experience catharsis through the arts. I knew theatre could be transformative—a place where they could break free from societal constraints and speak their truths. At first, their steps into theatre were tentative, unsure of themselves and their capabilities, but I could see the spark of potential in them. They longed for a space where they could be unapologetically themselves.

Through rehearsals, improvisations, and script development, the women began to evolve as both performers and individuals. Theatre became a space for them to explore their emotions, fears, and aspirations.

It wasn't just about acting—it was about finding the courage to be themselves, to own their stories, and to find strength in their authenticity. For many, it became a form of liberation, a release for the pent-up emotions and frustrations they had carried for years.

The Challenges: Breaking Societal Boundaries

The journey was not without its challenges. Many of the women came from conservative backgrounds where theatre was seen as frivolous or inappropriate for women.

The very idea of a woman stepping onto a stage and performing in front of an audience was often met with skepticism, and sometimes even outright opposition.

They are the 'Nati Binodinis' of the 21st century. The women were told that theatre was not for them, that their place was in the home, adhering to traditional roles.



But despite these societal pressures, the women slowly shed their hesitations. They were no longer just playing roles—they were finding their voices. With each performance, they gained a newfound sense of ownership, confidence, and purpose. They began to realize that theatre was not just about entertainment—it was a tool for empowerment. By performing, they were not only telling stories—they were reclaiming their narratives, challenging societal norms, and redefining what it meant to be a woman.

The stage became their sanctuary, a place where they could feel seen and heard, a place where they were no longer confined by the limits placed on them by society.

The Power of Collaboration and Creation

One of the most enriching aspects of the group was the collaborative nature of our work. From the start, the creative process was open and participatory. The women were not just actors; they were co-creators.

They helped shape the stories we told, developed the characters they portrayed, and even contributed to writing the scripts. This sense of ownership made the work deeply personal, and the performances became more than just rehearsed lines—they were expressions of their own truths.

Through extensive reading, research, improvisations and group discussions, we developed productions that were deeply personal and reflective of their own experiences.

Plays like *Baawre Mann Ke Sapne*, *Simayon Se Parey*, *Beyond Borders*, *Burning Bubbles*, *The Dice of Desire* and others, became more than just performances.

They were windows into the lives, struggles, and triumphs of women across myriad canvases. Each play represented a collective effort to capture the essence of their voices, making them feel empowered, visible, and heard. These productions were not just about artistic achievement—they were about social change.

The National School of Drama: A Magical Moment

Our journey took a significant turn when we were invited to perform at the Bharat Rang Mahotsav International Theatre Festival at the National School of Drama (NSD). For the women, it was like stepping into a dream—a moment that felt like Alice in Wonderland. The grandeur of the event, the scale of the venue, and the energy of the audience left them in awe. They had never imagined that their stories would be shared on such a prestigious National platform, and it was a defining moment in their journey.

The performance itself was nothing short of spectacular. The group had worked tirelessly, and their passion and energy were evident in every scene. The audience response was overwhelming, and after the first show, the crowd demanded a second performance. Both shows received standing ovations, a testament to the power of their stories and the depth of their performances. It was a moment of triumph, not just for the women on stage, but for all those who had supported and believed in them.

This was the beginning of many more such moments to follow – like receiving the LAADLI National Award for Gender Sensitisation, being invited by SAARC and ICC, to perform at Colombo, Sri Lanka and International Theatre Olympiad at Jaipur.



The Impact: Creating a Ripple of Change

The All-Women Theatre Group is more than just a project. It is a testament to resilience, community, and self-expression.

The success of the All-Women Theatre Group extended far beyond the performances we delivered. It has had a broader impact on both the participants and the audience. These women, who had once been told that “good girls don’t act,” were now at the forefront of a social movement in the arts. They were rewriting the narrative of what it meant to be a woman in the 21st century.

Our performances resonated deeply with audiences. People began to see the power of women’s voices in spaces that had long been dominated by men. The group’s success sparked a ripple effect, inspiring other women to explore their creative potential, break free from societal constraints, and pursue their own passions.

Over the years, the group has continued to grow and evolve, with more than 250 women joining us. What began in 2012 has transformed into a movement—one that challenges conventions, gives voice to the voiceless, and creates lasting change. Theatre has become a space for self-discovery, healing, and empowerment, and it continues to change lives, one performance at a time.

Through this group, I have witnessed the magic that happens when women come together to share their stories. My journey has taught me that theatre is a space where everyone belongs, regardless of background or circumstance. It’s never too late to step onto the stage and take your place in the spotlight. ◆



Ramanjit Kaur is a Film and Theatre Actor/Director. She is the Founder Director, The Creative Arts and National President, Arts Leadership Council, Women Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Film Magic

Film and arts are the soul's mirror, where emotion, memory, and meaning converge in every frame and stroke. They unravel the seen and unseen, offering layered narratives that stir thought and awaken the senses.

Her.Water is a collection of initiatives designed to protect the environment, ranging from reforestation efforts to the incorporation of sustainable materials in daily life.

HER.WATER

Brenda Rodriguez

MAKING FILMS IN SINGAPORE CREATIVITY BEYOND CONSTRAINTS

Anindita Ghosh

WOMEN IN CINEMA - CHANGING DYNAMICS

Deepti Chawla

HER WATER

Brenda Rodriguez



"A blank page is always an opportunity. So when the water dries and the wall returns to white, it simply means more opportunities to paint. To paint freedom. What are you painting? Possibilities. What are you painting? Opportunities. What are you painting? The certainty that nothing, absolutely nothing, stays the same."

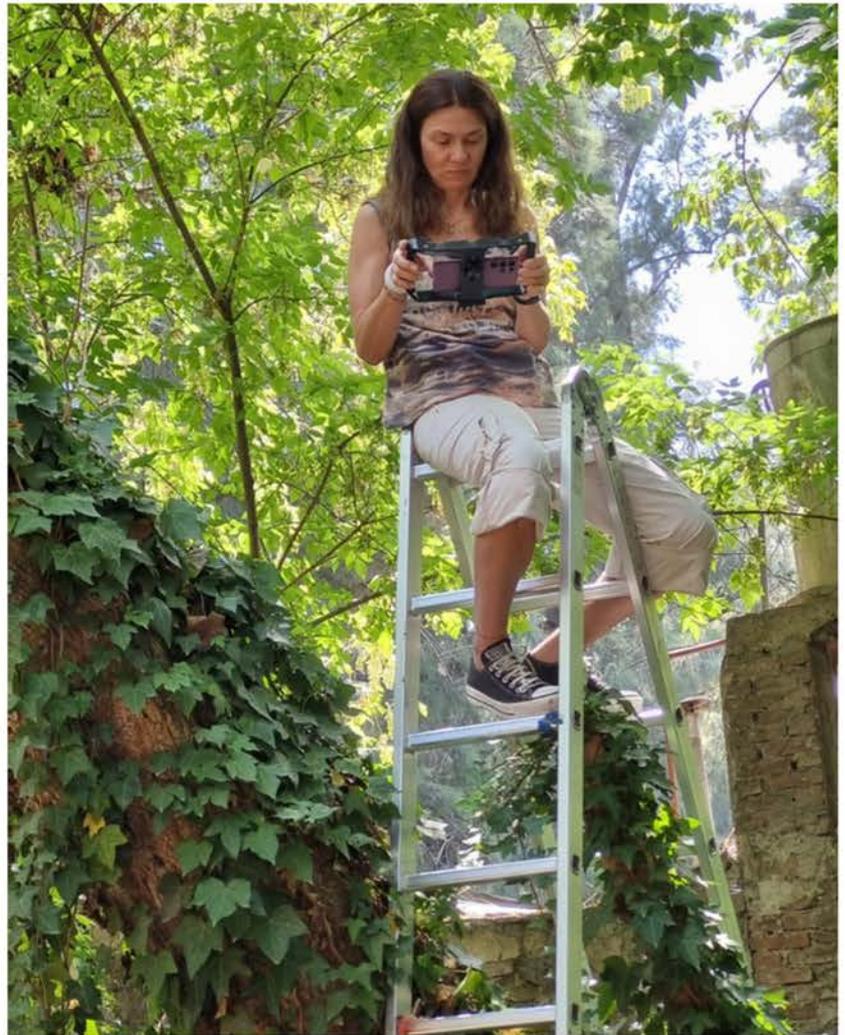
Brenda Rodriguez



ELLA.AGUA
HER.WATER — a music video
featuring Brenda Rodríguez.

Brenda Rodríguez paints with water —no ink, no pigment, just water on a plain white wall. Her evocative artwork is ephemeral, fading as it dries, returning the wall to its original state. This impermanence is not a loss but an invitation: to embrace change, to let go, and to see new possibilities.

Made in Argentina, ELLA.AGUA (HER.WATER) is a music video that captures Brenda's deep connection with water, both as an artist and as a person. Shot entirely on a cell phone using only natural light, the film was made in a single day on a minimal budget. What started as a simple documentation of Brenda's process quickly evolved into a visual exploration of transformation, impermanence, and renewal.



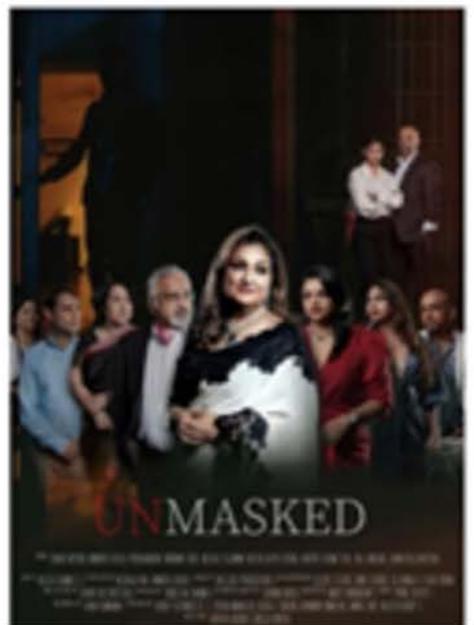
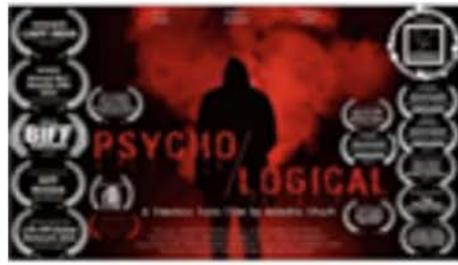
Brenda, as both artist and art director, shaped the film's aesthetic vision, while director Nora Dechant translated it into moving images. The result is a film that blurs the line between fiction and documentary, capturing the essence of water—not just as a subject but as a force of nature, a metaphor for life itself.

ELLA.AGUA is a short (four minutes, 40 seconds) silent film, which poignantly brings out the transience and revival of nature and life. Apart from being the official selection for some film and media festivals, it won Best International Short Film at the Sittannavasal International film festival, 2023 and Best Silent Short Film at the Chauri Chaura International Film Festival, India, 2024.

Co-producer, director, cinematographer and the person behind the camera, Nora Dechant began her career in 1992, working in television. With a degree in Film and Television Direction from C.I.C. (Centro de Investigación Cinematográfica), she has been a professor at the National University of Audiovisual Arts from 2005. She teaches and supports film projects of her students. Nora is also dedicated to social causes, especially education, environmental advocacy, and childhood development. ◆

Making Films in Singapore

Creativity Beyond Constraints



Singapore's film industry is a testament to resilience and creativity. With limited budgets and a relatively small local consumer base, local filmmakers face unique challenges. Yet, they persist, driven by a passion for storytelling and a desire to capture the diverse narratives of this multicultural nation. One filmmaker who embodies this spirit is Anindita Ghosh, a Singaporean-Indian Artist and Entrepreneur. Through her production house, ArcLight Productions, she has consistently challenged the norms of local filmmaking. Her films have earned 15 international awards across 14 countries and featured on platforms like Zee5 and Colors TV Asia Pacific, showcasing Singapore's talent on a global stage.

Anindita's vision aligns with Singapore's cultural ethos of unity in diversity. Her efforts towards bringing together artists of different backgrounds include multiple seasons of the annual family theatre festival, film anthologies, and a dance festival featuring national dances of 10 countries.

Her platforms not only entertain but also foster a deeper cultural understanding, thus enriching the local arts scene. Her events have been referred to by local media as "United Nations of Theatre in Singapore".

Anindita has taken initiatives in marketing, sourcing funds, and collaborating, inspiring local artists to believe that local stories can have universal appeal. Anindita also supports cross-border collaborations by bringing international artists to Singapore. Her efforts contribute to a vibrant arts ecosystem, inspiring new narratives and building a global community of storytellers. ◆



Anindita is a multi-disciplinary artist & entrepreneur based in Singapore. Award winning Actor (Love Yours Truly (2021), Unmasked (2023), Kathaah@8, Lizard on the Wall, Vesta)

Producer - Films : Commercial (Unmasked, Lifaafe, Papa Mio, PsychoLogical, Love Yours Truly, The Lighthouse, Put a Ring on It), Independent (Achaar); Mainstream (Mr. Chef - in production), International Theatre, Films and Arts events - Timeless Tales Theatre Festival (2019, 2020), Film Edition (2021), Rhythm International Dance Festival (2019)



WOMEN IN CINEMA-CHANGING DYNAMICS

Deepthi Chawla

Over the past decade and a half, the cinematic world has witnessed a notable evolution in the representation and influence of women. From behind the camera to the red carpet, women's roles have expanded. Yet, challenges persist. As we approach 2025-2026, the intersection of gender dynamics and technological advancements, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), presents both opportunities and complexities for women in the film industry.

In 2024, gender parity in leading roles in film was achieved for the first time in recent history. However, that progress was not reflected at this year's Oscars. A majority of the winners at the Academy Awards were men and, predominantly white.

According to data from USC Annenberg, women made up just 27% of the nominees, while men accounted for 73%. The situation was even more disheartening when it came to racial diversity—89% of all nominees were white, leaving only 11% of nominees identified as racially or ethnically diverse.

The lack of diversity was particularly evident in behind-the-scenes categories. Research from USC Annenberg highlighted that, major technical categories such as Best Cinematography and Best Visual Effects, had no women or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous of people of Colour) nominees. Additionally, the Best Director category included only one woman, with no BIPOC directors nominated.

This lack of representation among nominees is not a reflection of lack of talent; it points to deeper systemic issues about who gets the opportunity and empowerment to work in the entertainment craft business.

In the early 2000s, female representation in leading film roles was markedly low. A study analyzing lead roles by genre and decade revealed that in the 2000s, only 6% of top movies were female-led. This figure improved to 34% in the 2010s, indicating a positive trend. However, this progress has been uneven. In 2018, women comprised 8% of directors, 16% of writers, and 26% of producers in the top 250 grossing films. Such statistics highlight ongoing disparities, especially in key creative roles.



The AI Paradox: Under representation and Emerging Opportunities

The portrayal of AI professionals in cinema offers a lens into societal perceptions and industry biases. A study analyzing depictions of AI scientists found that only 8% of AI professionals in films are women, with half of these characters depicted as subordinate to male counterparts. This underrepresentation extends to real-life AI roles, where women constitute less than one in five AI engineers. However, AI also holds transformative potential for women in filmmaking. Embracing AI tools can enable female filmmakers to undertake projects that were previously challenging, fostering innovation and diversity in storytelling. By leveraging AI, women can enhance various aspects of production, from script analysis to post-production, thereby expanding creative possibilities and operational efficiencies.



Recent Milestones and notable Gaps

The year 2024 marked a significant milestone, with female protagonists appearing in 42% of top-grossing films, achieving parity with male leads. Additionally, the London Film Festival showcased 44% of films created by female and non-binary directors, up from 39% the previous year. Despite these advancements, the industry continues to grapple with gender disparities. Notably, only 17% of Oscar nominees since 1929 have been women, with less than 2% being women of colour.

Charting a Course Forward

To build upon recent progress and address persistent inequities, several measures are essential:

1. **Education and Training:** Investing in education and training programs tailored for women can bridge the technical skills gap, particularly in emerging areas like AI and digital media.
2. **Mentorship and Networking:** Establishing mentorship networks connects emerging female talent with industry veterans, fostering guidance, support, and opportunities for collaboration.
3. **Policy Advocacy:** Advocating for policies that promote equitable hiring practices, equal pay, and representation ensures systemic changes within the industry.
4. **Embracing Technology:** Encouraging women to adopt and innovate with AI and other technologies can lead to new storytelling methods and production efficiencies, positioning them at the forefront of industry evolution.

The journey of women in cinema is characterized by significant strides and enduring challenges. As the industry stands on the cusp of further technological transformations, embracing change while addressing systemic biases will be crucial.

By implementing strategic measures, women can not only navigate but also shape the future of cinema, ensuring their narratives and perspectives continue to enrich the global cultural tapestry. To move forward, the industry must prioritize behind-the-scenes representation by empowering women and BIPOC filmmakers in key roles such as directors, producers, and decision-makers. Investing in diverse representation is not only the right thing to do, but also essential for attracting more moviegoers. Ignoring this need is bad for business, and for the film industry to thrive, it must recognize this reality. ◆



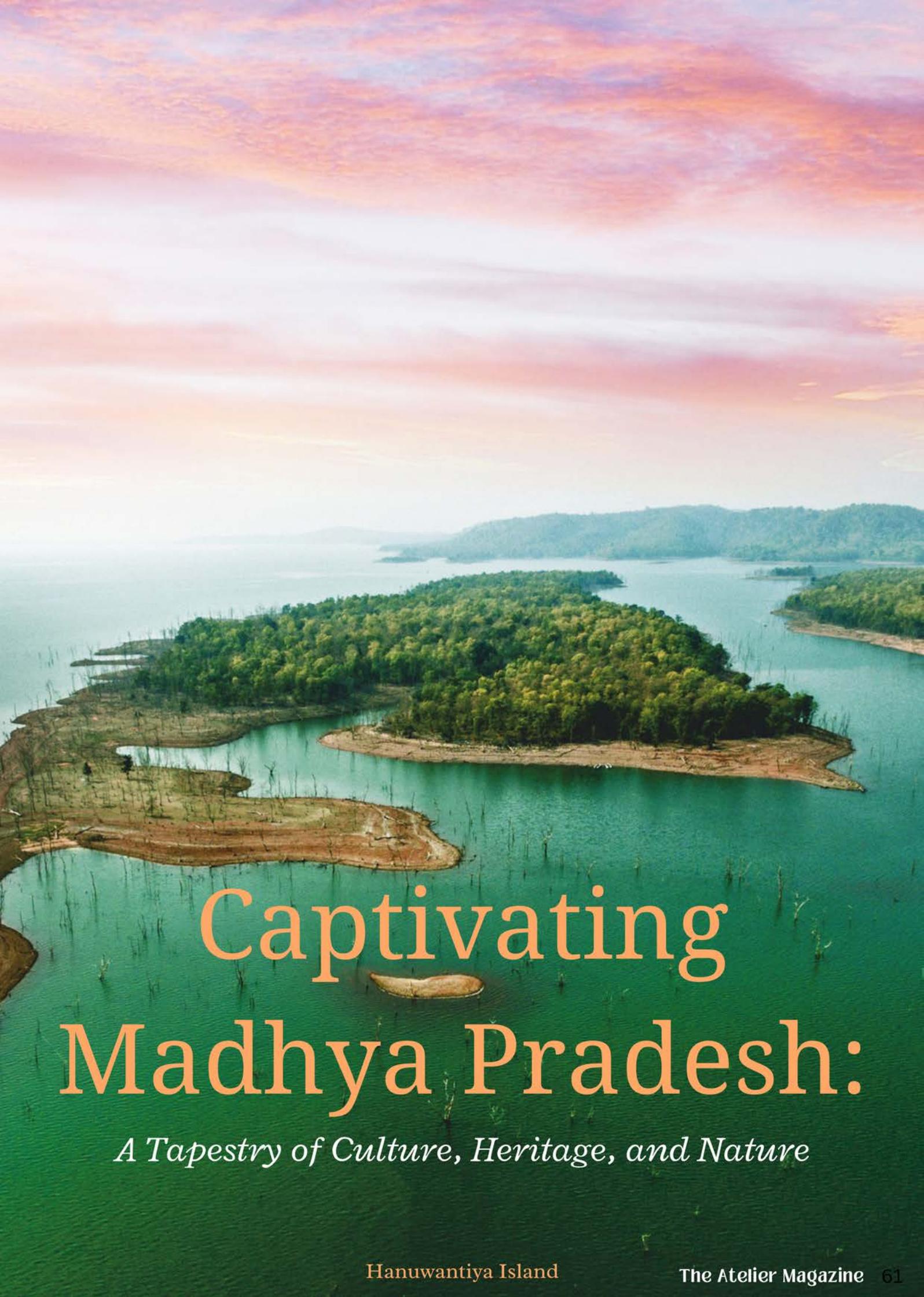


Deepti Chawla is an Indian female writer-director with over 20 years of filmmaking experience. A post graduate in Film Production from Mumbai University. Her debut film, Little Boy (2008), won the IDPA Silver Award. She has developed projects at Torino Film Lab, Canneseries, and the London Film School. Her latest short film- Absent Ties is a survival drama in festivals currently. As an Executive Producer on The Shameless (Winner, Cannes 2024) and Associate Producer on Sultana's Dream (Winner Annecy 2024), she champions nuanced storytelling.



Pc:Freeipik

The facts and views in this article are provided by the author



Captivating Madhya Pradesh:

A Tapestry of Culture, Heritage, and Nature



Madhya Pradesh, often called the "Heart of India," is a captivating fusion of rich cultural heritage, breathtaking history, and stunning natural beauty. It is a must-visit destination for those in search of a journey that blends time, spirituality, and adventure. From the majestic forts and grand palaces of Gwalior and Mandu to the architectural wonders of Khajuraho, Bhimbetka, and Sanchi—UNESCO World Heritage Sites that speak to the state's deep historical roots—Madhya Pradesh entices history enthusiasts, archaeologists, and culture lovers alike. For wildlife enthusiasts and nature seekers, Madhya Pradesh presents an unparalleled experience with its world-famous national parks, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, and Panna. These verdant sanctuaries offer a rare chance to explore a rich diversity of flora and fauna, making the state a premier destination for eco-tourism. Beyond its natural beauty, Madhya Pradesh also has a wealth of spiritual and wellness offerings. From revered temples to serene meditation retreats and ancient religious sites in Ujjain, Omkareshwar, and Orchha, the state provides the perfect setting for those in search of peace, reflection, and inner harmony.



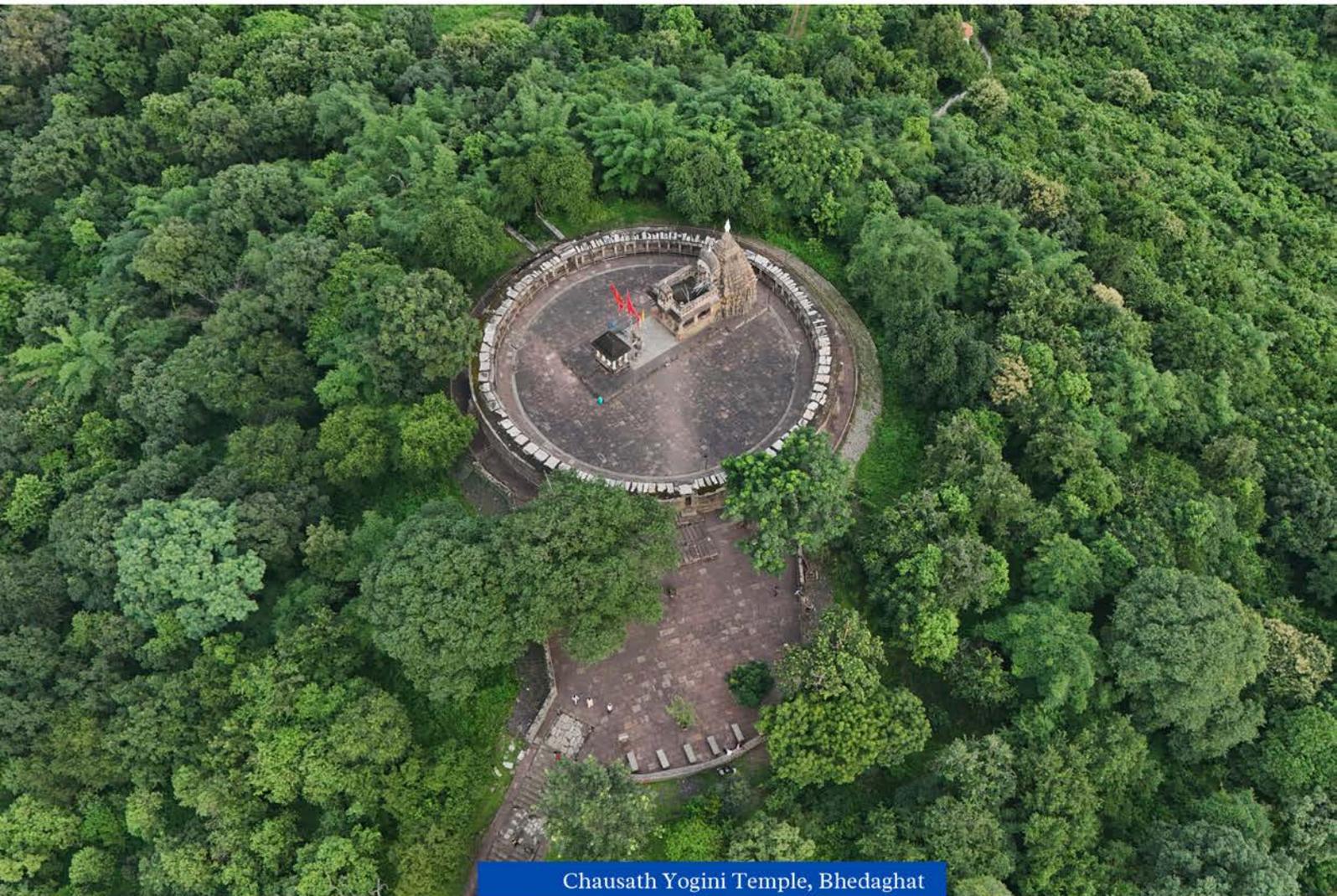
"Madhya Pradesh is more than a destination — it's a sensory and soulful awakening. Our vision is to establish the state as India's cultural and cinematic hub, where timeless heritage meets contemporary experiences. From sacred rivers to ancient monuments, dense forests to vibrant streets, Madhya Pradesh offers a canvas for stories, memories, and discovery. We are shaping a future where tourism bridges tradition and transformation."

Madhya Pradesh promises a journey that seamlessly intertwines history, culture, nature, and cinema — offering an unforgettable experience for every traveller"

*Sheo Shekhar Shukla I.A.S
Principal Secretary
Culture, Tourism and Religious Trust & Endowments
Govt. of Madhya Pradesh*



Chausath Yogini Temple, Mitaoli



Chausath Yogini Temple, Bhedaghat

Cultural enthusiasts will be enchanted by the rich traditions and history that define Madhya Pradesh. The state's vibrant festivals, such as the Khajuraho Dance Festival and the Tansen Music Festival in Gwalior, offer a stunning display of its artistic heritage through captivating performances of dance, music, and craftsmanship. Indore, the commercial heart of the state, delights food lovers with its delectable street food, while Ujjain attracts millions of pilgrims during the traditional Kumbh Mela. Local markets buzz with life, offering handwoven textiles, exquisite pottery, and intricate traditional jewelry, all of which reflect the region's unmatched artisanal craftsmanship.

With 18 UNESCO-recognized heritage sites, Madhya Pradesh is a true cultural treasure trove. Notable among them are the Khajuraho Group of Temples, Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, and the Buddhist Monuments of Sanchi, all featured on the World Heritage Sites' Permanent List. In addition, 15 other sites—such as the Ashokan Edict Sites, Chausath Yogini Temples, and the Bundela Palace-Fortresses—are included on the Tentative List. These landmarks, rich in historical, architectural, and cultural significance, make the state a captivating

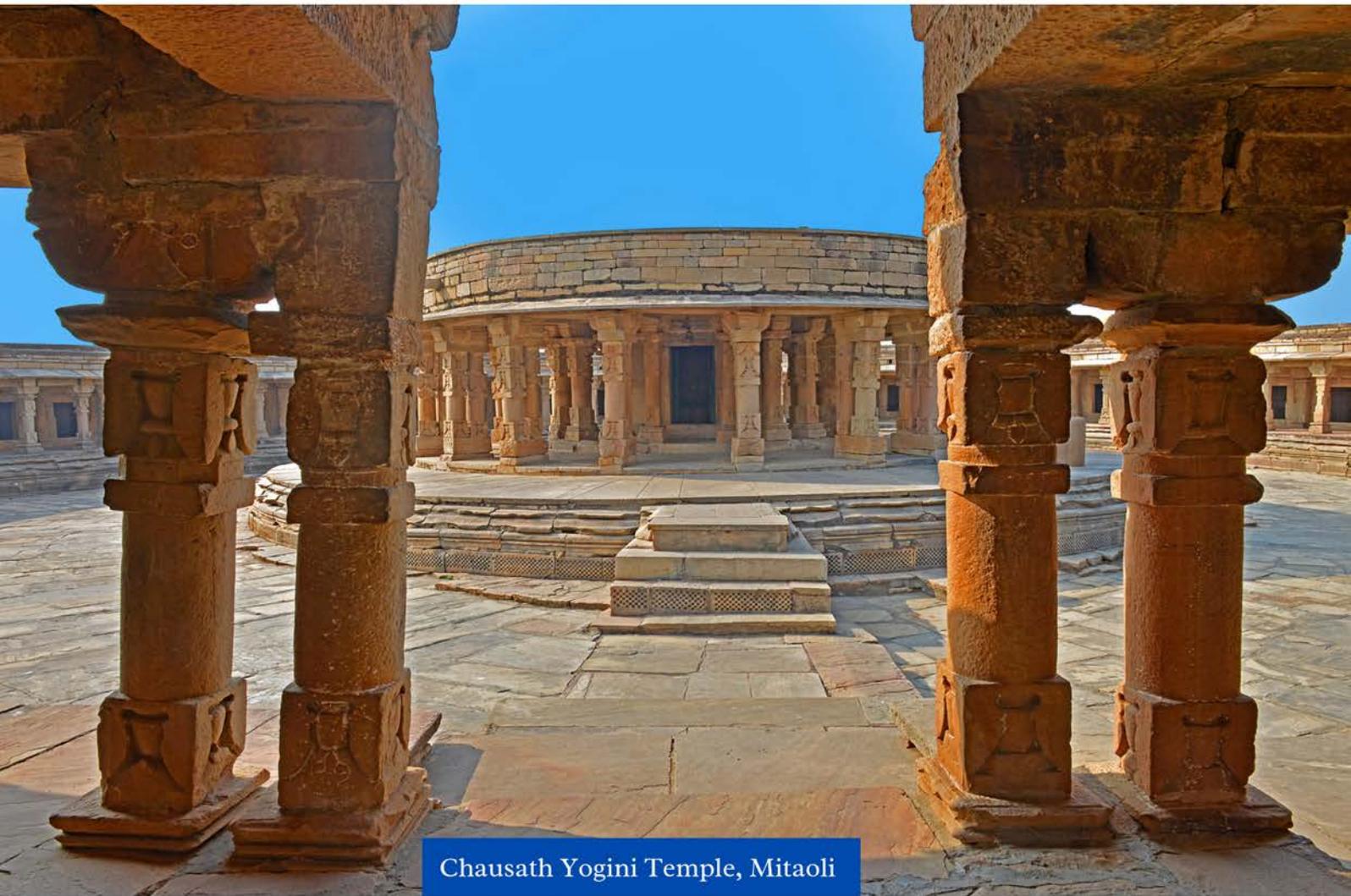
destination for heritage tourists and history buffs alike. Madhya Pradesh is rapidly emerging as a premier hub for the film industry, thanks to its breathtaking landscapes, serene atmosphere, and excellent accessibility.

The state's diverse offerings—ranging from ancient forts and palaces to dense forests and picturesque vistas—make it an ideal filming destination. Over 350 film projects, including well-known titles such as *Lion*, *A Suitable Boy*, *Stree*, and *Panchayat*, have been shot in Madhya Pradesh.

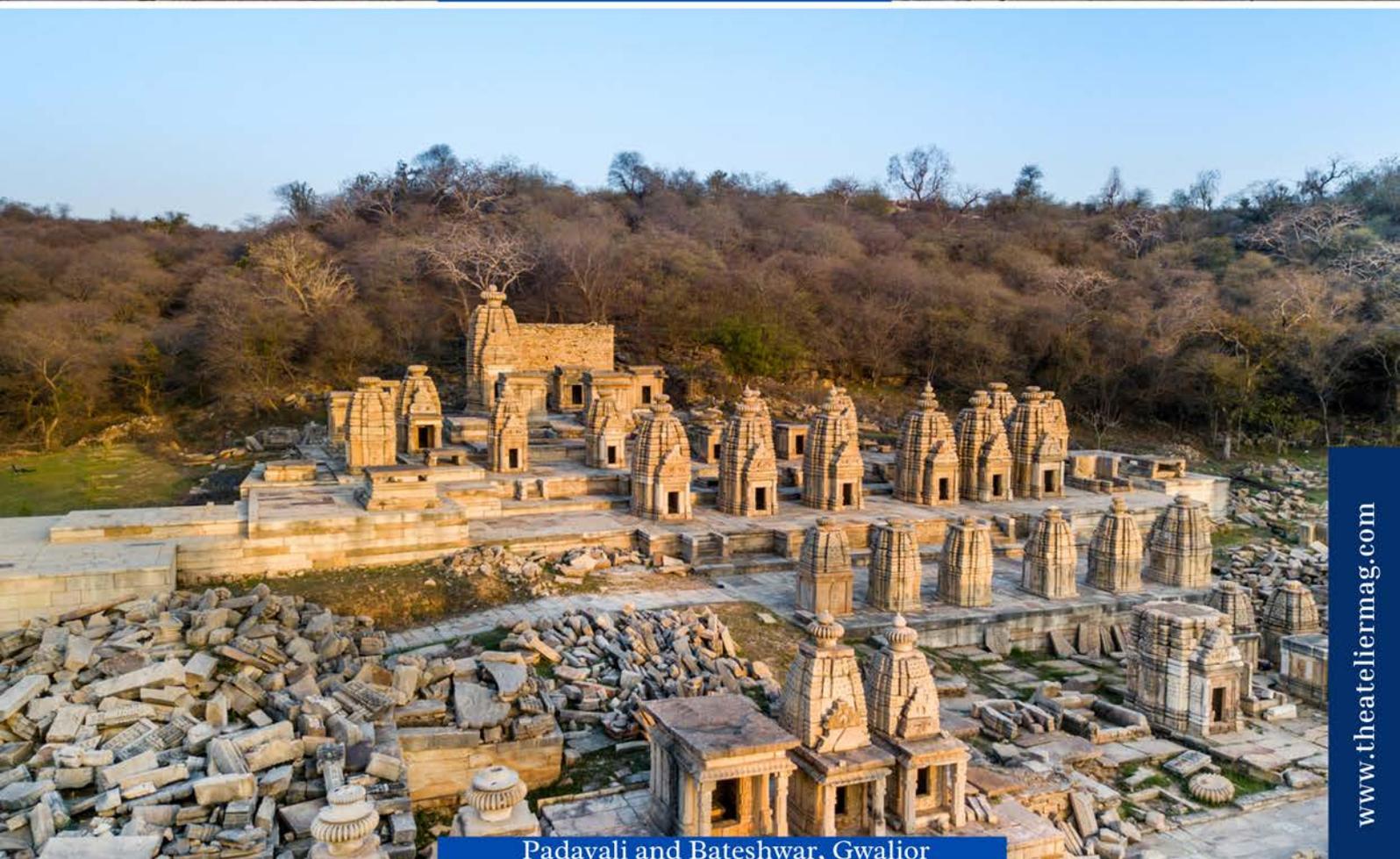
With state-of-the-art production facilities, a skilled local workforce, and cost-effective services, the state has successfully nurtured its film industry, ensuring a seamless and dynamic filmmaking experience.

In 2020, Madhya Pradesh launched its Film Tourism Policy to boost its global filmmaking profile by creating local jobs, improving film infrastructure, and showcasing the state's unique attractions.

This initiative earned the state the "Most Film-Friendly State" award in 2022. With the introduction of the MP Film Policy 2025, Madhya Pradesh continues to attract investment and solidify its status as a premier filming destination. ◆

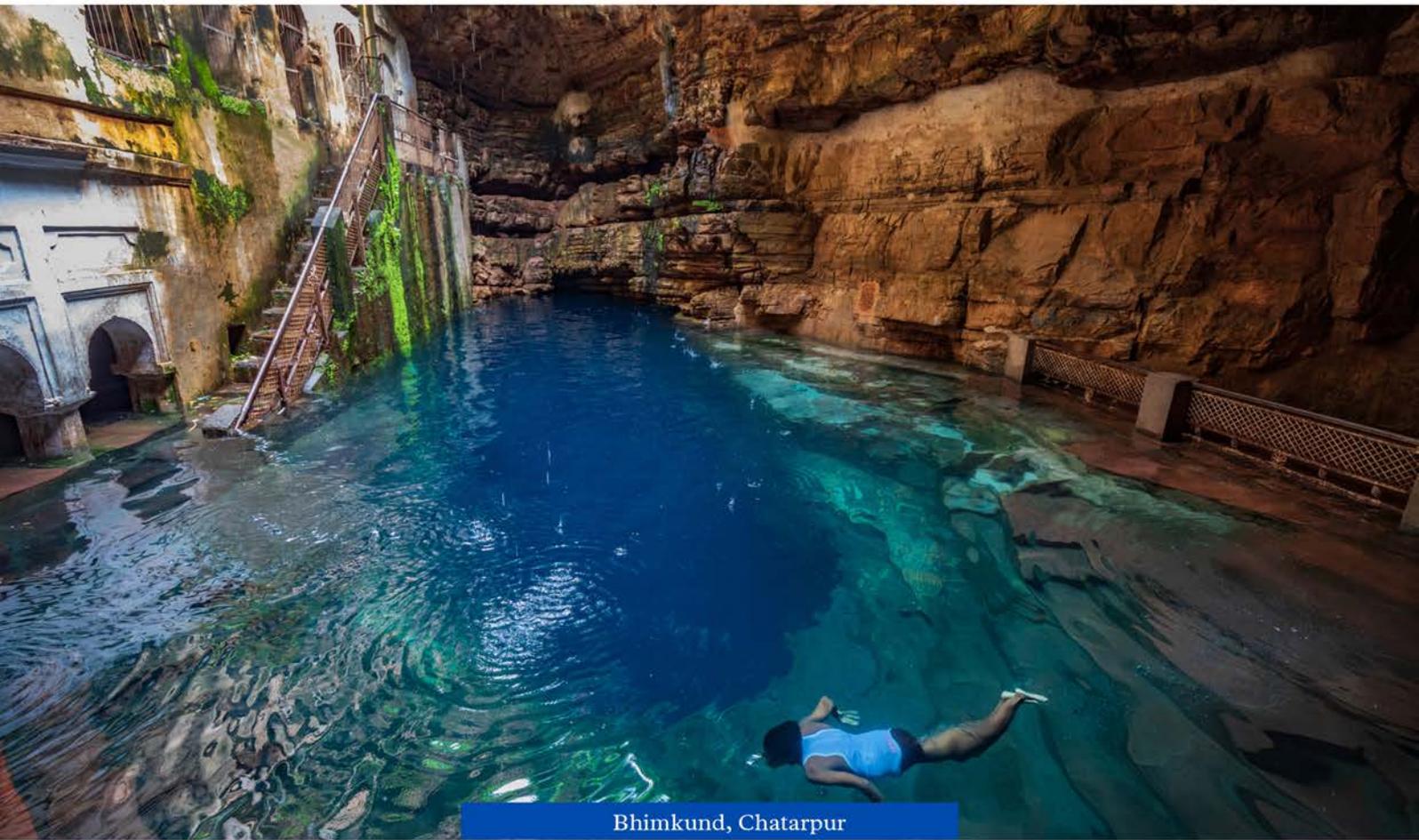


Chausath Yogini Temple, Mitaoli

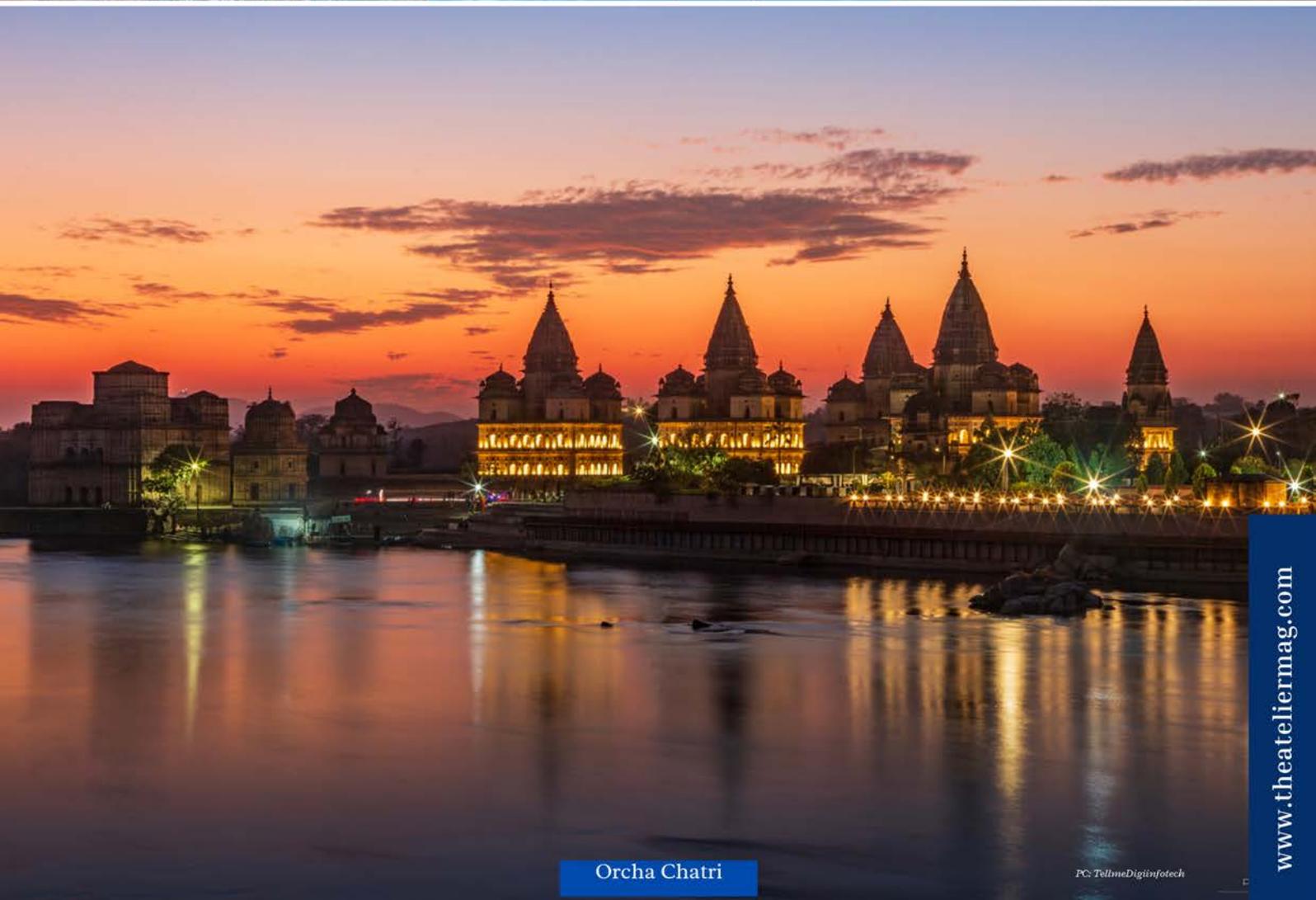


Padavali and Bateshwar, Gwalior

www.theateliemag.com



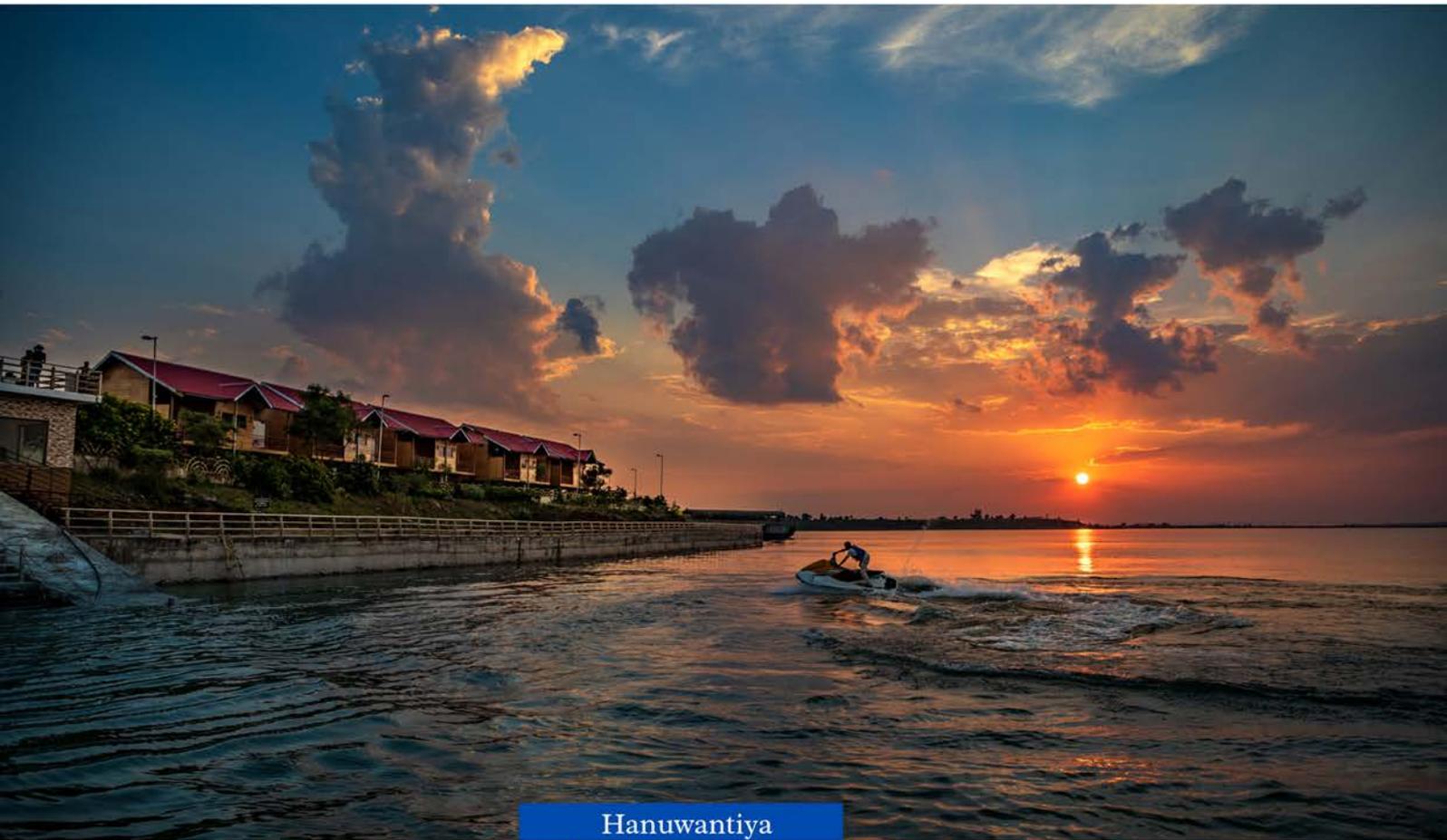
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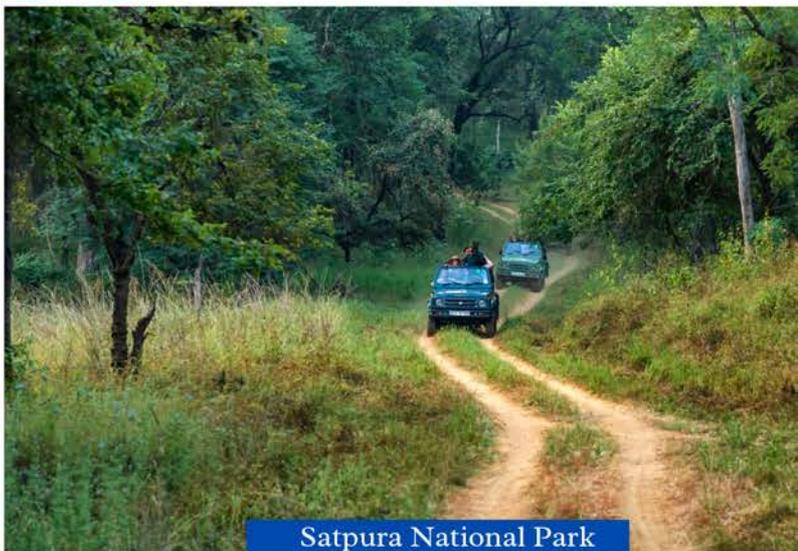
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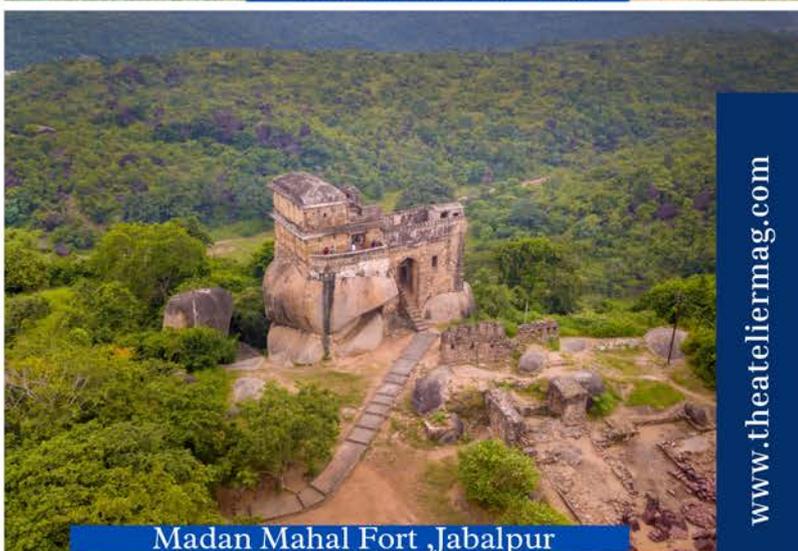
Hanuwantiya



Pandav Fall



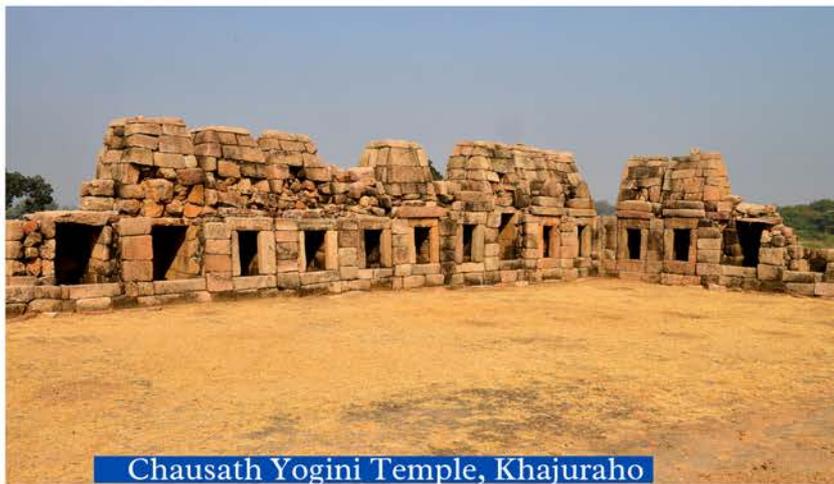
Satpura National Park



Madan Mahal Fort ,Jabalpur



Bhim Bhetka



Chausath Yogini Temple, Khajuraho



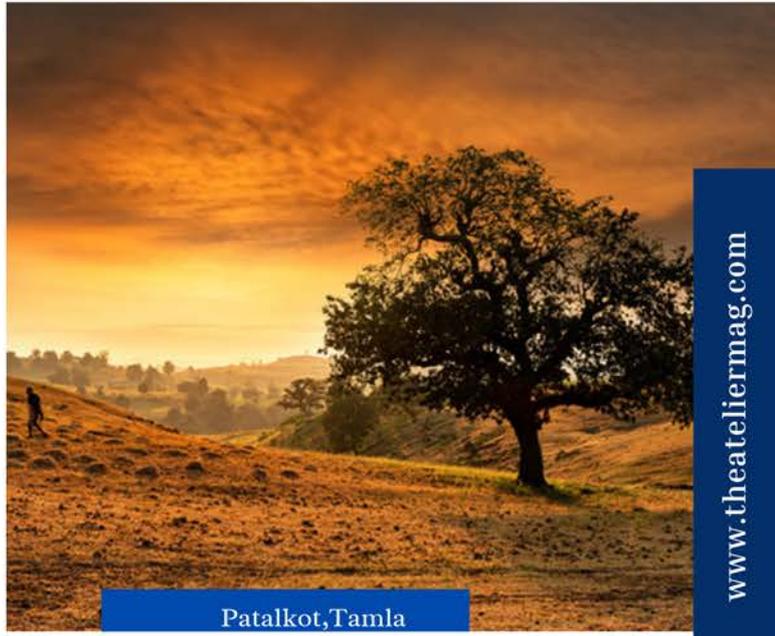
Chitrakoot



Ranch Water Fall



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 Fb - <https://www.facebook.com/MPTourism/>
 Twitter- <https://x.com/MPTourism>
 LinkedIn
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/76248800/admin/dashboard/>
 Youtube-
<https://www.youtube.com/@MadhyaPradeshTourism>



Patalkot, Tamla

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Fashion



BLUE GOLD

Sakina Ansari

LUXURY FASHION

Suzana Perić

THE DESIGN PROCESS

Vibha Vivek

REDEFINING LUXURY - HOW MOR IS TRANSOFRMING FASHION WITH FISH SKIN LEATHER

Linnea Engstrom

EMERGING THREADS

Manokar V

Varsha Ganesan

Janavi Janakiraman



Sakina Ansari
Founder - Maalgadi

BLUE GOLD

Sakina Ansari

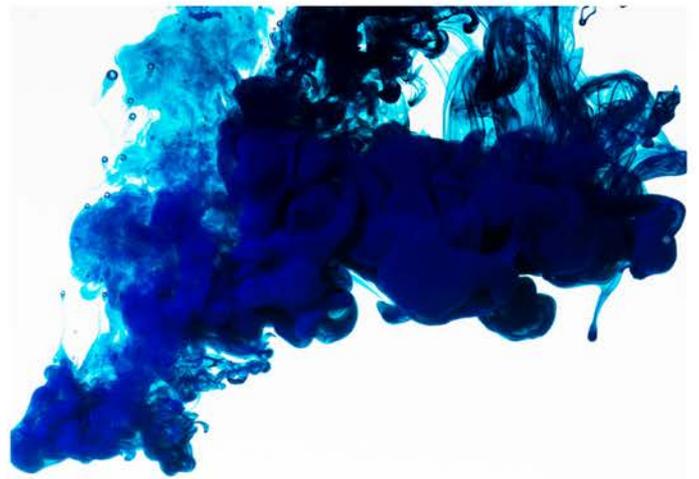
My journey with *Indigofera Tinctoria*, commonly known as Indigo or Indian Indigo, has been a fascinating exploration of the 'Blue Gold.' This perennial shrub, a member of the Fabaceae family, has been a cornerstone of textile industries for centuries, prized for its ability to produce a rich, deep blue dye.

Across the globe, diverse civilizations have been utilizing this extraordinary plant to create vibrant, blue-hued fabrics.

Indigofera Tinctoria was once a highly prized commodity exported from India. Its vibrant dye was extensively traded across regions, leaving an enduring mark on India's cultural and economic landscape.

Though the chemical dye revolution altered its path, a contemporary revival fueled by a quest for sustainability and craftsmanship ensures that the Indigo legacy lives on. In India, this traditional method still relies heavily on manual labour, underscoring the value of human craftsmanship.





As artisans and enthusiasts rediscover natural dyeing, Indigo's cultivation and extraction in Tamil Nadu continues with great success- the state is one of the largest exporters of Indigo dye in various forms, ensuring the continuation of its journey into the future.

My connection with *Indigofera Tinctoria* has deepened my appreciation for the intricate relationships between nature, culture, and human ingenuity. I have been captivated by the labour-intensive process of extracting the dye from the plant's green leaves, which involves fermentation to release the blue pigment.



I had the opportunity to witness the process of creating the incredible Blue Gold from *Indigofera Tinctoria*, thanks to Mr. Anbazhagan and Mr. Balachander from KMA Exports, an indigo powder manufacturing company in Tamil Nadu.

Beyond its significance in textile production, *Indigofera Tinctoria* has also been valued for its medicinal properties, with various parts of the plant used to address health issues.

From ancient civilizations to colonial trade and the revival of traditional practices, Indigo's legacy endures, weaving its rich hues through the fabric of time. ◆

LUXURY FASHION



Our Ideas

SP
SUZANA PEŠIĆ
EST 1999

SUZANA PERIĆ



Suzana Perić, international fashion designer from Serbia, made her third successful show at the Fall/Winter Paris Fashion Week, held in March 2025. During this Week, models dressed by her walked the ramp at the Serbia Fashion Week Runway Womenswear Fall/Winter 2024-2025.

Suzana Perić is an award-winning luxury fashion designer with an experience of over 25 years in the field, with more than 80 collections to her credit. She founded her fashion brand Suzana Perić (SP) in 1999, after graduating from the prestigious AMD Academy of Fashion Design in Dusseldorf. Suzana presented her first collections at the 9th Belgrade Fashion Week and was soon a well-known name in fashion, across the Balkans. She won the best designer collection award in 2007. She has presented shows at the Berlin Fashion Week, 2008 and Milan Fashion Week, 2019.

Suzana dons many fashionable hats- she is editor in chief of Bazar magazine, the oldest women's magazine in the Balkans. She is also a proud Tesla Ambassador; one of the 80 prominent individuals from Serbia and other parts of the world who worked towards keeping alive the memory of Serbian-American inventor Nikola Tesla. The Suzana Perić Academy of Fashion Design is open to anyone who is interested in fashion. The practical oriented course offers training in all aspects of fashion—from design to business strategies. Suzana heads the section on women entrepreneurship at the Serbian Chamber of Commerce. She organizes workshops for children with special needs, called "Children help children".



Her collection at the Paris Fashion Week 2025 presented with the collaboration of the Serbia Fashion Week, was "A celebration of 25 years of excellence, dedication, and extraordinary design." Called Mystic Sapphire, this unique collection was inspired by the beautiful Cyprus, Mediterranean luxury and the deep shades of Sapphire.

The Mystic Sapphire collection is a coming together of classic tailoring with modern elements, using luxurious fabrics like cashmere and silk, and enhanced with lace. The collection features blazers that highlight the body's natural shape, and wide trousers with vibrant cashmere patterns.

"This success is the result of many years of work, dedication and passion for fashion.

I am grateful to Serbian Fashion Week for the trust and support that allowed me to present my work on the international stage," says Suzana about her presentation at the Paris Fashion Week 2025 in her Instagram post. ◆



PARIS
FASHION WEEK
2025



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PARIS
FASHION WEEK
2025



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The Design Process

Vibha Vivek



What makes a design truly memorable – its aesthetics, functionality or the emotions it evokes? Design is more than just visuals, nor is it purely about function. The most impactful designs incorporate visual appeal, practical utility and emotional resonance. When these elements unite harmoniously, they create something that stands the test of time, fascinates the senses and leaves a lasting impression. Design is an ever-involving field with endless specialisations, each playing distinct roles in shaping the world around us. We all criticise designs but do we know the depth of the process involved in it?

Just as there are different branches of design, they also follow different steps to develop an end product. As diverse as they may be, the first step in design creation is research. Good research is the foundation of innovative design, providing critical insights into trends, user behaviour, hidden patterns and developments in the field to ensure thoughtful and impactful creations. The objective of this research is to discover a market gap. This approach blends creativity with strategy ensuring practicality. Designing without identifying a market gap can be a double-edged sword – while it allows for boundless creativity, it risks the lack of purpose, relevance and consumer demand. Research may open up a demand for newer design strategies by introducing fresh aesthetics, unique functionality or cultural shifts. Whether through storytelling, exclusivity or niche positioning, a design without an apparent market gap must find its own unique space to thrive.

Moving past research, ideation and conceptualisation are the backbone of the design process where abstract ideas take shape and creative visions transform into structured concepts. This phase is crucial in ensuring that a design is relevant and aligned with both aesthetic and functional goals.



Vibha Vivek is a final year student of Textile Design from NIFT - Kannur, Kerala. She is also an Artist.

This is the stage where mind mapping, sketching, mood board development, storytelling, narrative building and preparing for execution takes place. Each step is more pivotal than the previous one as it adds more value to the ideation. Concept development involves filtering and refining based on feasibility and user relevance, creating prototypes, swatches or digital mock-ups to test initial ideas. This also involves gathering feedback from peers, stakeholders or focus groups to add depth and connection to the final outcome. Finalizing the design direction includes the compilation of technical details involved, selecting final materials, dimensions and mapping out the final production process. By the end of this phase, there should be a well-defined concept ready for execution ensuring a seamless transition from idea to reality.

Prototyping and testing ensure that the concepts translate the way it was intended to. This iterative process helps refine the design before a full-scale production so as to avoid waste of material and energy. A digital render of the product can help in refining or adding changes before the physical prototype. The first prototype is usually made using low-cost materials. Experimenting and construction testing assists in mapping durability, flexibility and structural integrity. Analysing manufacturing constraints and adjusting details can ensure the design can be produced efficiently. Functional testing evaluates usability and ergonomics depending on the industry.

Development of multiple iterations of the prototype to confirm the final specification sheet to be sent to production. The final prototype will be the closest to the final product validating feasibility and scalability without compromising design integrity. Market readiness, industry standards, regulations and quality benchmarks should be met.

The apparent last step would be production and execution where a finalised design concept is transformed into a tangible product. This step requires precision, collaboration and quality control to ensure that the design vision is successfully realised. It starts off with sourcing and manufacturing setup, identifying and collaborating with suppliers, artisans and production facilities. A fixed timeline should be set to make sure that the products hit the market at a desired time period where the design can be a pioneer on its own or follow a previous vision.

A pre-production sample is made to verify the product's accuracy. This sample is put through various tests before production and any required changes are to be made. To set off mass/handcrafted production, the approved sample is used as a role model. Quality control is implemented at each step to identify defects early. This can optimize efficiency. Any defects or inconsistencies are to be addressed before packaging. The next step is to coordinate logistics, shipping and inventory management for market distribution.

Great design doesn't end at production, it goes onto make necessary refinements using market response. A well-executed process minimises waste, optimises cost and ensures a smooth transition from design to delivery. By consistently analysing, refining and innovating, brands and designers can maintain a competitive edge while delivering high-quality meaningful products to consumers. The key to a successful design lies in embracing adaptability and learning from both achievements and setbacks.

This tedious but exciting process is the backbone of innovation, ensuring that creativity is purposeful and impactful. It transforms abstract ideas into tangible, functional and compelling solutions by following a systematic approach to research and development. More than just a method, it is a cycle of learning, refining and evolving enabling creators and designers to push boundaries while also being relevant. Whether in fashion, textile or product design, a strong design process is essential for creating products that are not only visually striking but also sustainable and innovative. ◆

REDEFINING LUXURY:

How MOR is Transforming Fashion with Fish-Skin Leather.

Linnéa Engström



Luxury is undergoing a transformation. No longer defined solely by exclusivity and opulence, today's luxury must embody responsibility, sustainability, and innovation. MOR, a pioneering Scandinavian fashion brand, is at the forefront of this revolution. By repurposing fish skin—a discarded byproduct of the fishing industry—into exquisite, toxin-free accessories, MOR is proving that ethical craftsmanship, built on ancient knowledge from indigenous communities worldwide, and high fashion can seamlessly coexist.

Rooted in ancient traditions from the Scandinavian Saami culture or the Inuits in Greenland, yet propelled by cutting-edge sustainability principles, MOR bridges the past and the future. Women in indigenous communities such as the Saami and the

Inuit of North America have long practiced fish-skin processing, creating durable and beautiful garments from nature's overlooked materials, like the by-products from fishing. MOR revives this legacy while infusing it with modern circular design, ensuring that every piece not only tells a story but also supports a regenerative future.

At the heart of MOR are two visionary women: Kajsa-Lisa Larsson, a designer educated at the London College of Fashion with over 15 years of experience in the textile industry, and Linnéa Engström, a former Member of the European Parliament with a deep background in environmental and fisheries policy. Together, they embody the fusion of artistry and advocacy, proving that fashion can be both an aesthetic statement and a force for good.



The brand's mission is clear: to create beauty without compromise, honour the planet, and elevate women-led innovation. This ethos has positioned MOR as a leader in the sustainable fashion movement, appealing to environmentally conscious consumers who refuse to choose between ethics and style.

In an era where waste, and the need to effectively use everything that is taken out of the ocean are the industry's biggest challenges, MOR's work is a blueprint for a more responsible future—one where luxury is defined not just by rarity, but by its impact. As consumers increasingly demand authenticity and sustainability, MOR stands as a testament to what fashion can achieve when tradition, craftsmanship, and innovation align.

Bridging Two Worlds: India and Scandinavia

MOR's journey is not just about material innovation—it's about building bridges between cultures. India, with its deep heritage of textile artistry and craftsmanship, offers a dynamic stage for MOR's sustainable mission. The country is home to centuries-old embroidery, dyeing, and weaving techniques, many of which align with MOR's commitment to ethical fashion.

By collaborating with Indian artists, MOR seeks to blend Scandinavian minimalism with the intricate detailing and handcraft traditions of India. This partnership will explore ways to integrate sustainable fish-skin leather with India's expertise in embellishment and fabric manipulation, creating a collection that is both avant-garde and deeply rooted in heritage.

Shaping the Future of Sustainable Fashion

As the fashion industry grapples with its environmental impact, MOR's initiative between India and Scandinavia serves as a powerful model for global collaboration. By linking craftsmanship, innovation, and sustainability across borders, the brand is redefining what luxury can—and should—be in the 21st century. ◆





EMERGING THREADS

Manokar V,
Janavi Janakiraman,
Varsha Ganesan
NIFT



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Soulful Spaces

Soulful Spaces celebrates architecture rooted in art, earth, and emotion. From temples to offices, every space holds the power to inspire and heal. It's not just design—it's the art of living with intention.



**Airavatesvara
Temple: A Testament to Chola
Architectural Brilliance**

Arjun Kapoor

Where Home Meets Heart

Ekshikaa S

**Impact of Design in Architecture and
Construction - Shaping Spaces,
Shaping Lives**

Annabella Nassetti

Airavatesvara Temple:

A Testament to Chola Architectural Brilliance

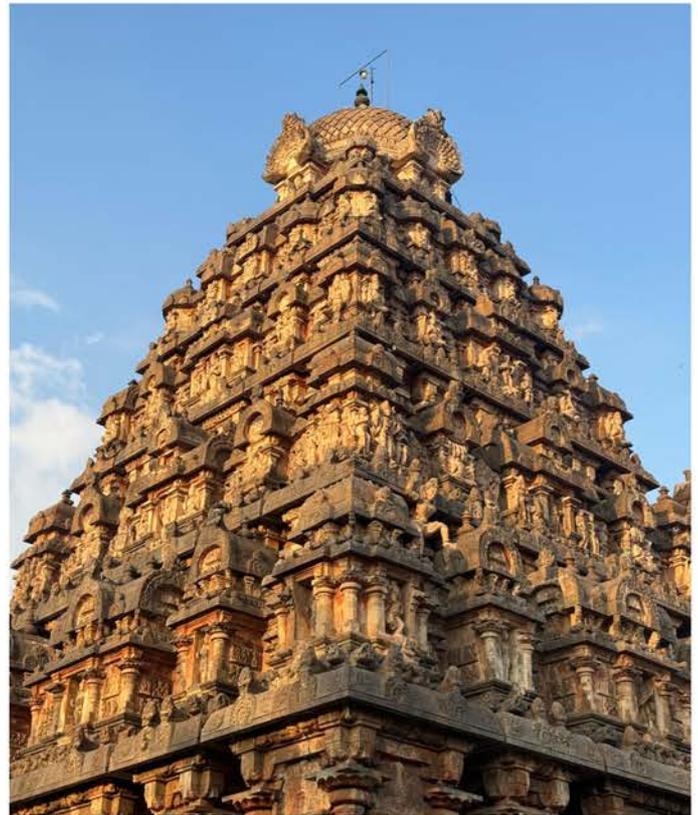
Arjun Kapoor

Nestled in the historic town of Darasuram, near Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu, the Airavatesvara Temple stands as a testament to the architectural brilliance of the Chola dynasty. Constructed in the 12th century under the reign of Emperor Rajaraja Chola II, this temple is a jewel of Dravidian architecture and is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Architectural Grandeur

The temple's design is a harmonious blend of art and spirituality. At its core lies the sanctum sanctorum, enshrining Lord Shiva as Airavatesvara. This central shrine is crowned with a majestic vimana, an 80-foot tower that exemplifies the Dravidian architectural style. The temple's base is ingeniously crafted to resemble a chariot, complete with stone wheels and horses, symbolizing a celestial vehicle transporting the deity.



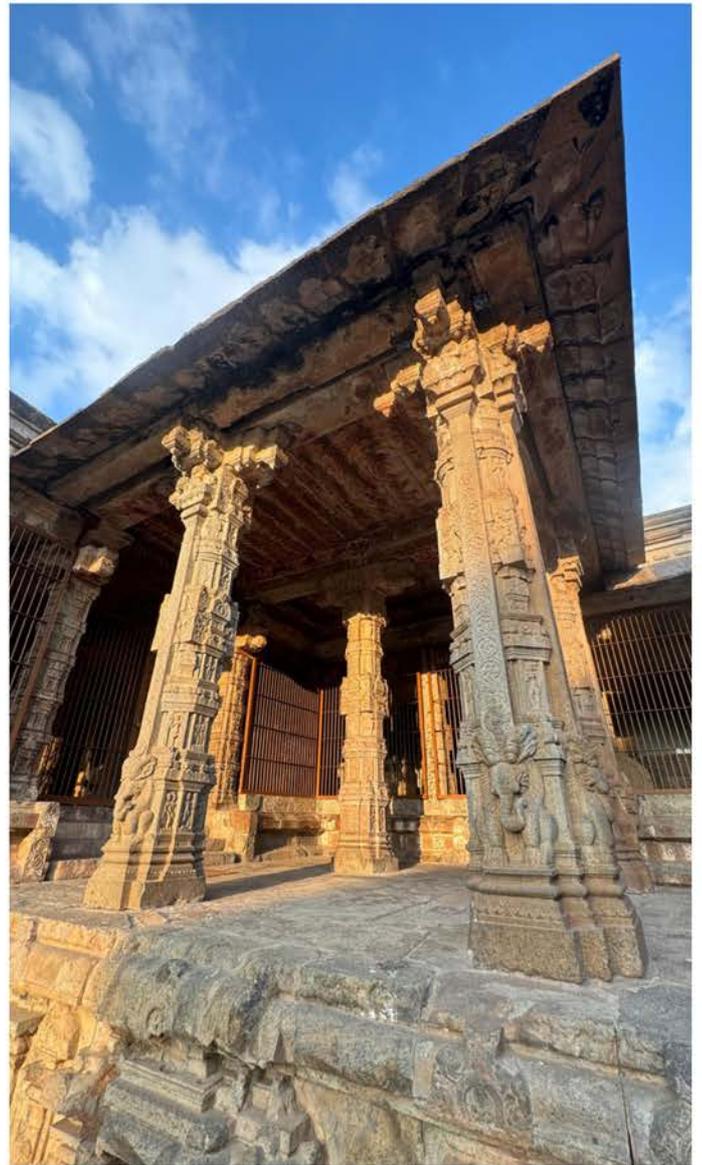
Intricate Stone Carvings

The Airavatesvara Temple is renowned for its exquisite stone carvings that adorn every corner of the structure. The ceilings are embellished with intricate depictions of various dance poses, mudras, zodiac signs, and celestial constellations, showcasing the artisans' meticulous craftsmanship.

The Musical Steps

A unique feature of this temple is its "singing steps." These steps produce distinct musical notes when struck, reflecting the advanced understanding of acoustics by the Chola architects. This remarkable aspect not only adds to the temple's allure but also highlights the integration of art and science in ancient Indian architecture.





Symbolism and Cultural Significance

Beyond its architectural splendour, the Airavatesvara Temple is rich in symbolism. The chariot-like base signifies the soul's journey toward enlightenment, while the numerous sculptures and inscriptions provide insights into the socio-cultural and religious milieu of the time.

One of the "Great Living Chola Temples," it continues to be a site of active worship and cultural importance, bridging the past and present.

In essence, the Airavatesvara Temple stands as a remarkable example of Chola architecture, reflecting the dynasty's artistic excellence, scientific knowledge, and spiritual depth. Its intricate carvings, innovative structural features, and profound symbolism continue to captivate scholars, devotees, and tourists alike. ◆



Arjun Kapoor is the principal architect at Arjun Kapoor Architects, with a deep-rooted passion for Indian architectural history and symbolism. He completed his Master's in Architectural Design from The Bartlett, UCL, London, in 2023. During his academic journey, Arjun discovered his calling in temple architecture, which led him back to India to explore and contribute to this timeless tradition.

Where Home Meets Heart

Ekshikaa S

Home is where we gently touch the books we'll someday read, with a cup of coffee in the morning sun. It is where resolutions are made with strength in intent, as we pen thoughts about our loved ones into journals.

As an architect, I have always believed that homes are deeply personal spaces. Yet, we often focus on the grandeur of design, forgetting that the ultimate purpose of any home is to serve the people who inhabit it. It is a sanctuary where emotions take root, memories are etched, and life truly unfolds. A house, no matter how meticulously designed, transforms into a home only when it begins to tell the stories of its inhabitants. It is here that we are allowed to expect and taught to accept, where cutting onions and unfiltered opinions have the same effect. Where carpets cover elephants, closets shield skeletons, and secrets find refuge under a mattress of silence.



Today, let us not marvel at the height of a building or the elegance of an arch. Let us instead look inward, into the heart of a home, where design becomes a deeply personal expression of love, care, and belonging.

Every home is a canvas painted with the memories, aspirations, and emotions of its residents. Thoughtful design is not about grandeur but about creating environments that bring joy and comfort. Straighten the photo frames that hang askew. Push the furniture to the side and make space for children to run freely, their laughter filling the air. Dance in the open spaces, letting joy resonate in every corner.

Let the ceramics tucked away for special occasions grace the table, celebrating the beauty of daily life. Drape aqua-blue curtains in the bedroom, add fragrant potpourri, water a bedside plant, and wrap yourself in a blanket that feels like a warm hug. Even the simplest acts, like resting, become deliberate acts of renewal when done in spaces designed with care.

Home is where we learn to weave pauses and brew compassion with the flowers in our tea, where responsibility becomes our identity, and where love prevails with resilience as stigmas walk free.

Every home holds stories waiting to be uncovered..Ask your grandfather about the history of the marble floors that cool your feet. Explore why a particular window has never been opened or venture into the loft to unearth forgotten treasures.

Clean the mirrors, so they reflect not just your image but your dreams. Light a lavender-scented candle and let its fragrance soothe your spirit. Repair the wobbly leg of the ancestral rosewood chair. Rotate the rugs, change the cushion covers, and embrace the beauty of transformation.

Fill empty shelves with photo albums, turning them into galleries of cherished memories. Display a favorite object on a glass shelf and smile every time it catches your eye.



Honor the legacy of your home.

Home is where we walk with heads full of songs and hearts full of dreams, where tales are shared, and stories are born. It is where confessions and adulations are brushed under the bed at night, knowing they will resurface another time.

Remove the plastic covers from furniture and embrace the warmth of your home. Reimagine the family room as a space where meaningful conversations bloom over a warm cup of honey tea. Play your favourite music, not just in the privacy of the bathroom, but throughout the house.

Let melodies bring life to every corner.

Dress up for your next meal, even if it's a simple one, and savour the beauty of the moment. Feel the textures of the settee, the softness of the carpet underfoot, and the warmth of the sunlight streaming in.



As architects and designers, we have a responsibility to balance functionality with thoughtful design. A home should not only meet the practical needs of its residents but also create a space that feels personal and meaningful. Our role goes beyond layouts, efficient design elements and building structures; it's about shaping environments that support daily life, foster connection, and provide a sense of belonging. At its core, design is about creating spaces where life flourishes, balancing form and function with precision and care.

Our role transcends aesthetics. We craft spaces that live and breathe, spaces that nurture, inspire, and celebrate the human experience. A home is not defined by its size or style but by the love and care infused into its every detail. It is where life happens, where emotions take centre stage, and where every corner holds a story.

Design is poetry, crafted in visual frames. Home is where the chaos and calm reside, where we unmask ourselves even as parts of us remain hidden. It is a place of memories, tender and wild—a place where we are truly alive. By integrating practicality with a sense of individuality, we ensure that homes remain timeless, liveable, and reflective of the people who call them their own. ◆

Ekshikaa S - Architect / Poet

An Architect by day and a Poetess by night, this powerhouse juggles her roles as a designer and artist!

An alumnus of Rishi Valley, her work with NPO's have been published in the leading newspapers, while being featured by The Quint | Bloomberg, Deccan Chronicle, DT Next, and What.If Global, for her stance as a poetic persona.

Being a two time recipient of the National Wingword Poetry Prize, and the Durian India Design Award, she has performed for several brands and NGO's including CCD, Social, and the Hemkunt Foundation.

Ekshikaa continues to design and write at the same time, that are socially relevant and emotionally important through poetry and satire.



Impact of Design in Architecture and Construction

– Shaping Spaces, Shaping Lives

Annabella Nassetti



Architecture and construction are not just about erecting buildings; they are about crafting experiences, shaping lifestyles, and influencing human well-being. The power of design in these fields extends beyond aesthetics—it integrates functionality, sustainability, and psychology to create spaces that enhance lives. As an interior architect and designer, I have witnessed firsthand how the right design can transform not just spaces but the way people interact with them.

The Essence of Design in Architecture and Construction

Design serves as the bridge between art and utility in architecture and construction. It dictates how a space is perceived, navigated, and utilized. Whether it's a home, an office, or a public space, well-thought-out design has the ability to:

- Improve efficiency and flow.
- Enhance comfort and well-being.
- Influence emotions and behaviour.
- Boost productivity in workspaces.
- Elevate the aesthetic and economic value of properties.

1. Functionality and Ergonomics

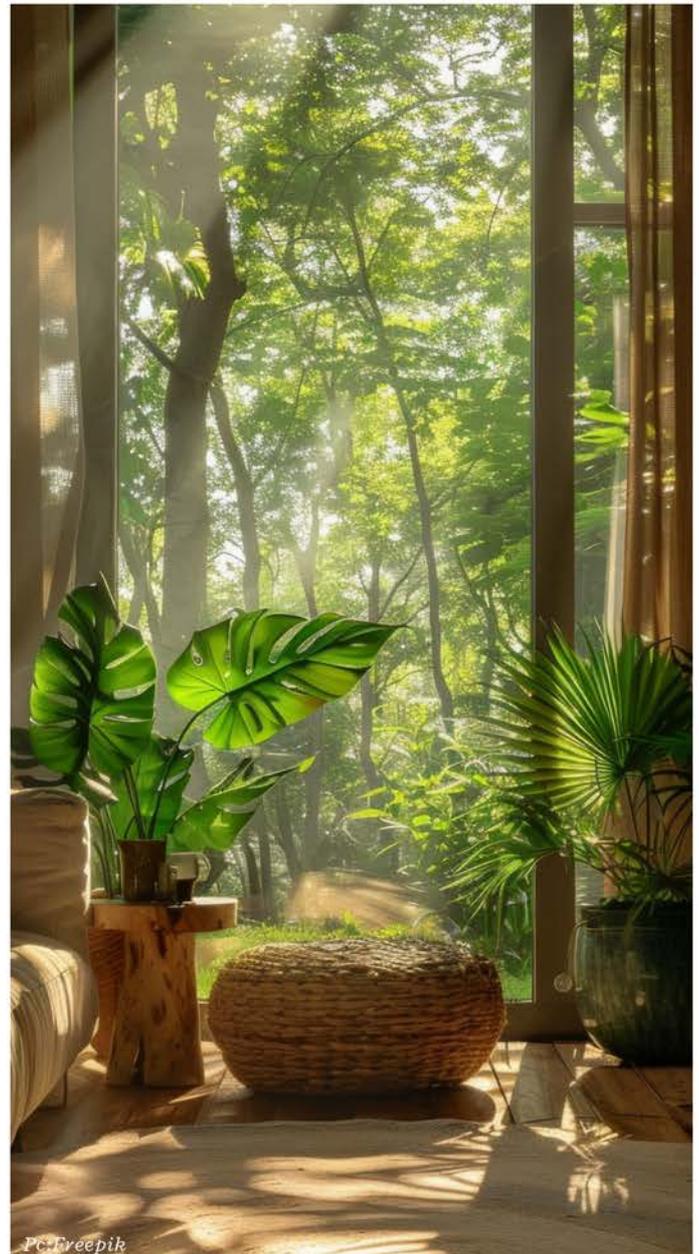
A well-designed space aligns with the needs of its users. In architecture, functionality is at the core of design. Every inch of a building must serve a purpose, ensuring that spaces are optimized for movement, comfort, and usability. In construction, intelligent space planning and material selection contribute to energy efficiency, durability, and ease of maintenance.

2. Sustainability and Environmental Impact With increasing awareness of environmental challenges, sustainable design is no longer an option but a necessity. Architecture and construction have a profound impact on carbon footprints, energy consumption, and resource depletion. Incorporating green materials, renewable energy sources, and eco-friendly construction techniques leads to a healthier planet and a better quality of life for occupants.

3. Psychological and Emotional Well-being The spaces we inhabit directly affect our emotions, productivity, and even health. Natural light, color psychology, textures, and spatial flow all contribute to a person's mood and cognitive function. A well-designed hospital can enhance patient recovery rates, an intelligently planned office can increase creativity, and a harmonious home can promote relaxation and happiness.

The Transformational Power of Design Residential Spaces— Creating Homes, Not Just Houses

A home should be more than just a structure; it should be a sanctuary. Thoughtful design takes into account the daily routines, lifestyle, and emotions of the inhabitants. Integrating Feng Shui, energy alignment, and personalized touches can turn a house into a space that truly nurtures its residents.



Workspaces – Boosting Productivity and Creativity

The modern workplace is evolving, and so is its design. Gone are the days of rigid cubicles; today's offices embrace open spaces, natural lighting, ergonomic furniture, and collaborative environments. A well-designed office contributes to employee well-being, reduces stress, and fosters creativity, ultimately impacting business success.

Public Spaces – Designing for Communities

Urban design plays a crucial role in shaping societal interactions. Parks, libraries, transit hubs, and community centres should be designed with inclusivity, accessibility, and engagement in mind. A well-planned public space fosters a sense of belonging and improves the quality of life for entire communities.

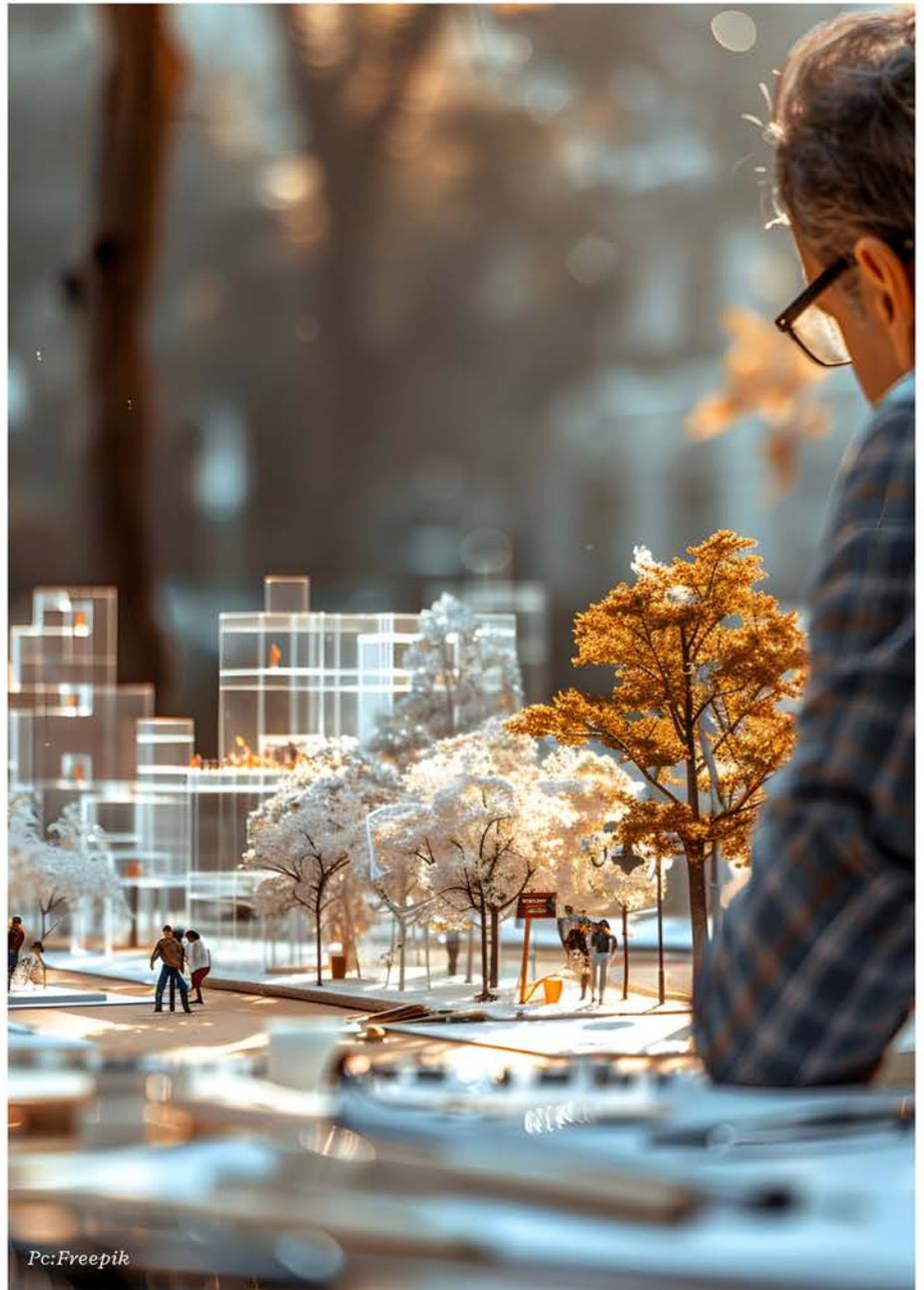
The Future of Design in Architecture and Construction

Technology and innovation continue to redefine design possibilities. 3D Designs, artificial intelligence (AI), and parametric design are revolutionizing how spaces are conceived and constructed.

Moreover, as climate change and urbanization present new challenges, the industry must focus on adaptable, modular, and smart solutions. The future of design is not just about what we build, but how we build it—with mindfulness, sustainability, and human-centric innovation at the core.

Conclusion

Design in architecture and construction is more than an aesthetic pursuit; it is a tool for transformation. By shaping the spaces we inhabit, we shape our experiences, emotions, and ultimately, our lives. As designers, architects, and builders, our responsibility is to create environments that inspire, heal, and elevate the human spirit. Because at the end of the day, great design is not just about what you see—it's about how it makes you feel. ◆



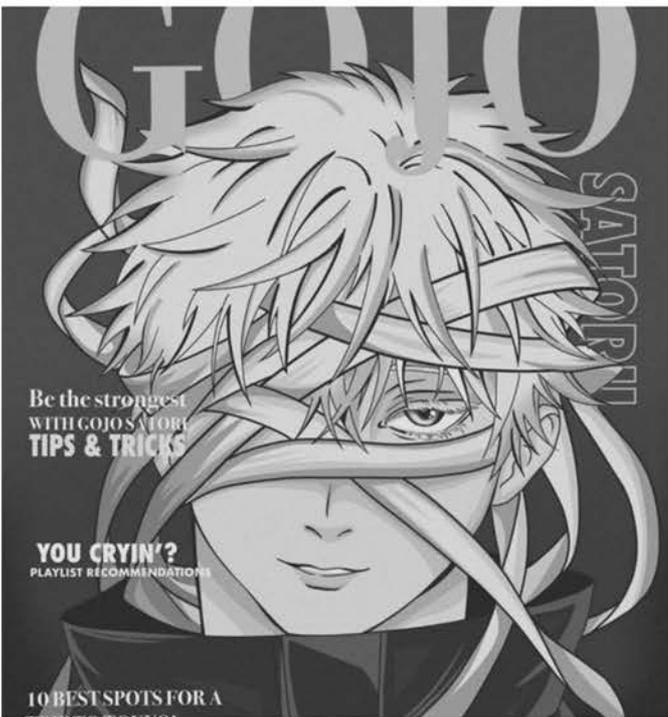
Annabella Nassetti is Owner @ A Living Concept / Interior Architect-Product Design. She won Most innovative Designer 2022 & 2023, Global 200 Inspirational Leader 2023 awards. She is also a RIT - Rapid Transformational Therapy Therapist



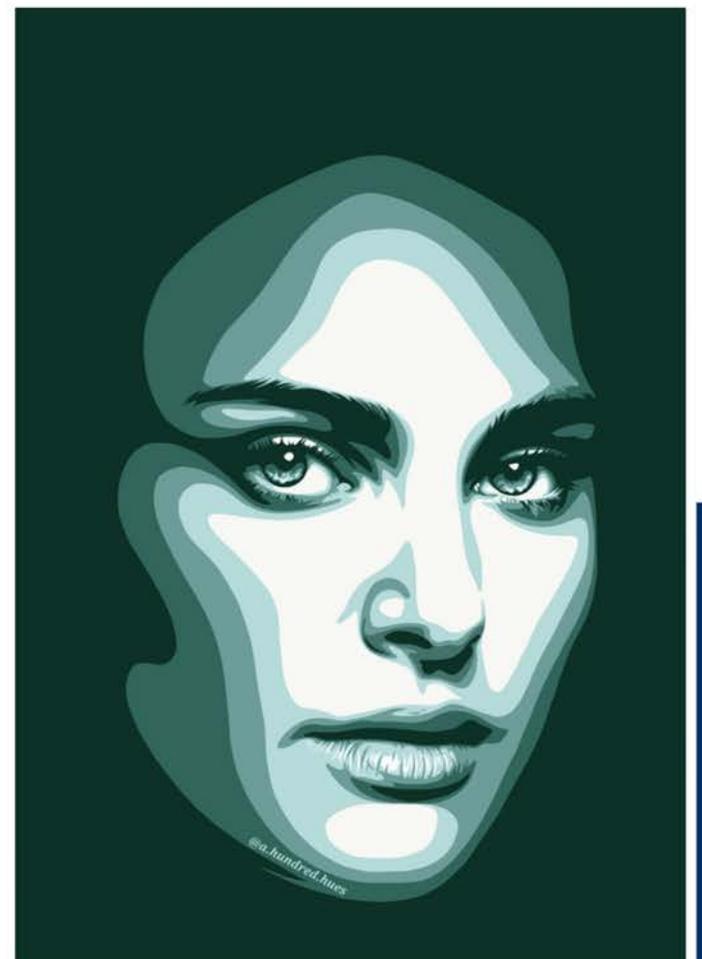
Daniya



Anushna Routh



DIGITAL CANVAS



UNSEEN ARTIST



Soul & Soil

*R. Suganeshwaran
Traditional Clay Sculptor
Salem*



Hari



Ashwini Krishnan

RAW CLICKS



Harsh Solanki



Jyotshna Sharma

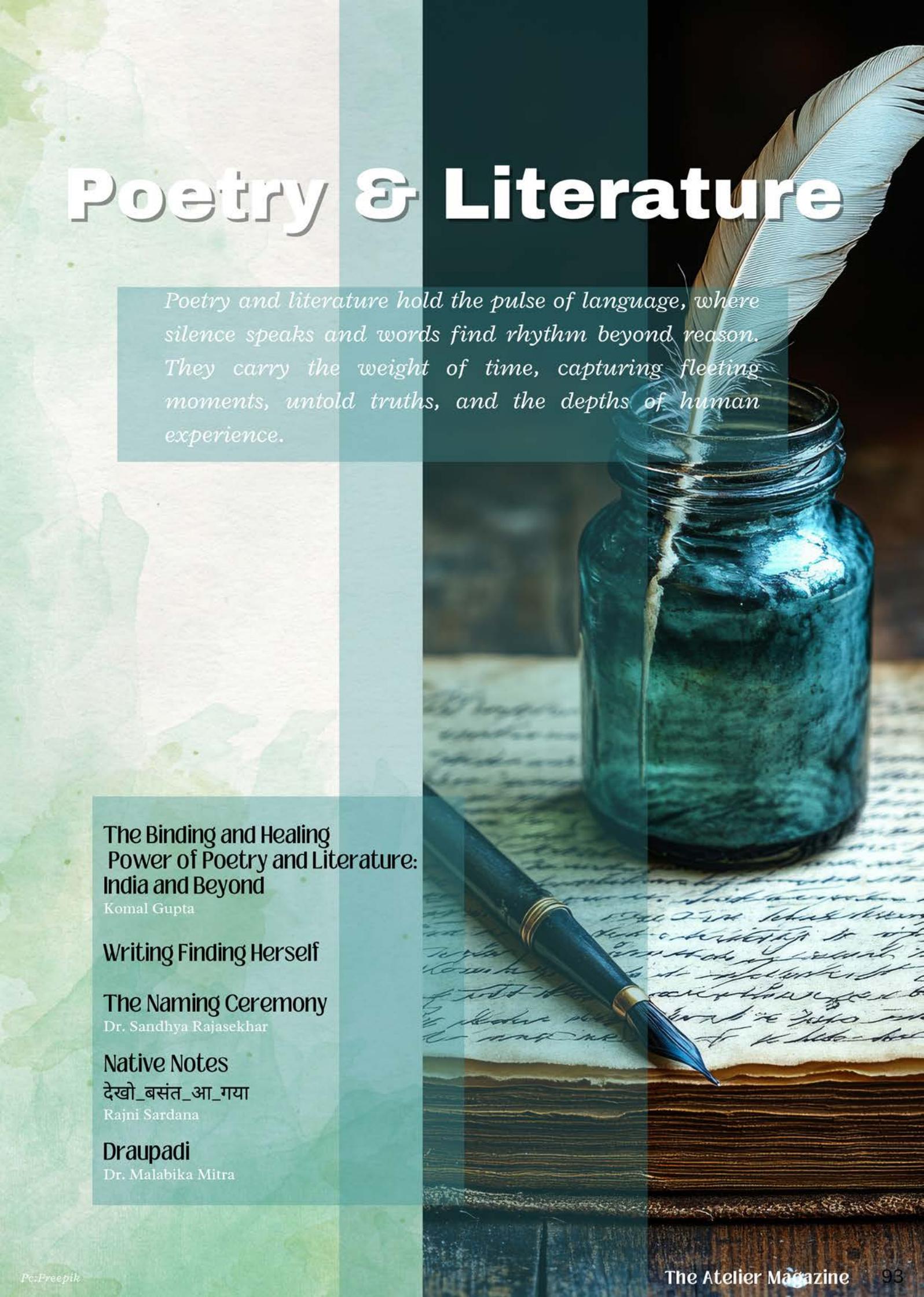


Beena Unnikrishnan



Krishna Rajan Nair

Poetry & Literature



Poetry and literature hold the pulse of language, where silence speaks and words find rhythm beyond reason. They carry the weight of time, capturing fleeting moments, untold truths, and the depths of human experience.

The Binding and Healing Power of Poetry and Literature: India and Beyond

Komal Gupta

Writing Finding Herself

The Naming Ceremony

Dr. Sandhya Rajasekhar

Native Notes

देखो_बसंत_आ_गया

Rajni Sardana

Draupadi

Dr. Malabika Mitra

The Binding and Healing Power of Poetry and Literature: India and Beyond

Kemal Gupta



From the epic narratives of the Ramayana and Mahabharata to the soul-stirring verses of Tamil Sangam poetry, Indian literature has always been a unifying force.

The Bhakti and Sufi movements of the medieval era further amplified this power. Poets like Kabir, Mirabai, and Rumi (whose influence reached India) wove devotion and mysticism into their lines, dissolving caste, creed, and linguistic divides. Kabir's dohas (type of poetry), for instance, spoke to the common heart, urging unity:

"The river that flows in you also flows in me." In modern India, poets like Rabindranath Tagore, whose *Gitanjali* earned him a Nobel Prize in 1913, elevated poetry to a healing art.

His verses, steeped in nature and humanism, offered solace during colonial oppression. Similarly, Urdu poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Hindi writers like Mahadevi Verma used their craft to mend the wounds of partition and social upheaval, their words a salve for a fractured nation.

Literature as a Healing Force

Indian literature's healing power lies in its ability to voice the unspeakable. The Partition of 1947, a traumatic rupture, found expression in works like Saadat Hasan Manto's *Toba Tek Singh*, which captured the absurdity and pain of division.

Such stories didn't just narrate suffering—they offered catharsis, allowing readers to process collective grief. Contemporary Indian authors like Arundhati Roy and poets like Tishani Doshi continue this tradition, addressing modern wounds—be it inequality or environmental loss—with empathy and insight

Poetry and literature have long served as threads weaving humanity together, transcending borders, languages, and time. In India, a land of myriad cultures and tongues, these art forms have been both a mirror and a balm, reflecting societal truths while offering solace. Around the world, too, they possess a universal ability to heal and unite, resonating with the human spirit in profound ways.

India's Poetic Legacy

India's literary tradition is as old as its civilisation, with roots in the Vedas—ancient Sanskrit hymns dating back over 3,000 years. These rhythmic chants, rich with spiritual depth, were not mere words but vessels of collective wisdom, binding communities through shared recitation.

Beyond storytelling, India's oral traditions amplify literature's binding role. Folk tales and songs, passed down generations, knit communities together. The Panchatantra, with its timeless fables, teaches morality while fostering a shared cultural identity. In rural India, performances of regional epics like the Pandavani of Chhattisgarh or the Yakshagana of Karnataka remain communal rituals, healing social rifts through participation.

A Global Perspective

Globally, poetry and literature wield a similar magic. In ancient Greece, Homer's Iliad and Odyssey united city-states through shared heritage. During the World Wars, poets like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon gave voice to the horrors of the trenches, their verses a lifeline for soldiers and civilians alike.

In South Africa, apartheid's scars were soothed by the defiant words of poets like Dennis Brutus, whose work fostered resilience and hope.

The 20th century saw literature's therapeutic reach expand. Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings became a beacon for the marginalized, its raw honesty mending broken spirits. In Latin America, Pablo Neruda's love poems transcended political turmoil, reminding readers of beauty amid chaos. Today, poetry slams and online platforms amplify diverse voices, from Warsan Shire's refugee narratives to Rupi Kaur's meditations on trauma, proving literature's enduring capacity to heal.

The Universal Thread

What makes poetry and literature so potent is their intimacy. A single line—be it Tagore's "Where the mind is without fear" or Whitman's "I am large, I contain multitudes"—can pierce the soul, offering clarity or comfort. They bind us by revealing shared emotions: love, loss, longing. In India, a farmer reciting Ghalib under a banyan tree and a New Yorker reading Auden on a subway are, in essence, connected. Literature heals by reminding us that we are not alone. In a fractured world, poetry and literature remain quiet revolutionaries. India's vibrant tapestry of voices—from Sanskrit to Bhojपुरi—mirrors a global chorus where every stanza, every story, stitches us closer. They don't erase pain, but they transform it, turning wounds into wisdom, division into dialogue. That is their timeless power. ♦



Pc:Freepik



Komal Gupta is an Indian poetess and writer based in India. She writes under the pen name of tejaswiniaura. She has worked as a Montessori Teacher Trainer and Preschool Principal and is currently on board as National Vice President of WICCI Arts Leadership Council and Global Advisor to G100 Arts Leadership and Films Council.

WRITING FINDING HERSELF

Dr. Sandhya Rajasekhar



Pc:Freepik

Since my childhood days, the very act of writing has been dear to me. And I am not talking of creative writing. It was putting words down on paper that I loved, and as I grew older, it had a therapeutic effect on me; I made it a habit to write down anything that bothered me and it helped. I still remember declaring at home that I would do a PhD and write so much that my right arm would be thinner than my left! As a school girl, I indulged in writing poems, wrote at least two unfinished 'novels' and loved writing essays in my English and language exams. Having been exposed to writing from an early age, with my uncle, an accountant by profession, and my father, a surgeon, being writers in the Kannada language, this love for writing seemed natural to me.

Journalism and literature were the obvious choice of courses for me as part of the triple major courses offered at the undergraduate level by Mysore University. After a PhD (since I had my laptop then, there was no danger of the right arm getting thinner than the left), I took to teaching and soon headed the department of Journalism at a well-known city college.

As an Associate Professor in Journalism, I was into academic writing and trained students in writing skills (non-fiction, of course).

It came as a surprise to my students and colleagues therefore, when I actually published a short novel – a fiction book. My love for writing led me to writing stories, mostly short stories, digging into my experiences and rich culture for ideas.

Growing up in Karnataka, my family shuttled between Mysore and Bangalore, whenever my father, a surgeon with the government hospitals, was transferred. In between were the villages of my parents and the flowing rivers, Kaveri and Shimsha. My mother's ancestral village was on the banks of the river Kaveri, and all that I have written about village life with the river is what we experienced as children during our summer visits.

With a journalist husband who worked long hours and night shifts, my daughter (who was then hardly three or four years of age) and I were always together, and sometimes my over-thinking and over-imaginative mind would wonder, "What will she would do if something happened to me?"

That is how my short novel, *Finding Herself*, began, and it was this thought that made me write the story with “warmth and tenderness”, as a friend who read the book, commented.

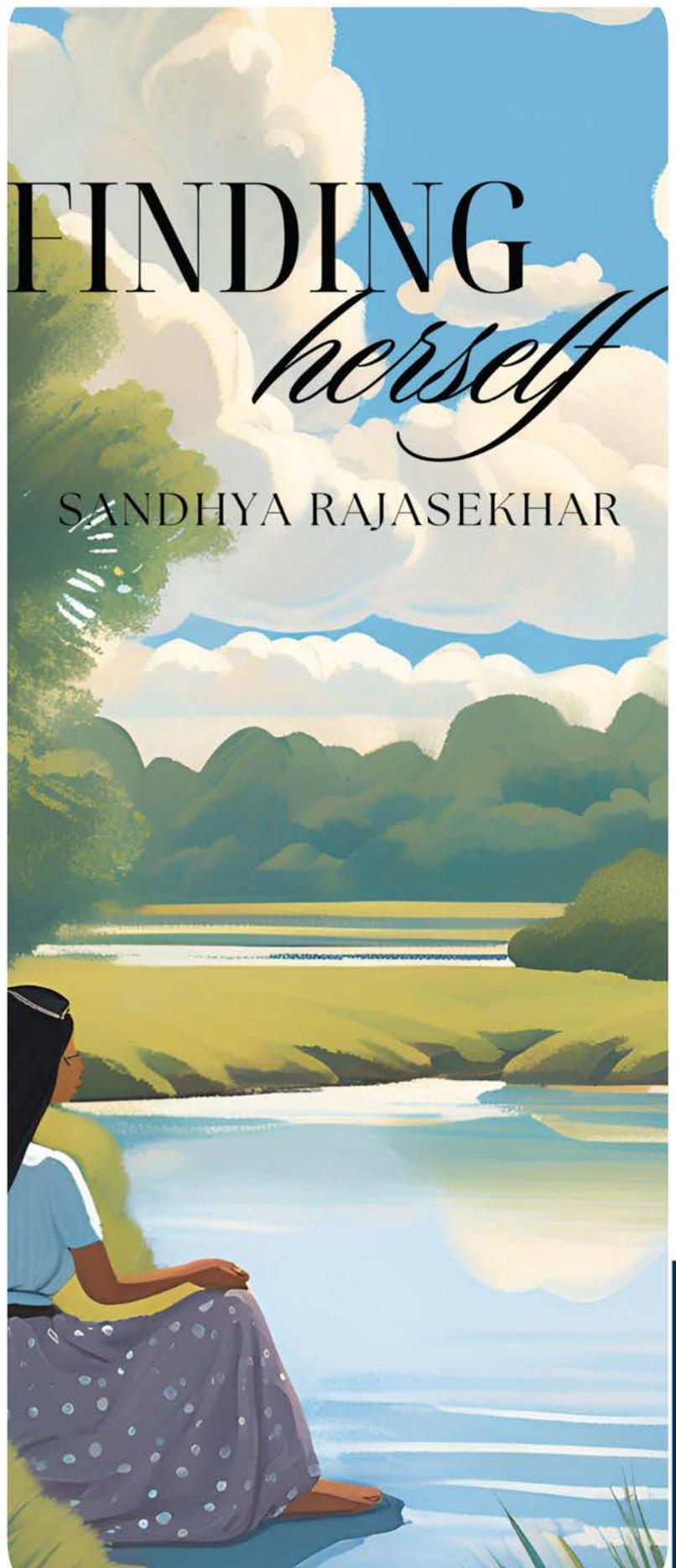
Finding Herself began decades ago when I wrote the first chapter, but as I got preoccupied with work and family, I took it again in earnest only in 2019. It was the very act of writing that kept me going, and once the process began in earnest, there was no stopping me.

I dug into my roots, my culture, and experiences- the fun girlhood times with my sisters and friends; the visits to the villages of my father and mother; learning to draw the rangoli; the leftover rice flattened and dried in the sun that my friend’s mother would later fry into crunchy fritters; college life; the rural survey; were all experiences that surfaced as memories as I wrote the story of Anupama, who loses her mother at the age of eight.

The canvas was not large, everything in the book was written from Anupama’s point of view. It was important to me that she was loved and cared for, even though her family crumbles when her father marries again. It was equally important to me that the stepmother broke the stereotype of the wicked stepmother found in fairy tales that our children are so used to listening to.

I wrote the epilogue chapter when I was down with COVID, and then left the completed manuscript in my laptop as a word file. My two daughters were my first readers, and my elder one persuaded me to publish it. “It is a story that needs to be told” she said. Writing does not end with writing! Any piece of work be it written, visual or audio is considered a text only when people read or see or listen to it. And, that is how, after sitting in my computer for four years, the book was published.

The publishing process was not simple or easy- editing and proof reading were done multiple times till my consultant and I had to draw the line and say ‘enough’ and go ahead with the printing. Holding the hard copy of the book was a surreal experience, and the fact that I had completed a project gave me a great sense of satisfaction.◆



The Naming Ceremony

Dr. Sandhya Rajasekhar

"Nina, don't touch baby. You will disturb him. Don't you see he is asleep?" Nina's mother scolded her. "We have a busy day today. Go have your breakfast. Grandma is in the kitchen."

Nina ran out of the room, upset. She loved baby, but nobody let her touch baby! And mom was always thinking of baby! Mother and Nina were in grandma's house for baby's birth. It was a large household, with grandma, grandpa, her uncle and aunt, two older cousins and another aunt who was not married. Dad was there too, for baby's naming ceremony.

Her oldest cousin Leela was already bathed and dressed for the occasion. They were having guests for the pooja (ceremonial prayer) and lunch. Nina ran back to her mother, who was resting with baby. "Mom, I want to wear the pink dress that aunt bought me for my birthday."

"Today is baby's naming ceremony. Wear your silk paavadai (traditional long skirt and blouse). You will look beautiful, sweetie," mother said. "Come on, it is time for your bath."

"Only if I can wear the pink dress!" Nina said stubbornly, and escaped from the room to the kitchen.

"Why are you not ready yet?" Her grandmother asked her. That was it! Nina was angry. Why was everyone after her? She would hide from all of them today, she thought.

She ran to the store room attached to the kitchen. Seven years old and nimble, she climbed up the large slabs of open shelves and was soon on the topmost shelf, wide enough to hide her if she lay down close to the wall.



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She peeped out when she heard her mother call out to her. Nina did not answer. She heard mother calling out to Leela. "Leela, please find Nina?" "Yes aunty." Leela answered and ran around the house shouting, "Nina? Neena? Neenaa? Where are you?" She soon lost interest and stopped looking for her.

Half an hour later, she saw mom come out of her room, all dressed up for the occasion. Nina waited for mother to call out to her. "Did you see Nina?" Mother asked anyone she met in the drawing room and kitchen. "Where could this girl be?" She muttered, but hurried back to her room when she heard baby cry.

An hour later, hungry, tired of lying down in the dark shelf, with God knows what was crawling around, Nina cried herself to sleep.

She felt gentle hands shaking her awake. Her dad was standing on the store room ladder, smiling with relief. She let him pick her up and hand her down to her mother. Her mother carried her to the drawing room and sat on the sofa, and everyone crowded around them. Nina gave a sheepish smile, and held on to her mother. Baby cried in the room but mother did not seem to hear.



Sandhya Rajasekhar is a retired Associate Professor, Department of Journalism, and PhD Supervisor at a well known city college in Chennai, India.

Finding Herself, a short novel, is her first fiction book.

"You gave us all a fright!" Grandma said. "Your poor mother has not even had her breakfast, she was worried sick when she couldn't find you." Nina mumbled an apology, but inside, she was grinning with happiness.

It was time for the pooja. Nina sat with her parents, baby on mother's lap, throughout the ceremony, looking beautiful in the silk paavadai that mother wanted her to wear. ◆



Pc:Freepik

NATIVE NOTES

देखो _ बसंत _ आ _ गया

Lo Behold! Spring has come

Rajini Sardana

देखो _ बसंत _ आ _ गया

नई शुरुआत नये परिवर्तन का
ये किसने आगाज़ किया
ये किसने खिलाई कलियाँ और
पवन को किसने महका दिया
ठिठुरती ठिठुरन को देखो
ये कौन भगा गया
करो स्वागत जोरों से
देखो बसंत आ गया

माँ शारदे ने वीणा बजाई
गणेश जी ने शंख नाद किया
महकी धरा खुशबू से
नव जीवन संचार हुआ
इन सूखे कुमलाये पेड़ों पर
किसने हरा-भरा शृंगार किया
नव कोपल-कोपल खिली डाल पर
देखो बसंत आ गया

सरसों के पीले-पीले फूल खिले
खेत-खेत लहरा रहा
रंग-बिरंगी चादर ओढ़ा
ये किसने धरा को सजा दिया
गुनगुनी सुनहरी धूप खिली
राग-रंग का उत्सव हुआ
करो स्वागत जोरों से
देखो बसंत आ गया

अमिया पर बौरें आईं
मोड़ भी नाच दिखा रहा
कोयल लगी कू-कू करने
फूल-फूल पर भंवरा डोल रहा
गा कर प्रेम के गीत मधुर
प्रीत की फॉर बाँध रहा
करो स्वागत जोरों से
देखो बसंत आ गया



Translated version;

Lo Behold! Spring has come

Look, Spring Has Arrived
A new beginning, a new transformation.
Who has set this in motion?
Who has made the buds bloom,
And who has perfumed the breeze?
See the shivering cold,
Who has driven it away?
Welcome it with fervour,

Look, spring has arrived.
Mother Saraswati played her veena,
Lord Ganesh sounded his conch,
The earth blossomed with fragrance,
A new life force surged forth.
On these dry, withered trees,
Who adorned them with green splendour?
New shoots sprouted on the branches,

Look, spring has arrived.
Yellow mustard flowers bloomed,
Fields ripple in waves,
Draped in a multicoloured sheet,
Who has adorned this earth?
Warm golden sunlight spread,
A festival of melody and colour began,
Welcome it with fervour,

Look, spring has arrived.
Blossoms appeared on the mango trees,
Twigs too sway in dance,
The cuckoo began its sweet cooing,
Bumblebees hover over every flower.
Singing sweet songs of love,
Tying the bond of affection,
Welcome it with fervor,
Look, spring has arrived.

डालियों पर रक्त टेसू झूले
भरे गुलाब मन को छू लें
मनमौजी हो तितलियाँ डोलें
बर्फ पिघल धारा बन निकले
ये किसने जीवन की सम्पूर्ण महिमा का बखान किया
करो स्वागत जोरों से
देखो बसंत आ गया

चलो ,चलो हम भी मिल कर
गीत नया कोई गाते हैं
बाँट के इक-दूजे से खुशियाँ
प्रेममय हो जाते हैं
ऋतुराज के रंग में रंग के
किसी जीवन को महकाते हैं
पूछेगा जब फिर कोई तुमसे
कौन तुम्हें सिखला गया
प्रेम से कह देना बंधु
देखो बसंत आ गया

स्वरचित-रजनी सरदाना

Red tesu flowers swing on branches,
Roses fill the heart with delight,
Playful butterflies flutter about,
Melting snow turns into flowing streams.
Who has narrated the full glory of life?
Welcome it with fervour,

Look, spring has arrived.
Come, let us together
Sing a new song,
Sharing happiness with one another,
Becoming immersed in love.
Coloured in the hues of the king of seasons,
Let us fragrance someone's life.
When someone asks you again,
Who taught you this?
Say with love, dear friend,
Look, spring has arrived.

Original Composition - Rajni Sardana



Rajni Sardana is a Writer and poet . She is
a Council Member of the Haryana Arts
Leadership Council



Pc:Freepik

DRAUPADI

Dr. Malabika Mitra

Draupadi...

The name has an ancient ring
A very familiar one
For who hasn't heard
Of the famous wife
A wife with five husbands!
The Draupadi of The Mahabharata
Wife, princess, queen and mother
An object of beauty and courage
But above all a woman -
So strong, and so unique,
She towered above the rest...

I also remember of another Draupadi...

By the way, a much coveted name,
Amongst tribals many.
You ask "Why?" -
I know not,
Maybe to draw a link
Connect with a culture past,
As ancient as the tribes
Sharing deep roots to the land.

This Draupadi, none other than
Mahasweta Devi's 'Draupadi'
Dopdi Meihen, as her kinsmen called
Unable to utter,
The Sanskrit way.
Dopdi is Draupadi,
No object of beauty, is she

But a Santhal rebel, a dreaded Naxalite
Much feared,
Of such mettle, that it shook the ground
From beneath the General...
She feared none,
But was dreaded by all
Dopdi laid her life for a cause,
For her tribe, for the forests
And for the woods.

Years and decades later,
Came another Draupadi of renown -
Draupadi Murmu²
A tribal, and a Santhal too
Like, her famed predecessor,
Who rose to become
India's first tribal President
By sheer grit and hardwork
From the poorest poor.
Rewriting history,



Completing the circle
Connecting past and present
Underscoring the change
Highlighting the transformation,
From the regal Draupadi
Through her rebel namesake
Becoming the first citizen of her country
The chief commander of her armed forces
Restoring the glory
Intrinsically connected with an ancient name. ◆

1. Renowned Indian author, Mahasweta Devi's much-acclaimed story
2. President of India



Dr. Malabika Mitra is a former English newsreader with Doordarshan, freelancer, corporate leader and author. An alumna of National University of Singapore (NUS), she also pursued a doctoral degree on a very feminist topic. Intertwined, an anthology of poems is her sixth book.

Ecosystem of Art Law & Economy

"A space where art meets economy—exploring copyrights, sustainability, marketing, and creative growth. Bridging tradition and innovation to empower artists in the modern world."

**THE COPYRIGHT CANVAS: A
Lawyer's Take on Protecting
Artistic Creations**

Sruthy Konnangath

THE COPYRIGHT CANVAS:

A Lawyer's Take on Protecting Artistic Creations

Sruthy Kannangath



As an artist, your work is a piece of your soul—your ideas, your emotions, your world. It could be a painting, a song, a short video, or even a viral meme. Your creativity is yours. But, in today's quick-fire, digital world, where your work can be copied, posted, and reposted by anyone with a click of a button, knowledge of copyright is no longer an option—it is a requirement.

As a lawyer who has seen hundreds of artists struggle to protect their work, I promise you this: copyright is your superpower. It is the shield that guarantees your art is respected, credited, and—when the moment is right—profitable. The fight for artistic ownership has been going on since the beginning of art itself.

What is Copyright, exactly?

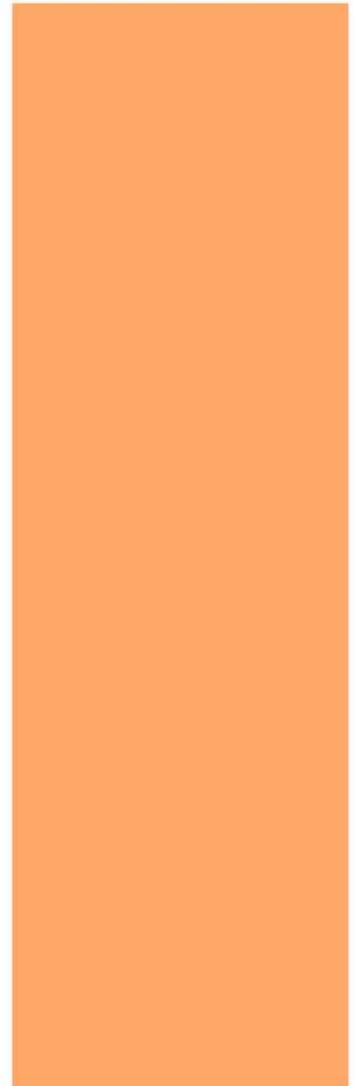
Copyright is a legal right that automatically comes into effect the second you create something original. From that brand new painting you have just completed to the hit song you have composed, or that film you have been producing—copyright means that you are entitled to specify how your work can be utilised. Although gaining official recognition can provide you with an advantage, essentially, it's yours the moment it is created.

Now, copyright doesn't protect your ideas—but it does protect how you express those ideas. For example, if you paint a portrait of a woman, copyright will not protect the concept of "a portrait of a woman." But it will protect your own brushstrokes, your use of color, and how you compose her. That is, it is your creativity that is protected.

A Quick History of Copyright

The idea of protecting creative material dates back to ancient Greece. However, it was not until the creation of the movable-type printing press in the 15th century, that the necessity of protection for artistic creativity became evident. It was only in 1710, that the Statute of Anne was passed in England, becoming the first law to recognise copyright as a legal right. Thereafter, other countries followed suit by enacting their own national legislations for protecting intellectual property.

In the 19th century, copyright law became more international in scope, with the adoption of the Berne Convention in 1886, which allowed creators to protect their work across borders without needing to register in each country. Now, thanks to the Berne Convention, creators can get worldwide protection automatically without requiring individual registration in every country.



Why Does Copyright Matter Right Now?

A number of artists, especially at the start of their careers, might think copyright is not really a big deal. Maybe you are not making millions from your work yet, so why bother? Here's why: the value of art can skyrocket over time. Think of Vincent van Gogh—during his lifetime, he struggled, and his paintings were considered too unconventional by the art world. He was barely able to sell a single painting, and when he did, it was for peanuts.

Had copyright laws been in place during his time, Van Gogh's family would have been able to capitalize on the value of his paintings after his death—something which would have made a colossal difference to his heirs. The reality? Van Gogh's genius was recognised only long after his tragic passing. Had he been able to control his work via copyright, his heirs might have had the chance to profit from his legacy, even if his masterpieces were not widely appreciated during his lifetime.

Your Rights Under Copyright

Copyright is not just about protecting your work from copycats; it is also about making sure you get the respect—and the earnings—you deserve. Let us take a look at your rights as an artist:

- **Economic Rights:** These rights give you the power to profit from your work—whether by licensing it, selling it, or even adapting it. If someone wants to reproduce, distribute, or modify your work, they have to get your permission first.
- **Moral Rights:** Your moral rights protect the honor of your work. It is about making sure your name is always credited and that no one can distort or alter your work in ways that do not reflect your vision.

Do You Have to Register Copyright?

The moment that your work is created and fixed in a tangible form (whether it's a painting, a song, or a script), copyright protection takes effect. While registration is not mandatory, it is a smart move—registering your work provides you with legal proof that you are the rightful owner, which can be a game-changer if you ever need to defend your work in court.

Registration also gives you a public record of ownership, and this will prove useful if your work is ever contested. And, in some cases, it will help prevent counterfeit copies from flooding the market.

How Long Does Copyright Last?

The duration of copyright protection varies depending on where you live, but most countries follow the standards of the Berne Convention. Generally, copyright lasts for the creator's lifetime and 50 years after. Some countries (like the U.S.) extend it to 70 years. Interestingly, Mexico offers the longest protection at 100 years. In India, copyright protection lasts for the creator's lifetime and then continues for another 60 years. Beyond that, your work enters the public domain—i.e., anybody can use it freely.

Why Copyright Is Like Real Estate for Your Art

Your art is an investment. Copyright allows your work to appreciate in value, just like real estate. Right now, your art might not look like it is worth much, but in a few decades from now, it could be hanging in a museum or fetching a hefty price at an auction.

Without copyright, you have little to no control over how your work is used. Many artists throughout history, especially early in their careers, lost control of their creations because they did not think ahead. Copyright protects you from making the same mistake, ensuring that even if you decide to sell or license your work, you do so on your terms.

Final Thoughts: Your Art, Your Legacy

Art is not just about what you create today; it is about what you leave behind. Copyright is the tool that protects your legacy, making sure your creations continue to shine long after you down your paintbrush or your guitar.

So, to every artist reading this: protect your work. It is not just about the money—it is about ensuring that your creativity, your identity, and your legacy are respected. Who knows? Someday that painting or song of yours could be worth more than you ever imagined. Wouldn't it be nice to know that it is still yours, even then? Protect your art now—it is the smartest thing you can do for your future.. ♦



Sruthi Konnangath works in Corporate Counsel at Younis Mohammed Al Blooshi.

Specializing in corporate and commercial law within the United Arab Emirates, Sruthi brings a wealth of experience across a range of legal domains, such as corporate establishment, compliance, governance, real estate law, employment law, and intellectual property rights

Inner muse

"A journey through art and spirit—unfolding how creativity connects us to our higher self and a more meaningful life."

Shakti Sutras

Dr. Harbeen Arora Rai

Art as a tool

Cláudia Sofia Sardinha Marques

How to live an Authentic Life

Shannon Skinner

The Sacred Spark - How Spirituality Enhances Creativity

Mansi Mahajan

Journaling for Mental Well-being: One Page at a Time

Kavita Yadav



SHAKTI SUTRAS:

108 SUTRAS FOR PEACE & PROSPERITY.

WRITTEN IN 108 WEEKS. BY DR. HARBEEN ARORA RAI AND VINAY RAI

Dr. Harbeen Arora Rai



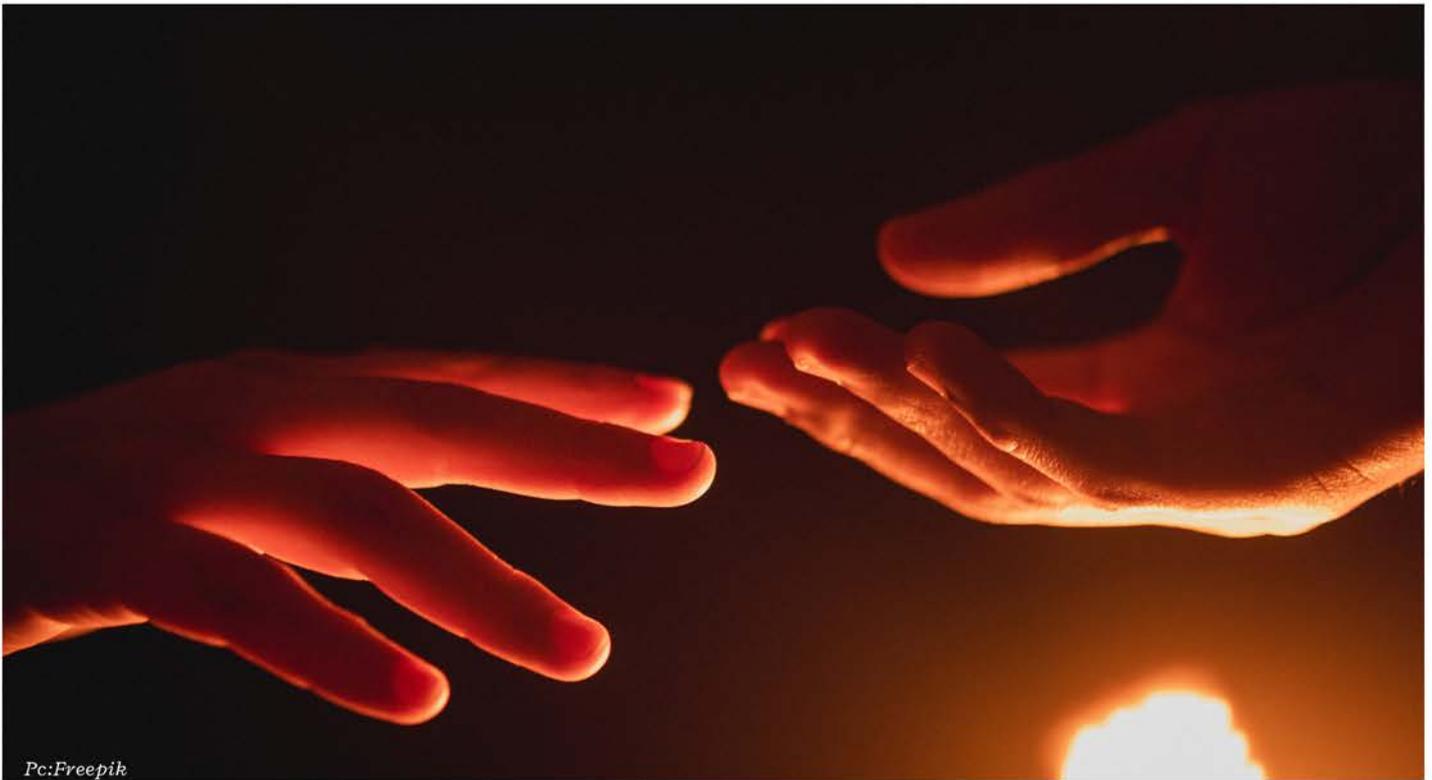
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The book 108 Shakti Sutras is a devout offering and the offspring of two spiritual seekers. My husband and I have been friends and soulmates, perhaps for lifetimes, before becoming life partners. Our Guru, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is our eternal guide, reminding us of our true nature and enduring bond: that of souls connected beyond roles, space, and time, in a web of wisdom where the light of awareness abounds and the love of the heart unites us as all as one divine family.

To behold such divine power of a great Guru in our midst is a great miracle itself. To have the fortune of listening and learning from the cosmic leader, "Brahmanda-Nayaka," is a blessing all the more.



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As humble channels of those divine experiences and learnings received at the lotus feet of our beloved Guru, Vinay and I have penned these sutras as spontaneous outpourings from the heart, beading the wisdom of lessons learned, through the prism of our experiences and introspection, which we further put through the crucible of time and sadhana, ripening it all in the sacred matrix of the 108, and the powerful mix of perspectives of Shakti and Shiva that we represent and channel in our unity.

Shakti is variously called Energy, Power, Force, or Existence. Shakti is ever-present and innate in everyone. The 108 sutras in the book are written to help us reclaim the Shakti within, especially when we feel disconnected, facing the challenges of life. Reclaiming the power of our own Shakti, we can take the path of self-healing, self-rejuvenation, self-leadership, self-stewardship, and self-allyship – stepping into the next best version of ourselves on our self-sailing ship.

We can read the Sutras in any order we like. Simply open a page, and allow the Sutra therein to gently nourish and awaken all that is already in our heart. Each Sutra acknowledges our human condition, searches for answers, and surges with the power of transcendence, providing us a way forward in wisdom from where we are to where we want to be. In this journey of human life, wherever we find ourselves, just there, we can take a deep cosmic breath and cross the hurdles of life with the power of our inner Shakti. The care and counsel of this book channel the enduring wisdom and inclusive spirit of Sanatan Dharma, and accompany us in our quest for the calling within.◆

Dr. Harbeen Arora is a philanthropist, entrepreneur, and Founder, G100, All Ladies League (ALL), WEF, WICCI, SHEconomy, and Chancellor, Rai University.



Pc:Freepik

Art as Tool

“Art consists in making others feel what we feel, in freeing them from themselves by offering them our personality for special liberation” Fernando Pessoa



Art is something very concentrated —it is the result of the artist's entire journey, their conquests, their defeats, their discoveries, their sensitivity and their unique perception. Art is a subtle, materialized invitation to new sensations and perceptions of reality.

“Art is not purity, it is purification; it is not freedom, it is liberation.” Clarice Lispector .

Creation begins when we open our minds and hearts and surrender to something that is beyond our rational mind. By opening ourselves up to new ways of perceiving our surroundings, we will be able to explore our inner world. The senses are activated and we feel the emotions that arise. When emotion is acknowledged, it becomes a vital impulse, an impulse that we can transform into action and understanding; and we consciously create new responses, new paths, and new patterns.

“The hand expresses what the heart already knows.” Samuel Mockbee

In the history of mankind, if they had only thought of spoken language to communicate with their fellow human beings and if their wisdom had only been expressed in words, there would have been no trace left of humanity. The changes that have taken place in human history are due to man's hand.

If we are willing to use our creative abilities with our hands, whether writing, painting, drawing, sculpting, playing a musical instrument, etc... we see the development of potential.

The hand, with a pencil or other material, creates a direct tactile connection between the object to be materialized, its representation and the mind. For example, in the case of architecture, the handmade model is molded in the same kind of physical materiality as the object being designed and which the architect himself embodies. In art, when we create, we are also intentionally creating this materiality in our lives.



The perfection I see in you is the perfection I have in me.

When we manage to awaken curiosity and a state of contemplation, we dive into deep processes of self-examination and bring beauty and compassion to life. Art gives us other perspectives, they are invitations. When we recognize the intrinsic beauty in things, we connect and integrate parts of ourselves that we previously rejected or did not know about

Art is a healing vehicle, activating our creativity, something that benefits all areas of our lives. It contributes to the mastery of our own potentials, as it helps us to deactivate fears and states of automatism that prevent us from flowing and reaching a state of greater awareness.





"The limit is the distance which I can love you and myself simultaneously"
Prentis Hemphill

When we awake our awareness and recognize that we have tools and resources within, we begin to create new patterns and define a line, a healthy boundary, our own space. First inside, then out into the world. Art creates space for this exercise.

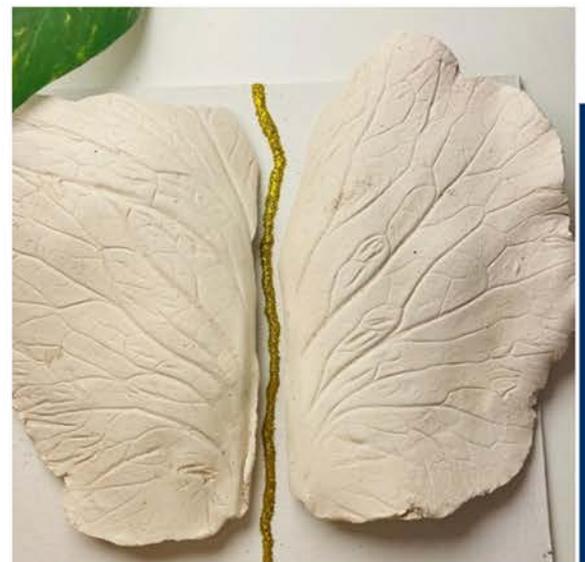
The opposites. Paradoxically, we can't have one without the other. One gives shape to the other..

Head and heart, reason and affection, masculine and feminine, inspiration and expiration. Although they are opposites, paradoxically, we cannot have one without the other.

Most of the time we are on autopilot and when we are able to observe the mind from a neutral perspective, we are given the opportunity to see reality with new eyes, beyond the ideas that limit our perception of the world.

Incorporating meditative practice into art makes it easier for us to carry out this process. It makes it easier to learn to keep and maintain that correct distance where we can be witnesses to what exists, putting us in a less reactive and anxious state and a cleaner state of self-observation.

In this state of greater awareness, where opposites coexist, we are able to transcend many doors that, without advancing in this creative and self-observation process, we would never have opened.





The tension of the opposites dissolves with the arrival of a third point.

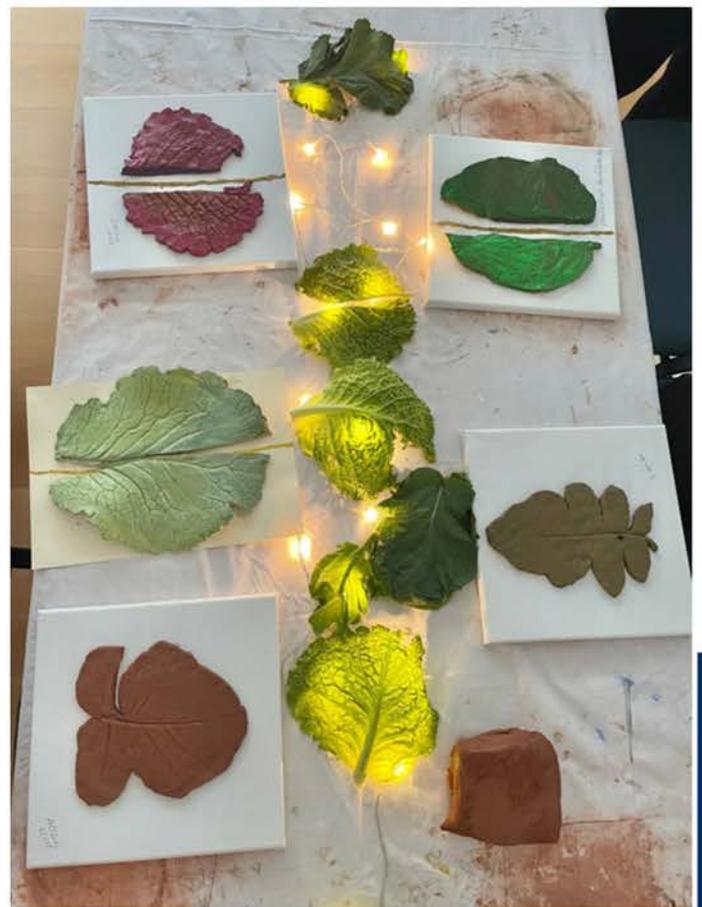
The state of neutral observation, the synthesis consciousness, integrates the opposites and opens the door to intelligence — the intelligence of the Soul. Just as a bird needs two wings to fly, the opposites fit deep within each being without conflict or dissociated vision. Both are masters of the soul and bring subtle lessons for developing wisdom and compassion. They reach the middle way — the return to our center.

“The purpose of art is simply to create a study of the soul” Oscar Wilde

Trust that chaos awakens wisdom and that there is an underlying order to everything. Art is a way of expressing our freedom, it is a vehicle for self-expression and for connecting with ourselves, our resources and the world around us. ◆



Cláudia Sofia Sardinha Marques is a Psychologist, Art Therapist and an Artist



· Photographs of pieces created by the author and photographs taken at Art Therapy Workshops at the Portuguese League Against Cancer's, Seixal branch.

HOW TO LIVE AN AUTHENTIC LIFE

Shannon Skinner



Pc:Freepik

The latest buzz word that seems to be sticking around is authenticity. Think of all the “be authentic, be yourself” messages posted on social media. But what does it mean to be authentic? How do you know if you are living authentically?

The root of the word authentic is to be real, genuine and original. When we apply this definition to the broader lens of life, it means living a life that is genuinely you: your interests, goals and heart's desires.

Think about your own life for a moment. You know when you are being true to yourself - and when you are not. You cannot fool your heart - just try it. It is like hitting a key on the piano and resonating with the note, or not. If it feels off, it is off.

The simplest way to live an authentic life is to be clear on your values. Your values are what is most important to you. When you are doing something you love, you put energy, time and resources into it. Conversely, when you are doing something you do not love, you may feel resentment, anger and your energy drained.

Some people value creating art, making films, writing books, and other creative or artistic endeavors. There are those who value building a business and creating enormous wealth.

Others value travel, or teaching, or building a fit body, or raising a family. Consider Rose Kennedy whose top value was raising a family of world leaders. There are plenty of examples in the public space of people being authentic, or true to themselves. Taylor Swift, one of the world's top bestselling music artists, comes to mind. Whether you like Swift's music or not, she is a prolific artist and is clearly doing what she loves. I do not know if it could be possible to be so prolific and not be authentic.

Getting clear on my own values took time and self-reflection. I love to write, travel, learn and create inspirational media. Writing this article is aligned with my values. It is especially powerful when I can combine my values. For example, as a travel writer, I love travelling to destinations (India is a favourite), learning about the culture, meeting interesting people, creating media and writing about it to inspire people to visit.

In 2010, I created, hosted and produced the ground-breaking television show, Extraordinary Women TV with Shannon Skinner. I was a pioneer in internet television. I have interviewed hundreds of women from all walks of life to tell their inspirational stories. Producing the show brought together everything I love doing and it made a difference in many women's lives around the world.

I have also been involved in other film and television productions over the years in various capacities, and it has given me tremendous joy to work on these projects. My spidey senses tell me there is more to come.

My new book, *Your Whispering Heart: An Inner Guide to Creativity*, to help artists unlock their creative power, make their dreams come true and live with joy, is to be published soon. It is a revised and updated second edition of a book I wrote years ago, which kick-started my heart's desire to inspire others.

One of the most important lessons I learned along my journey is that we need to know when it is time to pause the "doing" and ask ourselves: "Am I really doing what I love? Is this truly fulfilling? Do I want to keep doing what I am doing? Am I living my dream or someone else's dream?"

When we are being authentic, living a life authentic to us, we can feel joy and contentment in our hearts. Even more importantly, we feel fulfilled and have a sense of meaning, which is longer-lasting.

And so, how do you become authentic and live authentically? Here are some clues:

1. Where do you put your time the most?
2. What do you spend money on the most?
3. What gives you energy?
4. What do you talk about to your friends and family the most?

You may be living the life of your dreams, or you may realize you want something different. Either way, it is worth taking the time to reflect and ask yourself tough questions. After all, it is your life to live. ◆



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Shannon Skinner is an award-winning inspirational broadcaster, writer, international speaker, creator/host of "Extraordinary Women TV with Shannon Skinner," and author of "Your Whispering Heart: An Inner Guide to Creativity". She writes about travel and also hosts tours for women. She is based in Toronto. For more information, visit ShannonSkinner.com.

JOURNALING FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING:

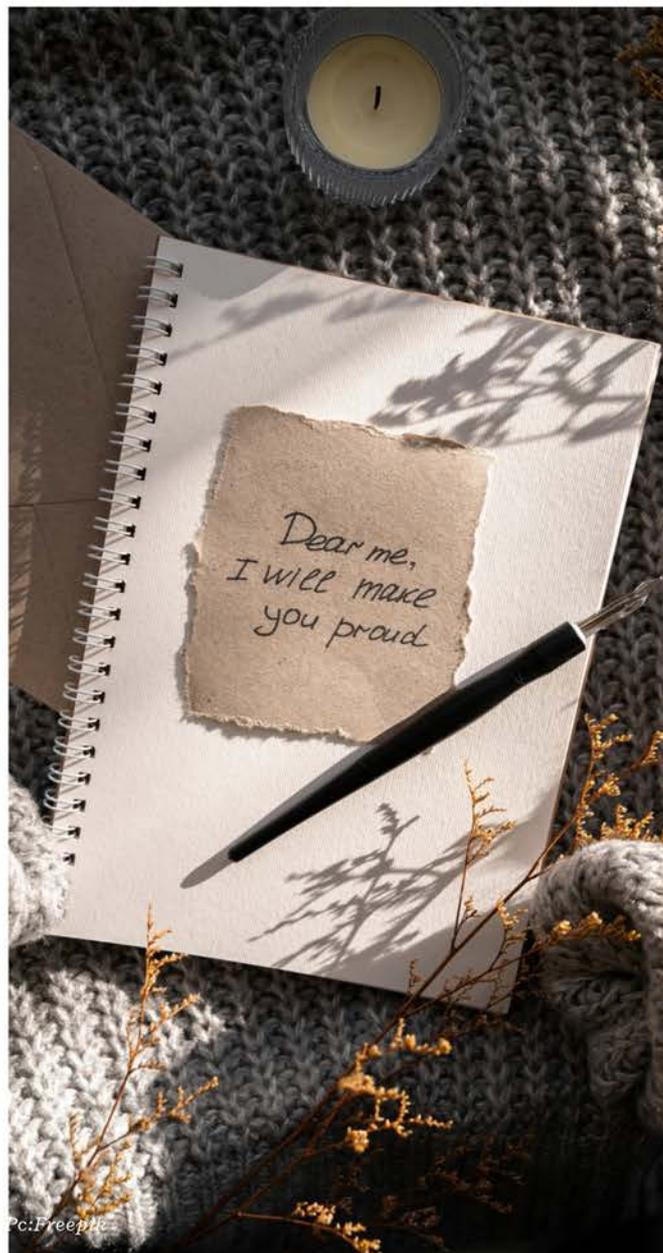
One Page at a Time

Kavita Yadav

“Journaling is like whispering to oneself and listening at the same time.”– Mina Murray

Want to organize your life and nurture your mental well-being?

Start by filling one page a day. Journaling is a simple yet powerful tool that brings clarity, emotional balance, and self-awareness into your daily life.



What is Journaling?

Let me try and explain it in simple words, “At its core, journaling is the practice of writing down your thoughts, feelings, experiences, and reflections.” It’s like having a private conversation with yourself, a safe, judgment-free space to express what’s on your mind. Whether you write about daily events, personal insights, or future dreams, journaling helps you process your inner world and understand yourself better.

Why is Journaling Good for Mental Health?

From a psychological perspective, journaling serves as a form of expressive writing that can enhance emotional regulation and cognitive processing. When you put your thoughts on paper, your brain can better organize emotions and experiences. Research suggests that

regular journaling can

- reduce stress,
- boost emotional intelligence, and
- improve mental clarity.
- It can also help reframe negative experiences and promote a sense of gratitude and resilience.

How to Journal for Maximum Benefit?

1. Set a Routine:

Find a quiet time in your day when you feel calm and focused. It could be in the morning to set positive intentions or in the evening to reflect and unwind. Consistency is the key. Pick a time that fits your rhythm and stick to it. Regular journaling can create a sense of structure and routine, which is beneficial for emotional regulation and stress reduction.

2. Reflect on the Positives:

Start your journal on a positive note. Take a moment to pause, breathe, and reflect. What went well today? It could be something as simple as a kind word from a friend, a beautiful sunset, or personal progress in your goals. This positive focus helps retrain your brain to notice and appreciate the good, which supports mental wellbeing through the neuroplasticity of the brain - the ability to form new positive pathways.

3. Shift Your Perspective:

Use your journal to reframe challenges. When facing setbacks, write about what you have learned and how you have grown. Psychologically, this practice encourages cognitive restructuring, shifting negative thought patterns to more balanced and empowering narratives. It helps you view obstacles as opportunities for growth rather than limitations.

The Psychological Benefits of Journaling

1. Reduces Stress and Anxiety:

Writing down worries helps externalize stress, making it easier to process and reduce its emotional intensity. It provides a healthy outlet for overwhelming feelings and offers relief through self-expression.

2. Processes Emotions Safely:

Journaling acts as a mental detox, allowing you to work through complex emotions in a safe space. This practice supports emotional regulation and prevents emotional suppression, which can lead to mental health concerns.

3. Deepens Self-Discovery:

By journaling consistently, you gain insight into your thoughts, behaviors, and emotional patterns. It promotes self-awareness - a core component of emotional intelligence that enhances decision-making and interpersonal relationships.

4. Clarifies Your Next Steps:

When life feels chaotic, journaling brings clarity. Writing about your goals, worries, and dreams helps organize your thoughts and identify actionable steps, creating a sense of control and direction. ◆

Not sure what to write about? Here are a few simple prompts to get started:

- What are three things I am grateful for today?
- What is one challenge I faced, and what did I learn from it?
- How do I feel right now? Why?
- What's one small win I want to celebrate today?
- Start Journaling Today – Your Mind Will Thank You
- Taking a few minutes each day to journal is an act of self-care. It's a space where you can be
- Honest, vulnerable, and reflective. Over time, you will notice greater emotional balance,
- Increased clarity, and a stronger connection with yourself.

Ready to begin?

Grab a notebook and start writing. One page, One thought at a time. Your mental wellbeing journey starts today!



Kavita Yadav is a Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Parenting Coach, Teen and Career Counselor. She is also the State President for WICCI- HPWC (Haryana Psychological Wellbeing Council)

THE SACRED SPARK

HOW SPIRITUALITY ENHANCES CREATIVITY

Mansi Mahajan

“Ananda (bliss) is the nature of creativity. True creation flows from a space of inner joy, where the self dissolves and only the act remains.” – Upanishads.

Creativity is often thought of as a talent—something that a lucky few are born with. But what if creativity is not just a gift but a state of being? A sacred portal that opens when we align with something greater than ourselves? This is where spirituality and creativity meet, merging into a dance of divine inspiration.

Beyond the Mind: Tapping into the Creative Field

Many of history's greatest artists, writers, and thinkers have spoken of their creativity as something beyond them—an energy that moves through them rather than from them. Elizabeth Gilbert, in *Big Magic*, calls it a “creative genius” that visits like a muse. In yogic philosophy, this idea is mirrored in the concept of Shakti, the divine feminine energy that flows through all living beings, fuelling both creation and expression.

Spirituality, in its many forms, offers tools to access this creative force. Whether through meditation, breathwork, prayer, or deep introspection, spiritual practices quiet the noise of the everyday mind and open the space for new ideas to emerge.

How Spirituality Unlocks Creativity Presence: The Gateway to Inspiration

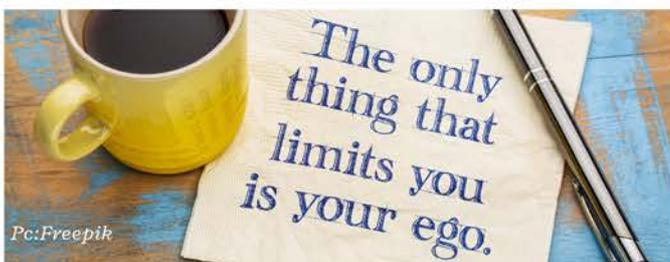
Most creative blocks arise from overthinking and self-doubt. Spirituality, through mindfulness and meditation, teaches us to be present—to engage with the moment fully, without the weight of past failures or future anxieties. When we are truly present, we tap into an infinite well of ideas waiting to be birthed.



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Surrender: Letting Go of the Ego

Creativity flourishes when we stop trying to control it. Spiritual teachings across traditions emphasise surrender—allowing ourselves to be vessels for something greater. Whether it's the Taoist principle of Wu Wei (effortless action) or the yogic idea of Ishvarapranidhana (devotion to the divine), surrendering allows creativity to flow through us rather than being forced.



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Creativity, Wellness & The Body-Mind Connection

Creativity is not just a mental process—it is a full-body experience. Our physical, mental, and emotional well-being directly impact our ability to create. Spirituality and wellness go hand in hand, offering us ways to nurture the body so that the mind can be free to create.

Nourishing the Body for Creative Flow

- **Movement as Meditation:** Yoga, dance, or even mindful walking helps unlock stagnant energy and sparks new ideas.
- **Breathwork for Clarity:** Pranayama (yogic breath control) oxygenates the brain, bringing calmness and creative focus.
- **Holistic Nutrition:** Eating sattvic (pure, light) foods like fresh fruits, nuts, and herbal teas supports mental clarity and inspiration.
- **Rest & Play:** Creativity needs both deep rest and childlike play. Sleep, nature walks, and joyful activities create the perfect ground for ideas to bloom.

The Mind-Body Harmony for Creative Expansion

Wellness is not just about physical health—it is about creating balance in all areas of life. When our energy is aligned, when our bodies are rested and our minds are clear, creativity flows effortlessly.

Ritual: Creating Sacred Space for Ideas

Rituals bring intention and sacredness to our creative practice. Lighting a candle before writing, chanting a mantra before painting, or simply taking deep breaths before brainstorming—all these small acts signal to our subconscious that it's time to create. They create a container for inspiration to enter.

Intuition: Trusting the Inner Voice

Spirituality teaches us to trust our inner knowing, the deep wisdom that whispers rather than shouts. Many creative breakthroughs happen when we stop forcing ideas and allow them to rise naturally. The more we strengthen our connection to our intuition—through meditation, journaling, or deep listening—the more effortlessly creativity flows.

Connection: Seeing Creativity as Service

When creativity is approached as an offering rather than an achievement, it takes on a new depth. Spiritual traditions teach that true fulfillment comes from serving others, and creativity is no exception. Whether through art, music, writing, or innovation, when we create from a space of love and purpose, our work resonates more deeply with the world.



Cultivating a Spiritually-Inspired Creative Practice

If you are looking to weave spirituality into your creative life, here are a few simple ways to start:

Morning Stillness: Begin your day with a few moments of silence, meditation, or conscious breathing. Let ideas rise without judgment.

Journaling as a Sacred Practice: Free-write whatever comes to mind for 5–10 minutes daily. This clears mental clutter and makes space for new insights.

Movement as Meditation: Dance, practice yoga, or take mindful walks—creativity often emerges when the body moves.

Create Without Expectation: Make art, write, or brainstorm without needing a perfect outcome. Let the process be the goal.

Offer Gratitude: Before and after your creative sessions, express gratitude for the inspiration you receive. This deepens your connection to the creative force.

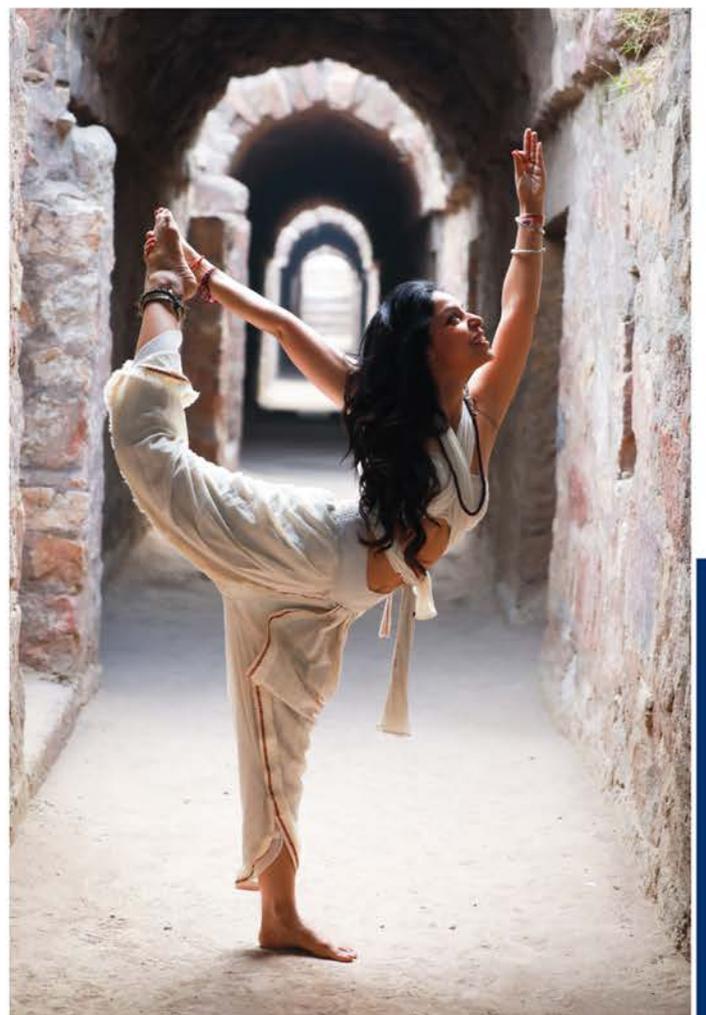
The Creative Spirit Within You

“Yatra visvam bhavati eka nidam, tad alokam” –
“Where the entire universe becomes one nest, there is illumination.” – Rig Veda

Creativity is not a skill—it is a state of being. And spirituality is the key that unlocks this state, allowing us to tap into a creative flow beyond the limits of logic or effort. When we trust in something larger than ourselves, when we show up with presence, surrender, and intention, we don't just create—we become the creators of our own reality.

Let your creativity be an offering, a sacred act of co-creation with the universe. And in that space, magic happens. ◆

Mansi is a wellness and transformation coach, guiding individuals on a journey to holistic well-being and personal growth. As a Transformation Coach, Yoga & Meditation Teacher she empowers people to embrace inner change as the foundation for a fulfilling and balanced life. Her teachings blend mysticism, science, and yogic principles to deliver a truly transformative experience.



Magnet Minds



Magnet Minds: Decoding the Language of Art and the Human Psyche – A Journey Through Stories, Reflections, and Expert Insights

Brushstrokes of the mind: How Art Mirrors Human Psychology

Dr. Abirami Vivek

The Neuroscience of creativity

Dr. P A Edwin

Embodied Wisdom: An Autobiographical Narrative of Arts in Therapy

Aditi Boratkar

Brushstrokes of the Mind: How Art Mirrors Human Psychology

Dr. Abirami Vivek

Art has always been more than just colours on a canvas or sculptures in a museum. It is an unspoken language, a mirror reflecting the depths of human emotions, thoughts, and experiences. Every brushstroke, every shade, every texture tells a story—one that often goes beyond the conscious mind. But have we ever paused to think about how deeply art is connected to our psychology?

Why does looking at certain paintings make us feel happy or melancholic? Why do some colours soothe us while others create a sense of unease? Art is not just about aesthetics; it is a powerful psychological tool that influences our thoughts, emotions, and even our behaviour.

The Canvas of the Mind

Psychologists and neuroscientists have long studied how art influences the human brain. When we look at an artwork, our mind does not merely "see" it; we feel it. A bright splash of yellow can uplift our mood, while a gloomy blue-grey painting might evoke sadness. This is because colours and patterns trigger certain emotions, often rooted in our subconscious.

For example, in early childhood, we naturally express emotions through art. A child who feels happy may use bright colours like red, yellow, and green, while a child who is anxious or upset might draw with dark or chaotic strokes. Even without words, their art speaks volumes about their emotions.

As adults, we might not always express our emotions so freely, but our reaction to art remains deeply psychological. Mona Lisa's mysterious smile intrigues us because our brain tries to decode her expression. A dramatic painting like Edvard Munch's *The Scream* can make us feel anxious because it visually represents raw emotion. This is why art is often used in therapy—it bypasses the barriers of language and logic, directly engaging with our subconscious.



Art as an Emotional Release

Life often overwhelms us with emotions—some we understand, and some we struggle to process. Art provides a safe space for emotional release. Many artists, knowingly or unknowingly, pour their deepest emotions into their work.

Take Vincent van Gogh, for example. He struggled with mental health issues throughout his life, and his paintings reflect his emotional state.

The Starry Night, painted while he was in a mental asylum, swirls with intense emotions—some see it as hopeful, others as chaotic.

Even for non-artists, picking up a brush, moulding clay, or even doodling in a notebook can be therapeutic. Studies have shown that engaging in creative activities reduces stress, improves focus, and even helps in healing trauma.

This is why art therapy is widely used for individuals dealing with anxiety, depression, and PTSD. When words fail, colours and shapes step in to express what the heart feels but cannot say.



The Stories We See in Art

Our perception of art is deeply personal. The same painting can evoke different emotions in different people. This is because our brain interprets visual stimuli based on our experiences, memories, and emotions.

Imagine looking at an old, abandoned house in a painting. One person might feel nostalgia, remembering their childhood home. Another might feel loneliness or fear, associating it with abandonment. In reality, the house is just a house—but the mind projects personal emotions onto it. This is why art is so powerful. It doesn't just tell the artist's story; it allows the viewer to find their own meaning within it.

Art and the Subconscious Mind

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, believed that art is a window into the subconscious mind. Many surrealist artists, like Salvador Dalí, created dream-like paintings that symbolized hidden fears, desires, and thoughts buried deep in the unconscious. Have you ever mindlessly doodled on a piece of paper during a meeting? Those little scribbles might seem random, but they often reflect our inner thoughts. Circles might indicate a calm state of mind, while jagged lines could represent stress or tension. Even in everyday life, we engage in subconscious creativity.

Carl Jung, another famous psychologist, introduced the idea of archetypes—universal symbols that appear in human culture and personal psychology. Many ancient artworks, religious symbols, and even modern films contain these archetypes, shaping how we perceive stories and emotions.

How Creating Art Shapes the Mind

Creating art isn't just an emotional release; it also rewires the brain. Neuroscientists have found that when we create art, multiple areas of the brain activate—especially those linked to problem-solving, memory, and emotional processing.

- Art improves focus – The process of painting or sculpting requires concentration, which enhances mindfulness and reduces anxiety.
- It boosts creativity – Engaging in art encourages out-of-the-box thinking, making us more innovative in other aspects of life.
- It builds resilience – Every mistake in art—whether a wrong brushstroke or an unexpected colour mix—teaches us to adapt and find solutions, a skill that translates into real life.

This is why art is encouraged for children and the elderly alike. It helps young minds develop critical thinking and emotional intelligence while providing older people with a way to stay mentally active and engaged.

Art as a Reflection of Society

Just as art mirrors individual psychology, it also reflects collective human emotions. Different art movements throughout history have captured the emotions of their time.

- The Renaissance reflected curiosity and intellectual awakening.
- Impressionism focused on fleeting moments, mirroring a changing society.
- Expressionism portrayed inner turmoil and raw emotion, often during times of war.
- Street art today speaks of rebellion, hope, and change, reflecting modern social movements.

When we walk through a city and see murals and graffiti, they aren't just random splashes of colour—they are voices of the people, speaking about their struggles, dreams, and realities.

Art as a Bridge Between Minds

One of the most beautiful aspects of art is its ability to connect people. A painting created centuries ago can still move us today. Two people from different cultures, who do not speak the same language, can still understand and appreciate the same artwork.

In my work with artists and exhibitions, I have seen firsthand how art brings people together. An artist may pour their soul into a piece, but once it is displayed, it belongs to everyone. Each person sees it through their own lens, connecting it to their own experiences.

Art breaks barriers, builds empathy, and helps us see the world through someone else's eyes. In a world divided by language, politics, and differences, art remains a universal thread that binds humanity together.

Art in Everyday Life

Art is not just for painters, sculptors, or musicians. It is for everyone. Whether we create it or simply admire it, art has the power to heal, inspire, and connect.

So, the next time you pick up a brush, take a photograph, or even just observe a painting, remember—what you see is not just art. It is a reflection of the mind, a glimpse into human psychology, and a silent conversation between the artist and the viewer.

And maybe, in those brushstrokes and colours, you'll find a piece of yourself too. ◆



Dr. Abirami Vivek is a Counselling Psychologist and Early Childhood Educationist. She is also the Founder - Magnet Minds, Global Advisory Member - G100 Arts Leadership and Films Wing and National Chair - All Ladies League (WEP)



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THE NEUROSCIENCE OF CREATIVITY

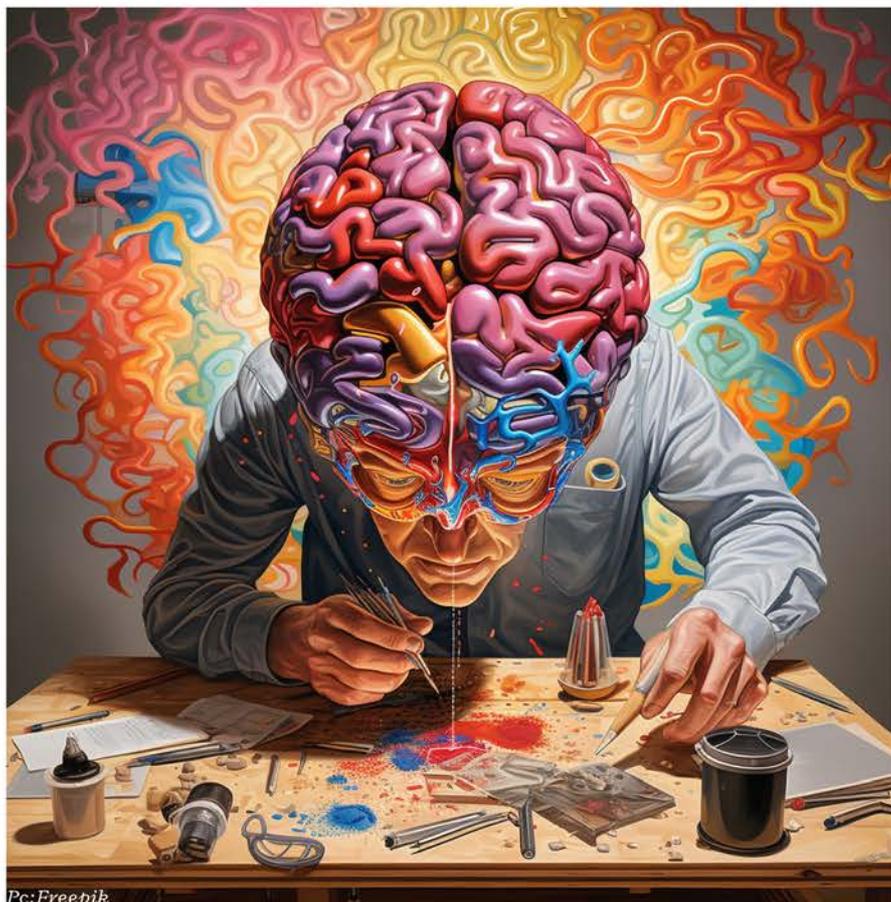
Dr. P. A. Edwin

Art is a higher dimension of expression and it does not stop with its narrative quantum alone; even an observance of it equally stimulates and synthesises the mind. Creation and appreciation of art are equally fascinating activities. When we engage in creative activities, our brain reaches a unique state — the Default Mode Network (DMN), associated with mind-wandering and daydreaming, becomes highly active. This network helps generate new ideas by connecting dissimilar concepts, a process that is fundamental to creativity.

The brain's reward system is responsive to creative activity, stimulating dopamine production. This gives the artist a sense of pleasure and the motivation to carry on.

So, what kind of art should be tried?

Any type of art appears to yield greater health benefits—modelling clay, for example, is wonderful to play around with. It engages the hands and many parts of our brain in sensory experiences. Similarly, studies have shown that colouring inside a shape—specifically a pre-drawn geometric mandala design — is more effective than colouring on a blank paper or even colouring inside a square shape



Therefore, there is no one medium or art activity that is "better" than another. A study of paintings recorded during experimental hypnagogia, the transitional state that occurs between wakefulness and sleep, found the paintings to be more profoundly realistic than the ones created during a wakeful state. This has led to a new understanding that is contrary to the belief that there is a surge in hormones during creativity, resulting in a creative product.

When a person encounters a piece of art, the brain embarks on a complex journey of perception and interpretation. This process involves several key regions in the brain: the Visual Cortex processes visual details, pulling out elements like colour, movement, and shape from what we see. The Frontal Lobe helps us understand and make meaning of artistic work based on our existing knowledge and experiences. The Amygdala helps us connect with art on a deeply emotional level thereby stimulating our brain's pleasure centres, releasing dopamine, the "feel-good hormone".



Art as Therapy for Emotional Health

The activities of creating and appreciating art are highly therapeutic. Art therapy helps individuals to explore their emotions and express their feelings in a creative, non-verbal manner.

The therapeutic benefits of art include reduction of stress, creating or improving self-awareness, and development of social skills

Art as therapy for Mental Health

Various studies have shown that the creative process can leave a deep impact on mental health by improving overall emotional well-being. The activity of creating art helps channel emotions and experiences, thereby acting as a means of expression and a source of pleasure, by which it significantly enhances our disposition and outlook on life.

Engaging in art, whether creating it or appreciating it, activates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) which is responsible for "rest and digest", thereby influencing the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), which governs the "fight or flight" response, by potentially promoting relaxation and emotional regulation.

The Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

The SNS is part of the autonomic nervous system which controls involuntary bodily functions. It is activated during stressful or dangerous situations, preparing the body for action through increased heart rate, rapid breathing, and other physiological changes.

The Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS):

The PNS counteracts the SNS, promoting relaxation, slowing down heart rate and breathing, and facilitating digestion.

Art and the Nervous System Indulging in artistic activities can result in certain positive responses by the brain like relaxation through the release of calm inducing neurotransmitters; and stimulation of the Vagus nerve that plays a crucial role in regulating the autonomic nervous system which includes SNS and PNS.

Art and Brain Plasticity

Art does not just relate to our feelings; it also promotes brain plasticity which is the brain's capacity to form and reorganise the communication process of neurons and cells. This not only promotes cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills, it also helps prevent dementia, short term memory loss and Parkinson's.

Art and Child Development

Art plays a crucial role in child development, by helping in cognitive, emotional, and social growth. It can improve the learning abilities of children, and assist in developing essential skills that include motor skills, language skills and decision-making skills.

Creating and appreciating art is therefore, not just for pleasure or entertainment, it has a synergistic relationship with the human brain. Whether one is an artist or critic or observer, it helps us explore, express and connect with the world in a broader spectrum of our life. By understanding how art affects the brain, we can let our creativity flow and gain the benefits that art brings to our lives. ◆



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Life Associate Member - Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists

Embodied Wisdom:

An Autobiographical Narrative of Arts in Therapy

Aditi Boratkar

My journey into the realm of arts in therapy began at the age of seven with the rigorous discipline of Bharatanatyam. This classical Indian dance form, far exceeding mere physical movement, became a profound exploration of human emotion and spiritual philosophy.

It is paramount to understand that Bharatanatyam is not merely a performance, but an integrated system where story, choreography, music, costume, postures, gestures, and the dancer's interaction with the orchestra are inextricably linked.

It embodies the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, signifying a unity with universal consciousness, a ritualistic expression of love.

Bharatanatyam is a practice of embodied cognition, where symbolic gestures and movements facilitate a connection with higher consciousness. Beauty, love, and truth become pathways to brahmananda, a state of ultimate bliss.

The theory of rasa, central to Indian aesthetics, provides a framework for understanding the emotional impact of art. Rasa refers to the aesthetic flavor or sentiment evoked, a distilled emotional experience transcending personal contexts.

Bhava, the expressive states of the emotional experience, are expressed through detailed gestures and facial expressions, ultimately transmuted into rasa.

This process involves both transitory (sanchaari) and enduring (sthaayi) expressed emotional states, with combinations of sanchaari evoking specific sthaayi.

Love (including erotic, maternal, and devotional-in union and in separation) is considered the essential experience within which all emotions and their expressions can be contained for outside of love there is indifference.

The nuanced portrayal of love across life stages ('Mugdha,' 'Madhyamaa,' 'Pragalbhaa') and the detailed descriptions of universal emotions and their corresponding sthaayi bhava provide a rich framework for interpreting human expression.

Years of rigorous training honed my ability to embody emotions and witness their transformative power. Rehearsal of ancient poetry and choreography revealed that dance transcends personal limitations, allowing for the expression of something beyond age or wisdom.

This transformative experience, witnessing how codified texts and intricate choreography could unlock such depth, underscored the power of structured art to create deep understanding. This journey, however, was not without its shadows.

I observed the struggles of artists, ethical dilemmas, and the strain on individuals and families due to limited resources, stigma, and societal standards perpetuating vanity and jealousy.

There were tender moments too, genuine camaraderie, and unwavering support. It was in this vibrant, complex world that I truly understood the power of structured art to create deep understanding—not just of dance, but also of the human heart. Through dance, I experienced how art can express truths beyond personal limitations. How really art is essential!



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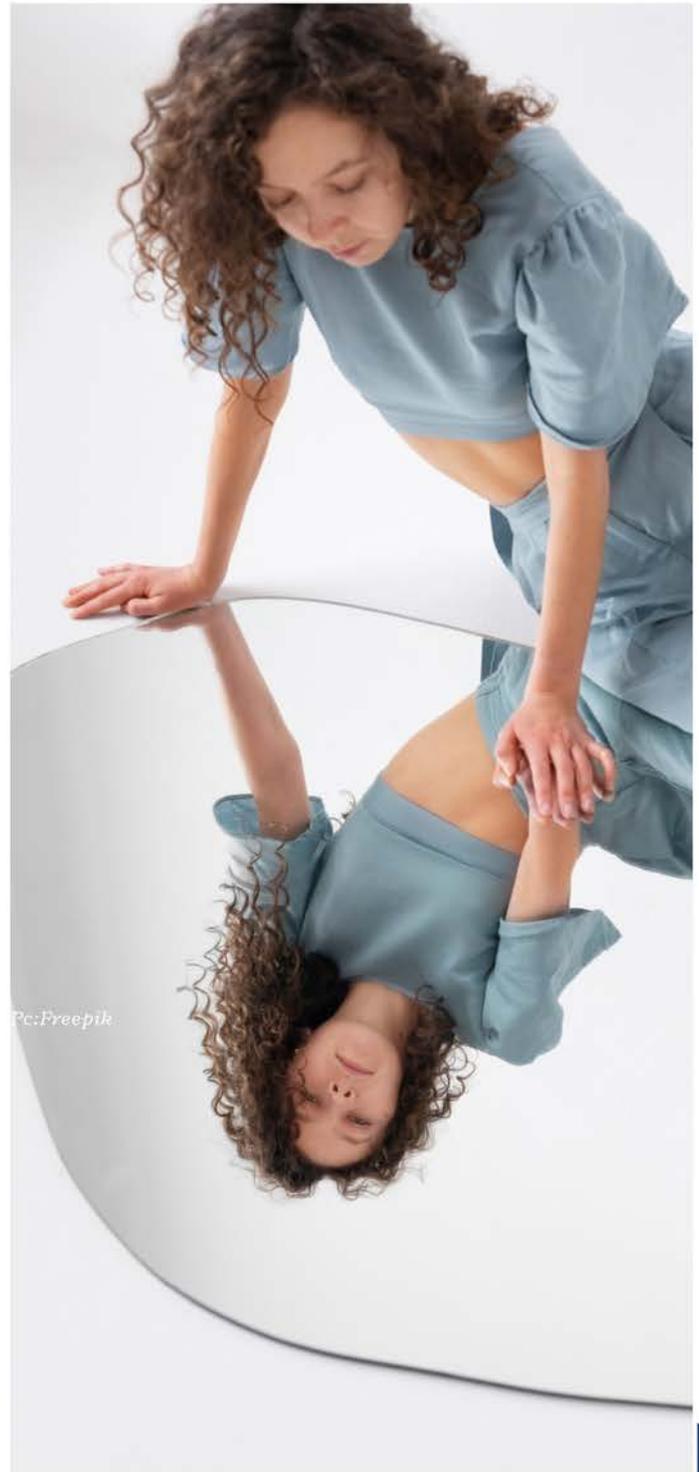
My transition to psychology, initially intended to enhance my understanding of Bharatanatyam, revealed the interconnectedness of art, philosophy, and psychology. Therapy, as a structured system, addresses psychological needs, and my appreciation for ancient Indian wisdom grew as I became a psychologist. The concept of mood, as an enduring feeling state, and the impact of emotional disorders on cognitive functions became increasingly relevant to my understanding of human experience.

My artistic background profoundly influences my clinical practice. My training allows me to connect with both the spoken and unspoken language of movement, posture, gestures, and facial expressions. It informs my belief that there is no single standard of experiencing life, nor a singular expression of it. Beauty—essentially truth—the authenticity of the personal reflecting the universal, as Advaita Vedanta holds, can manifest in myriad forms, each fully resplendent.

It also teaches that at different stages of life, the same experience can be understood in manifold ways, each perspective equally valid, informed by exposure, experience, skill, and dedication. This facilitates reflection and validation of unique experiences at each point of time, enriching the therapeutic process.

In my practice, embodiment takes center stage. I encourage clients to explore their emotions through movement, connect with their bodies, and find their authentic expression. The aesthetics of the therapeutic space, like the stage of a dance, create a safe and nurturing environment for healing. Mindfulness, a core component of my practice, allows for deep listening and observation. Metaphors become powerful tools for accessing deeper levels of understanding and facilitating transformation.

The sense of community translates into my therapeutic approach where I hold strands of reality and accountability for individuals while also suspending these to truly accompany and understand their lived experience. I believe in the power of connection and support in the healing process. Whether through group therapy or individual sessions, I strive to create a sense of belonging and shared experience. Aesthetics, embodiment, mindfulness and community are the foundational pillars of my current practice.



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Aesthetics: The therapeutic value of aesthetics extends beyond creating a beautiful and safe physical space. It lies in the transcendence that aesthetics brings about. In psychotherapy, it's about reflecting on and attuning to the relational field between the therapist and the client, fostering a beautiful and safe relationship.

This relationship can serve as a model for healthy connection, interpreting personal metaphors (In therapy, metaphors help connect internal experiences to external ones, allowing us to explore emotions and experiences with greater depth), illuminating deficits in communication and attachment patterns, and providing an opportunity to learn and develop relational skills. Furthermore, engaging with or creating artistic expression inherently requires transcendence and creativity. This process is a powerful therapeutic tool.

It allows individuals to see beyond the surface, to appreciate the nuances of what is presented, to cultivate initiative, and to build trust in their own experiences.

It replenishes energy and renews hope. By supporting and facilitating this expression, therapists can act as catalysts for therapeutic change.

Embodiment: The Art of Living It. The sculptor does not merely imitate something/someone into a statue, they go beyond imitation and recreation—they bring to life each sculpture. This is the essence of embodiment – not imitation, but a complete accompaniment of—being with—simply, the being of an experience or rather the “lived experience of an experience”. There's an innate therapeutic value in this. Whatever is, can be embodied, and whatever is embodied can be experienced, and therefore also expressed, seen, and validated. In psychotherapy, this translates to embodying different emotions, attitudes, postures, parts of the self, and past experiences, like when a person fully feels the sadness of grief, instead of pushing it away. Within the safe space of the trusting relationship between therapist and client, these embodied experiences can be witnessed, validated, and ultimately, dissolved, leading to healing and integration.



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Mindfulness: Mindfulness is the secret ingredient in psychotherapy. The capacity and process of paying attention is essential. It is what separates ‘hearing’ from truly ‘listening’.

It is what distinguishes astute observation from non-judgmental, loving presence. It impacts memory, learning, motivation and mood—all of which inform our judgment and insight. It is the very essence of what makes therapy successful. presence and being present.

It requires both sensitization and desensitization to experience and circumstance, and a delicate balance of the capacity for mindfulness requires training attention capacities, focusing and shifting attention, compassion—for the self and the other, pausing, and simply being, without judgment, and without striving, thereby improving our wellbeing—all of this can be facilitated through art. Art, like meditation, is both, a pathway to mindfulness and an expression of it.

Community: Art cannot exist in isolation. To truly engage with art requires being part of a community, learning its rules and conventions (like art, people experience both criticism and praise within communities from a young age), and creatively expressing one's own observations within that framework (sublimation). This encompasses both celebration and tragedy, demanding that the artist be a fully engaged human being. To achieve individuation while maintaining integrity and intimacy—to avoid enmeshment while fostering connection—is a delicate balance that can only be achieved within the context of community.

In this way, art mirrors psychotherapy and counseling, both of which bring us closer to ourselves and encourage creative expression and engagement. Revisiting of a person with curiosity, dedication, and trust, beyond one's own experience and expression, is a transcendental act that is significantly therapeutic—it facilitates reflection of 'reality' and 'fantasy,' and helps to bridge the gap between the two. Community support is essential and aids social rehabilitation.



Aditi Boratkar is a Psychologist with expertise in Dance Movement (Psycho)Therapy and Mindfulness and presence-oriented approach to psychotherapy. She is a Bharatanatyam Teacher (up to Visharad Purna) Akhil Gandharva Sangeet Mahavidyalaya Mandal

My journey from Bharatanatyam to psychology and especially, Dance Movement Therapy and then a mindfulness and presence-oriented approach has been a profound exploration of the human experience. Through the lens of art, I have come to understand the power of embodiment, aesthetics, mindfulness, community, and metaphor in fostering healing and self-discovery. As a professional, I am committed to integrating mindfulness, and artistic wisdom with clinical practice, empowering individuals to find their authentic voice and create meaningful change in their lives. To truly heal, we reclaim our bodies and voices, expressing our truths through art and movement.

Mental health and the arts, important for human development, deserve recognition. Therapy is essentially a resource to survive and transition from surviving to thriving; while art is a way to transcend as one is surviving and thriving. My journey shows the value of arts in therapy—embodiment, aesthetics, mindfulness, and community—honoring the mind-body connection, and moment to moment capacity, awareness, and compassion. ◆



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