

# INDIA

## PERSPECTIVES

Volume 37 | Issue 02 | 2026



### Songs of Spring

India's harvest festivals

### India AI Summit

A defining global inflection point

### Vows on Celluloid

How cinema shaped the big fat Indian wedding





The Kushmandi wooden mask, also known as the Gomira mask or *Mukha*, represents folk and mythological characters from West Bengal. Originating in the Dakshin Dinajpur district of the state, these masks are crafted from lightweight *Gamhar* wood. Recognised for their cultural significance, they received Geographical Indication (GI) status from the Government of India in 2018.



# FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

India's civilisational ethos has long found expression through its traditions. Among these, the Indian wedding stands as one of the most profound reflections of the country's cultural richness, spiritual depth, craftsmanship, cuisine, music, and enduring sense of community. More than a celebration, it is a living cultural experience where rituals, heritage, and hospitality come together in extraordinary harmony.

Recognising both its cultural and economic significance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has championed the vision of "Wed in India", encouraging Indians and global audiences alike to celebrate weddings in India. Aligned with the ideals of Vocal for Local and Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the initiative seeks to position India as a premier global wedding destination while strengthening local economies, supporting artisans, and fostering cultural pride. Indian weddings, in this spirit, become celebrations of indigenous textiles, handcrafted décor, regional cuisines, traditional artistry and India's vibrant creative industries.

This edition of India Perspectives focuses on one of India's most evocative cultural expressions, the traditional Indian wedding. Through contributions from renowned writers and cultural voices, the issue explores the spiritual depth of Vedic weddings, where sacred chants and enduring customs embody ideals of companionship, duty, and cosmic balance.

Journeying across the country, readers encounter temples steeped in mythology, ceremonial traditions shaped by regional diversity, and the joyous rhythms of traditional music, cuisine, and craftsmanship. Together, they reveal how Indian weddings continue to serve as powerful expressions of culture, heritage, hospitality, and India's timeless appeal to the world.



**Randhir Jaiswal**

Official Spokesperson and  
Additional Secretary  
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Diplomacy (XPD) Division,  
Ministry of External Affairs,  
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#### Previous Cover

Through the flickering light, the Hindu deity Hanuman's valour shines in Andhra Pradesh's Tholu Bommalata, a traditional shadow puppet theatre



#### Current Cover

A glimpse into the ancient Raulane Festival, celebrating 5,000 years of living tradition from the villages of Himachal Pradesh, captured by photographer Ashif Khan.



#### Back Cover

Celebrating the timeless rituals of an Indian wedding, this Madhubani painting uses intricate folk motifs to depict unity, devotion and sacred togetherness.



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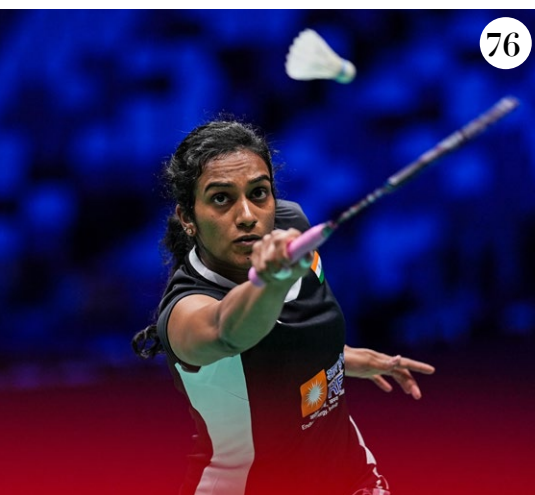


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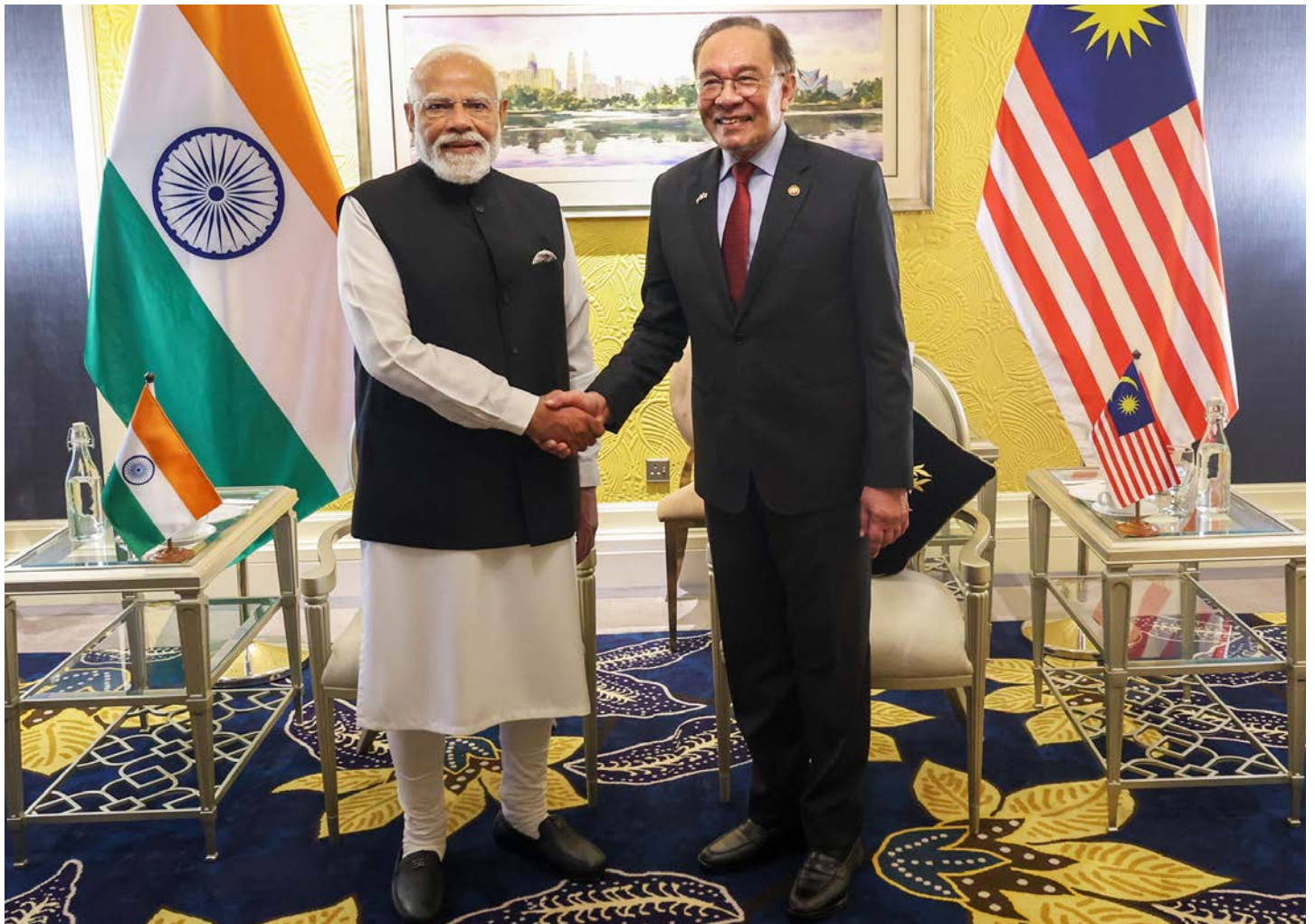
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# DIALOGUE. PARTNERSHIP. PROGRESS

*From strategic dialogues to cultural exchanges, a round-up of diplomatic visits that highlight India's role at the global stage.*



## India-Malaysia Ties Enter A New Chapter

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi's visit to Malaysia, nearly a decade after his last visit, marked a significant step in strengthening bilateral ties between the two nations. The visit from February 6 to 7 reinforced the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership [CSP] building upon wide-ranging cooperation in trade, technology, defence and also people-to-people

exchanges. Key outcomes emerging from the visit included multiple MoUs in semiconductors, healthcare, fintech and security, alongside initiatives like cross-border digital payments and academic collaborations. The visit deepened cultural and diaspora ties, while advancing regional cooperation under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Indo-Pacific vision.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held discussions with his Malaysian counterpart, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia





## India Engages With G7 Leaders

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met on March 27, on the sidelines of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting at the Abbaye des Vaux-de-Cernay near Paris, France. Minister Jaishankar focused on India's and the Global South's concerns about food, fuel and fertiliser shortages with his counterparts from the G7 countries and others. Further, he stressed the importance of having resilient trade corridors. "The uncertainties arising from the conflicts in West Asia only make a stronger case for more resilient trade corridors and supply chains," Dr. Jaishankar said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar (third from right in front row) participated in the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting with partner countries at Abbaye des Vaux-de-Cernay, France

## Building Bridges Across Europe

The External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar's visit to France and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg from January 4 to 9 focused on strengthening strategic and economic ties with Europe. He held talks with the President of French Republic, H.E. Emmanuel Macron, discussing innovation, defence, technology and global issues. In Luxembourg, discussions included expanding trade, finance and digital cooperation. Dr. S. Jaishankar also participated in the first India-Weimar foreign ministers' meeting, which included foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland. Overall, the visit reinforced the India-Europe partnership, highlighting shared priorities in innovation and global cooperation.



External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar visited the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Paris



# Preserving Memory On The WEDDING PLATE

*While global flavours have found their way into Indian feasts, a quiet revival of traditional recipes is also underway, particularly at weddings.*

By Shantanu Mehrotra





India's first product accorded with the  
**Geographical Indication tag** was the Darjeeling tea in 2004.



In India, wedding dishes are never simply items on a menu. They are blessings served on a plate; symbols of prosperity, unity and familial bliss. While global flavours are reinventing the palate, tradition is the true heirloom of the Indian wedding table.

### Food as Memory

Food has never been merely about flavour. It is about memory, symbolism and continuity. Nowhere is this more visible than at our weddings, occasions where cuisine has traditionally served as a quiet yet powerful carrier of cultural significance.

Over the years, across cities and communities, wedding menus have been increasingly showcasing global influences, such as pasta stations, sushi counters, dim sum bars and fusion appetisers, crafted more for spectacle than sentiment. While these offerings bring novelty, they often displace the dishes that once expressed our values, beliefs and shared identity.

### Sacred Sweetness

Consider *motichoor laddoo* or *gulab jamun*. For generations, these sweet dishes have transcended regional, linguistic and religious boundaries and



marked auspicious beginnings. Slow-cooked and gently sweetened, these symbolise abundance, patience and harmony. Their presence at weddings was never incidental. However, today these deeply symbolic dishes are often over-powered by tiramisu and chocolate mousse shots.

The solution is a fine blend of traditional sensitivities and modern-day trends. This has given way to a "renaissance" of these inherited flavours in a refreshed look, like a *gulab jamun* cheesecake or *motichoor* parfait. These innovative creations preserve nostalgic flavours while presenting them in refined, contemporary formats. At Indian Accent (a popular restaurant headed by Mehrotra), we often serve the Gobindo Bhog *kheer* reimagined with the fragrant West Bengal rice, paired with fruity sorbet and milk crisp. Further, we offer a *doda burfi* treacle tart blending Punjabi milk fudge with British pastry, a *besan laddoo* cheesecake infused with cardamom and pistachio, and a decadent *badam halwa* pie that transforms the classic almond pudding into a refined dessert.

**Serving *dal* at a wedding symbolises the foundation of a household, the everyday care that sustains a marriage after the festivities end.**





Chef Shantanu Mehrotra at work

## Forgotten First Feast

In many Indian households, the first meal on the morning of a wedding, meant a simple yet grounding moment before the day's ceremonies unfolded. Families gathered, sharing food that was comforting and familiar. It was a reminder that before the grandeur of décor and ritual, a wedding is about people, relationships, intimacy and togetherness.

As weddings become increasingly compressed into schedules and spectacles, this quiet culinary pause is disappearing. With it we are losing a moment of emotional anchoring, a reminder of simplicity amid celebration.



## The Quiet Strength of *Dal*

Then there is *dal* (lentil soup), perhaps the most understated yet essential element of Indian cooking. Banarasi *nimona* (mashed green peas curry), *maa ki dal* (creamy North Indian dish made from whole black gram), *arhar* (red gram) and *moong* (green gram) *dal* represent nourishment, balance and continuity. Serving *dal* at a wedding symbolised the foundation of a healthy household, the everyday care that sustains a marriage long after the festivities conclude.

Yet today, *dal* is often pushed to the margins of elaborate menus, overshadowed by richer gravies and international mains. Simplicity, it seems, struggles to claim space at grand occasions. However, it is precisely this simplicity that reflects the values of steadiness, sustenance and shared responsibility.





*Khurma*, the Chattisgarhi counterpart to the famous Eid dish *sewaiya*, is a renowned sweet dish crafted from milk and vermicelli. Roasted vermicelli is immersed in boiling water, combined with sugar syrup, and enriched with a variety of premium dry fruits, resulting in an utterly delightful sweet dish that is sure to satiate your sweet tooth.



## Regional Identity on the Plate

Instead of offering a predictable, pan-global spread, many contemporary Indian weddings are embracing climatic menus that celebrate seasonality and region. A December wedding in Punjab might showcase *sarson da saag* (mustard leaf curry), in Delhi, it can be *gajar ka halwa* (carrot dessert) and in West Bengal, *nolen gursandesh* (dish made with winter-special jaggery). Choosing a Bengali *mishti pulao* over a generic risotto or *Kashmiri yakhni pulao* instead of a standard pilaf isn't just a menu decision, it's a commitment to preserving a culinary vocabulary rooted in climate and soil.

flatbread) to *dal* approached with restraint and precision, and seasonal vegetables plated with elegance, the possibilities are endless. Such modern reinterpretations allow tradition to evolve rather than vanish.

A dim sum counter can coexist with a *golgappa* (a street food consisting of hollow, crispy-fried shells) or a *chaat* (a range of savoury, tangy snack items) station. And a pasta station can stand beside a seasonal *pulao*. Global and local can complement one another.

## Multi-cultural Innovation

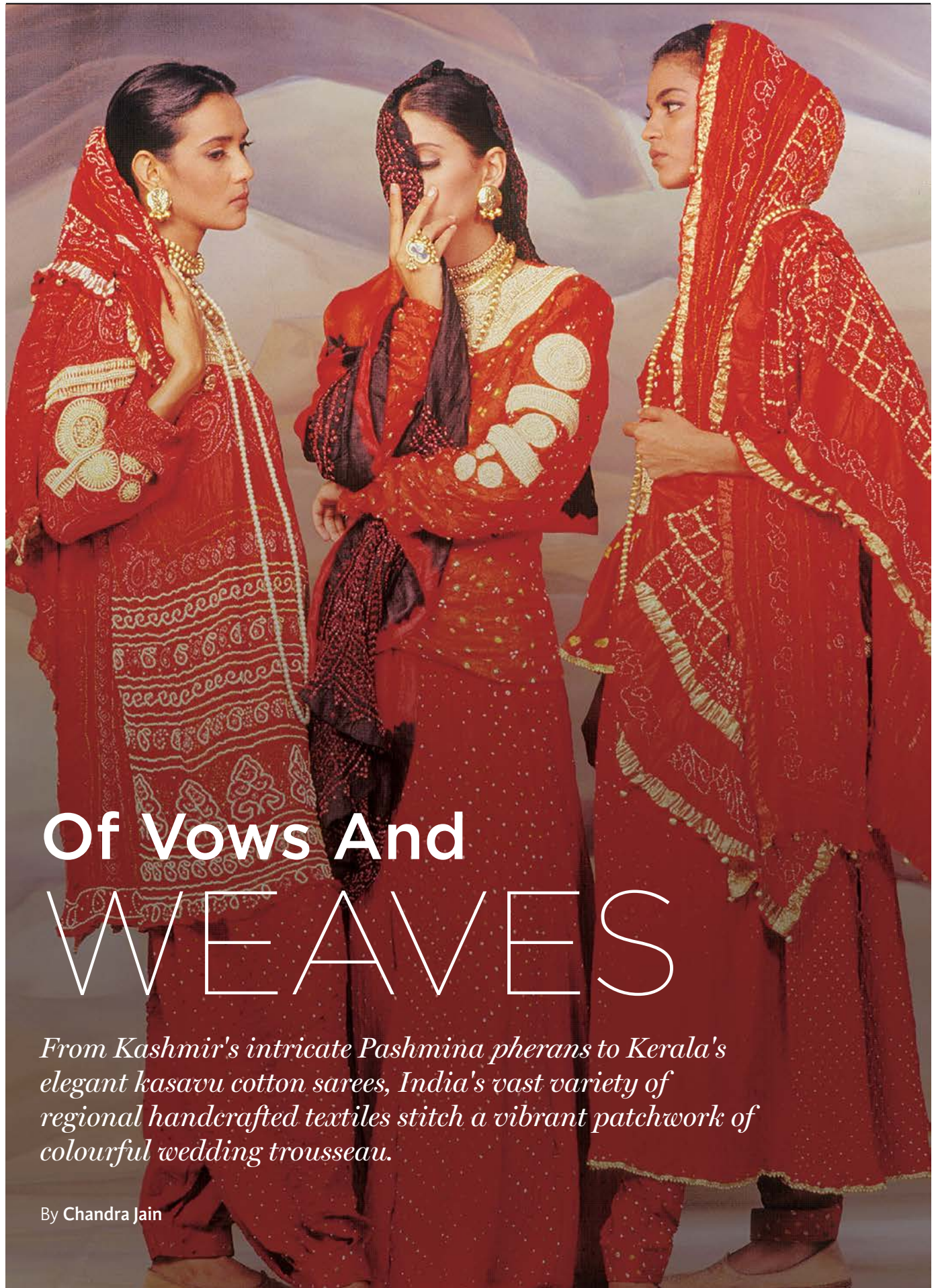
Modern Indian cuisine thrives precisely because it engages thoughtfully with the world. From *aloo tikki* (potato patties), *vadas* (fritters) and *khakhra* (crispy



**Shantanu Mehrotra** is a seasoned culinary professional with over two decades of experience. He is the Executive Chef at Indian Accent restaurant, New Delhi and New York.







# Of Vows And WEAVES

*From Kashmir's intricate Pashmina pherans to Kerala's elegant kasavu cotton sarees, India's vast variety of regional handcrafted textiles stitch a vibrant patchwork of colourful wedding trousseau.*

By Chandra Jain



India was the world's leading producer of **natural indigo dye**, shaping colonial trade, textiles and resistance movements.

Among the many milestones of life celebrated in India, a wedding has the most unique expression. It is a grand event unfolding through songs, rituals and colours. Taking things a notch higher are the elegant ceremonial attires, handcrafted from textiles that encapsulate the rich symbolism, culture and traditions of the couple's regional identities.

### Northern Delights

The beautiful brides from the Kashmir valley dress in a heavily embroidered long robe made of velvet or Pashmina wool called *pheran*, over a salwar, a pair of loose-fitting trousers tapering around the ankles. These are usually adorned with *Tilla* embroidery, which uses gold and silver-plated copper threads. A bejewelled cap and a throw

#### NORTH EASTERN FLAIR

##### Muga Silk (Assam):

Known for its beautiful sheen and naturally golden tone, *Muga* is highly prized for *Mekhela Sadors*, the traditional two-piece attire worn by Assamese women, consisting of a skirt-like lower garment and an upper draped piece.

##### Eri Silk (Assam/ Meghalaya):

Produced from the cocoon of the eri silkworm, this fabric is known for its soft texture, natural sheen and durability.

##### Moirang Phee (Manipur):

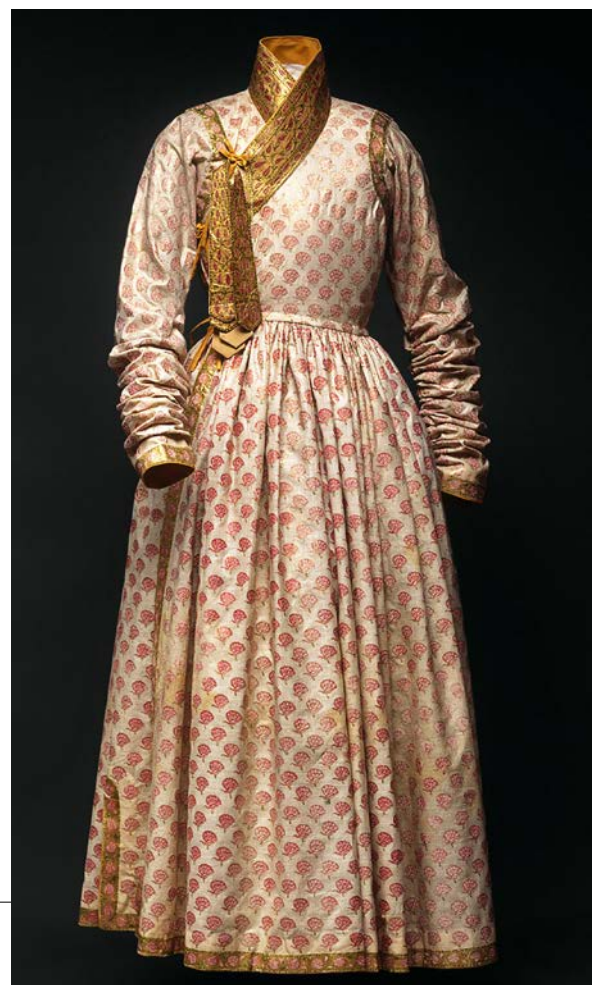
The pride of Manipur, this is a handwoven textile rich in heritage, symbolising the state's vibrant culture and skilled craftsmanship. It is often used to weave sarees and shawls worn during festivals and celebrations. Both cotton and silk fibres are used to create *Moirang Phee*.

embellished with golden embroidery or sequins complete the look.

Most brides from Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand dress in *Banarasi* sarees made of finely woven silk from Varanasi with intricate gold and silver brocade. This world-renowned fabric is woven on handlooms by weavers who have inherited the artistic finesse from their forefathers. The art of the opulent brocade weaving, from the preparation of the silk and the loom to creating the designs, has flourished as a community activity in this part of Uttar Pradesh.

### Royal Reckoning

In Rajasthan, brides dress in vibrant long skirts or *lehengas* with red *dupattas* featuring the ever-present designs of small saffron and white dots, created using the *Bandhani*





## TEXTILES



The world-renowned *Banarasi* silk is woven on handlooms by weavers who have inherited the artistic finesse from their forefathers.

tie-dye technique. The bridegroom looks majestic in *angarkha* and *chudidar* pyjamas, with an elaborate *safa* or turban, mirroring grand traditions of royalty the region is famous for.

### Heartland Edit

The exquisite handcrafted *Paithani* sarees that Maharashtrian brides wear carry motifs full of meaning and symbolism, for example, lotus for knowledge and purity, peacocks woven in jewel-like red, green and orange, symbolising prosperity.

Madhya Pradesh is home to *Chanderi*, where the eponymous gossamer-thin silk

sarees known for their glorious sheen are woven. Equally popular are the *Maheshwari* sarees crafted on the banks of the Narmada river in Maheshwar. This saree is renowned for its special blend of cotton and silk yarns and reversible borders.

### To the East

The bride in West Bengal drapes her red *Banarasi* saree in a unique style, and wears a *Sholapith* crown made with *Pith*, a naturally occurring plant material. The groom too wears a matching conical headgear called *Topor*. The coastal state of Odisha celebrates identity and nature by draping the bride and groom in their *Ikat* weaves with motifs of fish, shells, tortoises and other marine life. The *Sambalpuri* sarees with *Ikat* weaving technique and vibrant colour combinations are like canvasses of elegance.

When the bride in Gujarat steps out wearing her lavish *Patan Patola* saree with



Odisha Ikat is an intricate weaving tradition dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE in ancient Kalinga.



plant and zoomorphic patterns, the dazzling patterns reflect the state's cultural traditions.

### Threads of South

Travelling South, we celebrate more diversity and richness. The bride's luxurious *Kanjivaram* silk saree with gold threads and the groom in his *veshthi* or *dhoti*, a 2.5-m unstitched drape for the lower body, and an *angavastram* (body cloth) on his shoulder is the most common image. However, the vast South offers multiple distinct weaves and wedding attires.

Kerala has a unique handwoven textile known as *kasavu*, a stark contrast of gold on white, with a simplicity and grandeur that blend impressively. The groom dresses in a *kasavu dhoti* and a shirt.

The states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which historically produced cotton and chintz for the world, dress their brides and grooms in the *Gadwal* and *Armoor* textiles, replete with their own grandeur. The state of Karnataka has its traditional

Mysore silks and *Molakalmuru* sarees, famed for their sheer texture and appearance, worn in specific styles. The Wodeyar royalty of Karnataka had the foresight to support the production of mulberry silk in the early 1700s, helping Karnataka to still cultivate and produce high-quality silk.

India houses numerous other techniques in various corners that makes its textile story so vivid, like Punjab's *Phulkari* and Bihar's *Sujini* embroidery. It is amazing how each region carves its unique identity on the loom.



**Chandra Jain** is a textile revivalist and the founder of an NGO, Kadambari. Jain has been deeply involved and associated with the crafts and craftspeople of India for over three decades.



# India At The ALTAR



*India is home to hundreds of distinct communities, each carrying its own language, cosmology and understanding of new beginnings. The sheer variety of ways in which people choose to marry is proof of our cultural richness.*

By Chandreyi Bandyopadhyay



The One District One Product (ODOP) initiative has identified  
**1243 products from 775 districts** across India.

Weddings, in India, have always been the most democratic of institutions. They insist on witnesses and demand that neighbours cook and eat together. They require a whole village to show up. Each community's singular rituals carry a record of everything it has ever valued, and in their insistence on spectacle, be it regarding the food they eat, the music they play, or the presence of others, they remind us that a wedding union is never a private matter.

We trace some of the most distinctive wedding rituals that are practiced in India today.

### Golden Charms and Sacred Steps

In Punjabi weddings, *kalire* are large ornamental clusters of gold or silver hung with dangling charms tied to the bride's wrists by her sisters and female relatives on the wedding day. Once worn, the bride moves gracefully among her unmarried

**But beneath the laughter, *kalire* are also farewell gifts from the bride's family. It is one of the last things she carries from her maternal house to her new home.**







female relatives, gently shaking her wrists above their heads. Should a piece of the jewellery loosen and fall upon someone, it is considered that she may be the next to marry.

It is a joyful ceremony as some unmarried women duck and dodge while others lean in, hoping to be the next bride. But beneath the laughter, *kalire* are also farewell gifts from the bride's family. It is one of the last things she carries from her maternal house to her new home.

*Anand Karaj*, among Sikhs, is another one such interesting ceremony. In this ritual, the couple does not face each other to exchange vows, but walk together in four circumambulations of the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture, which is the true centre

## MEHNDI

Days before the wedding, the bride's hands and feet are covered in intricate henna paste, left to dry overnight, the resulting stain deepening to a dark rust over days. Tradition holds that the darker the colour is, the deeper the husband's love. Hidden within the pattern, in some traditions, are the groom's initials, which he must find on the wedding night.

of the ceremony. Each *lavan* (round) corresponds to a verse being sung live by priests.

## The Betel Leaves

In a Bengali wedding, the bride enters the wedding area, shielding her face with two betel leaves. At an auspicious moment called out by a barber, who plays an important role in the union, she lowers the leaves and locks eyes with the groom. This ritual is called the *Shubho Drishti* (auspicious sight). The betel leaves are then placed on a ritual plate. No veil, but a simple leaf mediates the sacred moment.

## A Ritual in Jest

*Ponkvu*, also called *Ponkhnu*, *Ponkhana* or *Pokhvanu*, depending on the



sub-community, in Gujarati traditions, is a fun ritual. Upon arrival, the groom is met at the entrance by his future mother-in-law, while she pinches his nose. The groom is expected to try to playfully evade it. His friends lift him to help him. When she succeeds, the groom crushes a small clay pot, signifying overcoming obstacles. It is among the few rituals in India that formally encodes the mother-in-law's authority playfully.

### Companions First

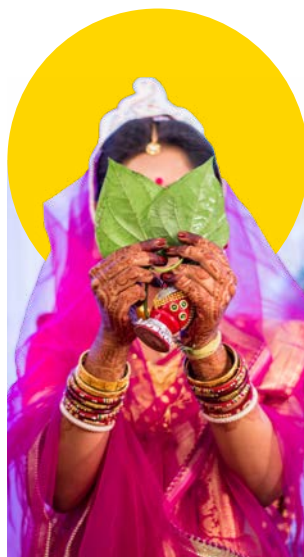
Long before a Muria-Gond couple in Bastar, Chhattisgarh, stands before their community to marry, they share years of companionship. At the heart of this journey is the *Ghotul*, a communal dormitory where adolescent boys and girls live, work, dance and learn together. More than a space, it is a school, a social institution and a rite of passage.

### A Gift of Fusion

In *Roce*, a fun ritual common in Goan Catholic weddings, the new couple is anointed with coconut milk. On



Image: RandB Studios



the wedding eve, family members rub coconut milk and oil into the bride or groom's skin and hair while singing Konkani *Mando* songs.

In the weddings of the matrilineal Khasi and Garo tribes of Meghalaya, it is the groom who leaves his family and joins the bride's household, not the other way around, as is the norm in most parts of India. Property, lineage and the family name pass through the youngest daughter (the *Ka Khadduh*). The bride's family performs no *kanyadaan* ritual, or giving away of the daughter. Instead, the bride's clan formally receives the groom.



Image: Lavanya Ullas



**Chandreyi Bandyopadhyay** is a freelance journalist who writes about offbeat travel, food and culture. Her bylines are in *Deccan Herald*, *Firstpost*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Grazia* and more.



# SHAADI Cinematised

*Once intimate and ritual-bound, Indian weddings have transformed into grand spectacles. By blending customs with cinematic flair, Bollywood has played a pivotal role in this shift.*

By Anupama Vinod Chopra



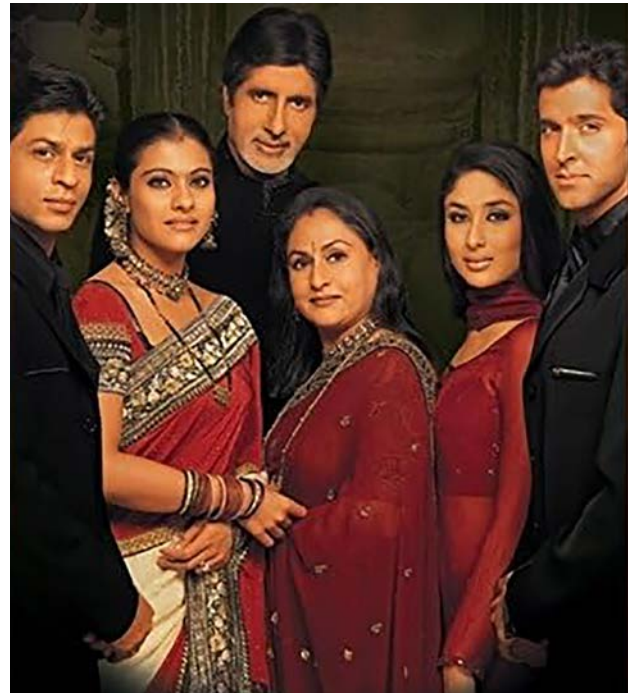
In the movie *Heroine*, lead actor Kareena Kapoor Khan wore over **130 designer** outfits.

Around 15 years ago, I found myself at a *sangeet* (musical evening) function alongside prominent Indian film director and producer Karan Johar. The daughter of a leading distributor was getting married. It was around 10 pm. The professional singers had wrapped up, and now it was time for family and friends to showcase their choreographed dances, rehearsed songs and skits dedicated to the couple. The acts were sweet but also awkward and clumsy as each group of friends, cousins, aunts and uncles, did their best imitation of their favourite Bollywood stars to various Bollywood songs. Mr. Johar finally turned to me, rolled his eyes and said, "How much longer do you think this will go on?" I responded with, "You started it, now you suffer from it."

### Cinematic Vows

Karan Johar, alongside his contemporaries Aditya Chopra and Sooraj Barjatya, reimagined traditional Indian weddings on screen, honouring timeless customs while elevating the celebrations.

The films, which these three filmmakers have created had an outsized influence on how Indians get married. Thanks to their movies, *sangeet* nights, professionally choreographed dance performances, opulence and rituals



***Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* became the longest-running film in Indian history and its song 'Mehndi Laga ke Rakhna' became a wedding anthem.**

such as the bride's cousins playfully stealing the shoes of the groom, are now standard practice, irrespective of state, language or community.

It all started in 1994 with Barjatya's *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*, a three-hour and 26-minute-long saga, most of which has captured events taking place in a traditional Indian wedding setup. At least a few critics from the film fraternity dismissed the film as "a wedding video", but audiences couldn't get enough. Further, it became the first Indian film to cross ₹100 crore (US\$ 11 million approx.) at the domestic box office. According to the *Navbharat Times* newspaper, the film drew approx 7.4 crore (74 million) footfall, one of the highest in Indian movie history. You might also recall Madhuri Dixit's purple saree from





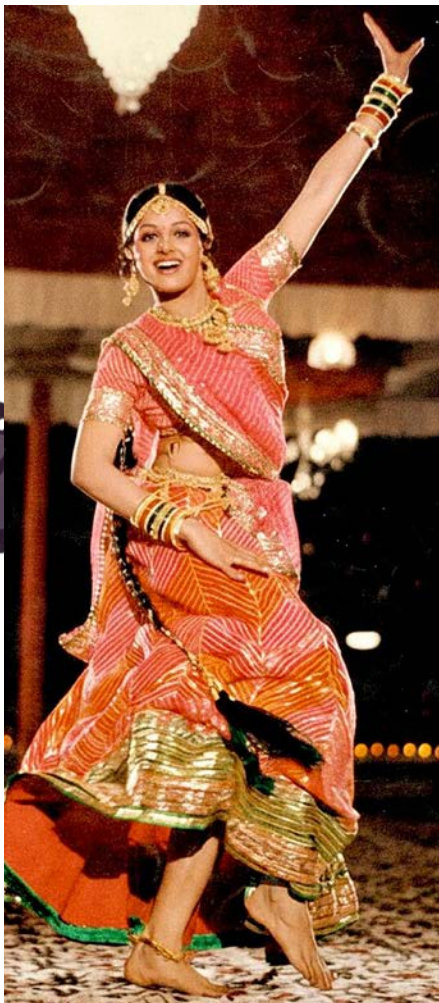
the song '*Didi Tera Devar Deewana*', which became iconic. Knock-off pieces sold for years across tailoring shops in India. The phenomenon was followed by another blockbuster, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ) in 1995. While the first half of the film was set in Europe, the second was set in Punjab against the backdrop of Simran's (protagonist of the movie, played by Kajol Devgn) impending wedding. The movie became the longest-running film in Indian history. The song '*Mehndi Laga ke Rakhna*' became a wedding anthem, and the green lehenga (traditional Indian skirt, usually paired with a blouse and

#### THE POETRY OF FILMS —

From the rhythmic joy of the *sangeet* to the poignant shadows of the monsoon, cinema has done more than mirror our weddings, it has authored them. These celluloid dreams have woven themselves into our very rituals, forever transforming the sacred aisle into a stage where tradition and glamour dance in eternal embrace.

a dupatta) worn by actor Kajol in the song became a cultural touchstone. The "DDLJ green lehenga" changed the colour palette of Indian weddings, and red was no longer de rigueur.

Next came Johar's debut film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, released in 1998. Of the many aspects of marriage that this movie displays, in the engagement song '*Saajanji Ghar Aaye*', the protagonist of the movie's beige-champagne lehenga signalled an aesthetic shift in bridal fashion. Fashion mavens believe that current trends of ivory and pastel lehengas can be traced back to this moment. This song also became a







Glimpse from Mira Nair's movie, *Monsoon Wedding*

## **2 States juxtaposed the contrasting wedding rituals of North and South India, where the groom is a Punjabi Hindu and the bride a Tamil Brahmin.**

mainstay in the Indian wedding playlist. As did the song '*Bole Chudiyan*' from Johar's next film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* in 2001. The sparkly, asymmetrical top worn by actor Kareena Kapoor Khan in the song became an instant classic. It reinterpreted traditional Indian silhouettes through a modern lens. Drawing from the *choli* and *angarkha* styles (garments historically known for wrap details and asymmetry) it blended heritage with contemporary glamour, redefining festive and wedding fashion for a new generation.

### **Drama in DNA**

These three filmmakers were building on the foundation set by Aditya Chopra's father,

Yash Chopra (Bollywood film producer and founder of Yash Raj Films), who was the original wedding specialist of Indian cinema. His 1976 classic *Kabhi Kabhie* has the opening titles rolling on a wedding sequence. In the movie, *Silsila* (1981), the hero and heroine meet at a wedding and, through the song '*Ladki Hai Ya Shola*', flirt with each other. His 1989 blockbuster movie *Chandni* extensively features weddings with the beautiful Bollywood diva Sridevi dancing like a dervish to songs such as '*Mere Haathon Mein*'.

### **Breaking the Mould**

Famous film director, writer and producer, Mira Nair disrupted this narrative with her brilliant



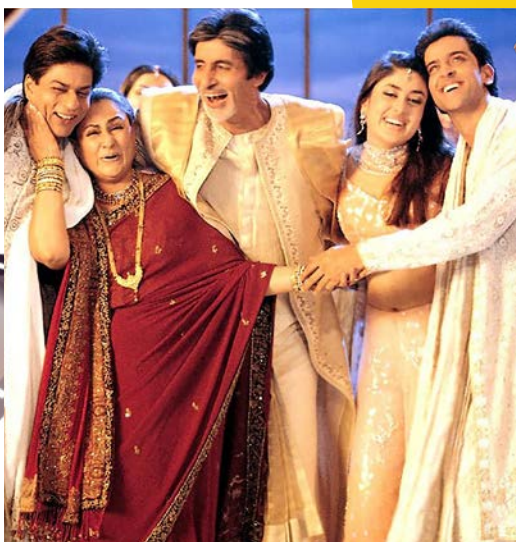
2001 film *Monsoon Wedding*. The film, shot in a month on a minuscule budget of ₹10.08 crore (US\$ 1.2 million approx), had the feel of a documentary. The film celebrates the chaos and confusion that any wedding inevitably generates (relatives at loggerheads, bills that need to be paid, the endless preparations, the wedding planner; a memorable Vijay Raaz doing 'jugaad'). It also beautifully etches the emotions of a father preparing to bid goodbye to

## REALITY ON REEL

*Vivah*, Sooraj Barjatya's 2006 Hindi-language movie about two people and their journey from engagement to marriage, was one of the highest-grossing films of that year. The story of the film was taken from an article in newspaper which the director's father, Tarachand Barjatya, had come across in 1988.

his daughter, which also happened to be one of actor Naseeruddin Shah's finest performances.

Beyond the festive *naach-gaana* (dancing and singing), the movie offered a raw, unflinching look at complex family dynamics, far ahead of its time. It was this courageous, honest narrative, paired with Nair's visionary storytelling, that earned the film the prestigious Golden Lion award at the 58th Venice Film Festival, cementing its legacy.







Vidaai scene from  
*Hum Aapke Hain  
Koun*

## Behind the Scenes

One movie took the narrative further by taking audiences behind the scenes of the great Indian wedding industry. *Band Baaja Baaraat* was a 2010 Indian Hindi-language romantic comedy film directed by Maneesh Sharma and produced by Aditya Chopra. It tells the tale of Shruti (Anushka Sharma) and Bittoo (Ranveer Singh), two young entrepreneurs, who launch a wedding planning business in Delhi. As they navigate the ups and downs of the business, audiences get a glimpse of the varied ways in which Indian weddings unfold, from lavish extravaganzas to modest ceremonies complete with borrowed money.

**Mira Nair's  
*Monsoon Wedding*  
was different  
from most films  
in the category.  
The film was shot  
in a month on a  
minuscule budget  
of ₹10.08 crore (US\$  
1.2 million approx).**

Speaking of diverse celebrations, 2014's *2 States* juxtaposed the contrasting wedding rituals of North and South India, where the groom is a Punjabi Hindu and the bride a Tamil Brahmin. Their wedding was a celebration of diversity. Additionally, *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* (2013) and *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil* (2016) featured memorable wedding songs that took a generation of movie-goers by storm.



**Anupama Vinod Chopra** is a film critic, author and founder and editor of the Film Companion. She's been writing about Bollywood since 1993.





### Many Vows, One Purpose

Mass wedding ceremonies in India have been redefining this tradition with purpose, bringing multiple couples together in dignified, cost-free unions. By curbing expenses and discouraging dowry, these initiatives promote social equity. Backed by religious groups, and state support, they empower economically vulnerable families, ensuring that the event happens with respect and inclusion.

### Breaking Language Barriers with AI

BHASHINI, an Indian government project developed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, is transforming communication with voice-first, multilingual AI that bridges language, literacy and digital divides. As the world's largest co-creation AI platform, it enables seamless interaction across diverse users, fostering innovation, collaboration and inclusivity.

### Learning Without Limits

SWAYAM, a programme initiated by the Government of India, is designed to uphold the core principles of education policy, access, equity and quality. It is transforming India's learning landscape by delivering top-tier courses beyond boundaries, bridging digital gaps, and enabling millions, especially underprivileged learners, to participate in a knowledge-driven economy.







### AI for India, by India

Sarvam AI, a generative AI startup, is building a homegrown AI ecosystem tailored to India's linguistic diversity and governance needs. Through a fully indigenous, full-stack platform, it delivers AI solutions for enterprises and public systems, advancing innovation, ensuring data sovereignty and driving inclusive digital transformation rooted in the Indian context.

### Pattachitra: A GI-Tagged Wonder

Geographical Indication (GI) tags in India identify agricultural, natural or manufactured products rooted in specific regions, assuring their quality, authenticity and cultural heritage. Among them, *Pattachitra* art stands out for its intricate detailing, vividly portraying mythological narratives deeply connected to Odisha's ritualistic and temple traditions. *Pattachitra* means "picture on cloth" in Sanskrit.



### Empowered by Zari-Zardozi

In the villages of Uttar Pradesh, the cottage industry of *zari* and *zardozi* embroidery preserves centuries-old techniques. *Zari* uses gold or silver threads, while *zardozi* adds metallic wires, stones, sequins and beads. Supported by the government's One District One Product initiative, it sustains livelihoods while crafting intricate, hand-embellished textiles.



# Sacred Vows Of VEDIC WEDDINGS



*At a time when destination weddings and Bollywood-inspired extravaganzas are taking over, the quiet traditional Vedic marriage signifies an eternal cosmic connection between two souls.*

By Dr. Kiran Chadha





The Indian wedding is an institution rooted in the Vedas, the ancient sacred scriptures of Hinduism. They describe marriage not merely as a series of rituals, but as a sacred, lifelong union and an enduring commitment between two souls.

The genesis of the Vedic wedding stems from spiritual customs, rituals, beliefs and astrological perspectives. Every tradition is grounded in logical and scientific reasoning with meaningful shlokas or holy verses manifesting the divine.

### Cosmic Connection

The magic and mystique of Indian weddings begin with the matching of horoscopes, as prescribed by the Vedas. The horoscope of each partner balances the planetary influence of the other.

This is followed by ascertaining the exact *muhurat* or auspicious date and time for the sacred ceremony through the *panchang*, the Hindu calendar based on the movement of the planets.

### Timeless Traditions

First, a *roka* ceremony confirms the alliance between both families through a token exchange of gifts. Earlier, a small amount of money placed over almonds with *mishri* or sugar pellets, covered with a red cloth, was gifted to the boy, whose family would give sweets in acceptance.

This is followed by *mangni* or engagement, whereby both families agree to support the couple through good and bad times.

Before the wedding, a Ganesha Puja is performed. Simultaneously, the groom goes through the Vedic ritual of *Upanayana* or the thread ceremony. This is a prerequisite, as it signifies the end of his *brahmacharya* or the education. *Swastivachan* invokes the blessings of the ancestors.

Parents fast on the day of the wedding as they prepare to welcome guests. This is the time for the gifting of *chooda* or matrimonial bangles, made of ivory, in red and off-white colours.

**As the priest chants the mantras and the holy fire is lit, the Lord of Fire is invoked as a witness to the process.**



## SIXTEEN STEPS

In traditional Indian weddings, a bride's *Solah Shringar* or 16 adornments tell a story of heritage, beauty and symbolism.

**Bindi:** An auspicious dot worn on the forehead

**Sindoor:** Vermillion powder applied along the hair parting

**Maang Tikka:** A forehead pendant

**Kajal:** Kohl, applied to the eye to ward off evil eye and enhance one's beauty

**Mangalsutra:** A necklace tied by the groom, around the bride's neck, symbolising their commitment

**Nath:** A nose ring

**Karnphool:** Earrings

**Haar:** A necklace

**Choodiyan:** Bangles

**Bajuband:** Armlets

**Mehndi:** Henna designs

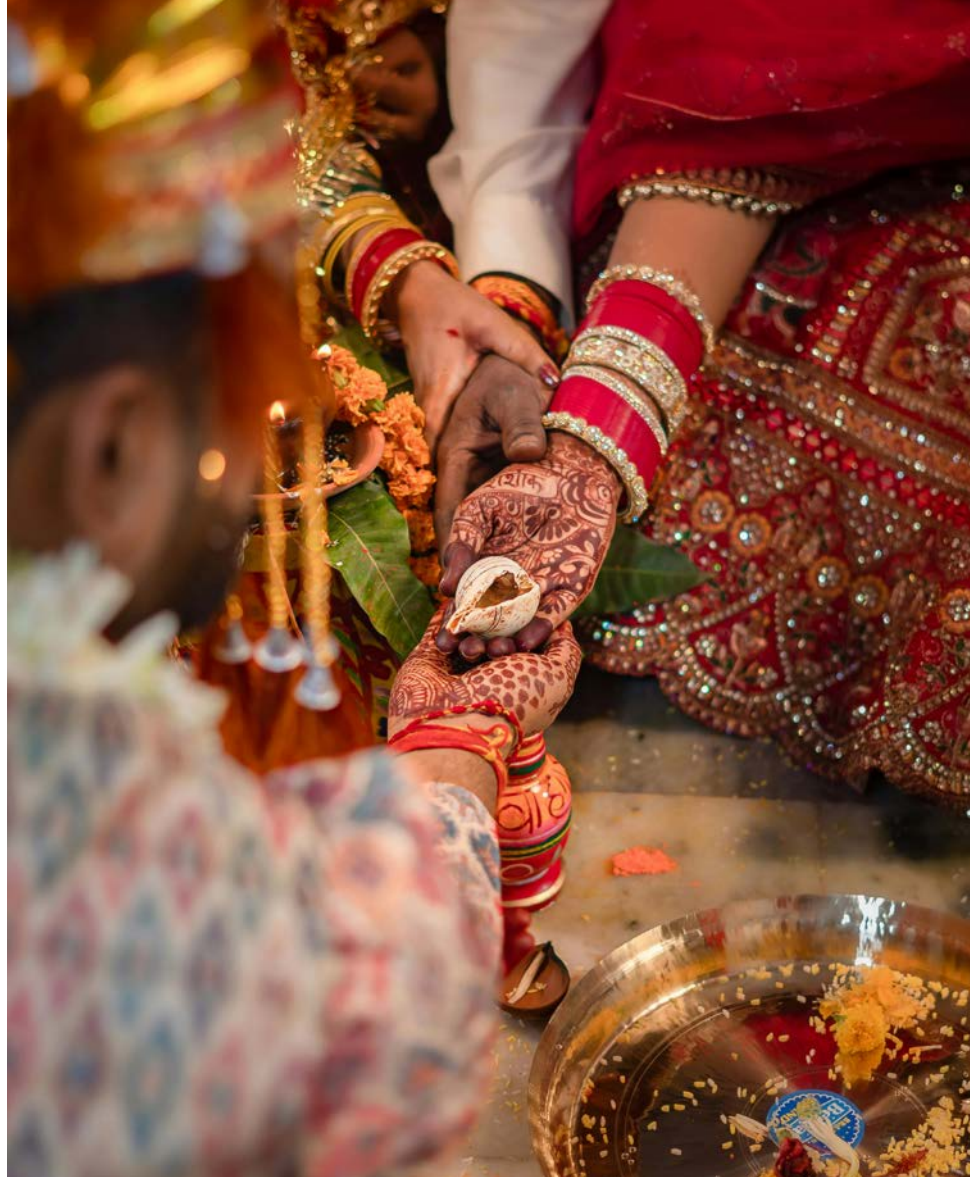
**Angoothi:** Finger rings

**Aarsi:** Thumb rings

**Kamarbandh:** Belly chain that clinches the saree or lehenga gracefully

**Payal:** Anklets

**Bichiya:** Toe rings



*Haldi tel* is the application of oil and turmeric paste to the bride and groom for a bright glow and spiritual cleansing. The nuptial headgear, the *sehra*, is then tied to the groom's turban as the priest recites the *mantras* or sacred verses.

*Madhuparak* is next, when the groom is offered a mixture of ghee, yoghurt and honey before the wedding vows.

*Jaimala*, or the exchange of garlands between the bride and groom, is their first public acceptance of the alliance. When the man garlands his wife-to-be, she agrees to be his partner in the pursuit of *dharma* or duty towards one's family and society.

The family then sits in the mandap for the *saat pheras* or the seven rounds

before *kanyadaan*. It's worth noting that it is not the giving away of the bride but the giving up of her gotra or clan to adopt that of her new family.

## Sealing the Bond

As the priest chants the *mantras* and the holy fire is lit, the Lord of Fire is invoked as a witness to the process. *Panigrahan* is the ritual where the groom holds the bride's hand to signify their union.

The couple then walks around the fire after the *gath bandhan*, whereby the veil of the bride is tied to the scarf of the groom. This knot is the eternal bond. *Laja Homa*, or rice grains, are offered to the sacred fire for prosperity.

In the seven rounds, each promises to uphold the dignity of both the



It has been universally acknowledged that the **Veda** is the **earliest available literature** of humanity.



families and seek love, respect and a virtuous progeny. The wedding vows are to be taken under the open sky, as the *mantras* invoke the blessings of the divine. Henceforth, the bride sits on the man's left in all religious ceremonies, i.e., close to his heart.

*Doli*, or farewell to the bride, occurs after the couple seeks blessings from elders. The *Grihapraves*, or entry into the marital home, with rituals and prayers, is followed by invoking Alcor and Mizar, the stars that forever revolve around each other. How symbolic!

### Intimacy Over Excess

Ostentation in wedding ceremonies is a modern concept. Vedic marriages don't call for alcohol or non-vegetarian food.

Similarly, in *shagan*, a custom where the bride's brother applies a *tilak* made of sandalwood paste, vermilion, saffron and rice to the groom's forehead with a gift, the present traditionally includes 14 dried dates and almonds wrapped in silver foil, a dry coconut tied with *mauli* or the sacred thread, and token money.

It is nearly impossible to imagine a simple *baraat*, or wedding party procession, these days. Traditionally, only a few people attend the ceremony and bring back the bride. And food and sweets are not ordered. A *halwai* or traditional chef makes them over a rustic fire at home.



**Dr Kiran Chadha** is a retired civil servant, artist, trekker and social worker. She is the author of *Dalhousie Through My Eyes* and *Magic Of Indian Weddings*.



# CRAFTING A Global Tale

*Weddings can emerge as a powerful platform for promotion of Indian crafts and can elevate regional products into contemporary luxury.*

By Sarthak Ahuja



Something remarkable is happening in showrooms from Copenhagen to California. Indian crafts and products, once dismissed as ethnic curiosities, are commanding premium prices and cult followings among the world's most discerning consumers. This indicates a fundamental shift in what the global market values and India sits at the centre of it.

For decades, the consumer economy celebrated speed, scale and synthetic efficiency. Fast fashion, disposable goods and economic convenience defined modern consumption. But that tide is turning decisively. Indian crafts, many being promoted under India's One District One Product (ODOP), answer this longing perfectly.







## The Quiet Affluence

From intimate ceremonies to global showcases, ODOP crafts are quietly redefining taste, gifting and luxury at weddings and far beyond. Picture a bride draped in an elegant *Kuppadam* silk saree from Chirala, a *mandap* grounded by vibrant handmade carpets from Bhadohi, and guests departing with decorative brass boxes from Moradabad paired with luminous *Gulabi Meenakari* (pink enamelled) bangles from Varanasi. Each detail reflects how ODOP products can seamlessly blend heritage, sustainability and refined aesthetics.

## Prada to Ralph Lauren

In fashion and textiles, luxury houses are no longer merely drawing inspiration from India, but actively collaborating with Indian craftspeople. At Dior's Spring/Summer 2022 Haute Couture show, creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri commissioned hand-embroidered panels crafted by over 300 Indian artisans. Handmade Indian crafts offer environmentally responsible alternatives to factory production,

using locally sourced materials and eco-friendly techniques. For luxury brands committed to reducing their carbon footprint, partnerships with Indian artisans represent both ethical sourcing and authentic storytelling opportunities.

And of course, the Prada footwear inspired by *Kolhapuri* sandals from India are quite a rage, as are the Madras checks in the new Ralph Lauren collection. Interestingly, India is responsible for around 40 per cent of worldwide exports of handmade carpets, exporting almost ₹12,655 crore (US\$ 1.39 billion approx) worth in FY24. The Indian handmade carpet industry is highly labour-intensive

and provides employment to over 2 million workers and artisans, especially women. The brand Jaipur Rugs does revenues estimated at over ₹9,100 crore (US\$ 1 billion approx), exporting hand-knotted carpets, where an average piece possibly takes over a couple of months to make, and the prices run into several lakhs.

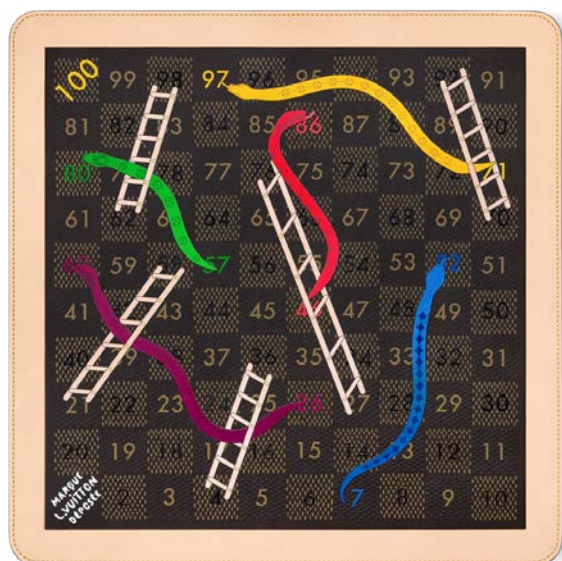
## Craft Goes Global

Reimagining heritage for a global marketplace begins with the simple yet powerful idea to let Indian craftsmanship travel beyond its expected boundaries. Take a traditional Indian craft and apply it to an unexpected, internationally recognisable context. For instance, blue pottery from Jaipur with its very distinctive Persian-influenced aesthetic, can be used to create Russian nesting dolls. Such products would be unlike anything tourists find in conventional souvenir shops. Thus, it's a formula of familiar forms rendered in an entirely novel artistic vocabulary.

This approach works because it removes the barrier of cultural translation. The international

The Indian handicrafts market achieved a size of ₹38,900 crore (US\$ 4,277.5 million approx) in 2023 and is projected to reach ₹71,112 crore (US\$ 7,817.8 million approx) by 2032.





### Louis Vuitton's runway for Men's Spring-Summer 2026 was inspired by the Indian board game of Snakes and Ladders.

consumer doesn't need to understand the history of blue pottery or its place in Rajasthan's tradition. They simply recognise something beautiful and distinctive, something unavailable anywhere else.

Celebrity musician-designer Pharrell Williams' Spring 2026 menswear collection for Louis Vuitton exemplifies this approach. In spring 2025, Williams spent seven days exploring Delhi, Mumbai and Jodhpur, immersing himself in India's aesthetic landscape. His vision transcended surface-level inspiration, incorporating colours like turmeric, cinnamon and "coffee indigo" denim.

### A National Resource

The ODOP scheme represents an extraordinary repository of possibilities for entrepreneurs thinking about this space. Under this initiative, the Government of India has identified a total of 1,102 products from 761 districts across the country. The idea is to select, brand, and promote one product from each district of the country for enabling holistic socioeconomic growth across all regions.

The total value of exports of ODOP products from Uttar Pradesh increased from ₹58,000 crore



(US\$ 6.37 million approx) in FY18 to ₹96,000 crore (US\$ 10.55 million approx) in FY22. The export of handicrafts from Uttar Pradesh contributes 44 per cent to the total export of handicrafts from the country. Similarly, this contribution stands at 39 per cent in carpets and 26 per cent in leather products.

Indian weddings can become powerful ambassadors for Indian crafts, turning celebration into conscious choice. As couples seek meaning alongside magnificence, handwoven textiles, crafted décor, and artisanal gifts rooted in specific districts offer authenticity no mass luxury can match. When these objects move from wedding rituals to global homes, they carry stories of place, people, and purpose, quietly redefining Indian craft as contemporary, desirable, and globally relevant. In that journey, weddings won't just showcase our crafts, they can propel it onto the wider stage.



**Sarthak Ahuja** is an investment banker, business educator and bestselling author. He is on the advisory board of several startups across India and the Middle East.



# Global Content ARCHITECT

*Bela Bajaria's journey from a television executive to championing cross-cultural content as the chief content officer of Netflix is a masterclass in navigating the dynamic landscape of modern media.*

Balancing artistic risk with global commercial viability, Bela Bajaria is being hailed as one of the most powerful women in the entertainment industry. Bajaria doesn't just manage a platform but shapes the cultural zeitgeist for over 300 million subscribers.

## Global Hits

Born in London to Indian parents of Gujarati descent, Bajaria joined Netflix in 2016. She has been the driving force behind a "borderless" content strategy. By overseeing an annual budget of approximately \$17 billion, she has pivoted the streaming giant from being a US-centric service to a global powerhouse. Under her leadership, local-language series, like the Korean sensation *Squid Game*, the Spanish thriller *La Casa de Papel*, and the French hit *Lupin* proved that great storytelling transcends linguistic and geographic barriers.

## Leadership & Influence

Before her reign at Netflix, the former Miss India Universe built a formidable reputation at NBC Universal, where she served as President of Universal Television. Her ability to revive shuttered studios and lead cable

**Since joining Netflix in 2016, Bajaria has been the driving force behind a "borderless" content strategy**



Bela Bajaria, Chief Content Officer, Netflix

divisions at CBS laid the groundwork for her current role on Netflix's leadership team. Her influence, however, extends far beyond the screen. A 2024 appointee to the Board of Directors of the Coca-Cola Company, Bajaria also serves on the boards of The Paley Center For Media and the Meridian International Center.

Recognised as one of *TIME* magazine's 100 Most Influential People and a mainstay on *Fortune* magazine's Most Powerful Women list, she is a modern diaspora success story, proving that a deep

understanding of local roots is the key to achieving global scale.

## From Script to Stadium

In January 2023, Bajaria was named Chief Content Officer at Netflix. Beyond period dramas like *Heeramandi* and Oscar® winners such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Bajaria has spearheaded Netflix's aggressive push into live programming. From comedy specials like *The Roast of Tom Brady* to ground-breaking partnerships with The National Football League (NFL), she is redefining "streaming".



# WEDDINGS



# REWIRED

*From placing menu details just a scan away to replacing fireworks with drones, the Indian wedding is undergoing a tech revolution.*

By Swapnil Karkare



Picture this: you arrive at a wedding, walk past the flower arch, and instead of giving your name to someone with a clipboard, you simply scan a QR code at the entrance. A quick beep, and you're checked in. Or imagine getting your wedding album ready almost immediately after the ceremony. No more waiting months to post them online.

This is the new normal. India's most traditional celebration is slowly becoming a tech-first experience.

### Scan to Celebrate

In digital India, QR codes have moved far beyond restaurant menus. At weddings now, they sit at the centre.

Today, many invitations come with scanners for RSVPs. At some weddings, guests get QR code-linked maps to navigate the seating chart and venues. Right from schedules and dress codes to playlists and menus, everything is just a scan away.

Add UPI to it, and you get an easier *shagun* (cash or gifts offered as blessings) experience. In Kerala, a bride's father went viral for wearing a QR code on his shirt pocket so guests could instantly transfer these blessings.

Not just that, friends and family abroad can join livestream weddings with a single scan. Even the photos don't take weeks to arrive. Guests upload snaps to shared digital albums, giving couples access to the highlights swiftly.



In another example, guests registered via QR-linked face ID systems and AI later sorted and emailed them personalised photo collections from the event.

### Traditions Get a Tech Upgrade

From dress rehearsals to venue decor, planning a wedding is no mean feat. But technology helps. Some shops have AR-enabled try-ons that help couples select the best outfit for their special day. Meanwhile, some wedding planners use AI tools to forecast costs, track expenses in real time, and flag overruns early.

**Drone light shows are quietly replacing fireworks, scoring another brownie point for making weddings eco-friendly.**





## AN AI MAKEOVER

AI is transforming the hair and makeup industry by helping brides and grooms visualise their wedding looks well before the big day. With AI-powered virtual try-ons, facial analysis, and hairstyle simulations, couples can experiment with different makeup styles, hairdos and accessories digitally. This allows them to finalise what suits their face shape, skin tone and outfit in advance.

Moreover, AI-generated moodboards and 3D walkthroughs help couples preview décor before anything is built. A Pune based couple took their wedding online, literally. They recorded their vows and stored them on the blockchain, a permanent digital database, turning them into an NFT (non-fungible token), a one-of-a-kind digital certificate, with the ceremony officiated by a digital priest.

Going one step further, Battlegrounds Mobile India (BGMI) hosted its first in-game wedding for a couple who met through the game. The digital ceremony mirrored real-world rituals, complete with a virtual *sangeet* programme and a performance by playback singer Benny Dayal's in-game avatar.

## Sustainability is Key

Another reason AI and QR-first weddings are gaining traction is sustainability. Traditional Indian weddings are resource-

intensive. Multiple printed invites, envelopes, maps and courier shipments across cities and countries: it all adds up. Digital invites dramatically reduce paper waste. Fewer physical packages mean fewer deliveries, lower fuel use and a smaller carbon footprint. For couples trying to align celebration with conscience, these systems offer a way to signal intent without sacrificing scale.

Additionally, drone light shows are quietly replacing fireworks, scoring another brownie point for making weddings eco-friendly.

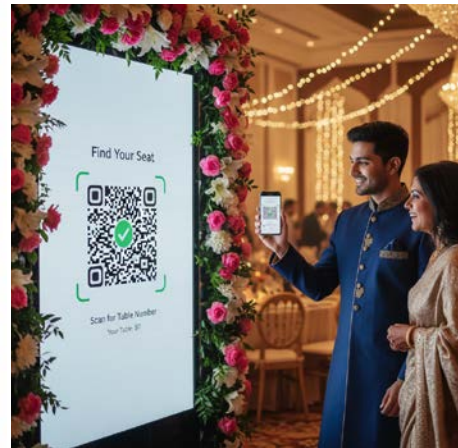
## Spirit Remains Unshaken

Weddings sit at the intersection of money, emotion and social norms. QR codes for gifting or contributions can feel transactional if poorly framed.

There are also practical risks. Technical glitches, such as weak



The **Ministry of Tourism** launched **"India says I do"** campaign in 2023, to promote India as a wedding destination.



Wi-Fi or server failures, can disrupt the experience. Poor planning can lead to unclear instructions, duplicated seat allocations, or too many links. For older guests, navigating multiple screens can feel intimidating, while even younger guests can find excessive device dependency overwhelming.

But these issues haven't slowed down the trend. If anything, they've encouraged families to be more careful and more thoughtful about how they use technology.

### Happily Ever After

As these tools get cheaper, simpler and more modular, they will move beyond elite planners and luxury weddings. In a few years, even small, local weddings may use lightweight versions of these tools, making planning and execution more efficient.

Weddings today are massive operations and QR codes help manage crowds, add light personalisation and

reduce the feeling of confusion or boredom that comes with scale. Increasingly, they're also being used quietly for access control and security.

Right now, this may sound ambitious. But India's digital history suggests otherwise. As platforms mature and features spread, weddings will likely become more about access, taking pressure off planners and hosts, and making celebrations smoother for everyone involved. And chances are, in a few years, we'll wonder how weddings ever worked without it.



**Swapnil Karkare** is known for bridging economics and storytelling. A Chartered Accountant and economist by profession, he analyses finance and policy through research, writing and podcasts.



# India Steps Into AI VANGUARD

*India is no longer on the sidelines of the AI revolution. It is shaping the agenda.*

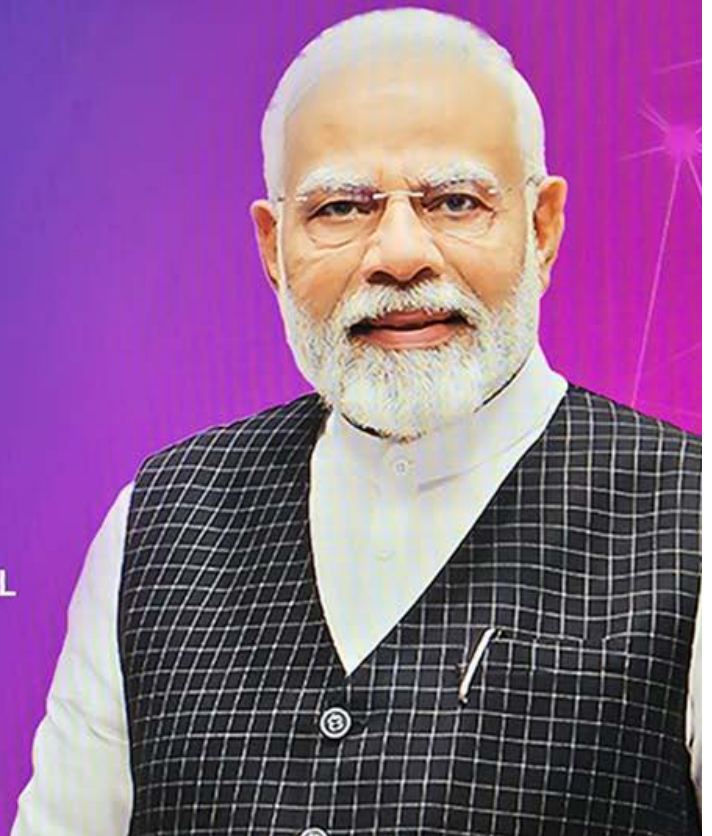
By Dr. Aruna Sharma

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is swiftly becoming a part of bringing efficiency in governance, in both the private and public sectors for better analytics and targeting. The India AI Impact Summit 2026, held in Delhi between February 16 and 21, marked a pivotal moment in capturing India's AI journey and the road ahead. The first such event hosted in the Global South, it brought together policymakers, founders, researchers and investors.



**AI  
IMPACT  
SUMMIT**  
भारत 2026 INDIA

सर्वजन हिताय | सर्वजन सुखाय  
WELFARE FOR ALL | HAPPINESS OF ALL





As per the Stanford AI Index Report 2025, India leads the world in AI talent acquisition, with an annual hiring rate of **33%**.

With approximately six lakh in-person attendees, and participation from 100+ countries and 20 international organisations, the summit positioned India at the centre of the global AI conversation.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the summit welcomed some of the most influential figures in global technology, such as OpenAI co-founder Sam Altman, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei and Google and Alphabet chief Sundar Pichai to flag the potential of AI in bringing out access to all for inclusiveness.

### **Why India is Fertile Ground**

India, with its digital initiatives, is primed for AI-based analytics that could enable better targeting for welfare programmes and assistance. For example, banking in the country has been modified for digital

payments. All utilities are now digital, creating a huge database. In the private sector, e-commerce, plant operations automation, fintech operations and gaming need the fastest analysis of data for better informed decision making assisted by machine learning. India, with a digitised database and AI skill penetration, which ranks among the top countries globally, as per the Stanford AI Index Report 2025, has great potential for usage of AI across sectors.

**A highlight of the summit was the open-source assistive device developed by the Digital India BHASHINI Division, Current AI and Kalpa Impact.**







Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with over 20 Heads of State and Government and leaders of major international organisations, participated in the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi



### Inclusion as Strategy

India hosted the AI summit 2026 to bring into focus the country's efforts in becoming the computing pillar in terms of GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) production. The summit demonstrated how AI talent in the country has already taken baby steps by developing multiple Indian languages AI tools. The need of the hour is to have affordable and accessible AI modules for inclusive usage. The spread is targeted to move to “Making AI in India and Making AI Work for India”.

AIKosha, a secure platform that provides a repository of datasets, models and use cases to enable AI innovation, was also launched. The Digital India BHASHINI Division, under the Digital India Corporation, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), marked a major milestone in India's Digital Public Infrastructure journey with the launch of VoicERA, an open source, end-to-end Voice AI stack, at the summit.



AI could add **US\$ 1.7 trillion** to India's economy by **2035**.



PM Modi inaugurated the India AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam

These efforts, adaptation and initiatives have tremendous potential by launching fellowship programmes, AI usage in healthcare, agriculture, education and in governance and businesses.

### Need for Self-Sufficiency

AI in India is on an imported stack and thus, the priority is to create its own stack, as has been experimented with BOSS (Bharat Operating System Solutions), an Indian open-source GNU Linux-based operating system released in 2007 to reduce dependency on proprietary foreign operating systems. In India, foreign softwares are more popular because of being Windows-based and ease of adaptation. This adds to the vulnerability.

The focus now must be on investing in having our own stack. The IndiaAI mission, with a budget of ₹10,000 crore and a focus on AIRAWAT (AI Research, Analytics and Knowledge Dissemination Platform), is to build the compute infrastructure and AI labs. It is a step in the right direction, but it needs to be accelerated.

### Global Tech Catalyst

At the summit, India showcased its potential to lead in the global AI landscape, leveraging a skilled and efficient workforce. By prioritising accessible solutions, such as open-source tools and user-friendly applications, the country aims to bridge the digital divide both internationally and within its own borders. With a population of 1.45 billion people and 250 million households, India's focus on efficient manufacturing, workforce training, social welfare targeting and a robust financial system positions it to harness AI's full potential, drive inclusive growth and strengthen governance.



**Dr. Aruna Sharma** is a practitioner development economist. She was Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and IT and also worked as Secretary Steel in Govt. of India.



## A Polyphony of Promise

# SOUNDS OF INDIAN WEDDINGS

*To discuss wedding music in India is to step into a world of extraordinary versatility.*

By S. Gopalakrishnan

Across India, wedding music invokes blessings, forges communal bonds and marks the emotional texture of each ritual. From the turmeric-smeared intimacy of the *haldi* and the henna-laced laughter of the *mehendi*, to the performative exuberance of the *sangeet* and the public spectacle of the *baraat* (groom's procession), sound becomes both sanctifier and social glue.

In Bihari weddings, women's folk songs such as the *sohar*, traditionally associated with birth but often adapted into wedding contexts, carry an aura





The Indian Classical Musical system has **two** major traditions: Hindustani and Carnatic.

of sanctity. Sung collectively, they invoke fertility, prosperity, and divine grace. In contrast, Punjabi *geets* adopt a playful, teasing tone, particularly toward the groom and his family. Accompanied by the steady pulse of the *dholak*, the humour in these songs softens hierarchy, and collective singing strengthens bonds.

### Shehnai's Grandeur

In North Indian wedding processions, the *shehnai*, a double-reed wind instrument, signals sacred beginnings. In South India, the resonant strains of the *nagaswaram* fulfil a parallel role. Its expansive soundscape consecrates both temple rituals and marriage ceremonies.

The *shehnai's* deep association with weddings took shape during the 16th–18th centuries, when the instrument gradually moved from folk usage into courtly and ceremonial spaces. By the 19th and early 20th centuries in North India, it had become synonymous with marriage.

Some trace its origins to the *pungi*, a reed instrument associated with snake charmers, while others note affinities with the Persian *surmai*.

### Vocal Traditions

Regional wedding soundscapes reveal patterned distinctions shaped by linguistic, religious, and aesthetic



traditions. In North India, particularly Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, percussive energy dominates pre-wedding festivities: the *dholak*-centred *sangeet* often incorporates bhangra idioms, while the *shehnai* lends ritual gravity to the *phas*.

In contrast, South Indian ceremonies, especially within Tamil, Telugu and Malayali contexts, foreground the tonal expansiveness of the *nadaswaram* paired with the

**The *shehnai's* deep association with weddings took shape during the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the instrument gradually moved from folk usage into courtly and ceremonial spaces.**





**In Goa, wedding music bears the imprint of indigenous Konkani traditions interwoven with Portuguese and British influences.**



rhythmic authority of the *thavil*, the barrel-shaped, double-headed drum. Here, music is structurally embedded in rites such as the *mangala shanam* (holy bath ritual), with Carnatic vocalism contributing emotional and liturgical depth.

West Bengal introduces distinctive vocal markers such as ululation, alongside folk repertoires and collective singing integral to rituals like the *gaye holud*, the Bengali equivalent of the *haldi* (ceremony where turmeric paste is applied to bride and groom). In Gujarat, the mesmerising *manjira* or hand cymbals and dhol accompany the *mehendi*.

### **Diverse Soundscapes**

In the Northeast, wedding music reflects tribal, ethnic and Christian influences. Assamese instruments such as the *pepa*, *gogona* and *dhol* lend festive vibrancy, while in Nagaland and Mizoram, log drums and choral singing mark ceremonial expression. In predominantly Christian communities, hymnody coexists with indigenous rhythms, bridging ancestral practice and missionary influence.

In Goa, wedding music bears the imprint of indigenous Konkani traditions interwoven with Portuguese and British influences.



India's national song **Vande Mataram** was composed by poet Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in the **19<sup>th</sup> century**.

Catholic ceremonies feature choir-led hymns accompanied by organ, violin or guitar, while local forms such as the *mandó* and *dulpod* retain vernacular melodic sensibilities. Waltz-like dances, brass bands and folk repertoires converge in a uniquely syncretic soundscape.

Among Parsis, Persian ancestral memory mingles with Gujarati folk and Western band traditions. Meanwhile, the Cochin Jewish community historically wove Hebrew liturgical chants with Malayalam-inflected melodies, preserving diasporic identity within an Indian milieu.

### Theological Influences

Muslim and Christian weddings, while shaped by distinct theological frameworks, often draw upon shared regional idioms. In Kerala, *Oppana* forms an integral part of *Mappila* weddings, with women encircling the bride in rhythmic song and movement. In Uttar Pradesh, *mehndi*



gatherings resound with women-led songs and dholak rhythms.

To speak, then, of “Indian wedding music” is to invoke not a singular tradition but a polyphonic federation of sound. From the *shehnai* to the *nagaswaram*, from sohar and geet to *qawwali*, garba, log drums, and *mandó* — each articulates marriage through its own sonic grammar.

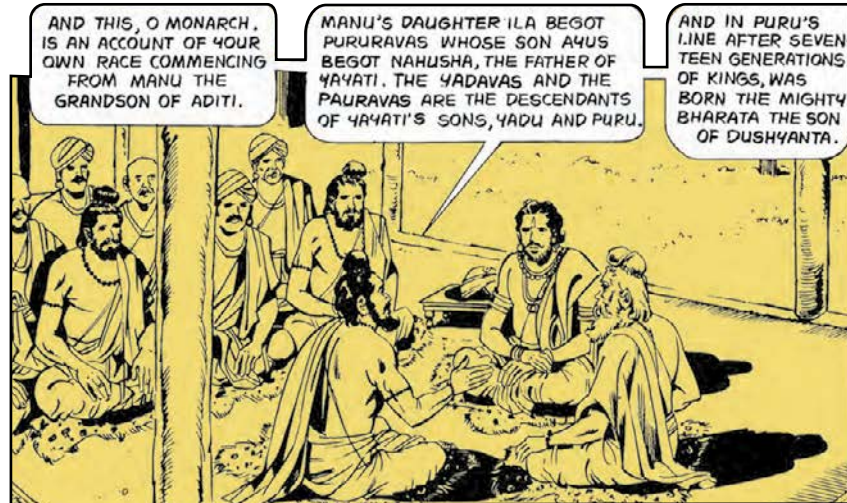
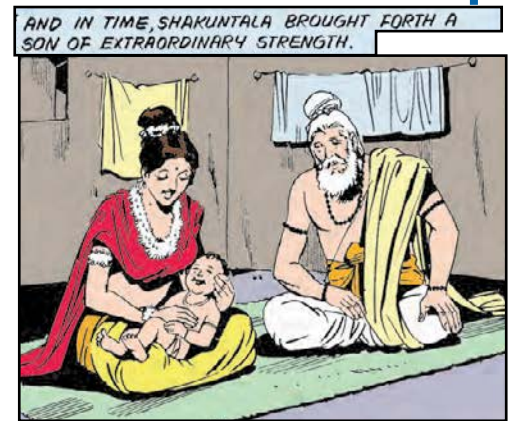
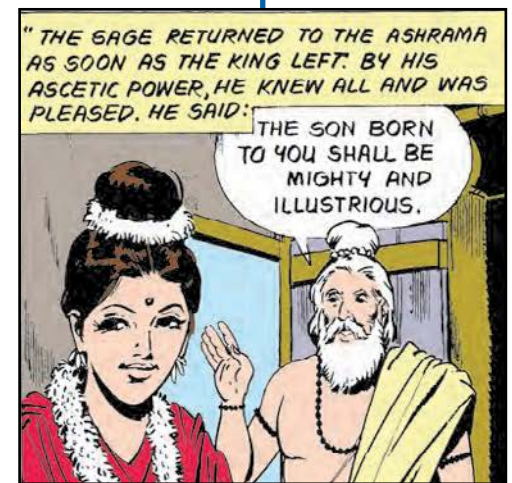
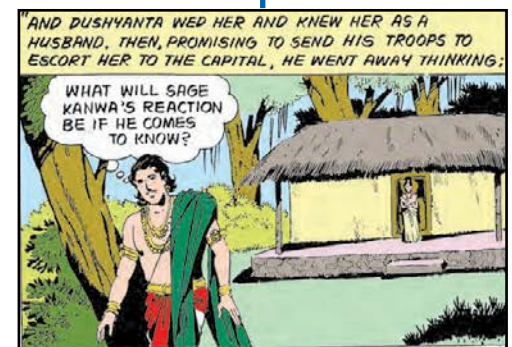
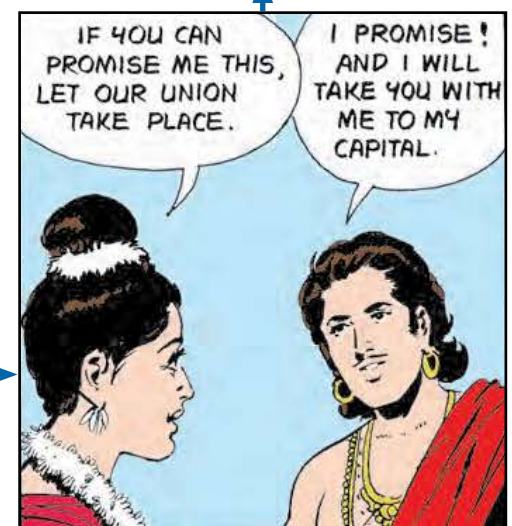
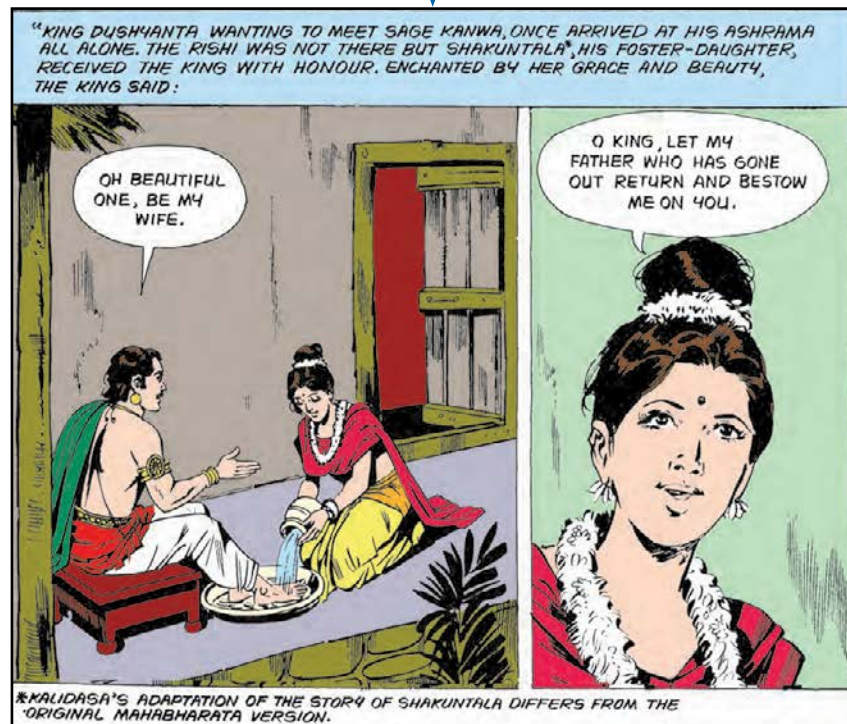
Across these varied practices lies a shared impulse: to sanctify transition, to bind community, and to inscribe memory through rhythm and melody. Indian wedding music mirrors the nation itself — not a single melodic line, but an ever-evolving composition.



**S. Gopalakrishnan** is a bilingual writer in English and Malayalam, a former broadcaster and the host of the *Dilli Dali* podcast, where he explores contemporary culture and society.



# The Epic Tale of SHAKUNTALAM

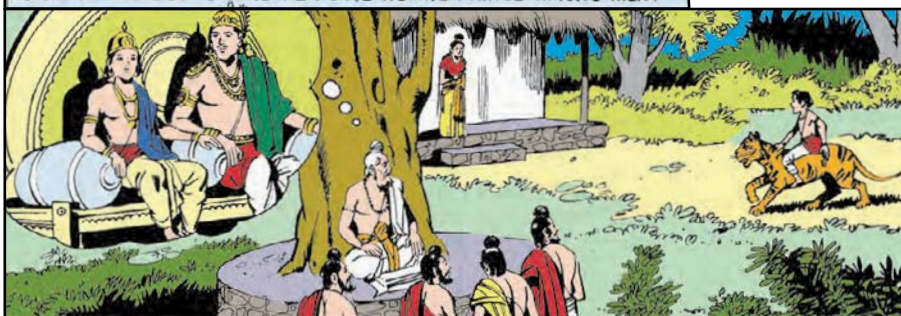




"AND WHEN HE WAS BARELY SIX, THE BOY WOULD CHASE AND SEIZE TIGERS..."



"... AND RIDE ON THEM. AND WATCHING THESE FEATS, THE SAGE KNEW THAT THE TIME HAD COME FOR THE BOY TO TAKE HIS PLACE AS THE PRINCE AMONG MEN."



"SO HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES:

LEAD OUR SHAKUNTALA AND HER SON TO THE PALACE OF HER HUSBAND WITHOUT DELAY.

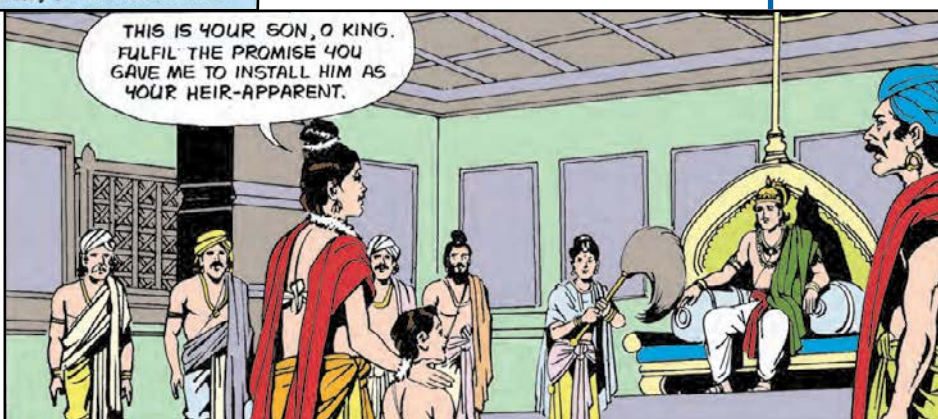
SO BE IT.

"AND THE RISHI'S DISCIPLES WITH SHAKUNTALA AND HER SON, WENDED THEIR WAY TO DUSHYANTA'S CAPITAL."



"WHEN THEY REACHED THE PRESENCE OF THE KING, THEY LEFT SHAKUNTALA WITH HIM AND WENT AWAY, PRESENTING HER SON, SHAKUNTALA SAID:

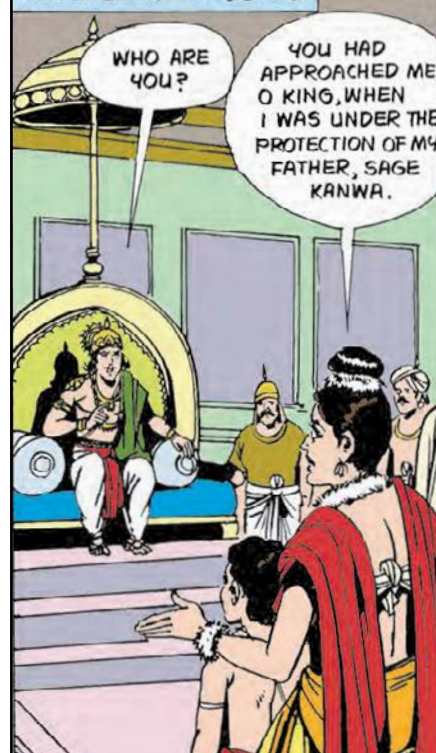
THIS IS YOUR SON, O KING. FULFIL THE PROMISE YOU GAVE ME TO INSTALL HIM AS YOUR HEIR-APPARENT.



"BUT THE KING, THOUGH HE REMEMBERED EVERYTHING, SAID:

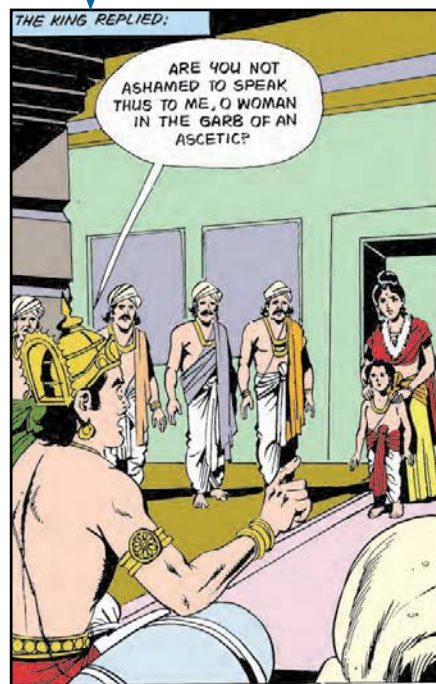
WHO ARE YOU?

YOU HAD APPROACHED ME, O KING, WHEN I WAS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF MY FATHER, SAGE KANWA.



THE KING REPLIED:

ARE YOU NOT ASHAMED TO SPEAK THUS TO ME, O WOMAN IN THE GARB OF AN ASCETIC?

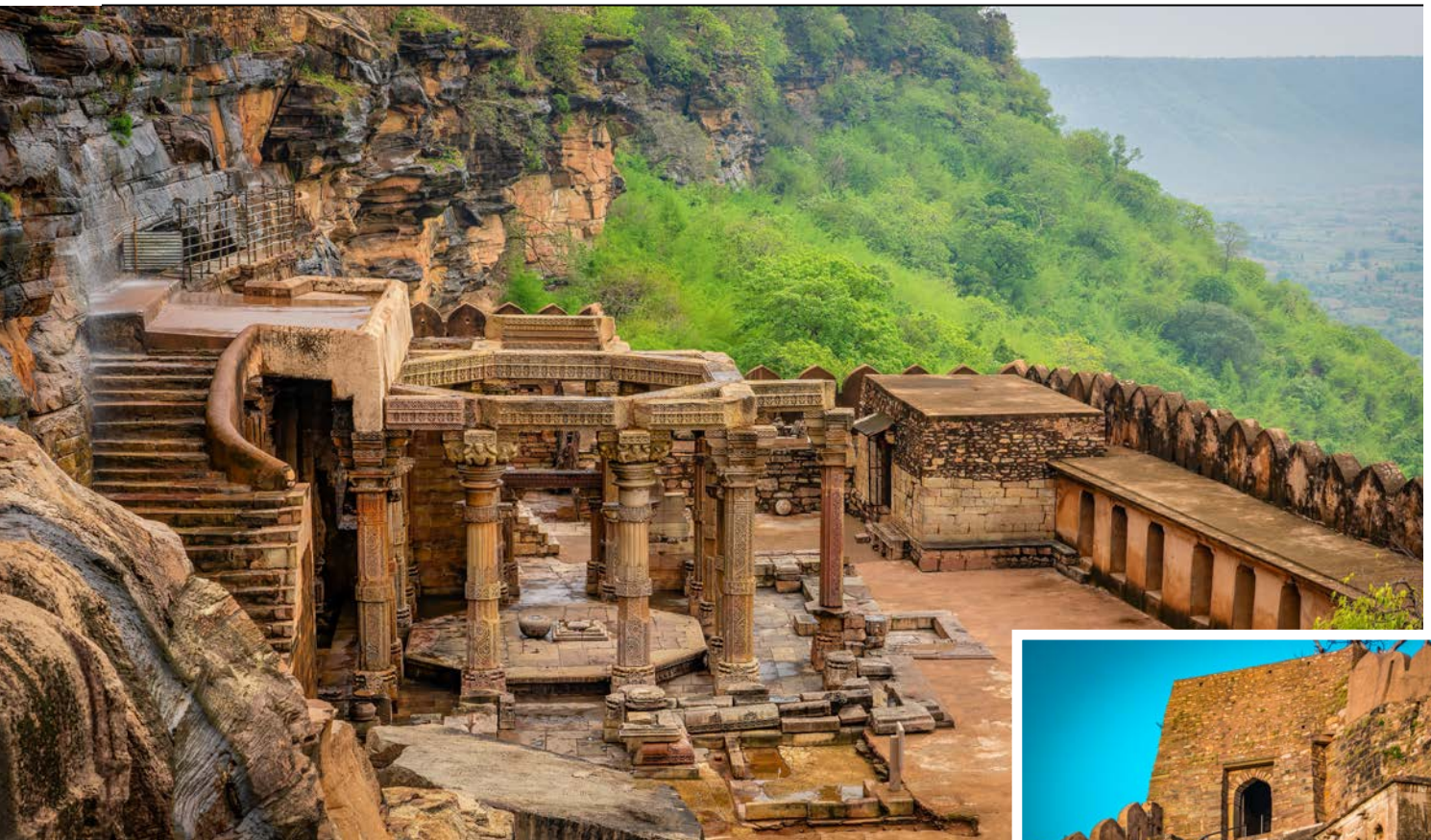


Amar Chitra Katha



Scan to read the rest





## Layers Of Legend And STONE

*High above the plains of Uttar Pradesh, where the land begins to ripple into rocky hills, the ancient Kalinjar Fort rises like a quiet sentinel of time.*

Long associated with emperors, pilgrims and storytellers, it has now gained fresh recognition: its surrounding landscape has been designated a National Geo-Heritage Site by the Geological Survey of India, adding another layer of significance to its cultural legacy.

Perched atop a hill in Banda district and adorned with intricately carved temples, palaces and pavilions, Kalinjar was built and expanded by the Chandela dynasty. A strong military fort, it also contains sacred sites like Pandava

Kund, Patal Ganga, Bhairav Kund and Kotitirtha, woven into its terrain.

At its heart stands the Neelkanth Temple, where a blue-hued Shiva *lingam* reflects the legend of Lord Shiva consuming cosmic poison.

### A Geological Marvel

What makes Kalinjar remarkable is not just what humans built, but what the Earth itself has revealed. The rocky hill beneath the fort holds a rare geological phenomenon known as the Eparchaeon Unconformity. It is a visible gap in Earth's history, where ancient granite formed nearly 2.5 billion years ago meets much younger sandstone, dating back about 1.2 billion years. This dramatic layering offers researchers a window into what must have shaped the planet long before human civilisations emerged.



**Nearest Airport:**  
Khajuraho Airport,  
Madhya Pradesh

**Nearest Railway Station:** Attara  
Railway Station,  
Uttar Pradesh

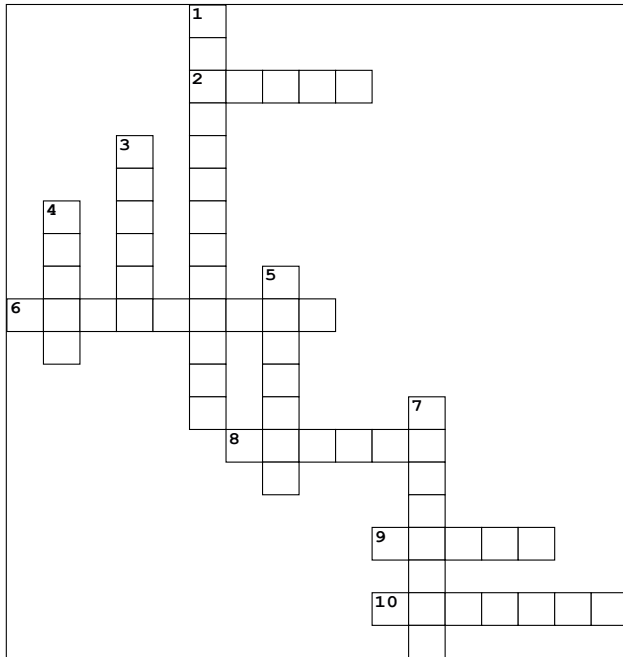
**Nearest Bus Station:** Kalinjar  
Bus Station, Uttar  
Pradesh



# Intriguing ARCADE

## Know India a Little!

A 9x9 crossword on India's culture, geography & milestones



### CUES

#### Across

- i) 2 The state known for its tea plantations
- ii) 6 The state known as the "Land of Kings"
- iii) 8 The National emblem of India is also called
- iv) 9 Haryana state's theatre style folk dance
- v) 10 A traditional way in which Holi is celebrated in the twin towns of Barsana and Nandgaon

#### Answers:

i) Assam, ii) Rajasthan, iii) Ashoka, iv) Saang, v) Lathmar, vi) Bharatanatyam, vii) Kerala, viii) Sitar, ix) Kalasa, x) Taj Mahal.

#### Down

- vi) 1 A traditional Indian Dance form
- vii) 3 The state with the highest literacy rate in India
- viii) 4 A Popular Indian instrument with a long-neck
- ix) 5 The largest of the rock-cut Hindu temple
- x) 7 The most famous monument in India (Symbol of Love)

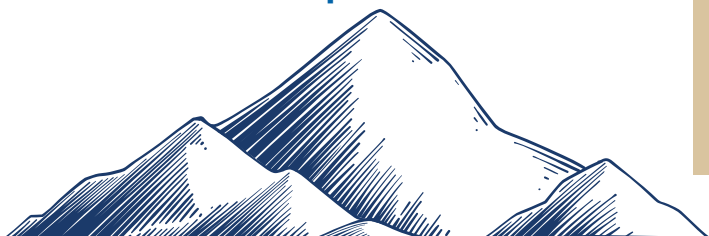
## How Well Do You Know India?

1. Which ancient Indian system of medicine is based on balancing Vata, Pitta, and Kapha?  
A. Siddha  
B. Ayurveda  
C. Unani  
D. Homeopathy
2. What does the traditional Indian greeting "Namaste" signify?  
A. Welcome to my home  
B. Respect and bow to the divine in you  
C. Good morning  
D. Peace be upon you
3. Which ancient Indian university, considered one of the world's first residential universities, attracted students from China, Korea and Central Asia?  
A. Vikramashila  
B. Nalanda  
C. Takshashila  
D. Vallabhi
4. The Kumbh Mela rotates between four cities. Identify, which one is NOT part of the traditional cycle.  
A. Prayagraj  
B. Haridwar  
C. Nashik  
D. Varanasi
5. India's national emblem is adapted from a pillar originally erected by:  
A. Chandragupta Maurya  
B. Samudragupta  
C. Emperor Ashoka  
D. Harsha
6. Which date was declared as International Day of Yoga by the United Nations, marking global recognition of yoga?  
A. 5 June  
B. 21 June  
C. 14 April  
D. 2 October
7. The famous treatise Arthashastra, a foundational text on governance and economics, was authored by:  
A. Kalidasa  
B. Chanakya  
C. Tulsidas  
D. Banabhatta
8. Identify the Indian state where the classical martial art Kalaripayattu originated.  
A. Karnataka  
B. Tamil Nadu  
C. Kerala  
D. Andhra Pradesh
9. India became the first country to reach the Moon's south pole through the mission:  
A. Chandrayaan-1  
B. Chandrayaan-2  
C. Chandrayaan-3  
D. Aditya-L1
10. "Satyameva Jayate", written below India's national emblem, is derived from:  
A. Rig Veda  
B. Mundaka Upanishad  
C. Bhagavad Gita  
D. Arthashastra

### Answers

- 1) Ayurveda
- 2) Respect and bow to the divine in you
- 3) Nalanda
- 4) Varanasi
- 5) Emperor Ashoka
- 6) 21 June
- 7) Chanakya
- 8) Kerala
- 9) Chandrayaan-3
- 10) Mundaka Upanishad

**India covers an area of 32,87,263 sq. km, extending from the snow-covered Himalayan heights to the south's tropical rain forests**

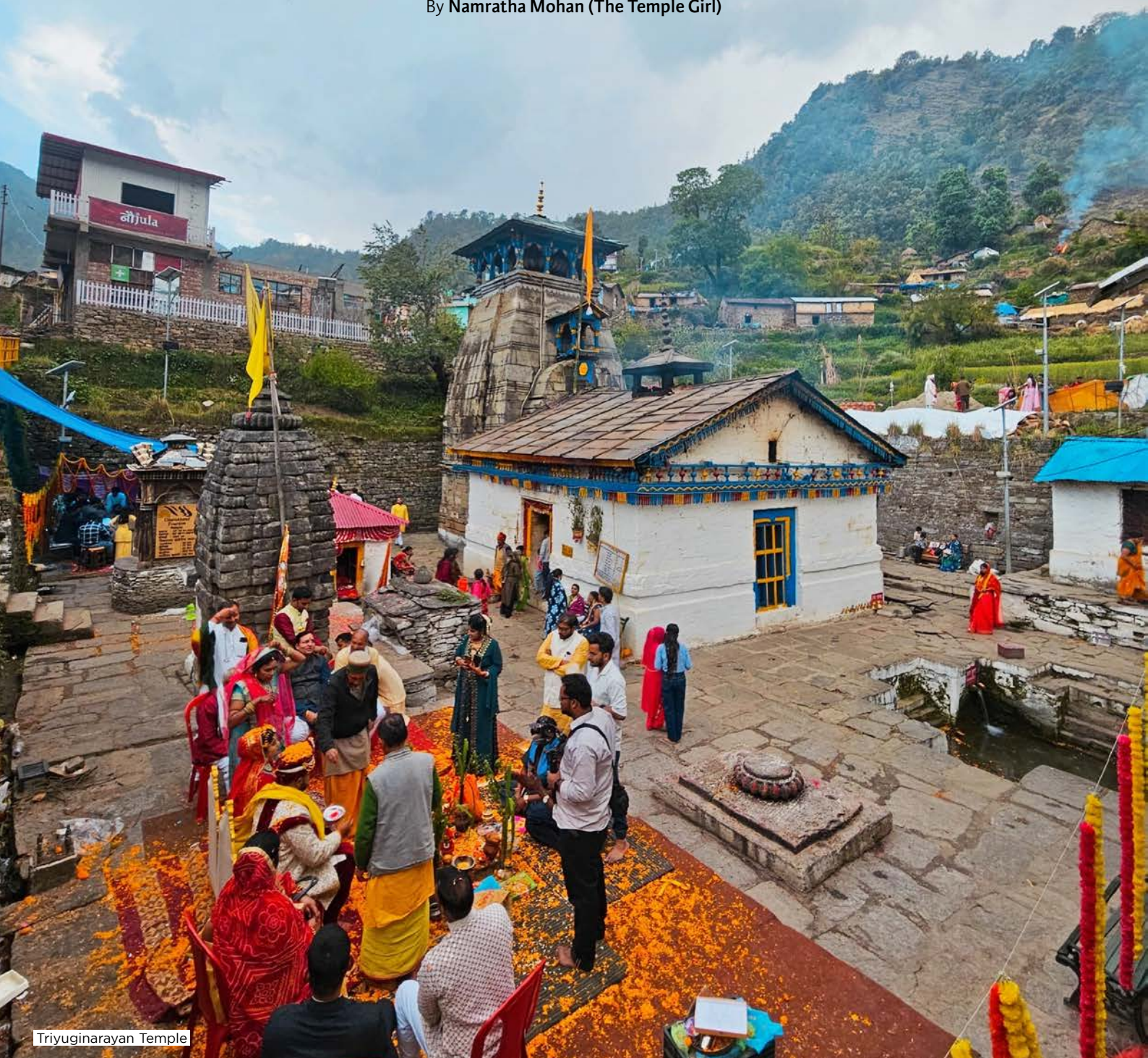




# Where Gods MARRIED FIRST

*What if your wedding wasn't just about you? What if the ground you stood on had witnessed millions of vows before yours, including the divine?*

By Namratha Mohan (The Temple Girl)



Triyuginarayan Temple



Historical records note that the Khajuraho temple site had **85 temples** by the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Only about **25 temples** survive today.

According to legends, some temples in India have witnessed the divine unions of deities such as Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvati and their incarnations. Naturally, couples seeking meaning beyond lavish venues choose to marry here. These aren't Instagram-famous temples packed with tourists. These are sacred spots where couples hope to begin their marital lives under the watchful gaze of the gods.

### The Primordial Flame

High in the Garhwal Himalayas, there's a fire allegedly burning for three million years. Priests swear it has not gone out since Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati got married here.

This is the Triyuginarayan Temple in Uttarakhand. The divine wedding is believed to have unfolded upon the sacred *Brahma Shila*, a consecrated stone that rests within the temple precinct, marking the spot where the divine union took place. It is said that Lord Vishnu performed the *kanyadaan* ritual of offering the bride in marriage, while Lord Brahma

#### SACRED CIRCUITS

Located in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand are five revered shrines where Lord Shiva is worshipped. Collectively known as *Panch Kedar* ('panch' in Hindi means five), these temples are Kedarnath, Madhmaheshwar, Tungnath, Rudranath and Kalpnath.

presided as the celestial priest. Vows were exchanged, witnessed not just by the deities but the entire cosmos. After the rituals concluded, the flame was not extinguished.

Despite the chill of the altitude, as soon as you step inside the temple, there's warmth radiating from the stone pit where the fire burns. The air smells like cedar wood. Simple walls. No decoration. Just a flame older than memory. Couples offer *samidha* or sacred wooden sticks to the fire and take a pinch of ash as blessings.

If you wish to get married here, contact the Shri Badarinath Kedarnath Temple Committee ahead of time, especially during peak wedding seasons, i.e. April to May and September to November. It's a small space and can accommodate 20 to 50 people at the most.

### Where the Bride is Queen

Most brides walk into their weddings. Goddess Meenakshi, (an avatar of Goddess Parvati) ruled hers at Meenakshi Amman Temple in



**At Uttarakhand's Triyuginarayan Temple, there's a fire allegedly burning for three million years. Priests claim it has not gone out since Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati got married here.**



**As you enter the Meenakshi Amman Temple, the sweet smell of *Madurai Malli* jasmine hits you first while the *nadaswaram* plays sacred wedding music.**

Madurai, Tamil Nadu. A warrior queen, she was trained in combat. When Lord Shiva arrived as Sundareshwarar, it wasn't just a wedding. It was her coronation.

As you enter the premises, the thick and sweet smell of *Madurai Malli* jasmine hits you first. The *nadaswaram* (a double-reed wind instrument from Tamil Nadu) plays wedding music that hasn't changed in centuries. The ceremony,

*Thirukalyanam*, centres the bride. Couples marry in the Kalyana Mandapam, surrounded by the Hall of a Thousand Pillars, each one intricately carved.

The dress code is strict, *veshti* (a traditional, unstitched white cotton or silk garment) for men, saree for women. Weddings happen between 6 and 9 am. No cameras are allowed in the inner sanctum.

### The Witness of Truth

Some weddings need a priest. This one needed a witness and found one in Lord Krishna. Legend claims a poor boy fell in love with the daughter of the village's headman in Odisha. The father agreed to the union initially but changed his mind later. The boy went to Vrindavan and asked Lord Krishna to come testify the promise.





## STUNNING ARCHITECTURE

The Meenakshi Temple complex is one of the largest and oldest of its kind in India. The temple grew with the contribution of each dynasty into an enormous complex extending over an area of 65,000 sqm. The complex houses 14 *gopurams* (gateway towers), painted in jewel tones, resembling thousands of carved gods watching over devotees.





### Unmissable Moments

#### Chithirai Festival at Meenakshi Amman Temple, Tamil Nadu

Held annually in April or May, this grand festival celebrates the celestial wedding of Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareshwarar (Shiva).

#### Amla Navami at Sakshigopal Temple, Odisha

Observed every year in October or November, on Amla Navami devotees are granted the rare *darshan* of the feet of Radha, consort of Lord Krishna, special for a harmonious marriage.

#### Shivratri at Matangeshwar Temple, Madhya Pradesh

Around Maha Shivaratri in February or March, this Khajuraho temple hosts the Matangeshwar Mahadev Biyah. The Shivling is adorned with a grand *sehra*, a groom's floral crown, symbolising Lord Shiva's divine wedding.

Lord Krishna said yes but on one condition. The boy had to walk ahead on their way from Vrindavan to Odisha and could never look back. On the way back, the boy could hear Lord Krishna's footsteps behind him but near the village, he stopped hearing them. Panic kicked in. He turned around. The second he did, Lord Krishna froze and turned into stone. The temple built around his statue came to be called Sakshigopal, meaning "the witness of truth".

The temple is made of red sandstone in classic Kalinga style, surrounded by coconut trees and *amla* (Indian gooseberry) groves. It is quieter than nearby Puri's grandeur. Couples here aren't just making promises to each other. They're asking for a witness who never lies, never forgets and never disappears when things get hard.

### The Original Elopement

If Triyuginarayan witnessed the gods' arranged marriage, Madhavrai saw their rebellion. Princess

Madhavrai Temple







The *Shivling* inside  
Matangeshwar  
Temple



Rukmini of Bhismaka, current-day Arunachal Pradesh, was being forced to marry Shishupala, a man her brother chose. A man she didn't love. Unhappy, she picked up a palm leaf and wrote Lord Krishna a letter. She asked him to come get her. He showed up and swept her from her palace grounds and brought her to Madhavpur Ghed, a coastal village in Gujarat, where they got married as equals. The temple sits near the coast. Couples do a *Lagna* ritual that mirrors the original elopement. This temple of courage is perfect for people who had to fight for each other.

### The Marriage that Grows

Right in the middle of Khajuraho's silent and museum-like temples where worship has ceased, there's one where bells still ring and locals show up every day. That's Matangeshwar!

It is said that Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati's wedding was solemnised here under the blessing of sage Matang. The *Shivling* (an abstract representation of the Lord Shiva) is an eight-foot-tall emerald-green sandstone block and local priests claim it grows by the size of one sesame seed every year. This is said to signify a dynamic marriage, growing with time.

You'll need to work with the local temple trust if you want to get married here. Ceremonies take place early morning and following all rituals and traditions.

At these temples, a wedding is a re-enactment of divine love stories. The ground here is soaked with legends, centuries of devotion and millions of promises made before yours.



**Namratha Mohan** works at the intersection of storytelling, heritage and modern media. She is the founder of The Temple Girl, a cultural media platform.



# Grandeur With A GLOBAL GAZE

*Fashion does not evolve in isolation. It mirrors the mood of a nation. India in the last decade, has been buoyant, economically confident, globally visible and digitally connected. That confidence has deeply influenced how brides and grooms wish to present themselves today.*

By J.J. Valaya



A **safa** (turban), **kalgi** (brooch on turban), **mala** (necklace) and **mojari** (footwear) complete a groom's wedding attire.

Having been a designer and couturier for over three decades, my experience allows me the privilege of perspective. So when I look at the Indian wedding trousseau today and compare it to what we were creating 20 or even 10 years ago, I do not just see a change in silhouettes or embellishments, but a change in India itself.

### Identity Statement

Twenty years ago, a bridal trousseau was largely ceremonial. They were unapologetically heavy as weight signified luxury. The most common was dense *zardozi* (an ancient, luxurious form of hand embroidery originating from Persia,

translating to 'gold embroidery'), made with thick metallic threads on layered velvet fabric.

A bride came in with clear expectations: a red lehenga, rich in *zari* (silk thread wrapped in gold) and *zardozi*, heavy with tradition.

Today, the trousseau is not just ceremonial, it is autobiographical. Brides now ask if their outfit reflects their love story, how and where the bride and the groom met, or if it echoes the architecture of her wedding venue, and lastly, can it be heavy in appearance but light in weight.

We now create couture pieces where memories are subtly woven into borders,

Valaya in his studio





## FASHION

**India's intrinsic maximalism, its love for texture, colour, craft, celebration, remains constant. Today's bride does not want to be a copy. She wants distinction.**

hidden in motifs, and layered into the threadwork. The garment becomes deeply personal, not just ornamental.

### Groom's Revolution

Interestingly, a greater transformation has happened in menswear. Thirty-five or 40 years ago, the groom wore a three-piece suit. It was respectable, restrained and largely predictable. Today, grooms rival brides in opulence. With intricate *sherwanis* (stylised kurta), hand embroidered *achkans* (traditional attire), layered textures and tonal threadwork, the male trousseau has undergone a revolution.

Their garments incorporate *zardozi*, *resham* (silk) thread embroidery, metallic *gotta* and *badla* work (forms of embroidery), subtle crystal highlights, structured silhouettes blended with traditional cuts, etc. The Indian groom is no longer peripheral to fashion, he is central to it.

### Red, Reinvented

The evolution of the wedding couture colour palette is another interesting aspect. Pastels, ivories, golds, and blush tones have gained popularity. But red never left the conversation.

The way red is interpreted has changed, though. Earlier, reds were deeper and traditionally paired with heavy gold *zari*. Today, we see vermillion red layered with antique gold, more balanced shades of red being used with





*Kanyadaan* is an auspicious Hindu ritual, meaning  
“giving away” of the bride to the groom by her parents.



In traditional footwear, hand-embroidered *juttis* made of leather are common among brides and grooms

tonal threadwork and lighter weaves to modernise the classic hue.

Colour experimentation is welcome, but the powerful emotional symbolism of red remains. If there is one defining aesthetic of the last decade for brides in red, it is shimmer!

Traditional *zari* and *zardozi* are still relevant, but now, they coexist with micro-sequins, crystals, cut beads, layered metallic threads and subtle reflective surfaces. As compared to the metallic work of the past, which was dominant and singular, embroidery is now multi-dimensional.

### Forever Sustainable

Sustainability might seem like a new concept for many, but the couture industry has always practised it. As

**"We are a country of architectural intricacy, layered cuisine, and elaborate festivals. That spirit cannot become entirely minimalist."**

designers, if we repeat heritage crafts exactly as they were centuries ago, we risk irrelevance.

Amazingly, what we designed as bridal lehengas 25 years ago are today worn by the daughters of those brides. These garments are altered, restored, reimagined, but never discarded.

In some cases, heirlooms are even transformed as *dupattas* (long shawl-like scarf traditionally worn by women) become wall tapestries, *sherwanis* are altered into jackets and embroidered panels are reapplied into new garments.

### The Future is Cyclical

Cinema undeniably shapes bridal aspirations. From the dust pink lehenga popular actor Kiara Advani



Twenty years ago, a bridal trousseau was largely ceremonial. They were unapologetically heavy as weight signified luxury.



wore on her D-Day to global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas' lush red wedding look, brides today get influenced by ongoing trends. But in my experience, only a small percentage of brides explicitly want to replicate a look from a film.

India's intrinsic maximalism, its love for texture, colour, craft, celebration, remains constant. Today's bride does not want to be a copy. She wants distinction.

We are a country of architectural intricacy, layered cuisine, and elaborate festivals. That spirit cannot become entirely minimalist. It may soften, but it will never disappear. This in itself is a refreshing evolution.



**Vedic tradition** mandates that priests carefully and precisely select the **holiest** and most auspicious wedding dates.

The evolution of the wedding couture colour palette is another interesting aspect. Pastels, ivories, golds, and blush tones have gained popularity. But red never left the conversation.



While the bride may opt for a traditional attire in shades of red for the wedding rituals, pre and post wedding day events are often about trending colours and silhouettes

### Spectrum Of Heritage

The Indian wedding is far more than a ceremony it is a "grand showcase of the ultimate celebration," where the bridal trousseau acts as a primary visual narrative. For both bride and groom, the choice of attire is no longer just about tradition, but about chronicling personal history and socio-economic progress.

Modern trousseaus have evolved into heirlooms of identity. As designers increasingly

weave life milestones into intricate embroideries, the garment becomes a living archive, asserting the identity of the couple while reflecting the aesthetic standards of families involved.



**J.J. Valaya** is widely regarded as one of India's leading fashion gurus and founder of one of its most respected luxury fashion and lifestyle houses.



# 'Sanskrit Is A Language Of WISDOM'

*Says Prof. Shrinivasa Varakhedi, VC,  
Central Sanskrit University.*



"Sanskrit is not merely a language; it is the foundation of India's knowledge system," says Prof. Shrinivasa Varakhedi, Vice-Chancellor, Central Sanskrit University, New Delhi. He is a firm believer that Sanskrit words are not just vocabulary, but carriers of meaning, culture and philosophy. Once spoken across regions, it was known to connect diverse communities, functioning as a shared intellectual thread across Bharat or India.





As of **October 2025**, a total of **11 Indian languages** hold the status of "**Classical Language**."



But if it was so alive, then what changed? With colonial education systems, Sanskrit was gradually pushed out of mainstream learning and confined to specialised institutions. Labelled as a "classical language," it risked becoming static like Latin or Greek, rather than evolving. "Yet, Sanskrit never truly died; it was simply distanced from everyday use," says the professor.

### University's Role

When the university was setup in 1970, its goal was preserving the language, but "preservation alone lead to stagnation." Today's Sanskrit universities are redefining their purpose, not as museums of the past, but as laboratories of knowledge. They are integrating Sanskrit with fields like law, artificial intelligence, and linguistics, transforming it into a tool for innovation rather than mere conservation.

**Central Sanskrit University, New Delhi, is the world's largest multi-campus language university, established in 1970.**

"Sanskrit is increasingly recognised as a bridge between ancient wisdom and modern challenges. Its structured grammar informs computational linguistics, while its texts offer insights into health, philosophy, and governance. Young scholars, driven by curiosity rather than obligation, are rediscovering its depth," says Prof. Varakhedi.

"Sanskrit, is not the language of the past, it is a technology of time, capable of carrying knowledge into the future," concludes Prof. Varakhedi.



# A SACRED ODYSSEY

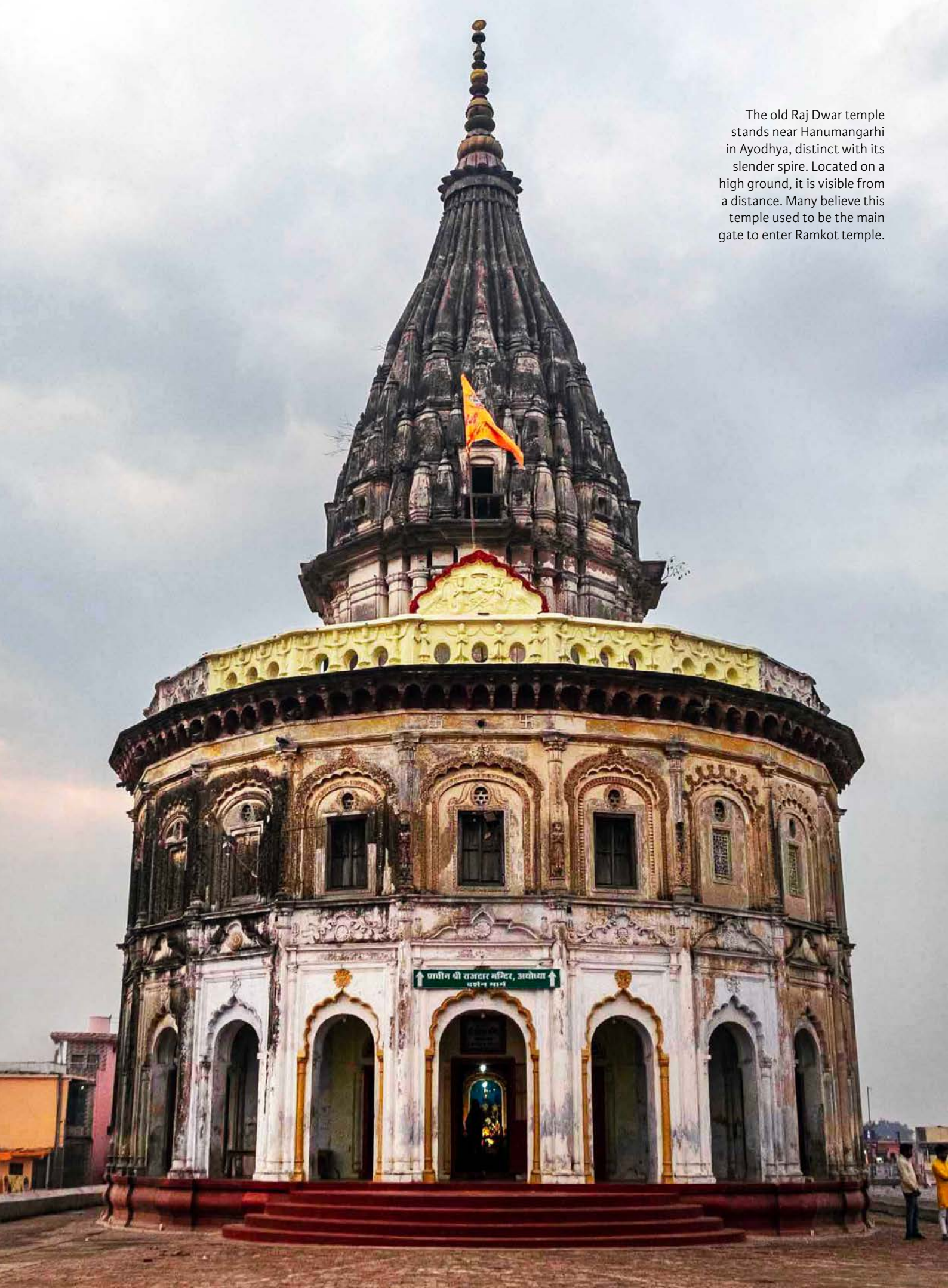
*A portrait of the living, layered and holy city of Ayodhya beyond the headlines, where history, devotion, culture and architecture interact in unexpected ways.*



Marking the birthplace of Lord Rama, the site of the Lord Rama Temple has held deep significance for devotees for decades.



The old Raj Dwar temple stands near Hanumangarhi in Ayodhya, distinct with its slender spire. Located on a high ground, it is visible from a distance. Many believe this temple used to be the main gate to enter Ramkot temple.





## IN THE FRAME

The holy city of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh stands as a spiritual beacon in the country. Located on the banks of the Saryu River and steeped in legend, history and the aura of divinity, this ancient city draws pilgrims and tourists alike, eager to witness its spiritual grandeur. Ayodhya holds a significant position as one of the most sacred cities in Hinduism and the revered birthplace of Lord Rama, a central deity in Hinduism.

This sacred association is chronicled in the ancient epic, the *Ramayana*.

Ayodhya's cultural heritage extends beyond its religious significance. The city is known for its vibrant festivals, including Ram Navami, Diwali, Janaki Navami, Guru Purnima and Hanuman Jayanti, which are celebrated with great fervour by devotees. These events showcase Ayodhya's rich cultural traditions, music, dance forms and culinary delights.



Raj Sadan, also known as the Royal Palace, was the residence of the erstwhile royal family of Ayodhya. The stately building with stunning architecture has been restored and attracts visitors and photographers alike.



Each corner of the city whispers tales of devotion,  
sacrifice and divine incarnations.

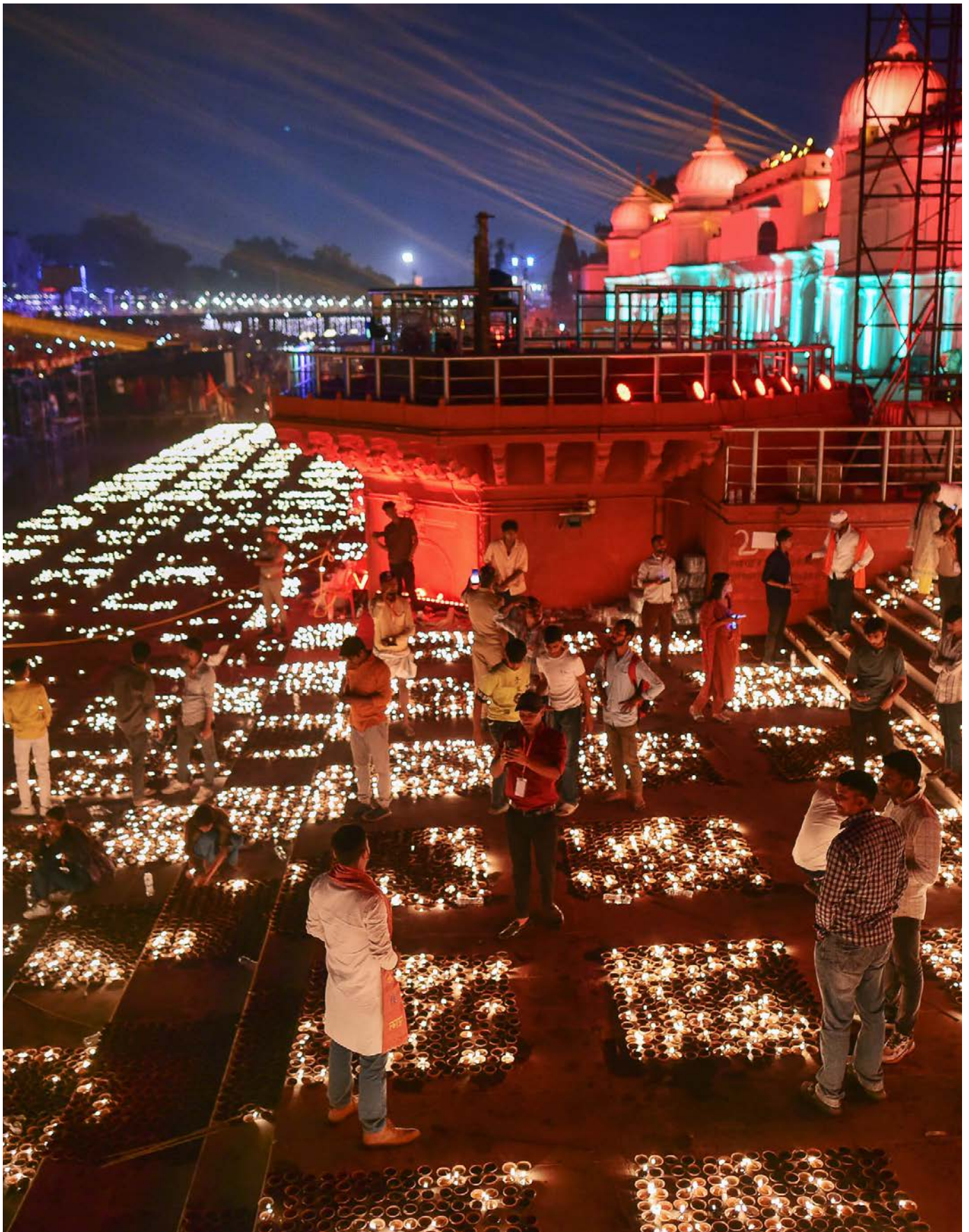


This particular temple in Ayodhya, earlier known as Saketa, features intricate floral and figurative carvings, which is typical of traditional temple architecture in the country.



## IN THE FRAME

During Diwali, Ayodhya transforms into a tapestry of light and devotion. Thousands gather along the Saryu River, placing diyas. The Ram Mandir glows with elaborate illumination, while chants, fireworks, and cultural performances fill the air. The grand Deepotsav celebration symbolises Lord Rama's homecoming.







(Top): Devotees offer their prayers inside Valmiki Bhawan by pressing their foreheads to the walls of the building, which are inscribed with all the 24,000 shlokas of the Valmiki Ramayana.

(Right): Visitors pray inside Shri Kanak Bhawan, also called "Sone ka Ghar". According to the legends Queen Kaikeyi, the stepmother of Lord Rama, gifted this golden palace to Goddess Sita after her wedding. The building's Bundela Style architecture and colourful murals are a wonderful mix of historical grandeur and faith.







**(Top):** A priest prays at the Hanuman Garhi temple. Perched atop a hill, this revered shrine in Ayodhya is dedicated to Lord Hanumana and is believed to be the guardian temple of the Ram Janmabhoomi.

**(Left):** Following the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in 2024 by the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, the city witnessed a surge of devotees from across the country. Here, a child applies *tilak* or a sacred mark made of sandalwood, vermillion to the forehead of one such pilgrim.



**The art and culture of Ayodhya reflect the influence of Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shakya, Saurism, Jain and Buddhist faiths.**



Home of *sadhus* or sages, Ayodhya is one of the most sacred religious destinations for Hindus. A lot of ascetics have been living here for a very long time. One such *sadhu* holds the door of his *ashram* (a spiritual hermitage) open.





**(Top):** In the southwestern part of the Ram Mandir complex, at Kuber Tila, stands a statue of Jatayu, the divine vulture in the *Ramayana*, symbolising valour and sacrifice. **(Bottom):** Several *gurukuls* (traditional residential schools) can be found in the city, imparting religious teachings from ancient Hindu texts. Importance is given to developing character, morality and empathy.







Beautiful metal doors of the Hanuman temple framed by colourful figures, patterns and drawings in Ayodhya.

In November, *Vivah Panchami* arrives not merely as a festival, but as a remembrance of the divine union Lord Rama and Goddess Sita. It is celebrated on the fifth day of the fortnight of the ninth lunar month in the Hindu calendar, *Margashirsha* (generally in November). Floral canopies adorn temples, priests chant Vedic hymns, and a symbolic *baraat* (wedding procession) winds through the streets in joyous procession. Through bhajans and reenactments from the *Ramayana*, devotees honour an eternal ideal of sacred partnership.







# The Relentless Spirit Of Indian Badminton

*Ace shuttler P.V. Sindhu has carved a niche of her own, shifting the national focus towards the grit and grace of the racquet.*

By Robin Bose



From her early training days to becoming the first Indian woman athlete to win two Olympic medals, P.V. Sindhu's recordbreaking journey is a template for India's rise on the global sports stage.

Sindhu is much more than an athlete; she is an unforgettable inspiration for millions whose aspirations seem attainable, thanks to her story of hard work and leadership.

### **Sporting Roots**

Born on July 5, 1995, in Hyderabad, Pusarla Venkata Sindhu grew up in a household of accomplished volleyball players. Her mother, P. Vijaya, was a standout player for the Indian Railways, while her father, P.V. Ramana, was a notable name in the Indian national team. Ramana had a decorated career, highlighted by a bronze medal at the 1986 Seoul Asian Games and the Arjuna Award in 2000.

But while volleyball was the family trade, Sindhu found her match in badminton. She was eight when she watched Chief National Coach of Indian badminton Pullela Gopichand win the 2001 All England Open, an achievement that changed her life forever.

Her training began at a local institute run by Indian Railways. Then she joined Gopichand's badminton academy in Hyderabad. The early years were defined by a level of grit that few youngsters possess, including a famous 56-km daily commute to reach her training sessions at 4 am.

### **Prodigious Podium Finishes**

Sindhu made an impact in no time. She was competing internationally in 2009 at the age of 14, achieving

a podium finish at the Sub-Junior Asian Badminton Championships.

By 2011, she had won titles in the Maldives and Indonesia, breaking into the world's top 100 before her 17th birthday.

But the feat that first drew global attention was her win against reigning Olympic gold medalist Li Xuerui at the 2012 China Masters. That one match pushed her into the top 20 in the world.

### **Road to Olympics**

Sindhu's Olympic success in 2016 wasn't a surprise; it was the result of years of

**Sindhu's story is a masterclass in the sheer discipline needed to perform at the world's highest level, consistently.**







### Accolades Won in Past Decade

In **2016**,

Sindhu won Silver Medal in Rio Olympics (Women's Singles)

Silver Medal in

**2017**

during World Championships (Glasgow)

In **2018**

she won a Silver Medal (Singles) and Gold Medal (Mixed Team) in Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast

The same year in Jakarta's Asian Games she came home with a Silver glory in hand

In **2019**

she won a Gold Medal from the World Championships (Basel)

**2020**

was the year of Tokyo Olympics (held in 2021) where Sindhu brought a Bronze Medal (Women's Singles)

In **2022**

Sindhu was honoured as Sportswoman of the Decade

In **2026**

she has commenced year's glory with World Record: Fastest Smash (380.1 kph) during Indonesia Masters tournament





**For Sindhu, Rio 2016 was the turning point! Her run to the Olympic silver medal felt like a wake-up call for Indian sports.**

hard work and steady battles against the best players in the world. Before the bright lights of Rio, she'd already made history as the first Indian woman with back-to-back World Championship medals in 2013 and 2014. She even pulled off a rare hat-trick of titles at the Macau Open during those early years.

Rio 2016 was the turning point. That run to the Olympic silver medal felt like a wake-up call for Indian sports. Her final match-up against Carolina Marin of Spain is still the benchmark for grit.

### **World Championship**

That momentum led her straight to the top in 2019, when she dominated the field in Basel to win the World Championship gold. It was a massive first for India, finally putting

a player from the country on the top step of the world podium. She backed that up at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics by grabbing a bronze medal, making her the first Indian woman to win two individual Olympic medals.

At the Indonesia Masters this January, she hit her 500th career singles win and reminded everyone of her power with a 380.1 kph smash, the fastest ever recorded in the women's game.

Away from the court, she's taken on a huge new role as the Chair of the BWF (Badminton World Federation) Athletes' Commission.

At 30, Sindhu is far from finished. Her career is a high-stakes grind, especially with her sights set on the next podium. It takes more than one lucky break to stay at the top for over a decade; it takes raw willpower.



**Robin Bose** is a senior sports journalist who has reported for some of India's leading news outlets. In his free time, he enjoys playing golf.



# Land Of The LION

*In western India, Gujarat unfolds as a vibrant tapestry of culture, cuisine and celebrations. From the majestic Asiatic lions roaming Gir National Park to its radiant festivals, the state pulses with life in every form.*

Text by Anil Mulchandani | Photos by Dinesh Shukla





Gujarat is a land of striking contrasts, with vibrant festivals, salt deserts, sacred temples, and a vast coastline. It is the last natural home of the majestic Asiatic lion. Also, Gujarat is a land of intricate handicrafts and a cuisine as bold and diverse as its landscapes.

## Architectural Masterpieces

From 1st to 8th century AD, Buddhism and Jainism thrived in Gujarat, together with Hinduism, under the patronage of the Western Kshatrapas, the Guptas and the Maitraka dynasties. The rock-cut Buddhist and Jain monastic caves in Kutch, Saurashtra and Eastern Gujarat, the Buddhist excavations at Vadnagar and Shamlaji, are important monuments of this period.

Continuing north from Vadnagar, you can see the intricately carved 12th-century Jain temple at Taranga, the Jain complex of Kumbhariya with temples built between 1062 and 1134

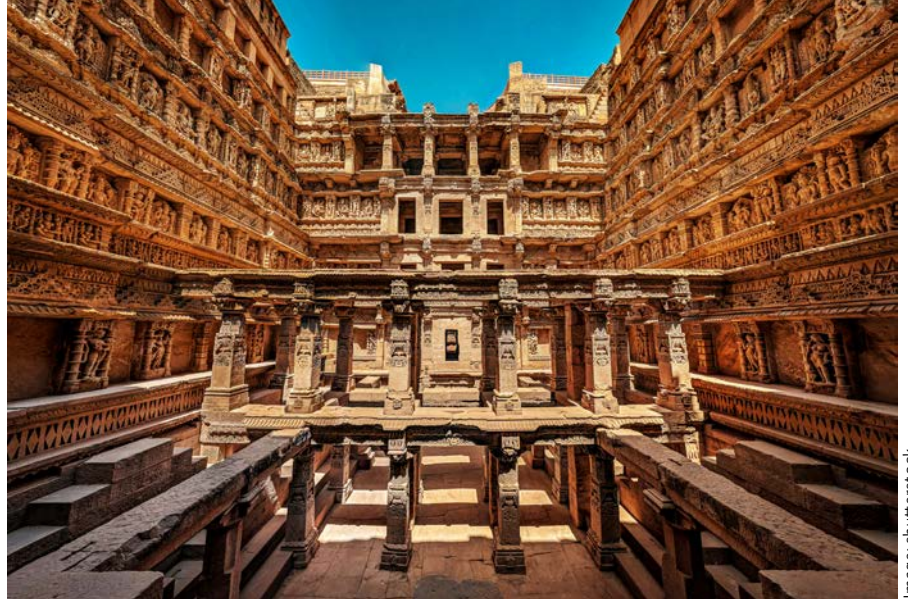


Image: shutterstock

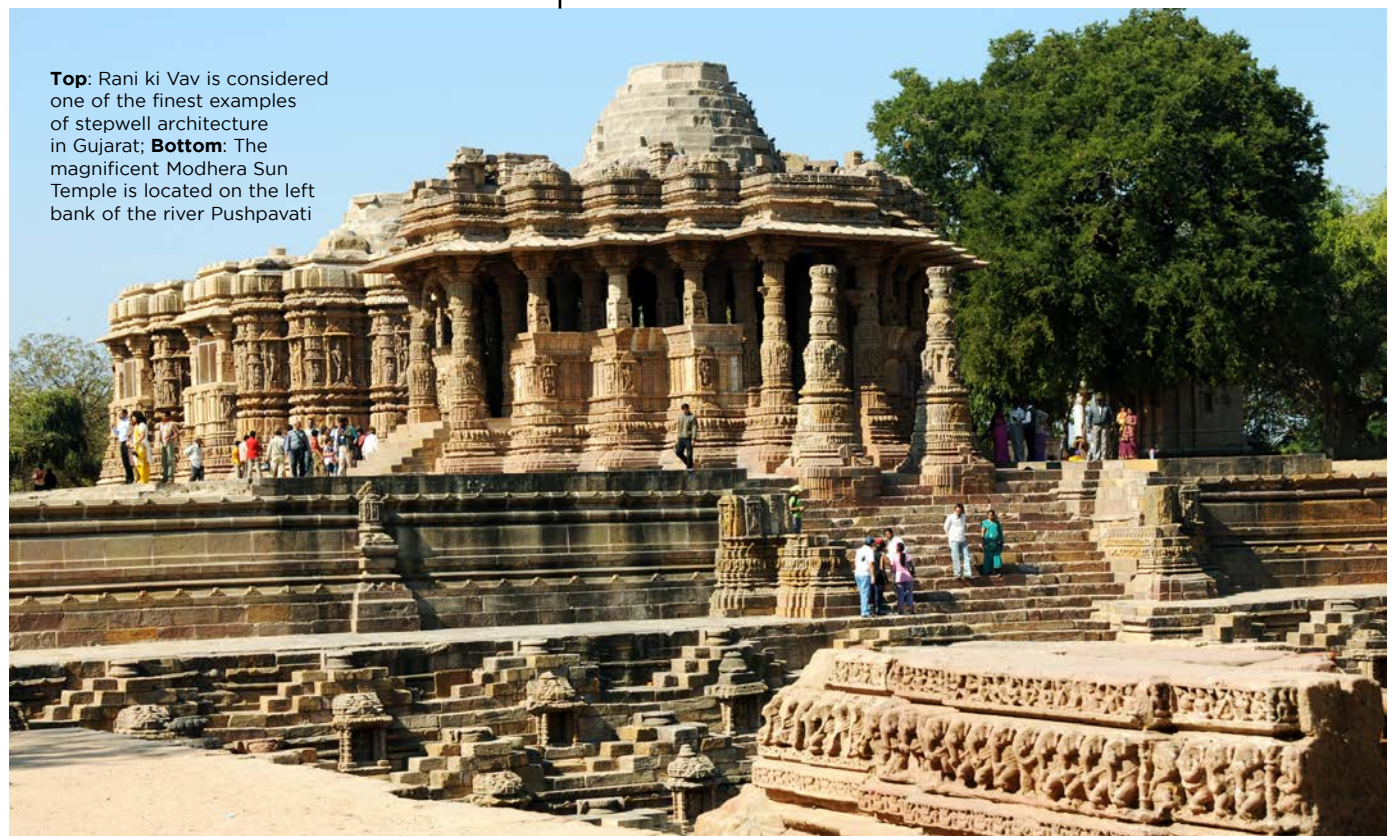
### RANN UTSAV

Every winter, the **Kutch** or **Rann Utsav**, a cultural extravaganza is hosted amid the awe-inspiring landscape in the state's Kutch region. An array of folk music and dance performances is held against the shimmering moonlit landscape. It began as a **three-day festival** and has evolved into a **100-day celebration** from end of November at Dhordo.

that feature fine marble carvings and the ornate Bohra mansions of Sidhpur. Another gem is the Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park, a UNESCO listed World Heritage Site that comprises forts, palaces, pavilions, mosques and temples.

## Sacred Summits

With its cultural diversity, Gujarat has several holy places of different religions and sects. Some of them enjoy spectacular locations in the hills or by the sea.



**Top:** Rani ki Vav is considered one of the finest examples of stepwell architecture in Gujarat; **Bottom:** The magnificent Modhera Sun Temple is located on the left bank of the river Pushpavati

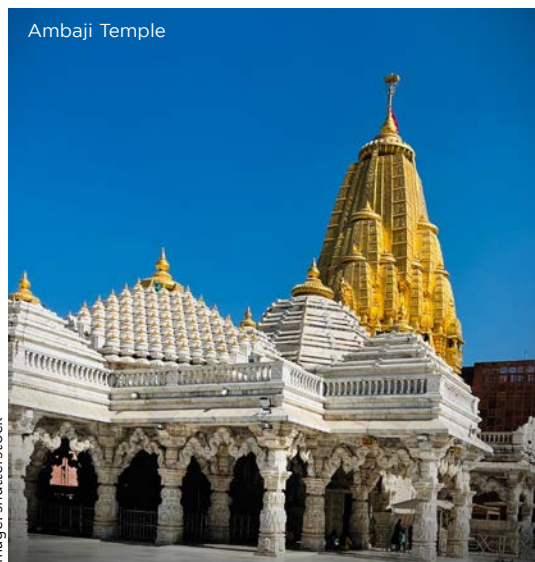


## SHOWCASE



A medieval style haveli, Jagdip Mehta's Heritage House is located in the walled city of Ahmedabad.

- Ambaji Temple is one of most important *Shakti Peethas* (sacred temple dedicated to Goddess Shakti) in India. The pilgrimage includes a visit to the summit of Gabbar Hill over the town.
- Somnath Temple by the sea is one of the holiest of the 12 *Jyotirlingas*



Ambaji Temple

Image: shutterstock

### HERITAGE BUILDS

From intricate stepwells (*vavs*) and ornate Jain temples to Indo-Islamic mosques, the state reflects layered cultural influences. Distinctive *polis* of Ahmedabad, the closely knit heritage neighbourhoods with carved wooden façades, internal courtyards and bird feeders, showcase community-centric urban planning and climate-responsive design.

(special shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva) in India. The shore temple has withstood destructions by waves of invaders and was restored in 1951. Somnath also has other holy sites like Bhalka Teerth, where Lord Krishna is believed to have ended his incarnation, and Triveni Sangam, which marks the confluence of rivers Hiran, Kapila and the Saraswati.

- The coastal town of Dwarka is revered as the kingdom of Lord Krishna. From here, you can also visit the richly carved 12th-century Rukmini Devi Temple and the holy island of Bet Dwarka with multiple temples and a much-visited gurdwara.

### Cultural Cornucopia

One of the most prominent festivals is Navratri (a Hindu festival dedicated to Goddess Durga), during which colourfully dressed people throng to dance for nine consecutive nights in



the entire state. Evenings are filled with dance and music. *Janmashtami* that celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna, is another festival that is marked across the entire state.

Multiple tribal fairs can be witnessed in the Chhota Udepur district of East Gujarat and the hills of North Gujarat.

### Cradle of Crafts

Gujarat is also famed for its handicrafts that are a living legacy built with age-old skills passed on from generations.

These handicrafts are part of the lifestyle of people of Gujarat, whether it is *Patola*, a silk weaving technique patronised by the Solanki Rajput rulers in Patan, or *Lipan*, the popular tradition of decorating mud houses with terracotta relief designs, murals

During the Hindu festival of Navratri, meaning 'nine nights', Gujarat erupts into a nine-night dance carnival to celebrate feminine divinity, referred to as Shakti.







and mirror inlay works in the rural areas of Kutch and Saurashtra.

*Ajrakh* is one of the intricate crafts of Kutch, where fabrics are printed through multiple processes. In Kutch and Saurashtra, *Bandhani* or tie and dye is widely practised. *Tangaliya* is a weave native to Gujarat's Surendranagar district.

### Palate Pleasers

"*Surat Nu Jaman Ane Kashi Nu Maran*" is a popular saying in Gujarati, which means dining in Surat and dying in Varanasi, lead

to heaven. For a taste of the excellent vegetarian Gujarati cuisine, savour a traditional *thali*, which is the ultimate wholesome delight. Intrinsic to this meal, *dal* (lentil curry), *shaak* (vegetable dish) and *kathol* (legumes) promise a bounty of flavours, aromas and a uniquely satisfying dining experience. The staple lentil soup in Gujarat is *tuver dal* and *chana dal* is widespread in the form of *besan* (gram flour) and popularly used in snacks and sweetmeats. Traditional Gujarati snacks, such as the fluffy *dhokla*,



**Soft, spongy Gujarati *dhokla* is a steamed, mildly tangy savoury cake, prized for its light texture and subtle sweetness.**





**Top:** Rann Utsav-The Tent City was created to showcase the soulful richness of Gujarat's remotest frontier, the Great Rann of Kutch  
**Bottom:** The *Chinkara* (*Gazella bennettii*) or the Indian gazelle, is a graceful antelope native to Gujarat's dry scrubs and grasslands.



the crispy flatbread *khakhra*, the savoury *khandvi* and the soft flatbread *thepla* are enjoyed by locals throughout the year.

### Trove of Natural Wonders

Gujarat has a remarkable geographical diversity encompassing a salt-covered desert, a 1,660-km-long coastline, forests, grasslands and wetlands.

Gir National Park is the last abode of the Asiatic lion. While the regal beasts

form the heart of the wildlife sanctuary, it is a vibrant ecosystem that supports over 40 species of mammals, including leopards, jackals, striped hyenas and Indian foxes.

The Rann of Kutch offers some of India's remarkably dramatic vistas. Stretching more than 7,500 sq km, it is one of the largest salt deserts left behind by geological factors that stopped the flow of the Arabian Sea waters that once covered the Rann and changed the course of rivers. Here, a thick crust of salt extends to the horizon, creating a glimmering white landscape.



**Anil Mulchandani** is a widely published author, freelance journalist and food critic. Based in Ahmedabad, he has written extensively about industries, tourism, culture, handicrafts and cuisines of Gujarat.



# A Civilisation Carved INTO SILENCE



*Ancient Dholavira invites you to listen to the past and the rhythm of human imagination.*

By **Anil Mulchandani**

Dholavira, located on Khadir Bet in the Great Rann of Kutch, stands among the oldest and largest Harappan settlements discovered within the Indian subcontinent. This is an excellent example of town planning of the period, specially the sanitary drainage systems and the water-harvesting structures. Occupied between 3,000 and 1,500

BCE, the archaeological site is one of the best preserved remnants of Harappan civilisation.

Dholavira's location was strategic to harness the different minerals and raw materials, such as copper, shell and agate-carnelian found in this area of Kutch. Copper, shell, stone, jewellery of semi-precious stones, terracotta, gold, ivory and other materials found



Dholavira was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India during **1990-2005**.



Images: Dinesh Shukla

during archaeological excavations of the site remain a testament to the ancient culture's artistic and technological achievements.

### A Planning Marvel

One of the site's most iconic discoveries is a large inscription with 10 Harappan symbols, believed to be a signboard at the city gate. In this arid region, the city thrived by building a sophisticated water management system that was way ahead of its time. As you walk from the southern side of the excavated site, you can see a series of reservoirs. Rain water was



**Dholavira in the island of Khadir is a diversion from the usual situation of Harappan cities.**

harvested and channelled through drains into these reservoirs.

### Stunning Architecture

The archaeological remains of the city of Dholavira include fortifications, gateways, water reservoirs, ceremonial grounds, residential units, workshop areas and cemetery complex, all clearly representing the sophistication of Harappan culture. While the reservoirs and drains skirt the ruins, a citadel rises in the heart of the walled city. Set in three tiers, with a castle at the highest tier, the layout of the structure points to what was once a stratified society. The remains feature smoothed, dressed stone masonry rather than just mud bricks. Massive stone-fortified walls are also part of the complex.

### Public Areas

End your tour by pausing to marvel at Dholavira's stadium, among the earliest known public gathering venues with tiered spectator seating. Dholavira also offers stunning panoramic views of the white salt desert, especially at sunrise and sunset.





# FESTIVAL Of Fairies

*In the upper reaches of the Himalayas, a symbolic marriage ritual honours celestial spirits.*

By Joanna Lobo



In Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, *Raulane* is a ritualistic dance performance that marks the end of a centuries-old spring festival, called *Suskar*. At the heart of the celebrations are legends of fairies (locally called *sauni*) who are said to reside in the meadows across the Himalayas. They are guardians or ancestral spirits, looked upon as deities of the meadows. In Kothi and Kalpa villages, these fairies are celebrated during a special five-day festival with *Raulane*. It is held in spring, between March and April.

## **A Thank You and a Farewell**

It is believed that in the cold winter

months, the *saunis* watch over families, homes and livestock of the villages. When the season shifts, and winter turns into spring, the villagers gather to thank and honour these unseen guardians, and bid them farewell as they go back to their alpine homes.

## **An Ancient Tradition**

*Raulane* features a symbolic marriage in which two men are chosen to play the central roles, *raula* (groom) and *raulane* (bride). This ritualistic marriage is meant to represent the significant union of human devotion and divine protection.



## Ladakh's Hemis Festival

showcases Tibetan Buddhist culture in June, attracting devotees across globe.







### Divine Dressing

Two young men are chosen to be part of this ritual. They are dressed in the *doru* (shawl) and *choli* (coat), *pattu* (shawl worn around the waist) made of thick Kinnauri wool held together with *gacchi* (a belt-like piece). Women of the village adorn the *Raulane* with their ancestral heavy silver jewellery. On their heads, they wear a hat bedecked with flowers from the meadows. The *raula* carries a dagger, called *rakas*, to ward off evil spirits. His face is covered with a red cloth and he also wears gloves.

There are no written records of the ***Raulane* festival or its origins**. It is part of a strong oral tradition that has been passed down the generations.

### Rooted in Mystical Rituals

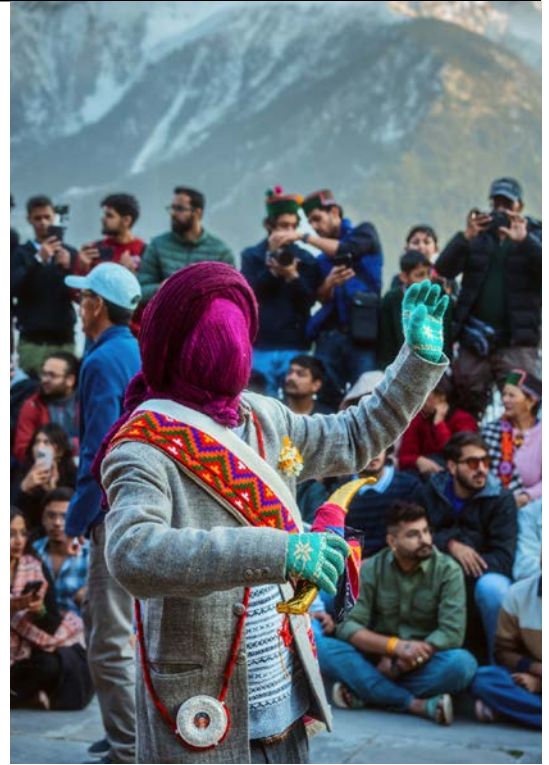
Each settlement chooses one *raula* and *raulane* as a representative. These couples walk through the streets of the villages as part of a procession till they eventually reach the Narayan Nagini Temple in the village of Kalpa. The wood and stone temple, with its spectacular view of the Kinnaur Kailash mountain range, honours two deities, Lord Narayana and Goddess Nagini.

The couples offer prayers and perform a slow, ritualistic dance





**Hampi Utsav** is a colourful annual celebration held in the ancient city of Hampi, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in Karnataka.



holding hands, moving in rhythmic circles and performing deliberate movements. Alongside, there are masked figures called *zannpundlu* or *pundlu*, who are believed to ward off evil spirits during the performance. Sometimes, they throw barley flour or *sattu* at the onlookers and also 'feed' the fairies by offering food.

After the dances, the couples receive blessings, and the community prays together to the *saunis*, seeking protection and thanking them.

There are no written records of the festival or its origins; these are oral traditions passed down the generations. An essential part of their culture, the festival is an homage to nature and its many miracles.



**Joanna Lobo** is a freelance journalist and editor with around two decades of experience. Her work has appeared in leading publications, such as *Conde Nast Traveller India*, *National Geographic Traveller* and *Lonely Planet*.



# Songs Of the SEASON

*April is one of India's most enchanting months as the country bursts into spring's colours. Marked by regional New Year celebrations, it's a time of harvest festivals.*



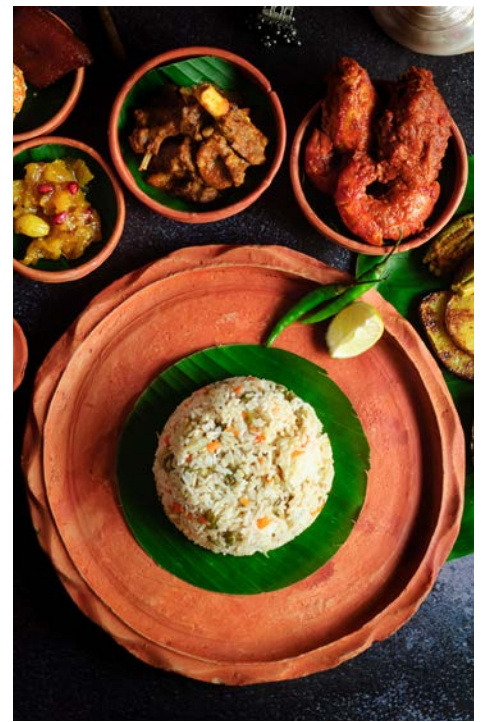
## Baisakhi

Baisakhi, the harvest festival of Punjab, also marks the establishment of the Sikh community. In 1699, on this day, Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th guru of the Sikhs, laid down the foundation of the Panth Khalsa. Devotees mill to gurdwaras in the morning. The Guru Granth Sahib is given a symbolic bath with milk and water, and at noon, *Karah Prasad* or sweetened semolina is distributed to devotees.





**Poi Sangken** is a three-day, water-splashing New Year festival celebrated in mid-April by Theravada Buddhist communities.



## Aoling

The Konyaks of Nagaland celebrate Aoling in the first week of April after completing their sowing in the fields. The five-day festival is celebrated with dances, singing, traditional jewellery and costumes, and community feasting.

## Rongali Bihu

New Year in Assam kicks off with Bohag Bihu, also known as Rongali Bihu. This festival is celebrated in seven phases. Stage shows are held, and people gather to watch Bihu performances. Villagers also collect *exho ebidh haak* (101 types of vegetables) and *amlori tup* (larvae of the weaver ant), bind betel leaf plants and cover bamboo plant roots with soil as part of symbolic harvest rituals.

## Gudi Padva

Gudi Padva is the Maharashtrian New Year. It is said to commemorate

### RITUALS OF HOPE

The night before Vishu, the Malayali New Year, women keep fruits, vegetables, money, gold jewellery, clothes, coconut and coins in front of a bell metal mirror. The reflection is said to herald a doubling of the bounty in the new year. This auspicious arrangement is called *vishukani*.



the arrival of Lord Rama in Ayodhya. To welcome him, bamboo sticks are covered in bright yellow or green brocade, sugar crystals, neem leaves, mango leaves and red flowers (known as *gudi*), and kept on the right side of the main door. Traditional sweets such as *puran poli* and *shrikhand* are prepared.

## Poila Boisakh

Poila Boisakh, which marks the beginning of the Bengali calendar year, is all about crisp new clothes and a festive meal concluding with an assortment of traditional sweets. Shopkeepers and businessmen worship the *haalkhata*, or the accounts book. Special dishes such as *daab chingri* (prawn served in a green coconut shell) and mutton *kosha* are prepared. Cultural programmes are organised across the state. Additionally, *probhat pheris* or morning musical processions take over the streets.





### Jaipur Teej Festival

Teej, celebrated all across Rajasthan, is one of the state's most vibrant and culturally significant festivals, marking the arrival of monsoon. In Jaipur, the festival attracts visitors from around the world who come to witness the cultural richness and timeless traditions of Rajasthan.

**Date:** August 14-15, 2026

**Venue:** Tripolia Gate, City Palace, Jaipur



### India Bio Energy Tech Expo 2026

Organised by the Indian Federation of Green Energy, the 3rd edition of this event is centred on the theme, 'Advancing Bioenergy Solutions for a Low Carbon World'. The expo will bring together industry leaders, policymakers and researchers to accelerate the growth of the bioenergy sector.

**Date:** August 11-13, 2026

**Venue:** India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh

### Lokrang- World Folklore Festival

Organised by the Department of Art & Culture, this is a vibrant celebration of global folk traditions, bringing together artists and performers to showcase the rich cultural heritage of diverse communities.

**Date:** August 22, 2026

**Venue:** Tagore Govt. College of Education Auditorium, Middle Point, Andaman and Nicobar Islands



### Film Expo India 2026

The event designed to connect filmmakers, investors and technology leaders will feature tech demonstrations, screenings and masterclasses. With its focus on local filmmaking through the 'Shoot in India' initiative, the expo aims to boost India's presence on the global stage.

**Date:** August 26-30, 2026

**Venue:** Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi





## **Bharatiya Vyapar Mahotsav 2026**

A major government-supported exhibition showcasing India's handicraft ecosystem. This event also highlights tourism and culture besides providing a platform for local artisans and enterprises.

**Date:** August 12-15, 2026

**Venue:** Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi





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