

INDIA

Volume 38 | Issue 01 | 2026

PERSPECTIVES



Shores of The Luit

Discovering
Assam's soul

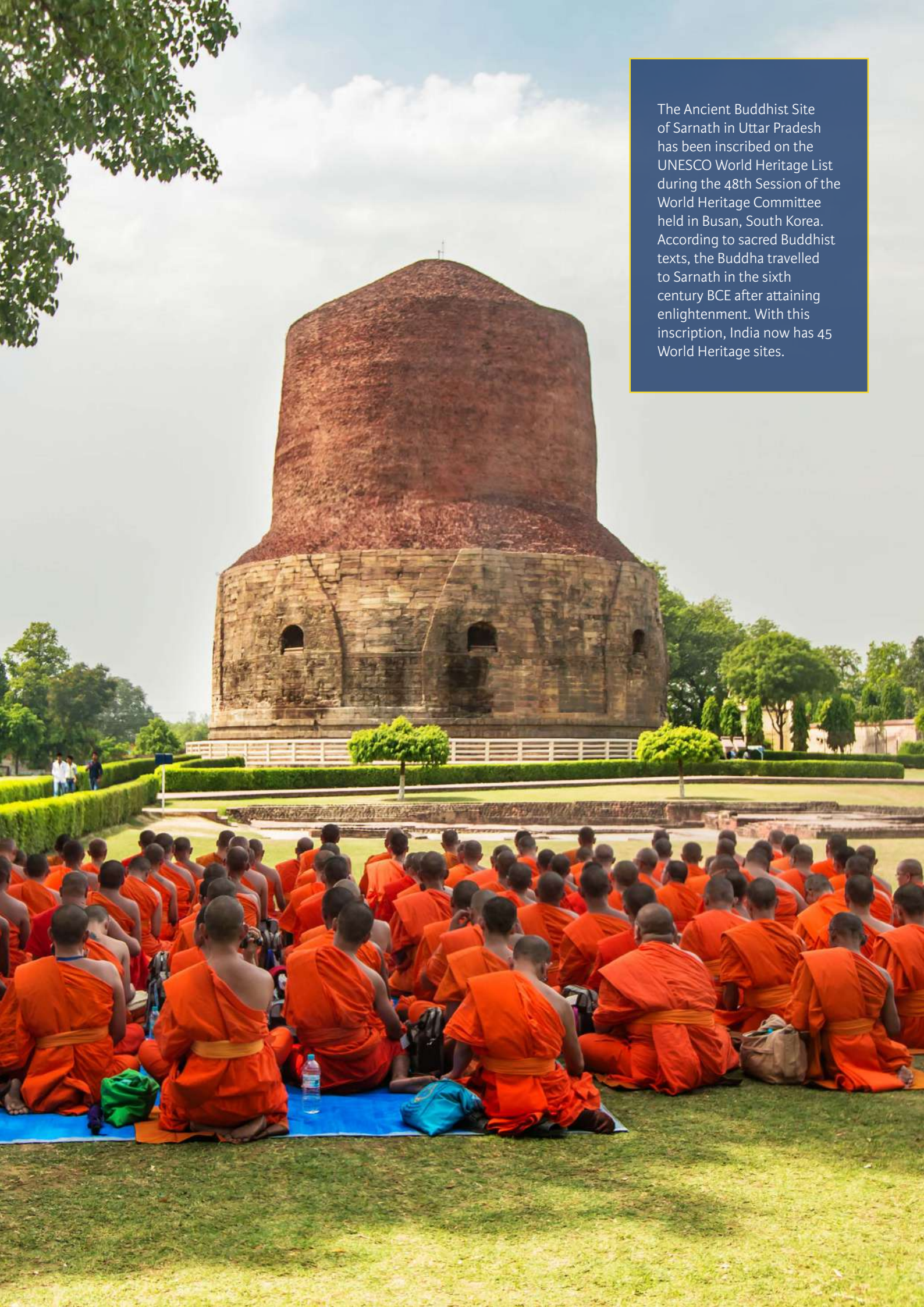
Cinematic Canvas

Behind cinema's
visual magic

A Star is Born

How Vaibhav
Sooryavanshi is
rewriting cricket's
age limits

The Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List during the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee held in Busan, South Korea. According to sacred Buddhist texts, the Buddha travelled to Sarnath in the sixth century BCE after attaining enlightenment. With this inscription, India now has 45 World Heritage sites.



FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

India has always been a canvas where tradition meets imagination, and where art finds expression in forms as diverse as movement, architecture, fashion, cinema and contemporary creativity. This issue of *India Perspectives* celebrates that extraordinary continuum, exploring how art and design continue to shape the way India sees itself, and how the world sees India.

As we marked the 12th International Day of Yoga in June 2026, we look at yoga not merely as a practice of physical wellbeing, but as an art of movement, balance and mindful design of the self. Its timeless philosophy reminds us that beauty often lies in harmony.

Cinema, too, has emerged as a fascinating space for artistic innovation. Through the work of prosthetic artists, the craft of transformation has acquired a new dimension, enabling filmmakers to create characters, worlds and visual experiences that challenge perception and expand the possibilities of storytelling.

India's contemporary art landscape finds a remarkable platform at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, where artists, ideas and audiences converge. Its growing significance reflects India's evolving cultural ecosystem and the need for spaces that nurture, preserve and celebrate artistic voices.

Further, the distinctive design language demonstrates how Indian creativity can be bold, contemporary and globally resonant. By blending heritage with irreverence, colour and modern silhouettes, designers all over the country have helped redefine the vocabulary of Indian fashion.

And then there are Rajasthan's murals, where walls become storytellers. Beyond their breathtaking architectural beauty, every curve, motif and brushstroke carries fragments of history, folklore and memory.

Together, these stories remind us that Indian art is not static. It evolves, experiments and endures, always finding new ways to tell India's story.



Randhir Jaiswal

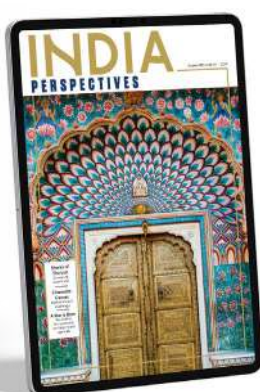
Official Spokesperson and
Additional Secretary
External Publicity & Public
Diplomacy (XPD) Division,
Ministry of External Affairs,
Government of India.

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Previous Cover

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



Cover Description

The Lotus Gate at Jaipur's City Palace exemplifies India's rich artistry through intricate motifs, vibrant colours and architectural craftsmanship.



Back Cover

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's July 2026 visit to Indonesia reaffirmed a friendship rooted in shared heritage and carried forward through new avenues of cooperation.

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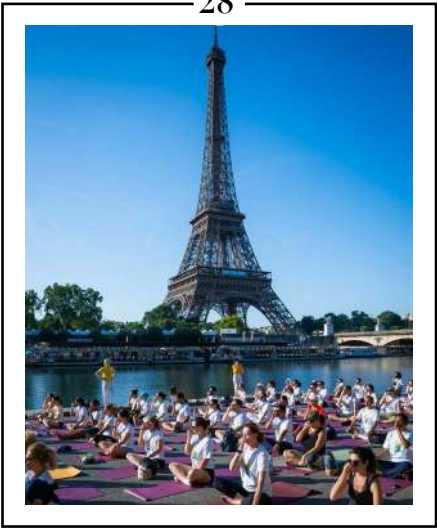
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INDIA PERSPECTIVES

Volume 38 | Issue 01 | 2026

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India Perspectives is published in Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Pashto, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Sanskrit, Sinhala, Spanish and Tamil.

The digital India Perspectives is published by External Publicity & Public Diplomacy (XPD) Division, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India.

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Kinship Across THE STRAIT



Separated by a narrow stretch of the Indian Ocean, India and Sri Lanka are bound by an enduring tapestry of culture, faith and shared heritage.

By Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha

5 historic Lord Shiva temples in **Sri Lanka** date back about **2,000 years**, representing some of the oldest manifestations of the lord's worship in the region.

India's Neighbourhood First policy and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision are best exemplified by its role as a first responder for Sri Lanka. New Delhi has consistently provided critical aid during natural disasters, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and Cyclone Ditwah last year. Beyond environmental crises, India offered a vital lifeline during the 2022–2023 Sri Lankan economic crisis and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This support has extended to mitigating the regional fallout from the 2023–2026 West Asian conflict too.

The Historical Dimension

Our policy towards the Emerald Isle to our south has naturally been shaped by civilisational links. While facts are immutable, interpretations invariably differ. The Tamil connection is deep and ancient. The *Pancha Ishwarams*, five historic Shiva temples, spread across Sri Lanka's north, east, west and south represent

some of the oldest manifestations of Lord Shiva's worship in the region. Even today, Hindus can offer prayers at the Keerimalai Naguleswaram Temple near Jaffna, the Thiruketheeswaram Temple in Mannar, which was restored with support from India, and the Thirukoneswaram Temple in Trincomalee. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also visited the ancient Keerimalai Naguleswaram Temple in March 2015. These temples stand as enduring testimony to the long presence of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Simultaneously, the Sinhalese trace their origins to Jambudwipa, their term for ancient India, particularly from regions associated with present-day Odisha (Kalinga), Bihar (Magadha), and Bengal (Vanga). The spread of Buddhism to Sri Lanka has also been documented by scholars, largely based on the ancient Sinhala Buddhist texts, *Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa*. Linguistic influences, art forms and traditions strengthened this connection. During the medieval period, maritime trade routes facilitated exchange.

Political Imperatives

The political engagement between the two countries was significantly enhanced when Prime Minister Modi



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Sri Lanka in April 2025

India-Sri Lanka relations are civilisational and resilient, strengthened by cooperation, and guided by a shared future.



Tourism is a major source of revenue for Sri Lanka and Indians constitute the largest number of tourist arrivals in the country.



Prime Minister Modi (**extreme left**) was conferred with the 'Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana' award by President of Sri Lanka, Anura Kumara Dissanayake (**extreme right**)

paid a landmark visit to Sri Lanka in March 2015, the first standalone bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the island country since 1987. PM Modi has since visited Sri Lanka four times, most recently in April 2025, a trip that deepened cooperation in connectivity, energy, digital infrastructure and maritime security and saw the signing of several agreements, including a trilateral India–Sri Lanka–UAE one to develop Trincomalee as an energy hub.

The visit came close on the heels of Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's visit to India in December 2024, reflecting a shared desire of both governments to qualitatively enhance the already robust ties that bind the two countries. This was also his first visit abroad since assuming power. The visit of Indian Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan to Sri Lanka in April 2026 deepened parliamentary, cultural and economic cooperation.

Economic Integration

Greater economic integration is the pathway to shared prosperity. India is among Sri Lanka's leading trading partners with robust economic ties and cross-cutting investments.





(Above) PM Modi being graciously welcomed by dancers in traditional costumes in Colombo; **(Right)** The Indian Prime Minister at the Jaya Shri Maha Bodhi Temple in Anuradhapura

Bilateral trade stood at ₹47,000 crore (US\$ 5.58 billion approx) in 2023-24. In 2025-26 for the period April-January, bilateral trade has reached ₹53,000 crore (US\$ 5.54 billion approx), with India's exports to Sri Lanka at ₹4,07,42.55 crore (US\$ 4.26 billion approx). India has also resumed negotiations with Sri Lanka for finalisation of the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) covering both goods and services. The India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement concluded in 1998 was among the earliest signed by India. Both the countries are seeking to upgrade to a comprehensive economic partnership agreement.

Spiritual Ties

Tourism is a major source of revenue for Sri Lanka and Indians constitute the largest number of tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka. Out of the 2.3 million tourist arrivals in 2025, over 531,000 were Indians. Tourism flows remain strong, with pilgrims and travellers visiting cultural and religious sites. Academic exchanges and youth programmes foster understanding. Shared traditions, festivals and cuisine strengthen these people-to-people bonds. Both the governments are seeking to actively promote and facilitate Sri Lankans in re-discovering the Buddhist circuit in



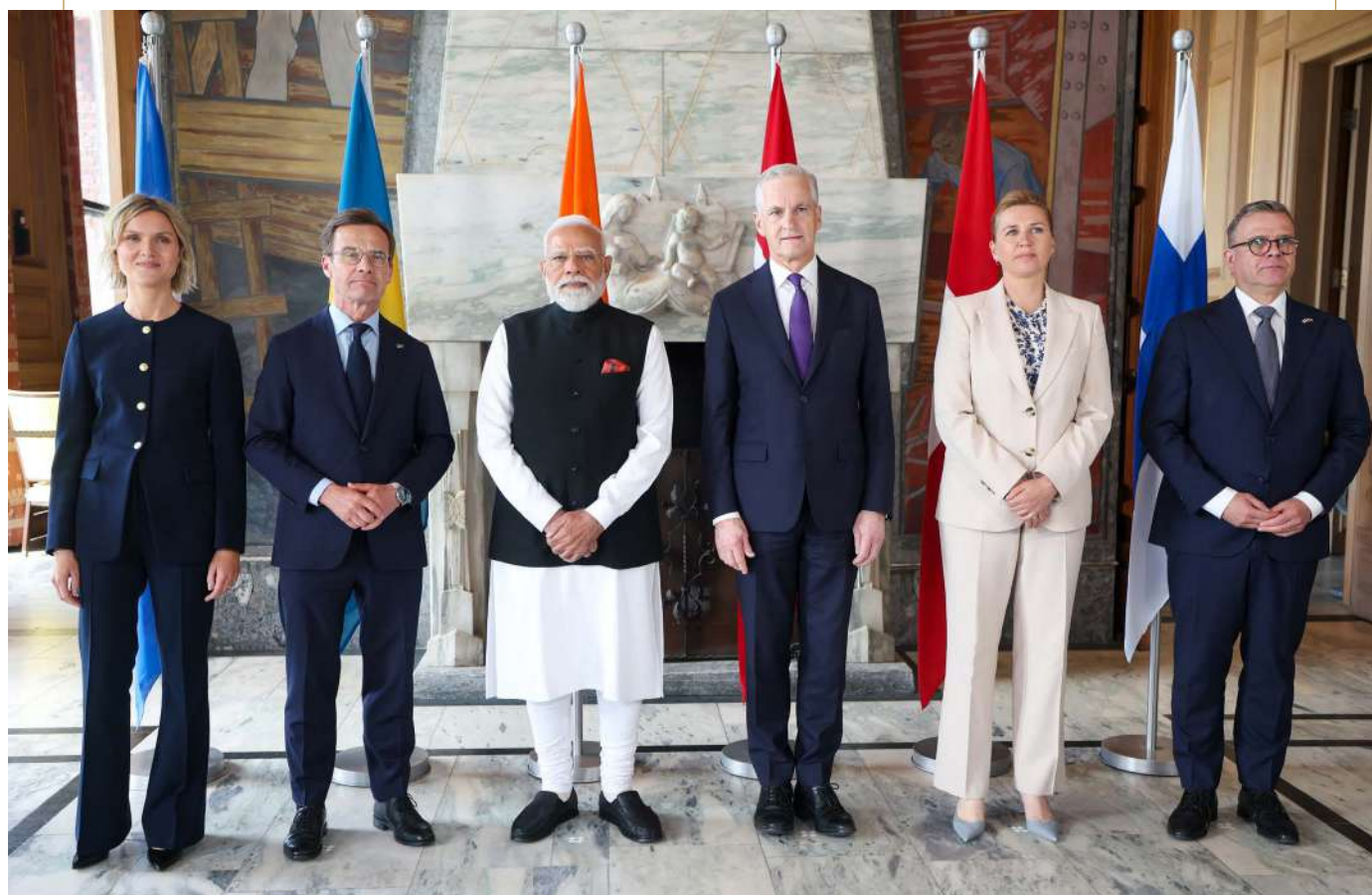
India and Indians, the Ramayana trail in Sri Lanka. The Tirumala Balaji temple at Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, attracts a large number of Sri Lankan worshippers. Many Sri Lankans believe that Lord Vishnu is the protector of Sri Lanka and come to seek the Lord's blessings. Many Indians visit famous Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka like the sacred Maha Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura, which owes its existence to the sapling planted by Sanghamitra, Emperor Ashoka's daughter, over 2,200 years ago.

Future cooperation includes cultural corridors, tourism circuits, digital exchanges, green energy, blue economy and connectivity projects, that not only include land, air and maritime connectivity but also power grid and digital connectivity.



Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha is a retired Indian Foreign Service officer, who served as India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka. He also held the position of High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

India's New NORTHERN



STRATEGY

*From green technology to Arctic cooperation,
India's Nordic ties are entering a new phase.*

By Harsh Vardhan Shringla

More than **1.4 billion people** in India are being connected through one of the world's largest digital ecosystems.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oslo in May 2026 for the 3rd India-Nordic Summit marked the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Norway in 43 years. The summit brought together the leaders of Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden, and yielded a series of significant outcomes.

Norway

The visit resulted in a Green Strategic Partnership, Norway's entry into the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, agreements in space, health and digital development and a sharper focus on green shipping, ports, ocean energy, carbon capture, circular economy and polar research. India and Norway also agreed to work together in third countries on Digital Public Infrastructure for the Sustainable Development Goals. Add to that the fact that Norway's Government Pension Fund Global had invested close to US\$ 28 billion in India in 2025.

INDIA'S ARCTIC FOOTPRINT —

Since 2008, India has run the Himadri Station in Svalbard, Norway, studying climate change, atmospheric science and global environmental impacts. India has held observer status at the Arctic Council since 2013. Indian researchers have linked changes in the Arctic to monsoon behaviour and wider climate consequences for India. Nordic leaders in Oslo explicitly welcomed India's continued engagement in Arctic Council working groups and supported deeper cooperation on polar research, climate and environmental issues.

Finland

Prime Minister Modi held key bilateral meetings with Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo to expand diplomatic and economic ties between the nations. India and Finland agreed to deepen cooperation in digital innovation, telecommunications and sustainable development, while strengthening partnerships between industry, academia and research institutions, making the Nordic country India's go-to partner on frontier digitalisation.

The March 2026 partnership with Helsinki prioritised focus on developing 5G, 6G, AI, high-performance computing, quantum technologies, semiconductors, sustainability and also the start-up ecosystem. The two countries agreed to create a Working Group on Digitalisation, a Task Force on 6G with the University of Oulu and the Bharat 6G Alliance, and to co-host the World Circular Economy Forum in India in 2026.

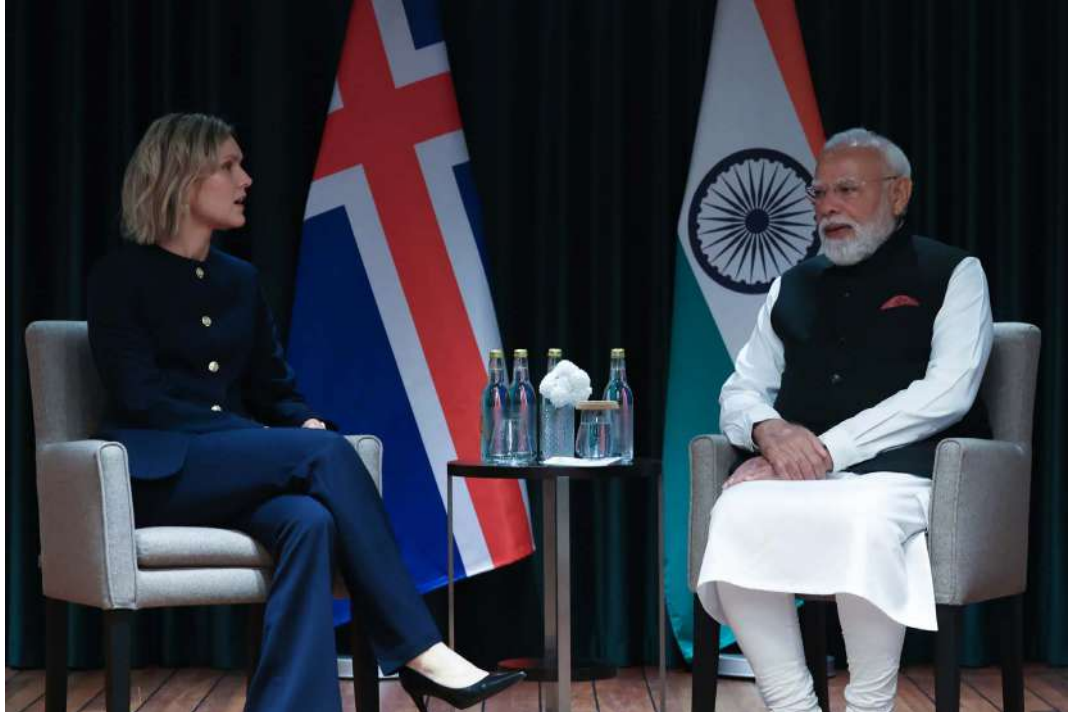


PM Modi's visit to Oslo for the 3rd India-Nordic Summit marked the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Norway in 43 years.

PARTNERSHIP

(Right) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Iceland's Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir

(Bottom) The Indian diaspora welcomes the Prime Minister



Iceland

Prime Minister Modi's Oslo meeting with Iceland's Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir focused on geothermal energy, fisheries, innovative technologies, culture and Arctic research, while the India-Iceland brief continues to identify renewable energy, biotech, fisheries and Arctic issues as core areas of cooperation.

Sweden

Sweden has emerged as India's most rounded Nordic technology partner. The new India-Sweden Strategic Partnership commits both sides to a shared goal of doubling bilateral economic exchange within five years and sets out cooperation

The real value of the Nordic relationship is that it gives India additional channels into European markets.

in AI, 6G, quantum computing, critical minerals, sustainable mining, space and defence innovation. It also launches a Sweden-India Technology and Artificial Intelligence Corridor, upgrades the Joint Innovation Partnership and creates a new joint science and technology centre. For India, Sweden is useful not only because it brings ideas, but because it brings industrial depth in telecom, advanced manufacturing, clean industry and defence production. India-Sweden trade in goods rose to US\$ 7.75 billion in 2025, and Swedish companies have already established a significant production presence in India, including Saab's Carl-Gustaf facility in Haryana.

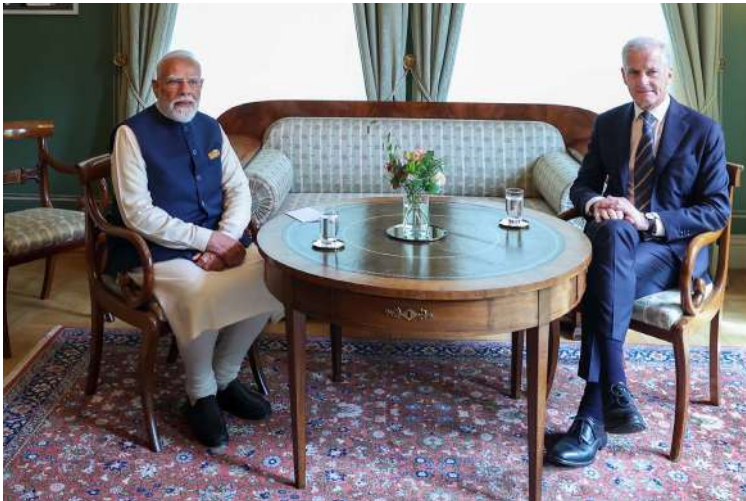
Denmark

Denmark remains India's most mature green partner in the region. Since the launch of the Green Strategic Partnership in 2020, the relationship has steadily moved from symbolism to implementable projects. Prime Minister Modi and PM Mette Frederiksen reviewed that progress with an emphasis on climate, new technologies, AI, defence, start-ups and academic exchanges. The two sides also highlighted the Smart Laboratory on Clean Rivers in Varanasi as a practical model of technology-led environmental

Several 11th-century Chola copper plates were repatriated to India from the Netherlands during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with dignitaries, CEOs and senior officials in Oslo



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre during his visit to Oslo, Norway

cooperation. On the Danish side, the newly created Green Transition Alliance India, formed in 2025, builds on earlier initiatives like the Wind Alliance India and the Green Fuels Alliance India to position Danish firms in India's energy transition.

Beyond Trade and Tech

Beyond economics and technology, the India-Nordic partnership has acquired a stronger strategic edge. The Oslo Summit advanced cooperation in maritime security, cyber resilience, defence manufacturing, supply-chain resilience and the blue economy,

areas that have gained importance in the post-Ukraine geopolitical landscape. The real value of the Nordic relationship is that it strengthens India's global outreach by giving India additional channels into European markets, Arctic governance, clean technology coalitions and standards-setting conversations. They have also backed India's claim for permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council, supported its NSG application, and shown a growing willingness to work with India on third-country development and multilateral problem-solving.

Taken together, this suggests that the Nordic region is becoming one of the quiet force multipliers of Indian foreign policy: low on drama, high on strategic value.



Harsh Vardhan Shringla is a Member of Parliament (RS), a former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to the USA.

Helping Shape Global GOVERNANCE



The recent G7 Summit highlighted the need for broader global partnerships, with India's participation reflecting the nation's growing role in global governance.

By Ajai Malhotra

The 52nd G7 Summit convened at Évian-les-Bains, France, between June 15 and June 17, 2026, under the theme of forging new partnerships and rebuilding international solidarity. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in it, alongside other invited leaders, underscored the reality that today's major global challenges cannot be addressed by the G7 alone.

Instead of a traditional leaders' communiqué, the Évian Summit adopted nine focused declarations on critical minerals, Artificial Intelligence (AI), maritime security, migration and geopolitical crises. Rather than forcing consensus across every issue, the G7 advanced cooperation where agreement was possible, reflecting a broader shift from comprehensive consensus towards issue-specific coalitions. This may prove to be Évian's most enduring legacy.

Consensus to Coalitions

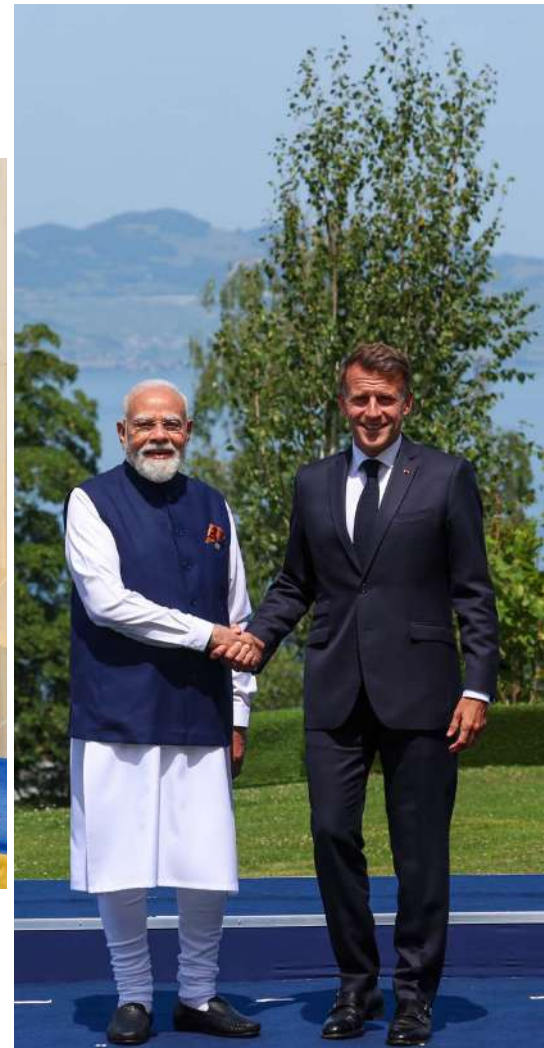
With the rise of emerging economies, the 2008 financial crisis, and the emergence of the G20, economic influence was redistributed. The G20 brings developed and developing economies together and remains the premier forum for international economic cooperation.

Yet Évian demonstrated that the G7 continues to matter in a different way. Rather than managing the global economy, it shapes standards, partnerships and strategic initiatives where economics, technology and national security intersect. Many of tomorrow's rules governing global commerce will emerge through such coalitions before diffusing more



(Above) Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with the President of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian, France.

(Right) The Prime Minister with French President Emmanuel Macron at the summit



Instead of a traditional leaders' communiqué, the Évian Summit adopted nine focused declarations, including on critical minerals and Artificial Intelligence.

widely. Two broad trends emerged from Évian. Economic security has become the organising principle linking technology, trade and industrial policy. Rule-making is increasingly taking place through flexible coalitions rather than universal consensus. Economic security connected discussions on AI, critical minerals, industrial policy and investment. Markets are increasingly viewed not simply as mechanisms of efficiency but as instruments of strategic resilience. Technology and industrial policy and national security are now parts of the same conversation.

PARTNERSHIP



(Above) Prime Minister Modi at the Outreach Session at the G7 Summit
(Below) The PM and US President Donald Trump at the summit

India's Priorities at Évier

For India, this evolution is familiar. Over the past few years it has pursued semiconductor manufacturing, diversified supply chains, strengthened trusted digital infrastructure and expanded overseas partnerships for critical minerals. These priorities increasingly overlap with those of the G7. One tangible

outcome was the launch of a G7 critical minerals platform to diversify supply chains for semiconductors, clean energy and defence industries. It aligns with India's strategy of securing lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earths while expanding domestic processing capacity.

Prime Minister Modi's three interventions at Évier highlighted India's diplomatic priorities: trusted technology, inclusive development, resilient supply chains, climate justice and rebuilding international trust. Rather than merely endorsing existing agendas, India broadened the discussion by bringing concerns shared across much of the Global South. As PM Modi observed, many global crises stem from a shortage of trust rather than resources. Mutual trust, he argued, is the world's most valuable strategic asset.

AI featured prominently in the summit's discussions as a technological and economic issue affecting productivity, competitiveness and energy use. India's Digital Public Infrastructure demonstrates how digital

50% of India's electricity capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources (2025 target achieved **ahead** of **schedule**)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receiving a warm welcome from the Indian diaspora in Paris, France

India has consistently argued climate finance is not charity but part of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

technologies can serve over a billion citizens as a public good rather than proprietary platforms.

The summit reaffirmed support for climate action, yet financing remains a constraint for many developing economies. The commitment made at the 29th UN Climate Change Conference held in 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan, to mobilise at least US\$300 billion annually by 2035 remains well below estimated requirements, while much of the financing arrives as loans, not grants. India has argued that climate finance is not charity but part of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

The G7 summit's emphasis on economic security and resilient supply chains provides context for India's continuing concerns over the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism as well.

Presented as climate policy, European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism also reshapes trade and industrial competitiveness, imposing an inequitable and disproportionate burden on developing-country producers. Developing-country industries, including India's, are more carbon-intensive partly because the finance and technologies promised have not materialised at scale.

The Outcomes

Perhaps the most important lesson from Évian is that international rule-making is becoming less dependent on consensus and more on flexible coalitions. The G7, BRICS, the G20 and other institutions increasingly complement one another.

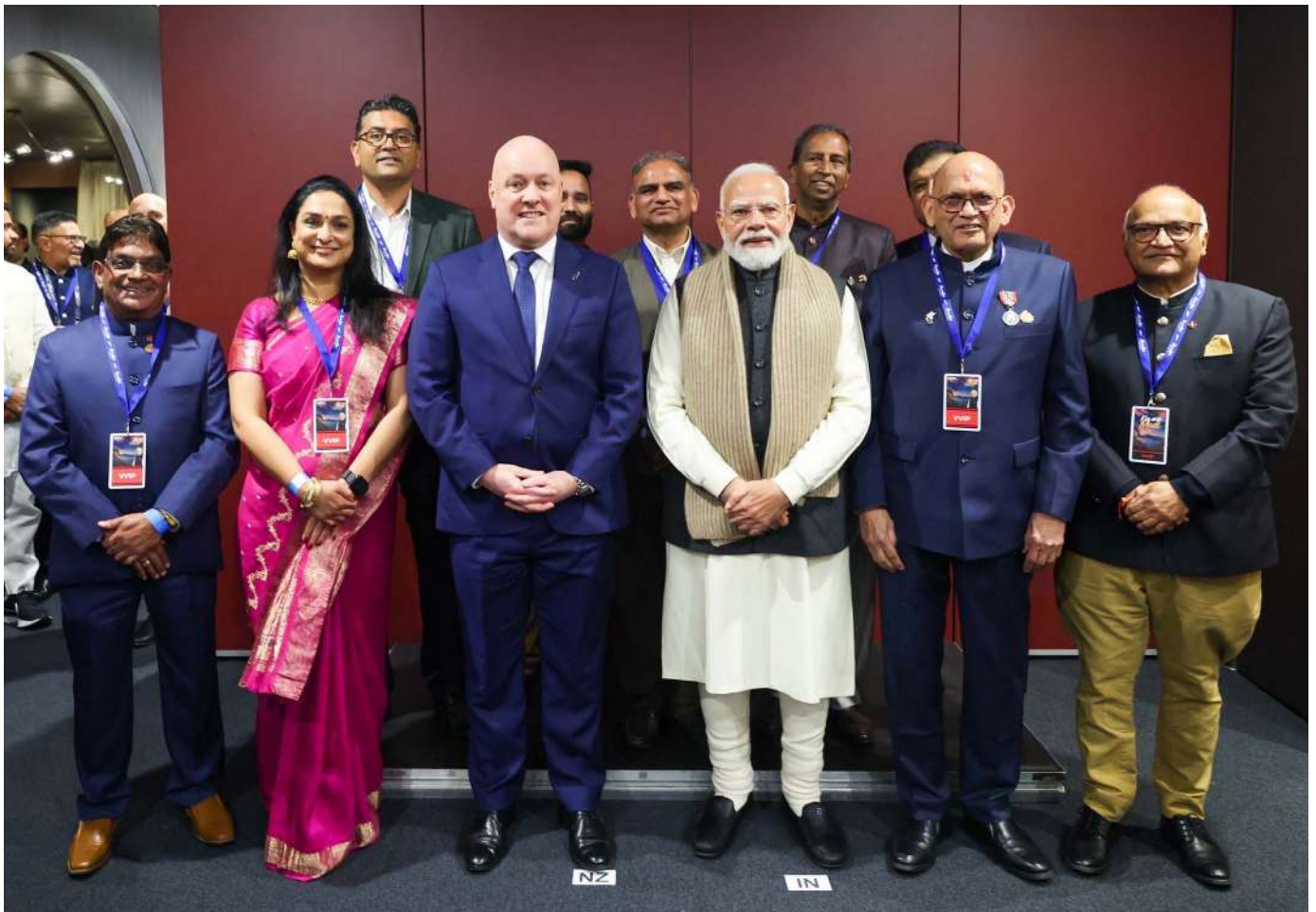
This suits India, whose diplomacy seeks to build bridges across institutional platforms rather than exclusive blocs. India's participation at Évian, before hosting the BRICS Summit, illustrates an approach based on shaping outcomes across multiple forums.



Ajai Malhotra is Distinguished Fellow, TERI and former Indian Ambassador to Russia, Kuwait, UN/New York, Romania, Albania and Moldova.

DIALOGUE. DIPLOMACY. PROGRESS

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



India-New Zealand Roadmap To 2030

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi completed a historic two-day visit to Auckland on July 10 and 11, 2026, the first by an Indian PM to New Zealand in 40 years. At the invitation of Prime Minister of New Zealand Christopher Luxon, both leaders marked a deepening relationship, recalling PM Luxon's March 2025 India visit that launched Free

Trade Agreement talks and resulted in MoUs on defence, education, customs, horticulture, forestry and sports. The two countries elevated ties to a Strategic Partnership and endorsed the "India–New Zealand Strategic Partnership: Roadmap to 2030," to steer cooperation on trade, security, people to people links and Indo-Pacific engagement.



India, Australia Advance Economic Partnership

Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the 3rd India-Australia Annual Summit in Melbourne on July 9, 2026, hosted by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The leaders held bilateral and delegation-level talks, marking six years of the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in trade and investment, defence and security, critical minerals, cyber and emerging technologies, space, civil nuclear energy, clean energy, education and people-to-people ties. Concluding the summit, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to early finalisation of a balanced and mutually beneficial Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) while pledging to further expand strategic and educational collaboration.

(Above) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese during the 3rd India-Australia Annual Summit in Melbourne

India-Indonesia Ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Indonesia between July 6 and 8, 2026, at the invitation of Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, reinforcing the India-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Building on President Prabowo's Republic Day visit to India in 2025, the leaders held bilateral talks in Jakarta covering political ties, defence, maritime cooperation, trade and investment, digital economy, science and technology, space, critical minerals, energy, agriculture, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, education, culture, tourism, youth exchanges and people-to-people relations. They also exchanged views on regional and global developments, reaffirming their shared commitment to deepening strategic cooperation across multiple sectors.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta during a high-level bilateral meeting

THALIS

Full Of Tales

Long before mindful eating, sensory design or farm-to-table became part of the global culinary lexicon, India had already perfected these ideas in one extraordinary format: the thali.

By Kunal Kapur



Over the years, travelling across India has taught me that a thali is never merely a meal. Instead, it is a philosophy thoughtfully served on a plate. More than a meal, the Indian thali is a feat of functional art, a philosophy served on a canvas of brass, silver or leaf. It is an intricate arrangement where geography, climate and community are mapped out carefully with remarkable aesthetic intelligence.

Regional Aesthetics

The Indian thali may appear simple with a large plate accompanied by smaller bowls or *katoris*. But beneath this simplicity lies centuries of evolved design thinking. The circular

SPIRITUAL TOUCH—

Beyond science and aesthetics, the thali in India has always carried spiritual meaning. Indian food traditions have long believed that eating is not merely consumption; it is an act of gratitude and balance. The phrase “*ann hi Brahma hai*,” translating to “food itself is divine”, reflects how deeply nourishment is woven into Indian spirituality. It creates pauses, rhythm and togetherness in an increasingly fragmented world.

plate encourages continuity and flow. Unlike compartmentalised dining formats, a thali invites interaction between dishes. Sweet may meet spicy, bitter may soften richness, yoghurt may cool heat and pickle may sharpen appetite.

In Gujarat, a traditional thali often begins with sweetness. A small portion of *shrikhand* or a mildly sweet dal becomes the opening note of the meal. In West Bengal, however, the meal begins with *shukto* (bitter vegetable stew), *neem begun* (stir-fried neem leaves and eggplant) or a lightly bitter preparation designed to stimulate digestion. One culture starts with comfort, another with restraint. Yet both are perfect reflections of



their geography, philosophy and food wisdom. There is no singular formula for the thali, yet every format of it carries balance, just like art.

Design Intelligence

In India, even the material on which food is served carries significance. Brass and *kansa*, or bell metal, are valued for their heat retention. Silver thalis are associated with royalty and festive dining. Banana leaves dominate the South, not only for sustainability but also for hygiene and fragrance. In Kashmir, copper-ware is preferred because it retains warmth in colder climates. In many traditional households, the texture, weight and temperature of the plate itself forms part of the dining experience.

Artisanal Legacy

Behind the culinary experience lies a parallel story of Indian craftsmanship.

BALANCING ACT

An Andhra thali is bold, fiery, layered and unapologetically expressive. From the sharp heat of *gongura chutney* (prepared with sorrel leaves, green chillies, garlic pods and other spices) to the comforting depths of *pappu* (Andhra-style lentil curry), coarse spice powder or *podis* mixed with ghee, spicy pickles and rice at its centre, the Andhra Thali reflects both agricultural richness and climatic intensity. Despite its reputation for heat, there is incredible balance through cooling curd rice, steamed rice, lentils and seasonal vegetables.

The thali is a testament to the skills of *kansaris* (metalworkers) and coppersmiths who have spent centuries perfecting the gentle curve of a plate or the intricate embossing of a wedding set. Whether it is the hammered texture of a Kashmiri *trami* (a large copper platter) or the woven bamboo baskets of the Northeast, the thali is as much a part of India's design legacy as its culinary heritage.

The thali reveals India's intuitive understanding of sensory rhythm. There is crunch against softness, fermented foods balancing heavier dishes, cooling yoghurt against spices and fried textures alongside slow-cooked gravies. A Maharashtrian thali moves between sweet, spicy, tangy and nutty notes almost musically. A Rajasthani thali reflects desert resilience through preserved ingredients, lentils, clarified butter and millet. A coastal Goan or Kerala



Spices such as **black pepper (known as "black gold")** from Keralam have been cultivated and traded internationally since **2,000 BCE**.

Thali Origins

Today, many people associate the word thali with unlimited restaurant meals. But historically, the thali was rarely about excess. It was about generosity and collective celebration. Thalīs were traditionally prepared during festivals, weddings, harvests, temple feasts and moments of community gathering. Across communities, these evolved into ritualistic experiences. A Parsi wedding feast, for instance, follows a ceremonial sequence of dishes where hospitality becomes performance and emotion. Similarly, the Kashmiri *wazwan*, one of the most elaborate culinary traditions, transforms dining into a collective experience. Traditionally, a large copper platter is shared amongst four guests, reinforcing the idea that food has always been deeply communal.



Behind the culinary experience lies a parallel story of Indian craftsmanship. The thali is a testament to the skills of *kansaris* (metalworkers) and coppersmiths.



thali carries coconut, kokum, seafood and rice, ingredients shaped by humidity, monsoon and the sea. Every thali is essentially an edible response to geography.

Additionally, the thali in India has always carried spiritual meaning. Indian food traditions have long believed that eating is not merely consumption; it is an act of gratitude and balance. The phrase “*ann hi Brahma hai*”, translating to “food itself is divine”, reflects how nourishment has always been woven into Indian spirituality.



Kunal Kapur is a Michelin-starred chef, author and educator renowned for bringing India's regional flavours to global kitchens. His New York restaurant, *Dévi*, earned him international acclaim.

The Living Traditions Of INDIAN ART



From ritualistic art to spiritual storytelling, Indian art and aesthetics have never been standalone practices, but an inseparable part of everyday life.

By Dr. Alka Pande



Indian art has never recognised the boundaries that other traditions draw between disciplines. A painter could also be a poet, a sculptor or a musician. The sage Markandeya, instructing King Vajra in the *Visnudharmottara Purana*, an ancient Sanskrit text, makes this explicit. It says “to truly learn sculpture, one must first learn painting, dance and music. All the arts are one.”

One important context that deepens this understanding is that Indian aesthetics has historically never separated art from daily life, spirituality, ecology or community. Unlike many other traditions, where art gradually became confined to galleries, courts, or elite patronage, Indian artistic practice has remained rooted in lived experience. A rice-paste *kolam* drawn at dawn is never merely a decoration but invokes prosperity, hospitality and cosmic order. A woven textile carries within it regional memory, inherited skill, seasonal rhythm and sacred symbolism. Even craft traditions were not regarded as “minor arts”, but as vessels of philosophical and cultural knowledge. From the simple *lota* to the complex *devi yantra* (sacred diagram) of divine rituals, beauty in India has never been decorative alone. It is functional, philosophical and sacred all at once.



At the heart of yantra tradition is the relationship between Goddess Shakti and Lord Shiva.

THE LIVING WALL —

Almost every state in India has a tradition of wall painting. These paintings are commonly known as **Bhitti Chitras** and are made primarily by women to decorate and sanctify their homes and using mirrors, seeds, clay reliefs of Puranic gods, local deities and ancestral spirits. They are not decorations applied to a wall; they transform the wall into a threshold.



Mandalas, Yantras and Sacred Geometry

Mandalas are representations of cosmic energy, drawn on earth, walls, paper, cloth and metal, traceable from the seals of the Indus Valley Civilisation to the rock paintings of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. Each deity has its own *mandala*, and each is a map of the universe brought down to human scale.

The *yantra* is the *mandala*'s more concentrated form. It is the visual equivalent of a *mantra*, used for both protective and generative purposes. At the heart of the *yantra* tradition is the relationship between Goddess Shakti, the power of creation, and Lord Shiva, the embodiment of pure

consciousness. Their union is rendered as two interlocking triangles meeting at a central *bindu* (point). This is the most elemental of over 56 *yantras*, each carrying specific power. In South India, the footprint of entire temples is sometimes drawn from the shape of *yantras*, and later, the diagram becomes the architecture.

Vratas: The Art of the Vow

Vratas are vows, but they are also diagrams and floor patterns, a form of sacred writing drawn primarily by women. More than 2,000 *vratas* exist, some traceable to the *Atharvaveda*. They are known by different names across India, including *aripan* in Bihar,



Unlike many other traditions, where art gradually became confined to galleries, courts or elite patronage, Indian artistic practice has remained rooted in lived experience.

alpana in West Bengal, *osakothi* in Odisha, *Chauk purna* in Uttar Pradesh, *mandana* in Rajasthan, *sathia* in Gujarat, *rangoli* in Maharashtra and *kolam* in Tamil Nadu. Each tradition has its own grammar of line and colour, yet all share a common root and were understood as writings and not drawings. They were, and remain, a form of language.

The Art of Storytelling

Traditional Indian art is inseparable from narrative. From oral tradition, stories migrated to painted scrolls used by itinerant bards as props for performance. The *Bhopas* of Rajasthan still travel with their long



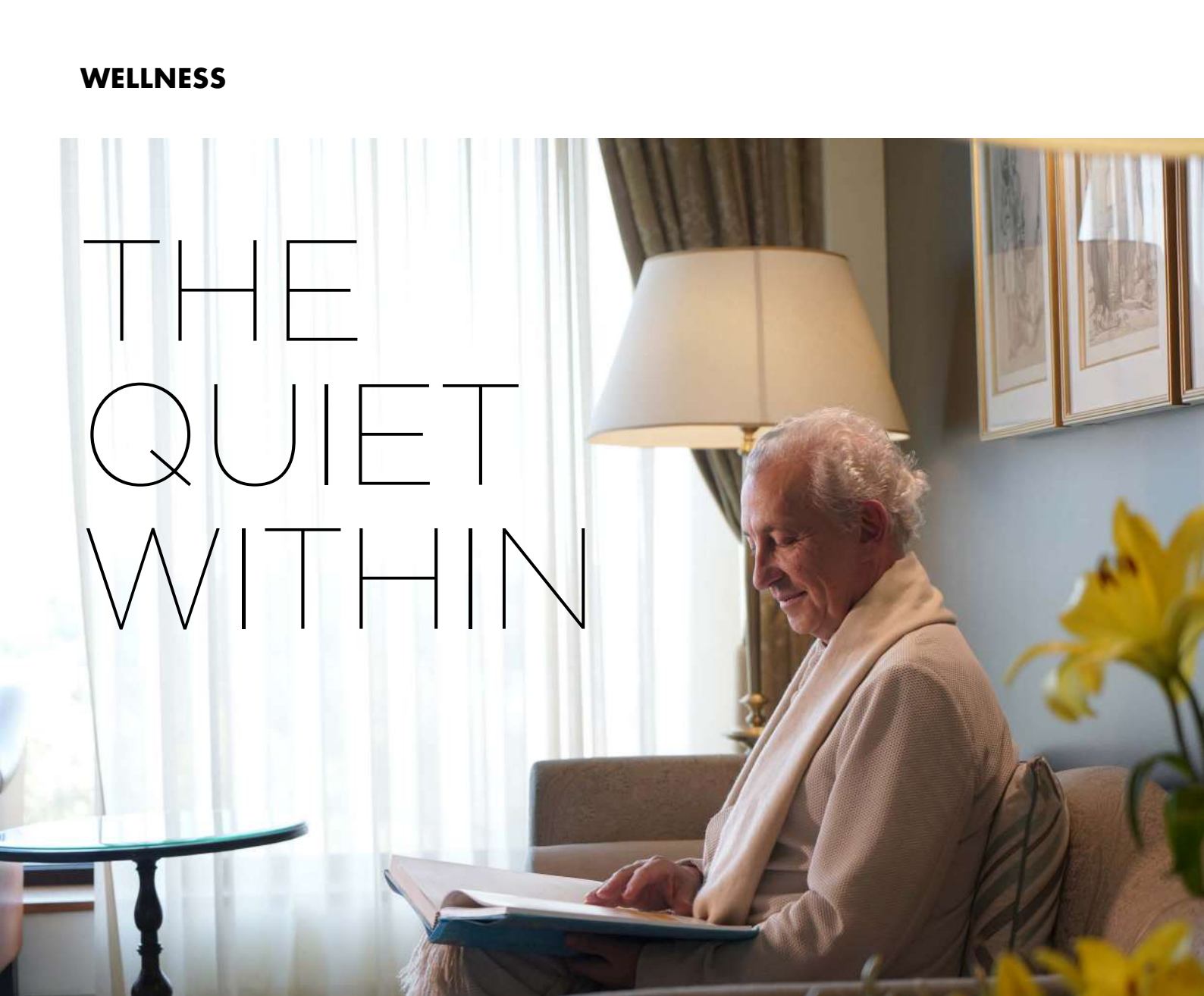
Pabuji ki phad scrolls, which are vast painted epics unrolled before village audiences, where image and song arrive together. The painted icons of Puri, Nathdwara, Thanjavur, previously known as Tanjore, and Kalighat carried religious and secular tales across the country in pure primary colour. To tell a story was always to make it visible.

Art was not created simply to be viewed, but to be inhabited, sung, worn, walked through, performed, or worshipped. In this tradition, beauty was never detached from purpose but was a way of bringing the material and the metaphysical into harmony.



Dr. Alka Pande is a curator, art historian and author. This essay draws on her books *108 Portraits of Indian Objects* (PB) and *108 Portraits of Indian Traditional Art* (HB), published by Arthshila Trust, New Delhi.

THE QUIET WITHIN



Healthy ageing begins within. Rooted in Vedic wisdom, yoga and meditation offer a path to reducing stress, renewing vitality and enhancing lifelong well-being.

By Dr. Tony Nader

Each year, we celebrate International Day of Yoga (IDY) on June 21, a global recognition of one of India's greatest gifts to humanity. Yet yoga is not one event on the calendar but a living state of being, cultivated moment by moment, breath by breath through the daily experience of our innermost nature. The Sanskrit word *yuj*, meaning "to join" or "to yoke," captures its essence. Yoga is the

science of union, that is the joining of body and mind, the individual and the universal, the small self and the infinite self.

The theme of this year's IDY, "Yoga for Healthy Ageing," points to the ancient Vedic philosophy that how we age is not determined only by genetics and circumstances. To a great degree, it reflects the quality of our consciousness.

*“Yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ
(yoga is the stilling of the
fluctuations of the mind).*

– Yoga sutras of Patanjali



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Dr. Nader

Transcendence

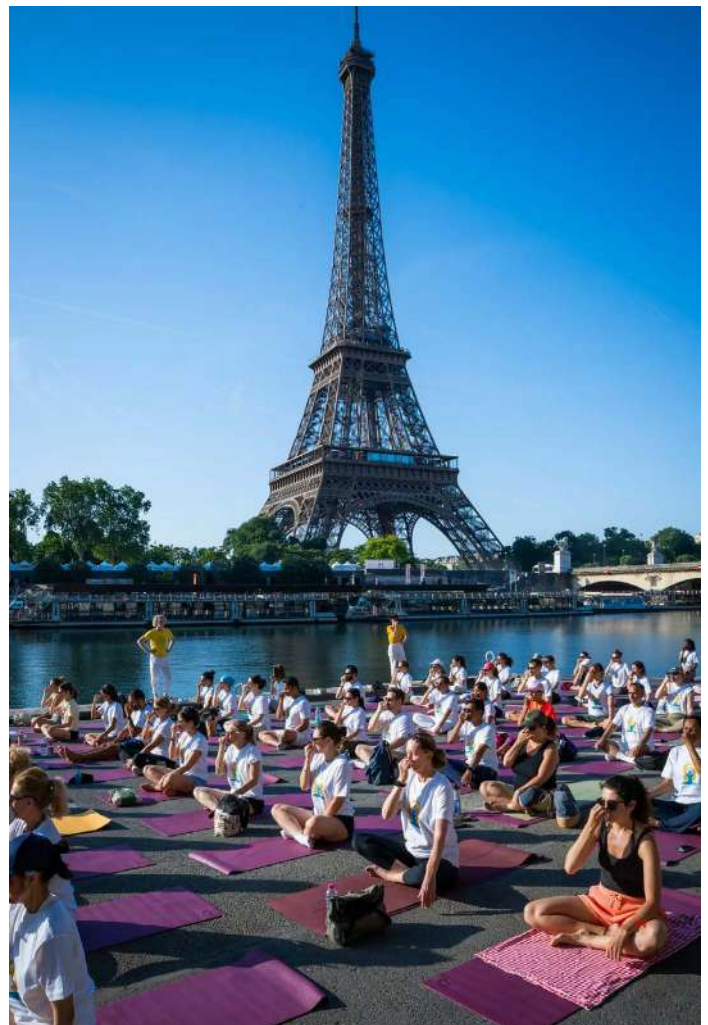
When the mind is repeatedly and effortlessly drawn inward to the source of thought, to pure awareness, known in the Vedic tradition as *atman*, something extraordinary happens. The body begins to renew itself. This is not a metaphor but a measurable science.

Research on Transcendental Meditation® (TM®), an effortless technique to experience transcendence, has produced striking findings on ageing. Long-term practitioners of TM have shown biological markers that are younger than their chronological age, along with lower expression of stress-related genes linked to chronic inflammation and accelerated ageing.

Biological age is not fixed. A powerful influence on its direction is our relationship with stress. When the mind transcends, it settles beyond surface activity into its own silent depth, in a state of inner restful alertness. Restful alertness is a state in which the entire system, mind and body, is alert in stillness. In that state, the body repairs itself, cortisol levels decrease, inflammatory processes diminish, autonomic balance improves and the brain functions with greater coherence.

Yoga and Ayurveda

Yoga *āsanas* maintain flexibility and strength. *Prāṇāyāma* helps regulate the autonomic



People across the world celebrated IDY 2026, including in Paris



Indian embassies and high commissions across the world marked the 12th International Day of Yoga, including in Poland and Armenia



nervous system. The Bhagavad-Gītā gives us a luminous phrase, "*Yogah karmasu kauśalam*". Meaning "Yoga is skill in action". The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali begin with another timeless definition, "*Yogaś citta-vrtti-nirodhah*: Yoga is the settling of the fluctuations of the mind". When those fluctuations settle, what remains is silent, alert and loving awareness. Direct experience of this is the essence of yoga and the key to skill in action, achievement, and fulfilment. Ayurveda's *dinacharya*, the science of daily routine, aligns biological rhythms with nature. All of these find their fullest expression when rooted in the regular experience of transcendence. Yoga and Ayurveda are sister sciences, wherein yoga refines awareness and Ayurveda refines the body's natural intelligence. Together, they nurture the whole person.

Every morning offers an opportunity to contact that deepest



"Yogah karmasu kauśalam (yoga is skill in action)."

- Bhagavad Gita

level of being and carry its silence, stability and aliveness into all that we do. In this way, every day can be Yoga Day. Healthy ageing is the presence of the Self, which is luminous, awake and always young at its core. As the Vedic tradition proclaims, "*Lokāḥ Samastāḥ Sukhino Bhavantu*", meaning "May all beings everywhere be happy".



Tony Nader, M.D., PhD, a Harvard-trained physician and MIT neuroscientist, leads the global Transcendental Meditation® organisations across 100+ countries.

Adding 'Fizz' To THE C-SUITE

Born and raised in India, Tapaswee Chandele has risen to Global Chief People Officer at Coca-Cola, bringing two decades of global HR excellence.

In a proud milestone for Indian diaspora leadership, Tapaswee Chandele has been named the new Global Chief People Officer of The Coca-Cola Company.

With over two decades of experience across international markets and diverse cultural environments, Chandele brings a deeply global perspective, sharp talent expertise, and a strong understanding of multicultural leadership to one of Coca-Cola's most influential positions. This appointment further highlights the growing influence of Indian professionals in the highest echelons of global corporations.

The Journey

A trailblazing Indian leader with deep roots and a truly global outlook, Chandele was born and raised in India. She began her professional journey at Coca-Cola in 2001 and steadily built an impressive international career that has taken her across Türkiye, South Africa, the United States and other countries. She holds a strong academic foundation in both science and human resources. She earned her MBA in Human Resources and Industrial Relations from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, India.

Elevation

With over two decades of rich, cross-



cultural experience spanning HR strategy, talent development, and people leadership across diverse markets, Chandele brings a unique blend of scientific rigour, deep people expertise, and global perspective to one of the world's most influential

people roles. She succeeds Lisa Chang and will report directly to CEO Henrique Braun.

Her elevation stands as a powerful testament to the growing impact of Indian professionals in shaping iconic global corporations.



THE FUTURE IS CURATED

As art, design, technology and heritage converge, creativity transcends disciplines, transforming cultural spaces into interconnected environments that foster dialogue, participation, learning and discovery.

By Kiran Nadar

The conversation around art and design is often framed as a dialogue between aesthetics and function, tradition and innovation, or heritage and modernity. Yet these distinctions are increasingly becoming irrelevant. Across museums, galleries, architecture, technology and public spaces, a new creative ecosystem is emerging, where artistic expression and design thinking coexist, overlap and enrich one another.

India finds itself at a particularly significant moment in this transformation. As global audiences become more receptive to diverse narratives, the country's artistic traditions, contemporary practices and indigenous knowledge systems are being viewed not as isolated disciplines but as interconnected sources of creative intelligence. This evolution reflects a broader shift in how we understand creativity.

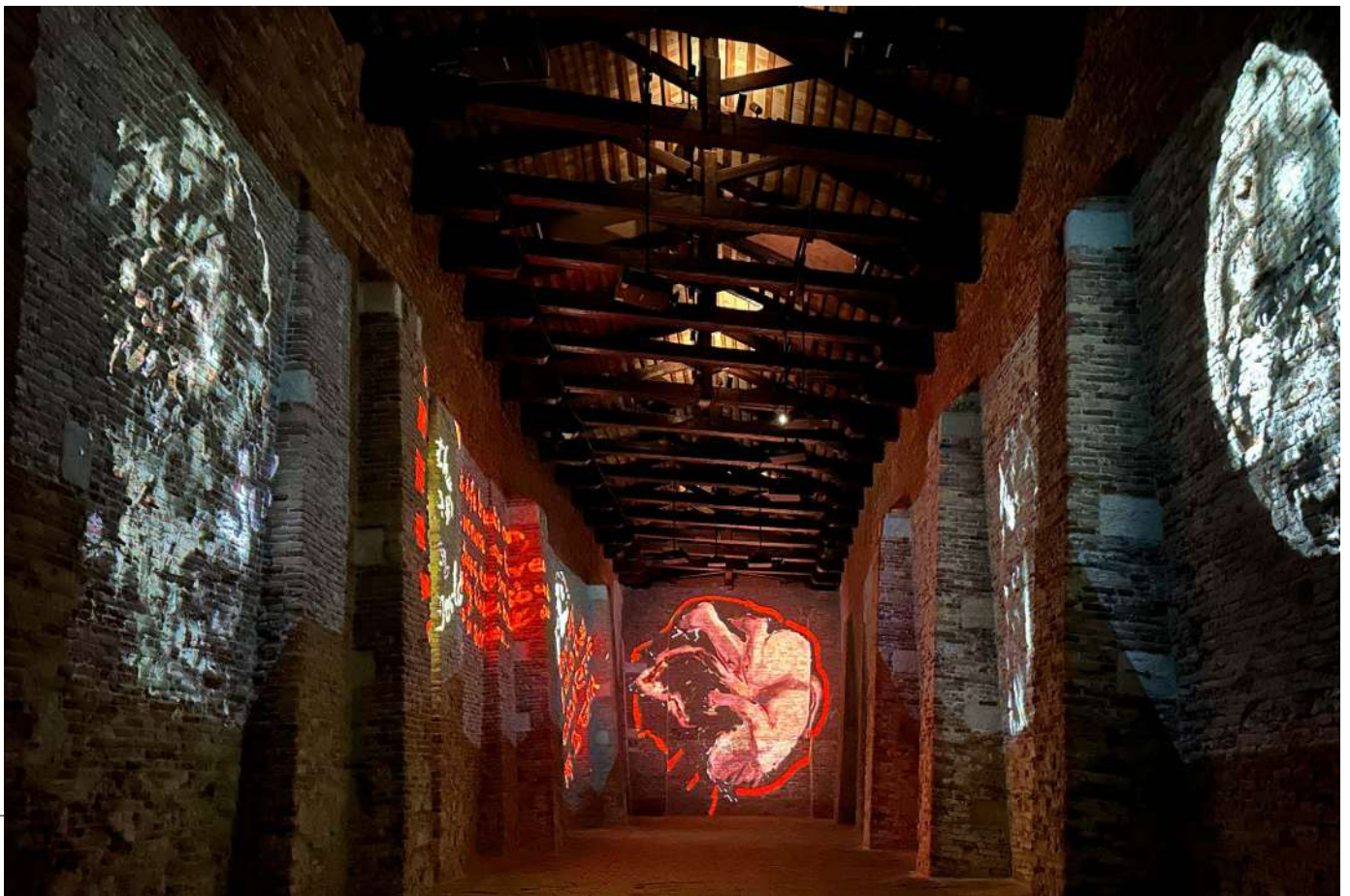
Art institutions today are no longer simply repositories of objects. They are designed experiences.

Beyond the Divide

For decades, artistic discourse in India often separated traditional practices from contemporary expression. Folk and tribal art were placed in one category, while modern and contemporary art were placed in another. Design disciplines occupied yet another space.

Today, those boundaries are dissolving, as contemporary artists are increasingly drawing upon textiles, natural fibres, indigenous materials and traditional techniques. Simultaneously, architects, designers and fashion practitioners are revisiting vernacular knowledge systems to create work that is both innovative and culturally rooted.

What emerges is not nostalgia, but relevance. Heritage is no longer viewed as a static archive of the past but is becoming an active source of inspiration for contemporary creation.





Mumbai's Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, launched in 1999, is Asia's largest multidisciplinary street art exhibition.

This renewed appreciation is particularly visible in the growing recognition of folk and tribal art traditions globally. Their visual languages, storytelling methods and material practices offer sophisticated frameworks that duly challenge conventional hierarchies between art, craft and design. The distinction appears outdated in a world that values interdisciplinary thinking.

Designing Institutions

Art institutions today are no longer simply repositories of objects. They are designed experiences. In India, cultural centres, such as the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in Delhi-NCR, are born out of evolution into dynamic cultural ecosystems that combine scholarship, education, community engagement and technological innovation. Their success is measured not only by the works they preserve but by the conversations they facilitate.



The **Indian Museum, Kolkata**, established in 1814, is India's **oldest multidisciplinary** museum.



Building such institutions requires a diverse team with long-term vision. Conservation, research, accessibility and public engagement must coexist within a sustainable framework. Equally important is the design of the visitor experience, or how audiences move through spaces, interact with narratives and form personal connections with artistic ideas.

The future of museums is as much an exercise in design thinking as it is in curatorial practice. It must anticipate changing audience behaviors while remaining committed to preserving artistic integrity.

Technology as an Enabler

Digital platforms, virtual exhibitions and immersive environments have

THE PHYGITAL INFLUX —

At the Venice Biennale 2024, **M.F. Husain's The Rooted Nomad** was presented as a **dual-format independent project**. It was part exhibition, part immersive experience. A subsequent iteration travelled to Qatar Museums. Digital interaction doesn't diminish physical experience; it often deepens it by creating informed, curious audiences in ways physical spaces alone cannot.

transformed how audiences discover and engage with art. Yet technology's greatest contribution lies not in replacing physical experiences but in extending them.

When thoughtfully integrated, digital tools can provide context, accessibility and deeper engagement. Virtual tours, multilingual content, interactive guides and immersive storytelling formats create multiple entry points into artistic practice, making cultural experiences more inclusive and democratic. The rise of hybrid exhibitions demonstrates this potential. By combining physical artworks with digital narratives and immersive environments, institutions can offer audiences richer and more layered encounters with art.

AI, or Not?

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) enters creative workflows, new questions emerge about authorship, originality and artistic value.

While AI is rapidly becoming part of the creative landscape, its most meaningful role may be as a facilitator rather than a creator. Art remains deeply connected to human experience, emotion, memory and cultural context, which cannot be replicated through algorithms alone. For cultural institutions, AI offers exciting possibilities in education, accessibility and audience engagement. Intelligent guides, conversational interfaces and personalised learning experiences can help visitors navigate complex artistic ideas with greater ease. The challenge lies in ensuring that technology enhances understanding rather than replacing critical thought.

ROAD AHEAD AT KNMA

At **KNMA**, we're designing the new building with this integrated vision. **The Learning Centre**, for instance, will be a space where digital and physical learning coexist. We're creating comprehensive digital records of our collection, high-resolution images, detailed provenance and scholarly research.

The Visual Generation

Through digital platforms and global connectivity, younger audiences encounter artistic practices from across cultures and geographies long before entering a museum. This exposure has cultivated remarkable visual literacy and curiosity. What is particularly striking is their ability to move effortlessly across disciplines and traditions. A classical miniature painting, a contemporary video installation, an indigenous textile tradition and an immersive digital experience are not viewed as separate categories but as parts of a larger creative continuum.

Interdisciplinary Creativity

The most exciting developments in contemporary culture are occurring at intersections. Visual art is engaging with architecture, storytelling is merging with technology and indigenous knowledge systems are informing contemporary





While AI is rapidly becoming part of the creative landscape, its most meaningful role may be as a facilitator rather than a creator.

design. Performance, craft and digital media are converging to create new forms of expression.

Such collaborations require careful balance. Interdisciplinary work succeeds not by diluting individual practices but by allowing each discipline to retain its integrity while contributing to a larger experience.

The Future

The next chapter of the global art landscape will likely be defined by a redistribution of cultural influence. For centuries, artistic narratives were shaped primarily through Western institutions and frameworks. Today, a more plural and inclusive conversation is emerging. India is playing an increasingly significant role in this transformation.

Indian artists, designers, photographers, architects and cultural practitioners are contributing not merely as participants but as active voices shaping global discourse. Their work reflects layered histories, diverse traditions and contemporary realities that resonate far beyond national boundaries.

The ideal cultural institution of the future will function as a living ecosystem that is adaptive, participatory and deeply connected to its communities. Artworks, archives, performances, technologies and public conversations will exist within a seamless environment designed to encourage discovery and exchange. Visitors will no longer merely observe culture; they will actively contribute to it.



Kiran Nadar is a prominent Indian art collector and philanthropist. She is best known as the founder and chairperson of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA).

By **Kshitij Rawat**

There's a moment in the iconic movie *Pyasa* (1957) where filmmaker and actor Guru Dutt frames a staircase like a scar in space. You immediately understand that loneliness is being presented as something tangible. It is the smoke that hasn't cleared, the space between two people who cannot touch. Though the film is in black and white, Dutt uses every inch of the frame with such mastery that you feel you can trace the shadows with your fingers.

Visual Thoughts

When we talk about India's greatest filmmakers such as Guru Dutt, Satyajit Ray and Shyam Benegal, certain characteristics define them. These artists thought in images. They understood cinema as a fundamentally spatial art form. More importantly, they developed their own visual traditions rather than merely emulating the West. They may have drawn inspiration from global cinema, but their films always felt inherited rather than imported.

Dutt's films are studies in visual melancholy. His characters move through architectural



Image: *Pather Panchali*, IMDb

Colour arrived differently in India than it did in the West. Indian filmmakers understood colour as an emotional vocabulary

spaces and rooms that dwarf them. In *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959), the protagonist's professional collapse is mirrored in the vast, empty studio spaces that gradually seem to swallow him whole. It is as though the visual style of the film is collapsing alongside the man's life itself. It remains one of the purest examples of "show, don't tell" in Indian cinema.

The Art of Backdrops

Satyajit Ray, perhaps India's greatest filmmaker, developed an entire visual grammar of his own. His use of negative space and the camera's ability to convey emotional structure transformed the language of Indian cinema. Ray understood stillness differently from almost anyone else. The famous train sequence in his film *Pather Panchali* (1955) is astonishing because of the way he stages anticipation spatially. His background in graphic design proved vital to his filmmaking. Ray instinctively



India is one of the largest producers of films in the world, producing approx **2,000 films** each **year**.

THE PAKEEZAH CRAZE —

Since the original cinematographer Josef Wirsching passed away during *Pakeezah*'s prolonged production, over a dozen of Mumbai's top cinematographers stepped in at different points to finish the project.

In 1972, veteran actor Pran Krishan Sikand turned down his Best Supporting Actor Filmfare Award (for *Be-Imaan*) because he felt the Best Music Award should have posthumously gone to Ghulam Mohammed for his legendary work in *Pakeezah*.

understood illustration, typography, balance and visual economy.

Director and screenwriter Kamal Amrohi approached cinema differently. After proving with *Mahal* (1949) that he did not need colour to create visual richness, he used it magnificently in *Pakeezah* (1972). The film moved through opulent palaces, courtyards and gardens with dreamlike precision. Here, production design was not merely a backdrop but the emotional architecture of the film itself. Amrohi translated the aesthetic principles of Mughal miniatures directly into cinema. What makes *Pakeezah* extraordinary is its tranquillity. Amrohi understood that beauty requires duration, something modern films often tend to forget.

Filmmaker Vijay Anand worked in a lighter register than Dutt, but he shared the same understanding that visual composition can create meaning. In *Guide* (1965), locations such as the temples of Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) become characters themselves. The film's interiors are carefully composed, while its songs expand emotional space rather than interrupt it. Anand's tracking shots



The term **superstar** was first used in India to describe actor **Rajesh Khanna** (featured in **15 consecutive hits** between **1969-71**).



Image: *Manthan*, IMDb

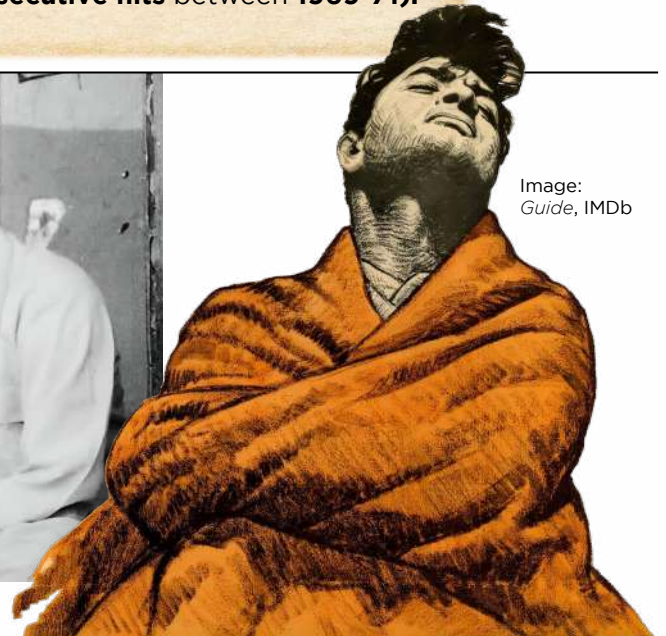


Image:
Guide, IMDb

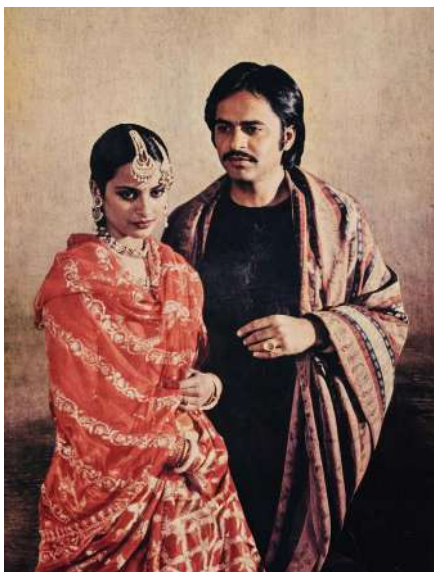


Image: *Umrao Jaan*, IMDb

In the movie *Pakeezah*, production design was not merely a backdrop but the emotional architecture of the film itself



Image: *Pyaasa*, IMDb

display technical virtuosity, but they also create emotional momentum.

The Coloured Era

Colour arrived differently in Indian cinema than it did in Hollywood. While Hollywood often treated technicolour as spectacle, Indian filmmakers instinctively understood colour as emotional vocabulary. Filmmaker Muzaffar Ali's *Umrao Jaan* (1981) exemplified this beautifully. Its amber and gold tones were not merely decorative relics of history; they conveyed emotional states in visual form. Decades later, this visual instinct found another expression in the films of Sanjay Leela Bhansali. His

operatic use of colour and elaborate set design works because Indian cinema had already spent decades developing this visual grammar.

Directors Bimal Roy and Shyam Benegal brought another kind of visual discipline. In *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), Roy demonstrated how composition, contrast, framing and light could achieve emotional richness without colour. His realism was carefully composed rather than accidental. Crowded streets reflected economic necessity, while intimate interiors revealed emotional precision. Though influenced by Italian Neorealism, Roy's cinema remained uniquely Indian. By the 1970s and 1980s, this

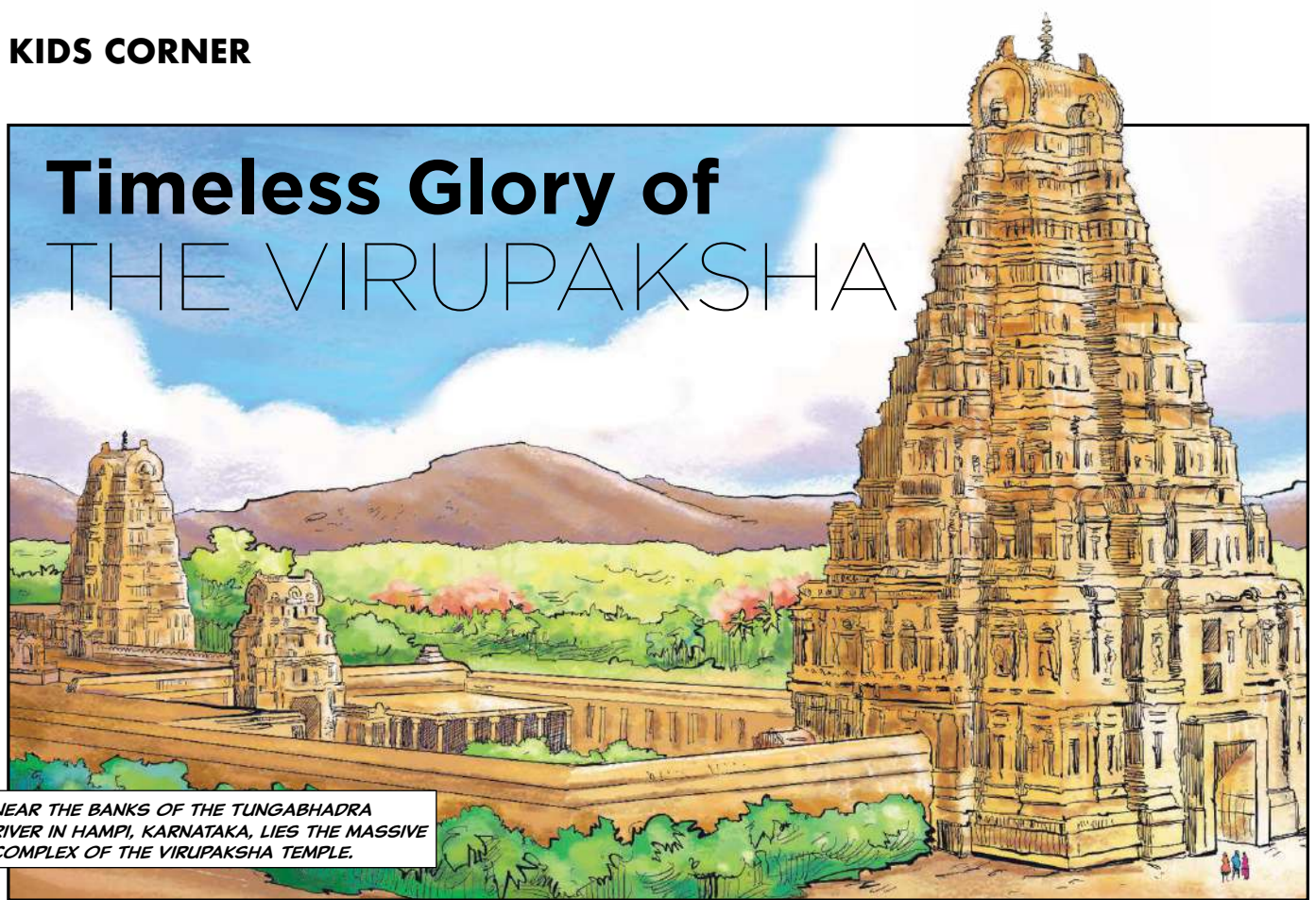
visual sensibility had slowly begun entering mainstream Indian cinema.

The through-line here is not simply that Indian filmmakers created great films. It is that they fundamentally understood cinema as a visual art form. Design and cinematography were not technical necessities but the very substance of meaning-making. These filmmakers did not begin from zero. They inherited centuries of artistic traditions, classical architecture and visual conventions refined over millennia.



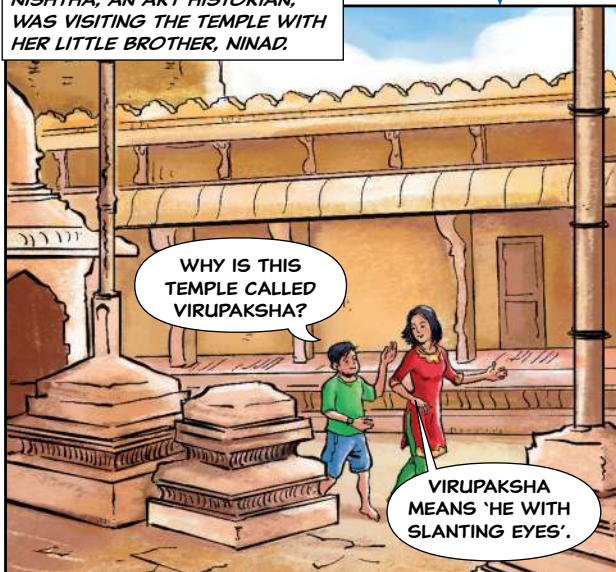
Kshitij Rawat is a film and television critic, journalist. He is also a member of the Film Critics Guild of India and serves on the jury of annual Critics' Choice Awards held in Mumbai.

Timeless Glory of THE VIRUPAKSHA



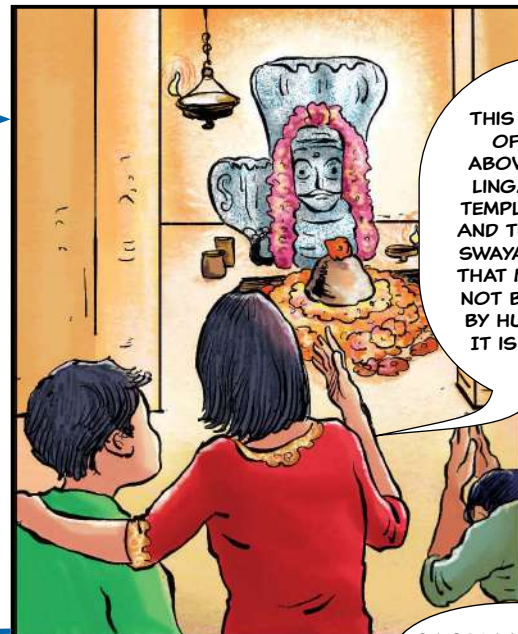
NEAR THE BANKS OF THE TUNGABHADRA RIVER IN HAMPI, KARNATAKA, LIES THE MASSIVE COMPLEX OF THE VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE.

NISHTHA, AN ART HISTORIAN, WAS VISITING THE TEMPLE WITH HER LITTLE BROTHER, NINAD.



WHY IS THIS TEMPLE CALLED VIRUPAKSHA?

VIRUPAKSHA MEANS 'HE WITH SLANTING EYES'.



THIS SILVER CAST OF THE EYES ABOVE THE SHIVA LINGA GIVES THE TEMPLE THIS NAME. AND THE LINGA IS A SWAYAMBHU LINGA. THAT MEANS IT HAS NOT BEEN CREATED BY HUMAN HANDS. IT IS SELF-MADE.

THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE HERE! SHIVA IS MUCH LOVED, ISN'T HE?

YES. ONE PERSON WHO LOVED HIM A LOT WAS...



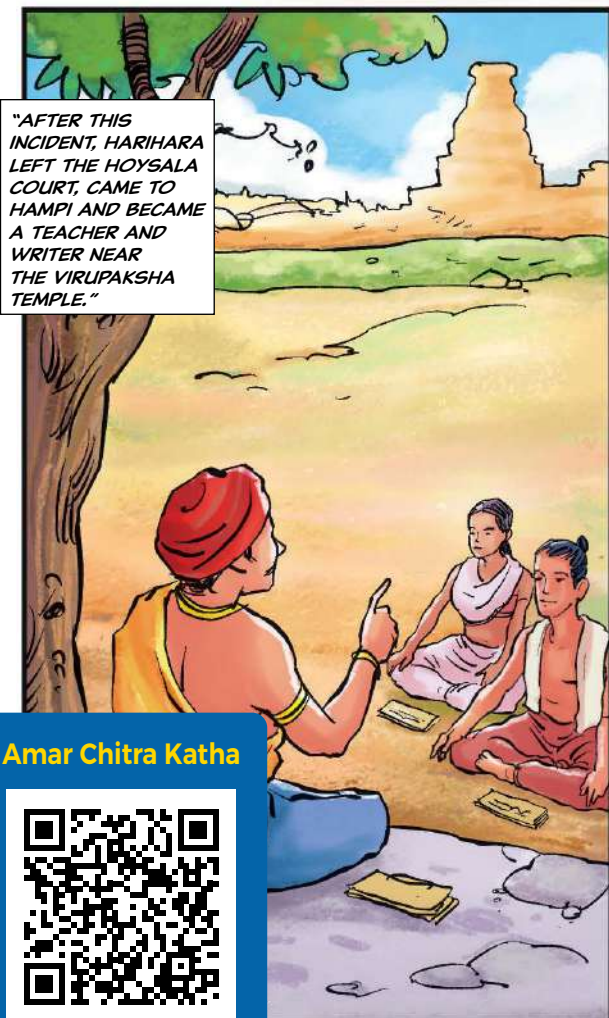
...HARIHARA, A POET IN THE COURT OF THE HOYSALA KING NARASIMHA I.

O LORD VIRUPAKSHA, BESTOW YOUR DIVINE GRACE ON YOUR SON HARIHARA.



"HE WAS SO DEVOTED THAT HE THOUGHT OF HIMSELF AS SHIVA'S SON."

"ONE DAY -



Amar Chitra Katha



Scan to read the rest

The Kutch CANVAS



Where paint flows like thread and tradition breathes through fabric — Rogan art is not just a craft; it is a living heritage.

Deep in the arid landscapes of Kutch in Gujarat lies one of India's rarest artistic treasures, the GI-tagged Rogan art form. Practised for over 300 years, this intricate textile painting tradition traces its origins to Persia, with the word "Rogan" meaning oil or varnish. Today, the craft survives largely in Nirona village, where artisan families, particularly the Khatri community, continue to preserve this centuries-old legacy.

In this art form, artists prepare a special paint by boiling castor oil for several hours until it transforms



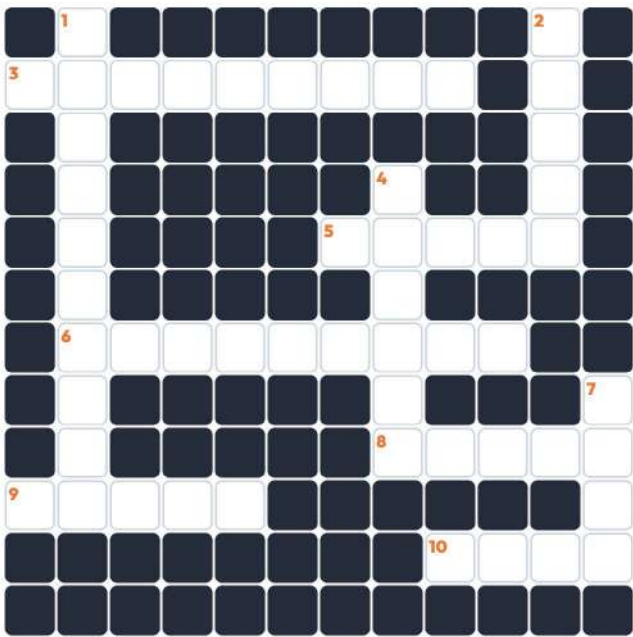
into a thick paste. Then they mix the paste with natural pigments and vegetable dyes. Using a metal stylus instead of brushes, artisans create delicate thread-like patterns freehand on dark fabrics. The cloth is then folded carefully to imprint symmetrical mirror-image motifs. Traditionally used on bridal wear and *ghagras*, Rogan art today adorns sarees, *dupattas*, wall hangings, etc across India.

Recently, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted a Rogan painting with the 'Tree of Life' motif, which is an ancient symbol of interconnectedness, strength, renewal, and continuity, to the President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Intriguing ARCADE

Crossword

Solve your way through India’s culture, geography and milestones



CLUES

Across

- 3. Iconic four-minareted monument of Hyderabad.
- 5. Ancient Indian metal craft made using the lost-wax casting technique.
- 6. Textile art involving hand-painted or block-printed mythological and botanical motifs.
- 8. Region of Gujarat celebrated for its colourful textiles, embroidery and handicrafts.
- 9. Dark metal craft from Bidar, Karnataka, known for intricate silver inlay.
- 10. Art form from central India known for intricate patterns inspired by nature and folklore.

Down

- 1. Traditional embroidery associated with Lucknow.
- 2. Buddhist architectural structure traditionally built to enshrine sacred relics.
- 4. Famous Odisha temple designed as a giant stone chariot.
- 7. Traditional scroll painting from Rajasthan, often depicting stories of folk deities.

Answers:
Down: (1) Chikanankari, (2) Stupa, (4) Konark, (7) Phad
Across: (3) Charminar, (5) Dokra, (6) Kalamkari, (8) Kutch, (9) Bidri, (10) Gond

How Well Do You Know India?

- 1. How many stanzas of Rabindranath Tagore’s “Jana Gana Mana” were adopted as India’s National Anthem in 1950?
A) Only first stanza
B) 4 stanzas
C) 2 stanzas
D) All 5 stanzas
- 2. Which Indian God is worshipped alongside Goddess Lakshmi on Diwali?
A) Lord Shiva
B) Lord Krishna
C) Lord Ganesha
D) Lord Vishnu
- 3. How many World Heritage Sites are there in India?
A) 45
B) 44
C) 38
D) 22
- 4. The National Song of India “Vande Mataram” was originally composed in which language?
A) Hindi
B) Urdu
C) Marathi
D) Sanskrit
- 5. Garba is the traditional folk dance of which state of India?
A) Gujarat
B) Punjab
C) Maharashtra
D) Delhi
- 6. Name the animal that carries Lord Vishnu’s vehicle in legends.
A) Lion
B) Eagle
C) Elephant
D) Horse
- 7. Which number system did ancient India invent that is used worldwide today?
A) Roman numeral
B) Binary system
C) Decimal system
D) Mayan numerals
- 8. Which ancient Indian text mentions that Earth is spherical?
A) The Ramayana
B) The Arthashastra
C) The Aryabhatiya
D) The Mahabharata
- 9. Who in ancient India discovered that the moon reflects sunlight?
A) Aryabhata
B) Varahamihira
C) Bhaskaracharya
D) Sushruta
- 10. The traditional Kavad is a portable storytelling shrine associated with which Indian state?
A) Rajasthan
B) Madhya Pradesh
C) Gujarat
D) Himachal Pradesh

Answers

- 1) Only first stanza
- 2) Lord Ganesha
- 3) 45
- 4) Sanskrit
- 5) Gujarat
- 6) Eagle
- 7) Decimal system
- 8) The Aryabhatiya
- 9) Aryabhata
- 10) Rajasthan

At the 2026 Commonwealth Games, debutants **Asmita Dey** and **Harsh Singh** made history by winning India’s first-ever CWG gold medals in judo.



Champions Are Born

India wrapped up the 2026 Commonwealth Games with 39 medals and a fourth-place finish, despite competing in a reduced programme without traditional medal-rich sports. Historic firsts in judo, record-breaking boxing matches and a landmark para campaign showcased the nation's sporting excellence.



World Yogasana Championship

The inaugural World Yogasana Championship, held from June 4 to 8, 2026, at EKA Arena, Ahmedabad, brought together over 500 athletes from 79 countries, marking a milestone for Yogasana as a global competitive sport. Host nation India dominated the event, topping the medal tally with an impressive 114 medals, including 102 golds.

Bharat Innovates On The World Stage

A huge success for India, Bharat Innovates 2026 held in Nice, France, showcased 120 deep-tech startups and several premier institutions. Attracting 350+ global investors, the event forged major international partnerships and firmly positioned India as a global innovation powerhouse.

bharat INNOVATES
GLOBAL ACCELERATOR FOR INDIAN EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM
NICE, FRANCE | 14-16 JUNE, 2026





Khelo India Rising

The Union Cabinet-approved revamped Khelo India Scheme, backed by a ₹36,441 crore outlay for 2026–27 to 2030–31, strengthens talent identification, enhances support for National Sports Federations and athletes. It has further created a robust pathway from grassroots participation to international sporting success.

What Powers Mahendragiri?

INS Mahendragiri has joined the Indian Navy as one of the country's most advanced indigenous warships, built with over 75 per cent Indian-made components. Alongside successful Pinaka and Kusha missile tests, it underscores India's accelerating defence innovation and growing self-reliance.



An AI Innovator At Just 16

Saahas Ludhra of Faridabad, Haryana, set a record as the youngest developer of an empathetic AI-based mental health support system. At 16, he created **SpeakUp Yuva AI**, a voice-text-based platform that helps young people address stress, anxiety, cyberbullying, fear of judgment, and health and hygiene concerns.



Image: guinnessworldrecords.com

The Ocean Holds The Tricolour

On May 2, 2026, India set a Guinness World Record by unfurling the world's largest underwater National flag at Radhanagar Beach, Swaraj Dweep (formerly known as Havelock Island), in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Measuring 2,400 sq m, the tricolour was unfurled by nearly 200 professional scuba divers.

History Comes Home

In a landmark act of cultural restitution, around 20 Chola Copper Plates from the 11th-century were returned to India by the Leiden University Library in May, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Netherlands Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Rob Jetten. The royal charters, inscribed in Tamil and Sanskrit, record a Chola-era royal land grant in present-day Tamil Nadu and represent an invaluable chapter of India's civilisational heritage.

Image: x.com/@narendramodi



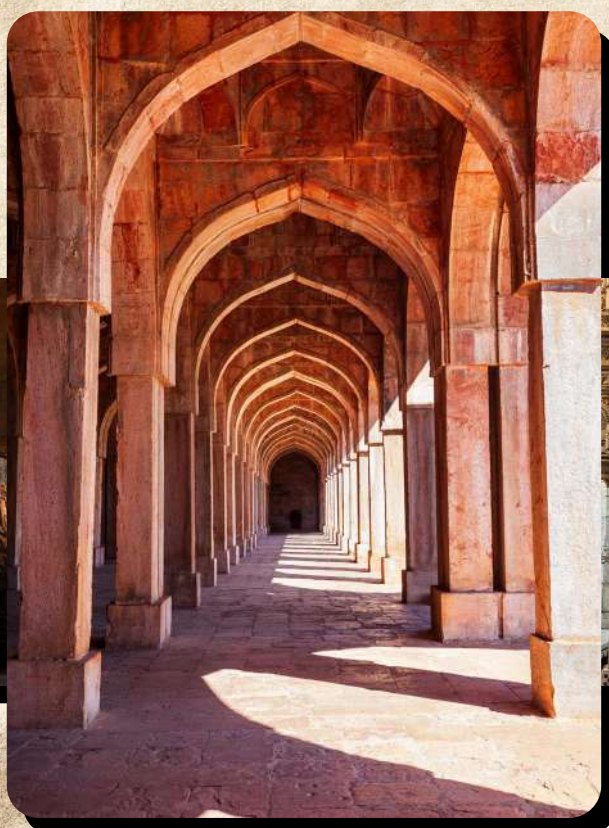
Image: www.skyroot.in/mission-parambh

Engineering Tomorrow

Launched in July, Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital rocket by Skyroot Aerospace, showcases cutting-edge engineering. With its lightweight carbon-composite structure and 3D-printed components, it signals India's leadership in next-gen space innovation.

STONES THAT SHAPED CIVILISATIONS

From the newly inscribed Sarnath to the rock-cut caves of Ajanta and Ellora, majestic forts, intricately carved temples and monumental complexes, India's UNESCO-recognised architectural marvels reflect millennia of artistic brilliance, engineering excellence and cultural evolution, preserving the nation's rich civilisational legacy for generations.



Echoes Of An EMPIRE

Temples, rivers and ruins reveal the enduring grandeur of the Vijayanagara empire at Hampi, Karnataka.

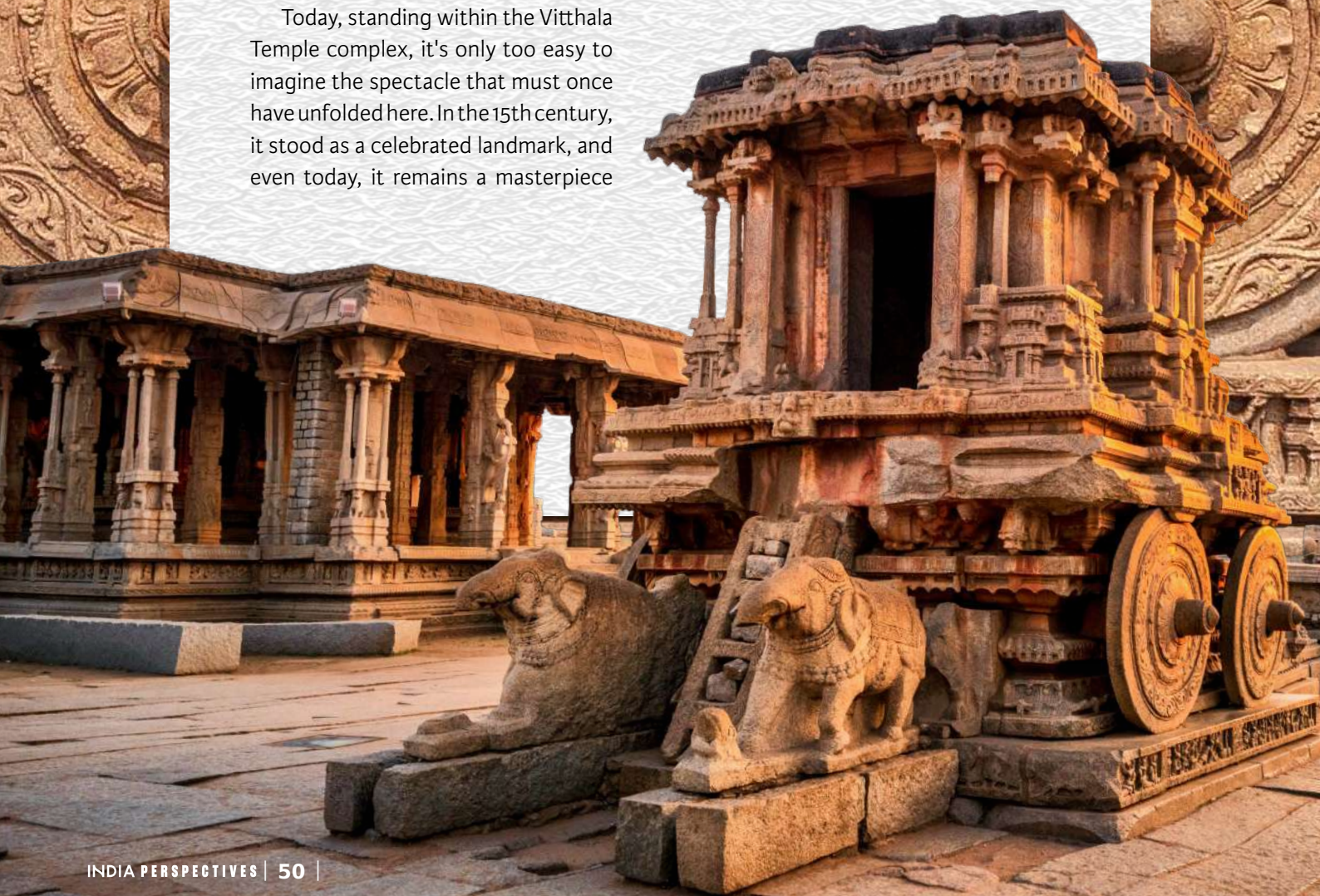
By Ami Bhat

The stone wheels of a grand chariot crunch across the carriageway leading to the Vitthala Temple. Majestic and bejewelled elephants lead the chariot of Garuda, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, as a gentle melody from the musical pillars of the Ranga Mandapa welcomes the dawn procession. That is what the past may have looked like.

Today, standing within the Vitthala Temple complex, it's only too easy to imagine the spectacle that must once have unfolded here. In the 15th century, it stood as a celebrated landmark, and even today, it remains a masterpiece

and an enduring symbol of the mighty Vijayanagara Empire.

The temple is just one of the many awe-inspiring monuments of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi, the capital of the erstwhile Vijayanagara Empire. Spread across



nearly 42 sq km, this ancient city is dotted with exquisite temples and clearly demarcated royal, military and public spaces.

A Glorious Capital

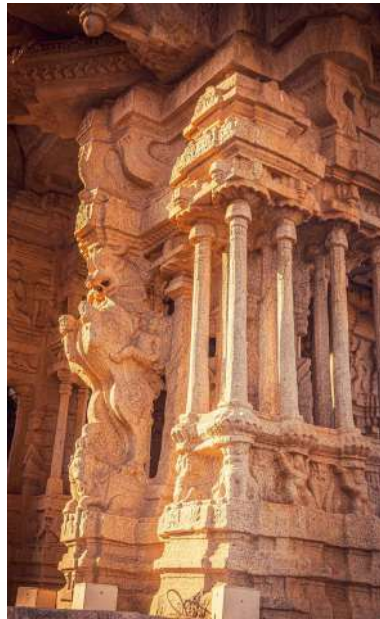
Between the 14th and 16th centuries, Hampi was a picture of wealth and prosperity. Portuguese and Persian travellers have chronicled it as one of the world's most magnificent cities, with rich bazaars and stunning temple architecture. It fell from its zenith after the Battle of Talikota (1565 AD), followed by months of plundering, with the capital city left in ruins.

Exploring the ruins of the city is a fascinating experience. Boulders give way to gateways and courtyards with magnificent structures. And the two distinct parts of the city, the sacred and the royal, become evident. Dominating the religious section is one of the oldest living temples of India. Dating back to the 7th century, the Virupaksha Temple stands tall with its nine-storeyed *gopuram*. A riverside trail that begins here weaves through the remnants of an ancient bazaar, noblemen's homes, and culminates at the Vitthala Temple.

Another path from the Virupaksha Temple leads past Hampi's natural

LINGER AROUND

Hampi does not reveal itself in a day or two. The longer one lingers, the more the lost empire seems to whisper through overlooked friezes and hidden bas-reliefs. Days unfold between the Vitthala Temple, the royal enclosure and the riverside ruins, before ending atop Hemakuta Hill.



and structured defensive walls to the Royal Enclosure, where a gargantuan Ugra Narasimha statue stands, dominating the landscape. It is the city's sophisticated water management system that astonishes as well. The intricate network of aqueducts, channels and canals around the Queen's Bath and the stepped tank near the Mahanavami Dibba reveals a hydraulic mastery far ahead of its time.

Carvings and Shrines

Just beyond the Royal Enclosures, the Patabhirama Temple stands in serene grandeur with its intricately carved pillars. Along the banks of river Tungabhadra, the ruins reveal clusters of Shiva lingas etched onto flat rocks.

Across the river is another mythological connection of Hampi. Believed to be Kishkindha, the Vanara kingdom from the Ramayana, the boulder hills hides the caves where it is said Lord Rama and Lakshmana met Sugriva. Additionally, here is the Anjanadri Temple that might have been the birthplace of Lord Hanumana. There's also the Pampa Sarovar named after Goddess Parvati, also known as Pampa, from whom Hampi itself takes its name.

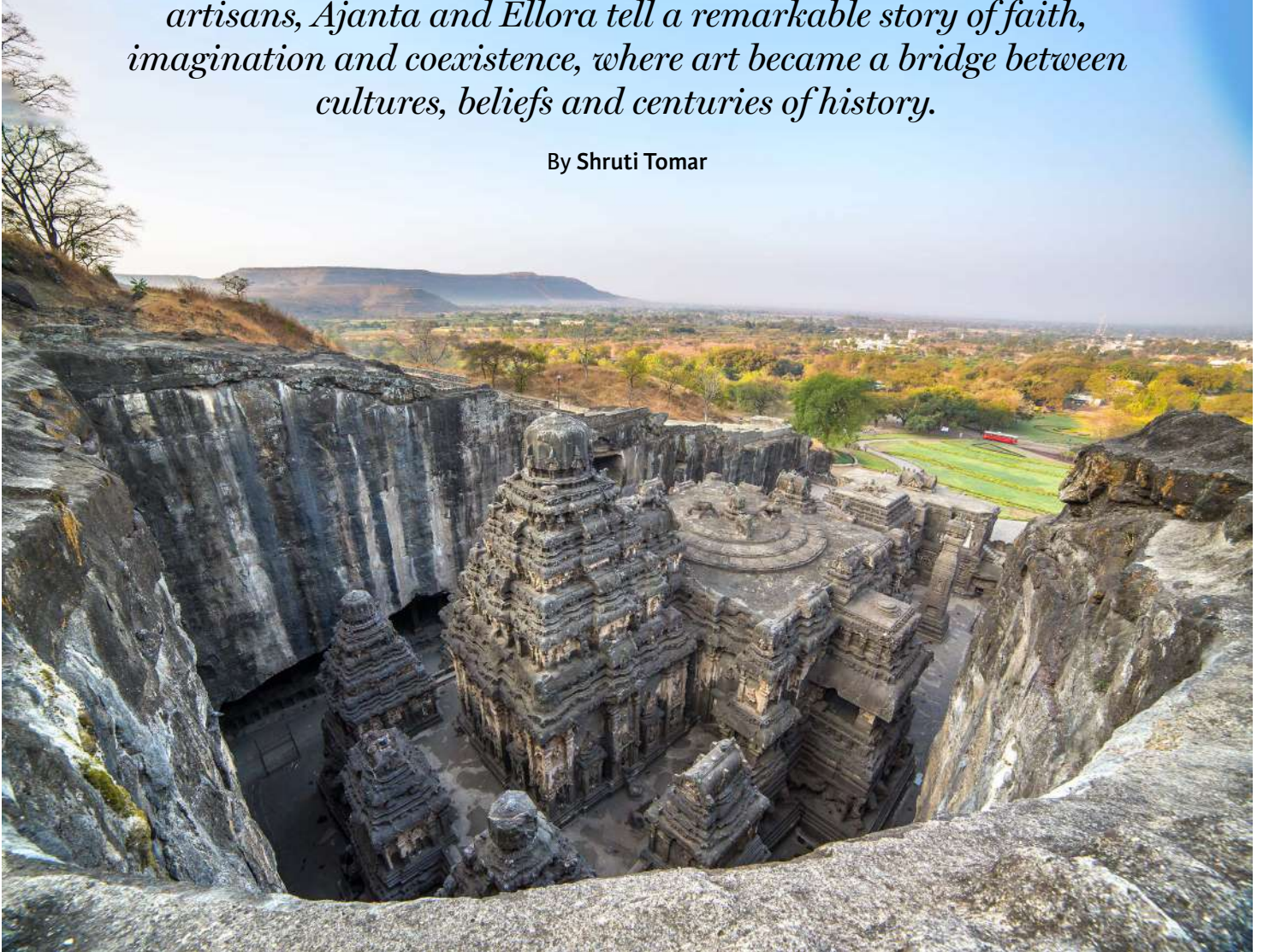


Ami Bhat is an experienced travel writer and blogger. Besides travel, she enjoys sports, photography and dancing.

A 1,000-YEAR Story In Stone

Carved into mountain sides and shaped by generations of artisans, Ajanta and Ellora tell a remarkable story of faith, imagination and coexistence, where art became a bridge between cultures, beliefs and centuries of history.

By Shruti Tomar



Set amid the rugged landscapes of Maharashtra, the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Ajanta and Ellora offer a remarkable window into India's artistic brilliance, spiritual traditions and culture of coexistence. Created over nearly eight centuries, these rock-cut caves showcase some of the world's finest ancient architecture, intricate sculptures and paintings.

Masterpieces of Buddhist Art

The Ajanta Caves encompass 30 rock-cut caves carved into a cliff above the Waghora River in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district. These caves were constructed in two separate phases, starting under the Satavahana dynasty (2nd–1st century BCE) embodying the Hinayana tradition of Buddhism and the second during



the Vakataka dynasty reign (5th–6th century CE), when Mahayana Buddhism inspired a new wave of artistic and architectural expression.

Despite following the principles of two different sects of Buddhism, these caves are celebrated globally for their mural paintings, considered masterpieces of Buddhist religious art that illustrate Buddhist legends in a manner exclusive to Indian art. The paintings have exerted significant artistic influence across India and beyond, particularly in Indonesia.

Confluence of Religions in Stone

Around 100 km from Ajanta, carved into a towering basalt escarpment near Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar in Maharashtra, Ellora comprises 34 rock-cut monasteries and temples stretching over 2 km. Created between the 6th and 10th centuries CE, the cave complex is an extraordinary feat of engineering and artistic achievement. With monuments dedicated to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, Ellora stands as a powerful symbol of ancient India's spirit of religious

DID YOU KNOW

There are **30 caves** in total. These caves are classified into two main types: **chaityas** (prayer halls) and **viharas** (monasteries). The **chaityas** are characterised by their vaulted ceilings, intricately carved pillars and large stupa structures, which served as focal points for Buddhist worship. The **viharas**, on the other hand, are rectangular halls with multiple small cells, providing living quarters for monks.



tolerance and cultural coexistence.

The most impressive temple at Ellora is Kailasa housed inside cave 16, which is the largest monolithic temple in India. Unlike other temples, Kailasa was built exposed to sunlight and exhibits four levels with carved halls, doorways, stairs, windows and life-size sculptures of elephants. The sculpture depicting Ravana attempting to lift Mount Kailasa is especially noteworthy.

Both cave complexes demonstrate India's ancient tradition of religious co-existence and serve as testaments to ancient India's socio-cultural phenomena, material culture, politics, and lifestyles, preserving nearly 800 years of art and architectural pursuit.



Shruti Tomar is a senior author, penning articles on culture, lifestyle and travel. She has extensively written for *Femina*, *Good Housekeeping* and other national publications.

Where Stone REMEMBERS

Mandu, the celebrated city of old-school romance in Madhya Pradesh, is renowned for its spectacular architecture and evocative ruins.

Mandu, in Madhya Pradesh, is a city woven from poetry, stone and legend. A place where love stories linger in the wind, grand palaces mirror themselves in still waters, and history unfolds against sweeping horizons. But it is during the monsoon that Mandu truly comes alive. Cloaked in drifting mists atop the Vindhya escarpment, the ancient citadel transforms into a dreamscape of rain-washed ruins, emerald valleys and cascading waterfalls. Its pavilions seem to float above the clouds, while every weathered arch and crumbling wall whispers the timeless romance of King Baz Bahadur and Rani Roopmati.

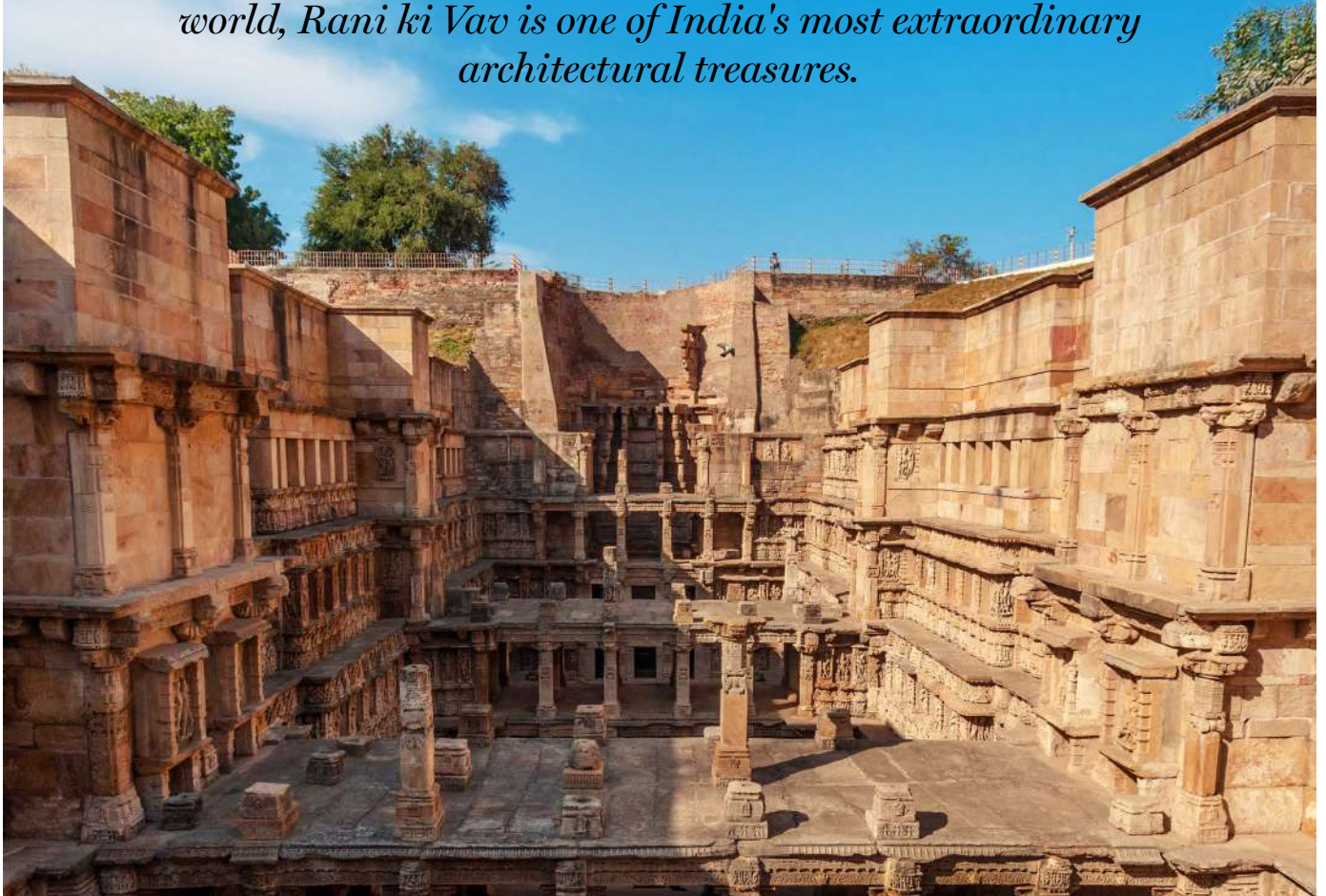
The Group of Monuments at Mandu

comprises 61 protected structures that together narrate a remarkable chapter of India's medieval past. Among its earliest remnants are the Lohani Caves, whose rock-cut chambers hint at a thriving sacred landscape. The city's architectural splendour unfolds through landmarks such as Dilawar Khan's Mosque, Hindola Mahal and the iconic Jahaz Mahal, which appears to sail between two water bodies. Equally captivating are the marble-clad Tomb of Hoshang Shah, the majestic Jami Masjid and Asharfi Mahal. Yet Mandu's most enduring legacy is its romance, embodied by Baz Bahadur's Palace and Rani Roopmati's Pavilion overlooking the distant Narmada River.



Stepping Towards ETERNITY

Hidden beneath the earth yet celebrated across the world, Rani ki Vav is one of India's most extraordinary architectural treasures.



Some monuments rise towards the sky; others descend into the depths of human imagination. Rani ki Vav in Patan, Gujarat, is one such marvel. It's a subterranean masterpiece where art, masterful engineering and devotion converge beneath the earth's surface.

Situated on the banks of the Saraswati River, this extraordinary stepwell was commissioned in the 11th century by Queen Udayamati in memory of her husband, King Bhimdev I. Designed in the ornate Maru-Gurjara architectural style, it takes the form of an inverted temple, inviting visitors on a symbolic journey downward through seven intricately carved levels.

In this monument, every step reveals a new layer of artistic brilliance. The monument is adorned with over 500 principal sculptures and countless decorative motifs depicting deities, celestial beings and scenes from mythology.

Recognising its outstanding cultural significance, UNESCO inscribed Rani ki Vav as a World Heritage Site in 2014. Two years later, it earned another distinction by being named India's "Cleanest Iconic Place" at the Indian Sanitation Conference (INDOSAN).

Today, Rani ki Vav remains a timeless testament to India's architectural ingenuity, an elegant monument where water, worship and artistry flow together.

BEYOND The MASK



Blending sculpture, painting and storytelling, India's prosthetic artists are elevating cinematic transformation into a remarkable form of contemporary visual art.

By Preetisheel Singh D'Souza

In an age dominated by AI and digital wizardry, the most convincing transformations still begin with human hands, sculpted textures, and stories etched into skin. Cinema has always been a medium of illusion. Yet some of its most memorable transformations are not born inside a computer but crafted painstakingly by artists who understand the language of skin, hair, texture, age and emotion. Behind every unforgettable screen character lies an intricate design process that blends sculpture, biology, chemistry, storytelling and artistic intuition.

A recent example being actor Ranveer Singh's haunting, ghost-like appearance in *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*, which was created using intensive, handcrafted prosthetics rather than CGI.

Today, as audiences marvel at increasingly sophisticated visual

RIGHT MATTER

Prosthetic artistry combines traditional sculpting with advanced materials to create lifelike cinematic transformations. Artists work with clay to sculpt designs, make precision **moulds using plaster or silicone**, and cast appliances in silicone, foam latex, or gelatin. Airbrushing, hand painting, hair punching, texturing, and seamless blending complete realistic characters.

effects, a quieter revolution continues behind the scenes. Character designers, prosthetic artists and makeup visionaries are proving that tactile craftsmanship remains irreplaceable. Their work does more than alter appearances; it builds believable human histories.

For these artists, transformation isn't about disguising an actor. It is about designing a life.

Designing a Human

One of the biggest misconceptions about on-screen character transformation of an actor is that it begins and ends with makeup. In reality, makeup is merely one component within a much larger design ecosystem.

Every convincing character is built through a combination of skin texture, hair design, facial structure, colour theory, prosthetics, grooming





patterns and environmental storytelling. The challenge is achieving harmony among these elements so that none feels artificial or overpowering.

Real people are imperfect. Their skin carries traces of sun exposure, uneven pigmentation, broken capillaries, pores, scars and countless subtle details accumulated over years. Character designers replicate these layers meticulously, creating surfaces that feel lived-in rather than painted-on.

The objective is deceptively simple: audiences should never notice the craft

itself. Instead, they should believe they are looking at a real person who has inhabited that face for decades. This philosophy transforms makeup from decoration into design thinking.

Sculpture Meets Biology

Prosthetic artistry occupies a unique space between science and art. The process begins with highly technical procedures including life casting, mould-making, sculpting, silicone fabrication, hair ventilation and colour layering. Yet despite these engineered foundations, the final result must feel real and alive.

Designers spend considerable time studying facial anatomy and muscle movement. A prosthetic appliance cannot simply look realistic; it must move realistically. The slightest restriction in expression can break the illusion instantly. Similarly, wigs and facial hair are designed with intentional imperfections.

Hair density varies naturally. Growth patterns are irregular. Hairlines are rarely symmetrical. Artists deliberately introduce these imperfections because perfection often appears artificial on screen.

The success of a transformation lies in making viewers forget the technical complexity that made it possible.

The Ghost Born of Shadows

One of the most striking recent examples of transformation design

Amitabh Bachchan's Kalki 2898 AD transformation required three hours of prosthetic application and two hours of removal daily.

in Indian cinema was the creation of Ranveer Singh's haunting "Ghost Born of Shadows" look in the film *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*. Interestingly, the design relied not on prosthetics but entirely on makeup texture and visual psychology.

The creative brief centred around a fascinating concept of a character that feels like a hallucination, someone existing somewhere between reality and imagination.

To achieve this, we built the look using desaturated colour palettes and intricate texture work. Cracked-surface effects introduced visual fragmentation, allowing light and shadow to interact unpredictably across the face. Under cinematic lighting, the textures generated depth without requiring additional physical appliances.

The result demonstrates an important principle of character design: transformation is not determined by the amount of makeup applied but by how effectively visual elements support storytelling.

Iconic Characters

Prosthetic character creation is a meticulous, multi-stage process that blends artistry with technical precision. It begins with interpreting the director's brief and developing digital character designs. A 3D life cast of the actor is then created to capture every facial detail, providing the foundation for sculpting prosthetic pieces. Depending on the character, separate appliances may be crafted for the cheeks, nose, chin, hands, or even a full-body suit for creatures and monsters. The sculpting stage is critical, as it defines the final texture and details before molds are created.





Ranveer Singh's haunting *Dhurandhar 2* transformation used makeup and visual psychology to create a hallucinatory character.

Since molding materials require time to cure, the process cannot be rushed. Once the prosthetic appliances are ready, they are carefully applied to the actor with precise placement and meticulously coloured to blend seamlessly with the skin. Every stage demands patience, craftsmanship, and precision to create a convincing on-screen transformation.

The Invisible Art of Realism

Modern character artists increasingly favour transparent layering techniques over traditional heavy coverage. Alcohol-activated colours allow designers to build depth gradually, introducing subtle undertones, discolouration, and texture without masking natural skin characteristics.

Visible pores, tonal inconsistencies, and natural irregularities create authenticity. Under cinematic lighting, these transparent layers interact with highlights and shadows in ways that mimic real skin, preserving dimensionality while enhancing characterisation.

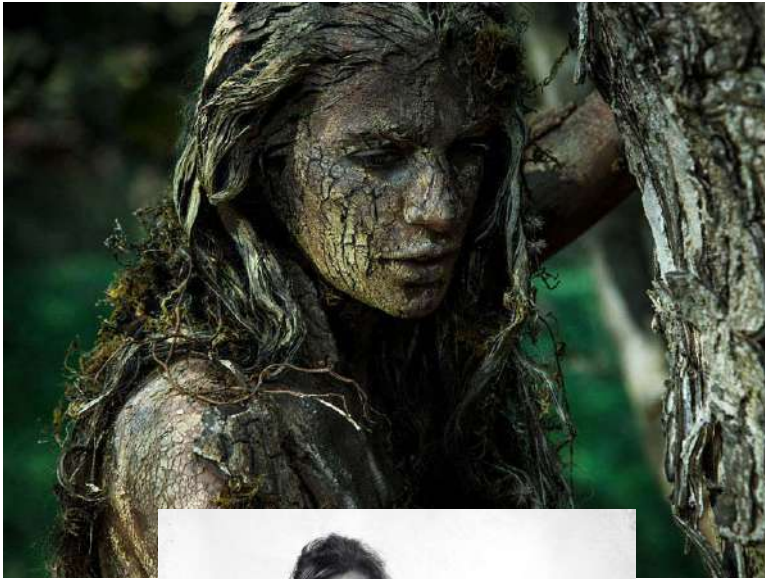
Hair functions as a powerful narrative tool. Whether maintained meticulously or left neglected, it provides insight into a character's inner world. The goal is to embed biography into appearance.

When viewers feel they can read a character's past simply by looking at them, design transcends aesthetics and becomes storytelling.

Why the Craft Still Matters

As Artificial Intelligence and visual effects continue reshaping filmmaking, questions inevitably arise about the future of practical artistry.

Yet, physical character design offers something digital tools still struggle to replicate: presence. When actors physically wear a transformation, they interact with it emotionally and psychologically. The experience changes



Actor Anushka Manchanda's tree transformation for a music video included full-body camouflage makeup

When actors physically wear a transformation, they interact with it emotionally and psychologically.

posture, movement, confidence and performance. The transformation becomes tangible. This is why many filmmakers increasingly favour hybrid workflows that combine practical craftsmanship with digital enhancement. The future belongs not to one discipline but to collaboration.

India on the Global Stage

Indian character artistry is entering an exciting new chapter. For decades, artists often worked under tight budgets and more demanding timelines than many international productions. Yet those constraints frequently encouraged innovation and resourcefulness.

Today, increased access to advanced materials, technologies and specialised training is enabling Indian artists to push creative boundaries further. More importantly, filmmakers and audiences alike are beginning to recognise character design as a vital storytelling discipline rather than a purely cosmetic service. The result is a growing body of work that stands confidently alongside international standards.

As Indian cinema continues to evolve, its character artists are proving that world-class design is not defined by geography or resources alone. It is defined by imagination, craftsmanship, and an unwavering commitment to quality storytelling.

And in that respect, the future looks remarkably transformative.



Preetisheel Singh D'Souza is a National Award-winning prosthetic artist and character designer renowned for transformative cinematic makeup.

The Handmade ADVANTAGE

India's greatest design strength lies in its living heritage, where creativity is part of everyday life, woven into homes, textiles, traditions and collective memory. The future of Indian design lies not in choosing between heritage and innovation, but in seamlessly blending both.

By Masaba Gupta



India produces about **95% of the world's handwoven fabric** and supports **millions** of traditional **artisans**.

There was a time when design was viewed as something exclusive, confined to galleries, runways, luxury homes and special occasions. Today, design has become one of the most democratic forces shaping our lives. It influences what we wear, how we decorate our spaces, the objects we interact with and even the emotions we experience daily.

For me, design has never been merely about aesthetics. It is a powerful expression of identity. In a world that often gravitates towards uniformity, design allows us to create distinction. Whether through fashion, beauty, interiors, or art, the most compelling design is that which tells a story long before it is spoken.

Sometimes a melody creates a mood that translates directly into a visual language. This is why creativity cannot be reduced to a formula.

Indian Design Heritage

Unlike the West, where design was historically treated as a distinct discipline, in India design has long been woven into the fabric of everyday life. It has always existed naturally in the objects, rituals, and environments that surround us. From the intricate carvings on household utensils and handcrafted door handles to the vibrant colours of a rural woman's attire, the symbolism of her jewellery, and the architecture of places of worship, design has always been an integral part of our daily living.

It is from this living tradition that India's enduring design vocabulary emerges. Astrology, temple architecture, regional crafts, traditional motifs, handwoven textiles





Across the world, there is a renewed appreciation for handwoven textiles, embroidery traditions, artisanal techniques and regional crafts.

and everyday cultural symbols all form part of a design communication that remains incredibly relevant. The challenge lies not in preserving these elements exactly as they are, but in reinterpreting them for a contemporary audience. When interpreted with creativity and authenticity, these cultural elements transcend nostalgia and history, evolving into living expressions of heritage that resonate with the young generation.

A song can inspire a colour palette, a campaign, a silhouette, or an entire design collection. Sometimes a melody creates a mood that translates directly into a visual language. This is why creativity cannot be reduced to a formula. Design is not simply about making things look beautiful but about creating an emotional response. It is about capturing a moment, a memory, a mood, or a cultural shift and translating it into something tangible.

Return of the Handmade

This idea of reinterpretation becomes especially important at a time when the world is rediscovering the value of the handmade. Ironically, as technology becomes more sophisticated and automation more pervasive, people are increasingly drawn to craftsmanship and objects that bear the imprint of human touch.

Across the world, there is a renewed appreciation for handwoven textiles, embroidery traditions, artisanal techniques and regional crafts that machines simply cannot replicate. India is uniquely positioned in this shift. From our embroideries like Kantha and Phulkari to Ikat, to traditional Channapatna toys, and countless weaving



In the 1960s, the film **Mughal-E-Azam** made the floor-length Anarkali suit an enduring style icon.



traditions, our textile and craft heritage embodies generations of skill, creativity and cultural memory.

And these traditions are not relics preserved in museums behind glass. They are living knowledge systems with immense contemporary relevance. As mass production becomes the norm, handmade work will only grow in value, not just for its uniqueness but for the stories, identities and human connections it carries.

The opportunity before us is not merely to protect these traditions, but to continually reinvent them and allow them to evolve with changing tastes while retaining the essence that makes them timeless.

What AI Can't Do

No discussion about design today can avoid the subject of Artificial Intelligence (AI). There is understandable excitement around what technology can achieve. AI is transforming workflows, accelerating research, improving efficiency and making businesses more agile. These developments are important and should be embraced.



However, creativity operates differently. Design is ultimately rooted in human experience. It is shaped by joy, heartbreak, nostalgia, anxiety, curiosity, ambition and countless other emotions that define our lives. Technology can analyse patterns and process information at extraordinary speed, but it cannot genuinely experience these emotions. The creative process is not simply about generating possibilities but about interpreting what it means to be human.

That is why I see AI as a powerful tool rather than a replacement for creativity. It can support research, streamline operations, enhance presentations, manage data and improve decision-making. But the intuition, empathy, and emotional intelligence that give design its depth and meaning remain distinctly human qualities.



Ancient Roots

India's textile heritage is among the world's oldest, with cotton cultivation dating back nearly 9,000 years. Over centuries, Indian artisans mastered spinning, weaving, dyeing, printing and embroidery, creating fabrics celebrated for their quality, craftsmanship and artistic expression across cultures.

The Art of Weaving

For more than five centuries, Gujarat served as India's leading centre of textile innovation. As Gujarati weavers travelled across the subcontinent, they spread weaving techniques and technologies that shaped regional traditions. From simple plain weaves, where warp and weft intersect in balanced patterns, to intricate draw-loom producing luxurious velvets and patterned silks, Indian weaving evolved into a remarkable blend of skill and creativity.

Natural Colours

Indigo, extracted from the *Indigofera* plant, has coloured Indian textiles for thousands of years. Unlike many dyes, indigo naturally bonds with fabric without requiring a mordant, although preparing and applying it demands exceptional expertise. Its rich blue shades became synonymous with Indian craftsmanship and were prized worldwide.

Patterns and Embroidery

Woodblock printing flourished in northern and western India, producing vibrant motifs on cotton fabrics. Equally renowned is India's embroidery tradition, with distinctive regional styles including *aari work*, *kantha*, *phulkari*, etc.



In many ways, the rise of AI makes human creativity even more valuable. As technology takes over routine tasks, originality, perspective and authentic storytelling will become the true differentiators. The future of design will belong not to those who choose between technology and creativity, but to those who learn to combine technological capability with emotional authenticity.



Masaba Gupta is a well-known design entrepreneur and actor. Her portfolio encompasses diverse clothing lines, from Indian wedding solutions to festive wear and luxe resort wear.

India On A GREEN TRACK

India's first indigenous hydrogen-powered train signals a cleaner, self-reliant future for sustainable rail transportation.



Indian Railways has entered a new era of clean transportation as India's first indigenous hydrogen-powered train has started operating on the Jind-Sonipat section in Haryana, following its July 17, 2026 inauguration. Joining countries like Germany, Japan, China, and the US, India advances Atmanirbhar Bharat with this pilot project. The 10-car fuel cell-based trainset generates electricity onboard using a 1,200 kW propulsion system.

Carrying approximately 2,600 passengers, it operates at 75 kmph with a 110 kmph speed. Connecting Jind and Sonipat, the train demonstrates feasible, energy-efficient and clean rail transport.

The Enduring Legacy Of INDIA POST

From dak runners to digital networks, how one of India's oldest institutions continues to bind a billion lives

By **Vandita Kaul**

In an age dominated by instant messages, digital wallets and same-day deliveries, it is easy to assume that the humble post office belongs to a bygone era. Yet few institutions have adapted to change as successfully or served India as consistently as India Post.

More than a communication network, the postal system has been a witness to India's evolution through empires, colonial rule, Independence, economic transformation and digital revolution. Officially established in 1854, India Post

today stands as one of the world's largest postal networks, reaching the remotest corners of the country. Its story is not merely about letters and parcels. It is a story of nation-building, inclusion, trust and resilience.

Before the Post Office

The origins of organised communication in India predate the modern postal system by centuries.

From the Mauryan empire to the Mughal administration, rulers recognised



With over **1,55,000 post offices**, the DoP has the most widely distributed postal network in the world.

that governance depended upon communication. Messages travelled through networks of runners, horsemen, military routes and relay stations. Merchants exchanged bills and trade correspondence across regions, while kingdoms relied on messenger systems to maintain administrative control.

When the British formalised the Department of Posts in 1854, they were not creating communication from scratch; rather, they were institutionalising an idea deeply rooted in India's civilisational history.

The issuance of the first all-India postage stamp and the establishment of a standardised postal monopoly transformed communication from an elite administrative function into a public service.

World's Largest Network

At the time of its formal establishment, India had roughly 700 post offices. By Independence in 1947, the number had risen to around 22,000. Today, India Post operates around 1.65 lakh post offices, nearly 90 per cent of which are located in rural areas, reflecting access before profitability.

Unlike private logistics providers, India Post was never designed solely as a commercial enterprise. Its mandate was inclusion. Whether serving Himalayan villages, desert settlements, forest communities or island territories, the institution's purpose has been to ensure that no citizen remains disconnected. In many regions, the post office arrived long before roads, banks, or telecommunications, resulting in a network that is unmatched in scale and social significance.



THE ROAD AHEAD

The future of India Post will undoubtedly be shaped by Artificial Intelligence, geospatial technologies, digital addressing systems, smart logistics infrastructure and evolving customer expectations. Yet its mission remains remarkably unchanged from the vision that inspired its creation more than 170 years ago. From handwritten letters carried by *dak* runners across difficult terrain to digitally tracked parcels moving through logistics networks, India Post has continually evolved while preserving its essential character. As India charts its path into the future, the enduring legacy of India Post offers an important lesson: true institutions survive because they understand their purpose to change with the times.

Why it Still Matters

Historically, the institution has been far more innovative than many realised, pioneering savings accounts, introducing money transfer mechanisms, enabling insured parcels, and facilitating cash-on-delivery services long before modern e-commerce platforms popularised them.

As India moves towards 2047, conversations around infrastructure often focus on highways, airports, digital platforms, and smart cities. Yet institutions like India Post remain equally essential. Its importance lies not merely in what it delivers, but in whom it serves. Private logistics networks excel where demand exists. India Post operates where need exists.

This distinction explains why it continues to be indispensable.



Vandita Kaul is an Indian Postal Service officer, who served as Secretary of the Department of Posts and Chairperson of the Postal Services Board.

A STAR IS BORN

From Bihar's sleepy lanes to the grand stage of the IPL, and now international cricket, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is rewriting cricket's age limits.

By Robin Bose

From time to time, Indian cricket has witnessed generational prodigies, and the biggest name that rings a bell instantly is that of Bharat Ratna awardee Sachin Tendulkar. In the present era, cricket lovers are getting acquainted with a new name constantly hitting the headlines for the right reasons. It is Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

Born in the sleepy hamlet of Tajpur in Bihar's Samastipur district, the 15-year-old cricketing maverick is the son of an aspiring cricketer. His father, Sanjiv Sooryavanshi, could not give flight to his cricketing dreams but has made up for it admirably by standing rock solid behind his son's career from the start.

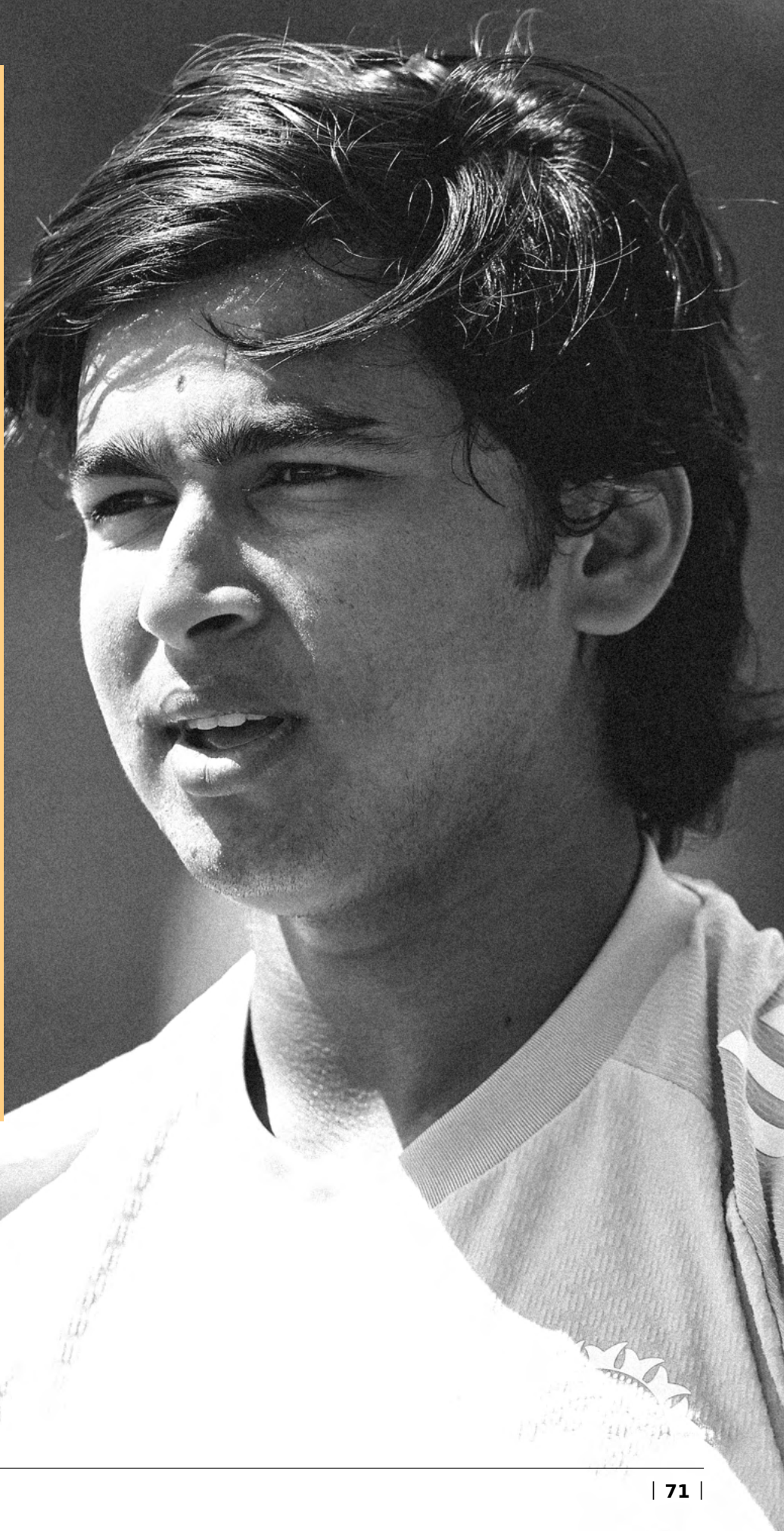


Sooryavanshi's love affair with cricket began at the age of four. By eight, he had joined coach Manish Ojha's GenNex Cricket Academy in Patna. The journey was anything but easy, both literally and figuratively. Travelling from Tajpur to Patna meant a gruelling 200-km round trip every alternate day for more than four years. The commute involved buses, trains and the family's second-hand car, often taking nearly three hours each way.

On days away from the academy, Sooryavanshi trained at home on a makeshift cement pitch built by his father. Those early mornings and endless journeys came long before anyone outside the district knew his name. Then came the breakthroughs. The youngest-ever Ranji Trophy debutant at 12, the youngest signing in Indian Premier League (IPL) at 13 and a string of milestones that left even seasoned cricketers in awe. When IPL team Rajasthan Royals placed its faith in a young boy from Bihar, they were betting on raw talent. Since then, Indian cricket has been trying to catch its breath.

Age Is Just a Number

The IPL is where careers are launched and reputations are forged. Sooryavanshi stepped into that





Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (right) with his Rajasthan Royals teammate right-handed batsman Dhruv Jurel

world at just 14. When Rajasthan Royals signed him in 2024, he not only became the youngest player ever to earn an IPL contract but also the first cricketer born after the tournament's inception in 2008 to be drafted into the league.

His opponents soon found out what he could do. His first ball in the IPL, bowled by Shardul Thakur, was hit for a six. There was no time to settle in or get a feel for the pitch. Sooryavanshi finished his debut match with 34 runs off 20 balls. He played seven matches, scored 252 runs and achieved a strike rate of 206.56. The youngest centurion in men's T20 history was still in school.

Fearless Cricket

Anyone watching Sooryavanshi bat for a few minutes will notice that he is not interested in waiting. Most young batsmen take time to settle down, read the bowler and get the



Sooryavanshi was honoured with the **Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar** in 2025.

eye in. But Sooryavanshi skips the traditional manual. His power is the first thing that stands out, but that is not the whole story. He is a calm and fearless batsman who hits difficult shots through the gaps easily and outsmarts any bowling strategy without even looking rushed. His composure is almost intimidating to opponents.

A Modern-Day Icon

Bihar's domestic circuit rolled out Sooryavanshi's first real test. At 12 years and 284 days, he played Ranji Trophy cricket against experienced senior players and it was the exposure that sharpened the young batsman faster than any training.

From there, it was the BCCI's Under-19 setup. More competition, more tours and more tournaments. Sooryavanshi's innings began to pop up on social media.



Sooryavanshi's meteoric rise rewrote IPL history books, earning him a TATA IPL contract with **Rajasthan Royals** worth a staggering ₹1.10 crore (approximately US\$ 115,283).

Exciting Future

In the 2026 IPL edition, he plundered 776 runs from 16 innings at a tremendous 237.30 strike rate. Then came his inclusion in the India 'A' squad for the June tri-series in Sri Lanka, making him the youngest to wear that badge in living memory. In the final, he smashed a record-breaking 94 off 29 balls, helping India A defeat Sri Lanka A by 66 runs to win the title.

There was a lull thereafter. Warming the bench during the overseas series against Ireland and a below-par showing on his international debut against England in the T20Is are vital building blocks that steel an athlete. Sooryavanshi showed that the lessons had been learnt well by going full throttle and bagging Player of the Series in the 3-0 T20I whitewash of Zimbabwe.

At 15, Sooryavanshi is on a record-roll and he is just *getting started*.

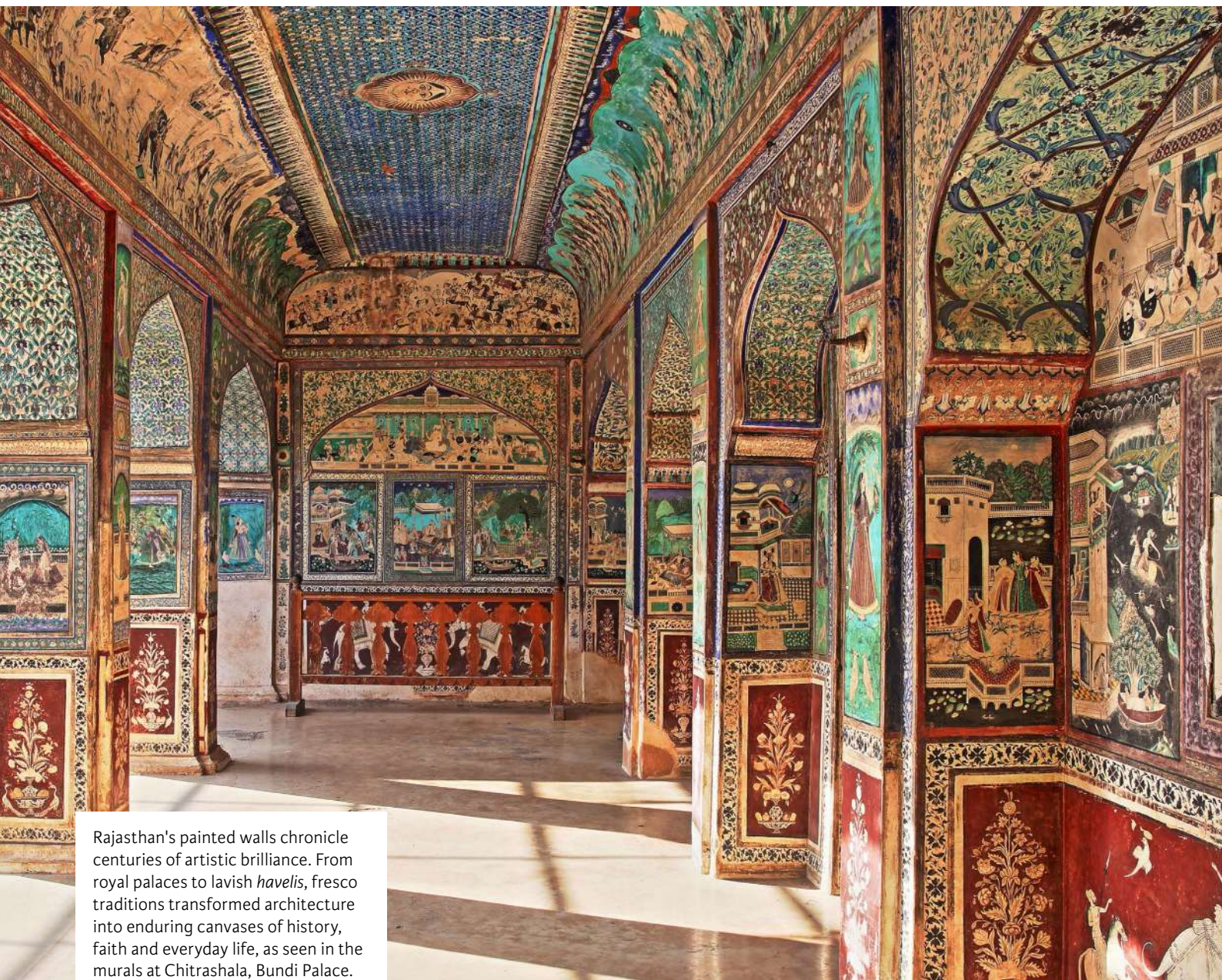


Robin Bose is a senior sports journalist who has reported for some of India's leading news outlets. In his free time, he enjoys playing golf.



WHAT THE WALLS REMEMBER

For centuries, Rajasthan's walls have served as living canvases, where palaces, havelis and temples preserve extraordinary mural traditions. From Bundi's dreamlike miniatures to Shekhawati's bustling facades, Rajasthan's murals trace shifting desires; devotional, commercial and personal.



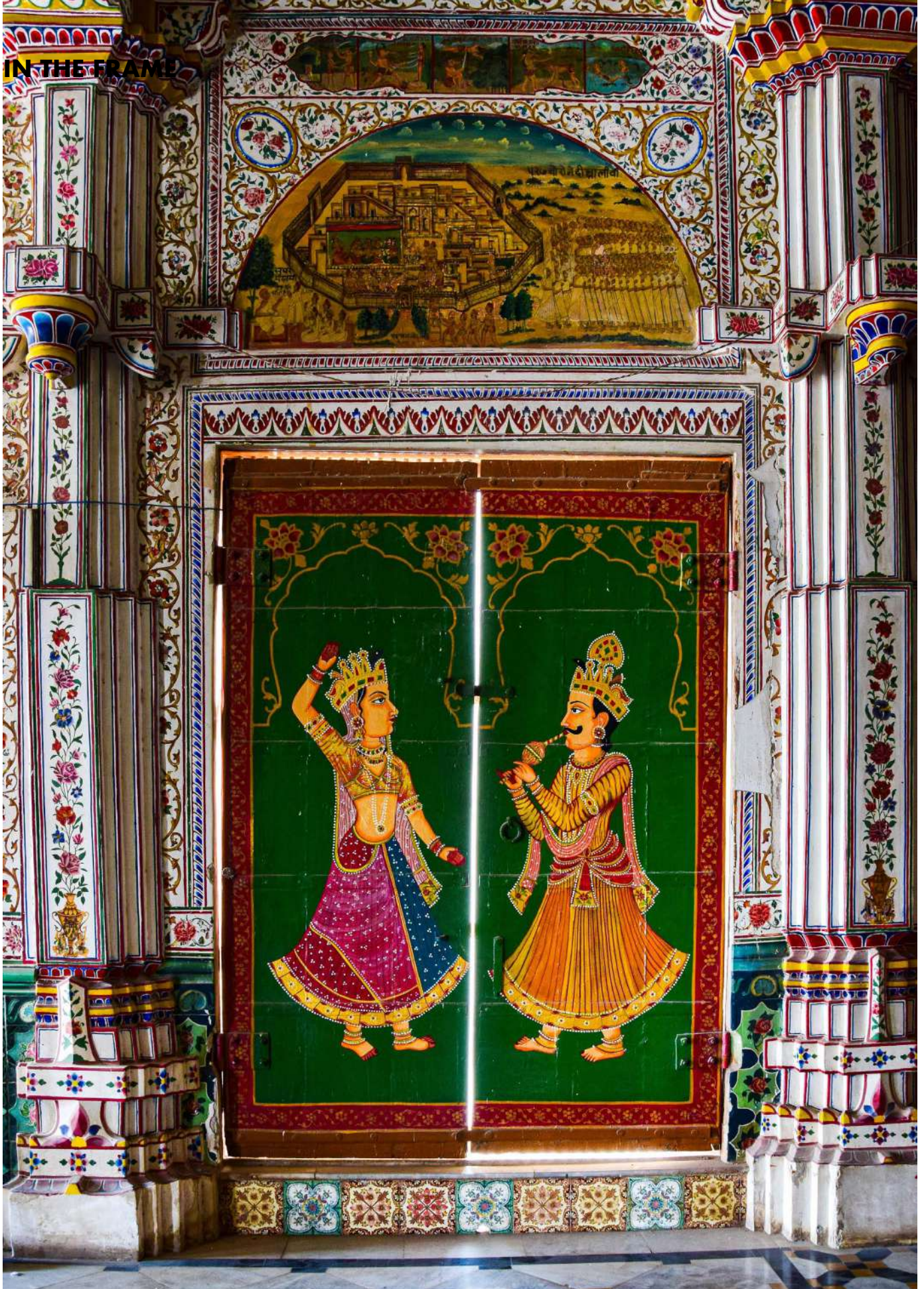
Rajasthan's painted walls chronicle centuries of artistic brilliance. From royal palaces to lavish *havelis*, fresco traditions transformed architecture into enduring canvases of history, faith and everyday life, as seen in the murals at Chitrashala, Bundi Palace.



(Top): In Shekhawati, merchant families carried the legacy of mural art beyond royal courts, adorning mansions like the Alsisar Mahal the region's Jhunjhunu city, with vibrant frescoes celebrating mythology, trade, travel and society.

(Bottom): Shekhawati's painted havelis earned the region its reputation as the world's largest open-air art gallery, where every façade narrates a story through colour and craftsmanship.

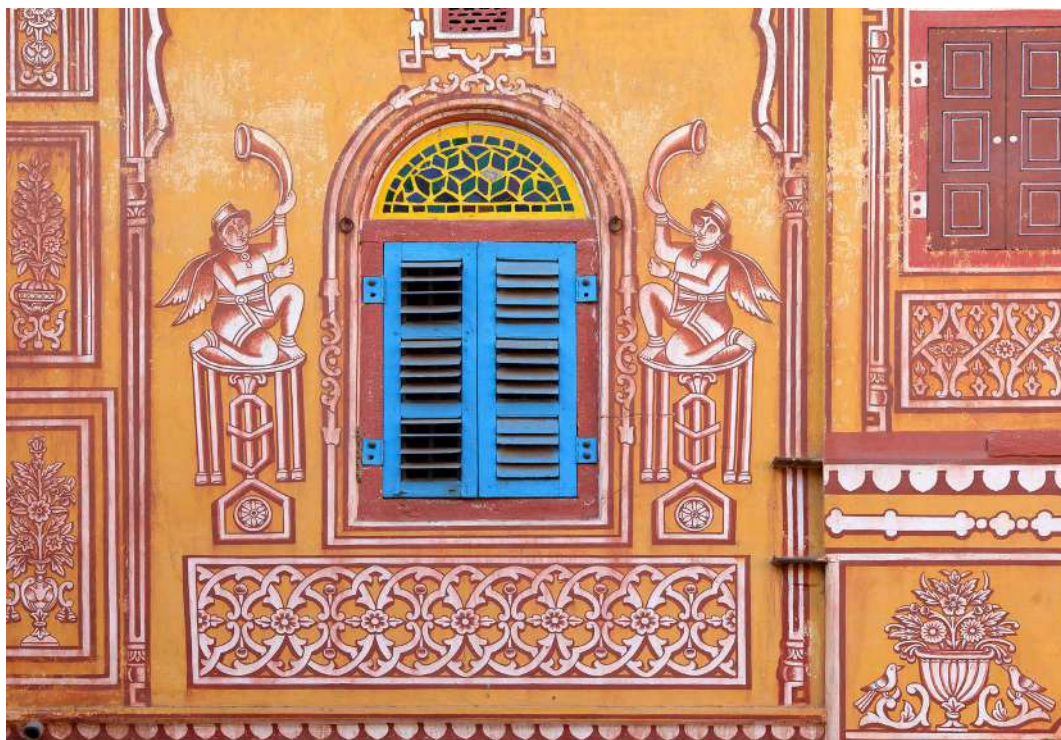




Decorative doors, such as this one in Bikaner, welcome visitors with floral motifs, deities and geometric patterns, reflecting the philosophy that art belongs in everyday life.



**Walls become storybooks, illustrating the
Ramayana, Mahabharata and Lord Krishna's life.**



(Top): Lord Krishna's legends are among the most enduring themes in Rajasthan's frescoes, as seen in this artwork from Bundi.

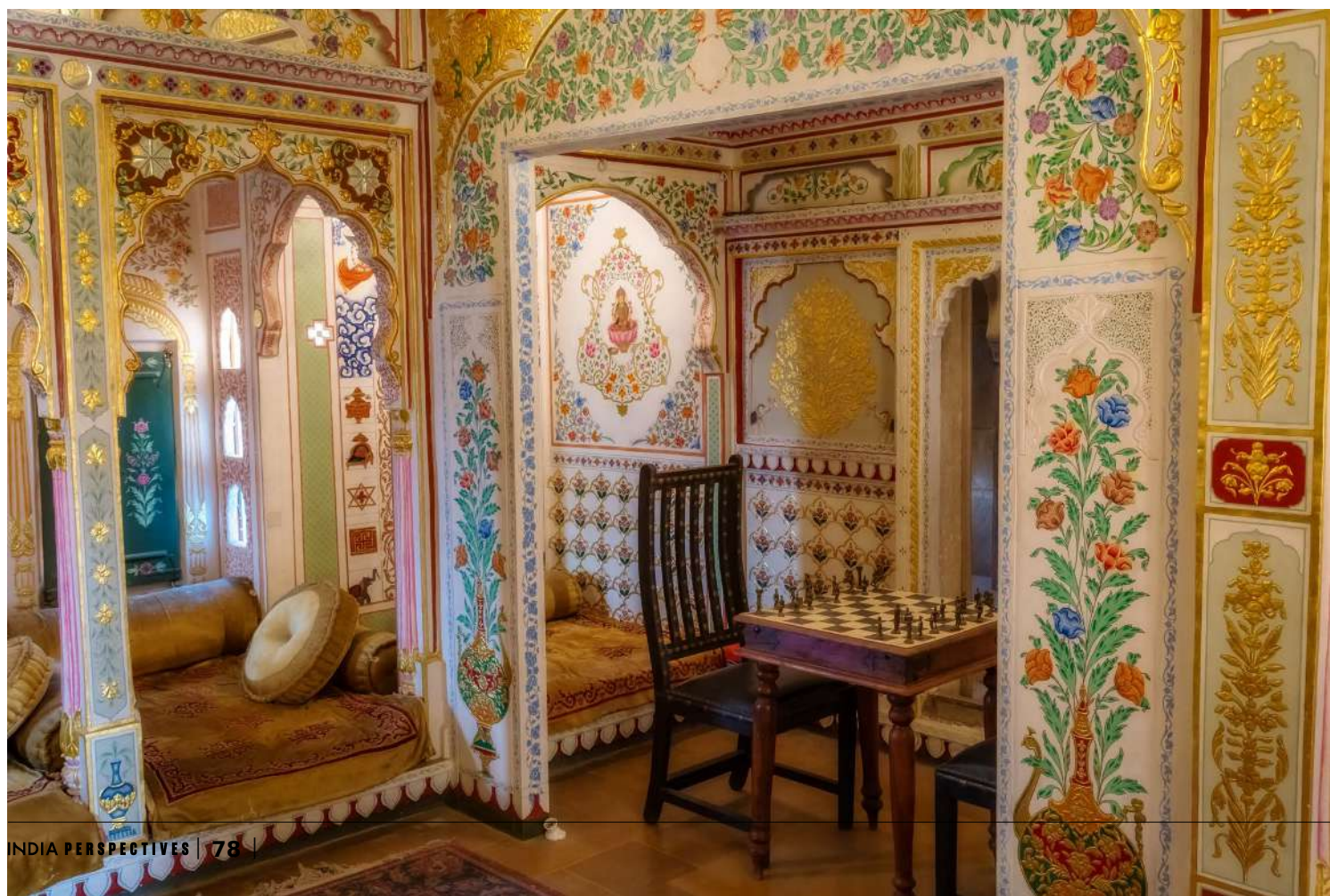
(Left): Temple walls extend this tradition, blending devotion with artistic mastery through colourful murals that brought sacred stories to life for generations of worshippers. Here is an intricate wall art from Sri Madhav Bihari Tanwarji temple in Jaipur.

IN THE FRAME



(Top): Prosperous Shekhawati merchants have long commissioned lavishly painted interiors, transforming private homes into immersive galleries, like this *haveli* in Nawalgarh.

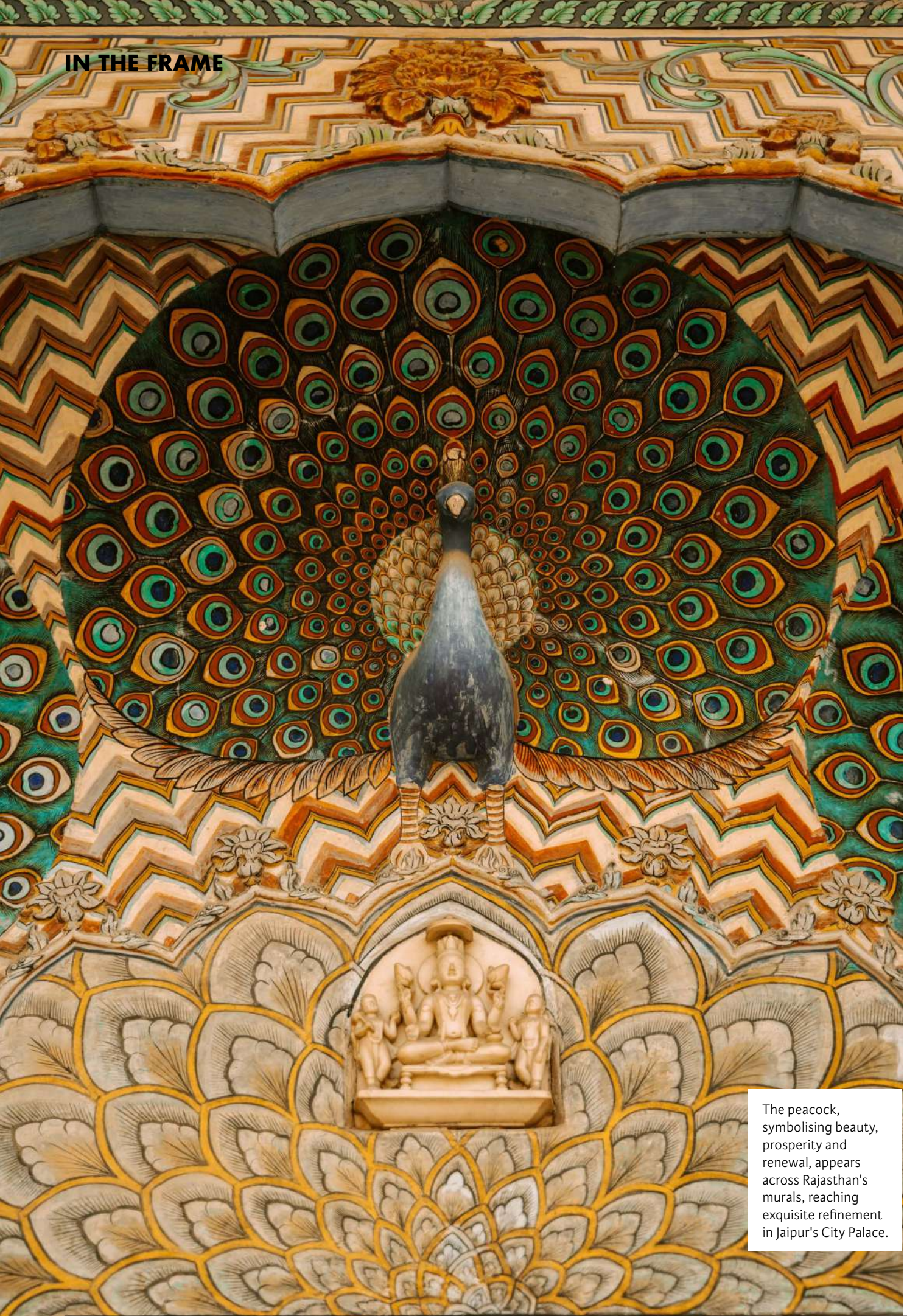
(Below): Known as the City of *Havelis*, Nawalgarh preserves one of Rajasthan's richest collections of frescoed mansions, temples and monuments in remarkable detail.



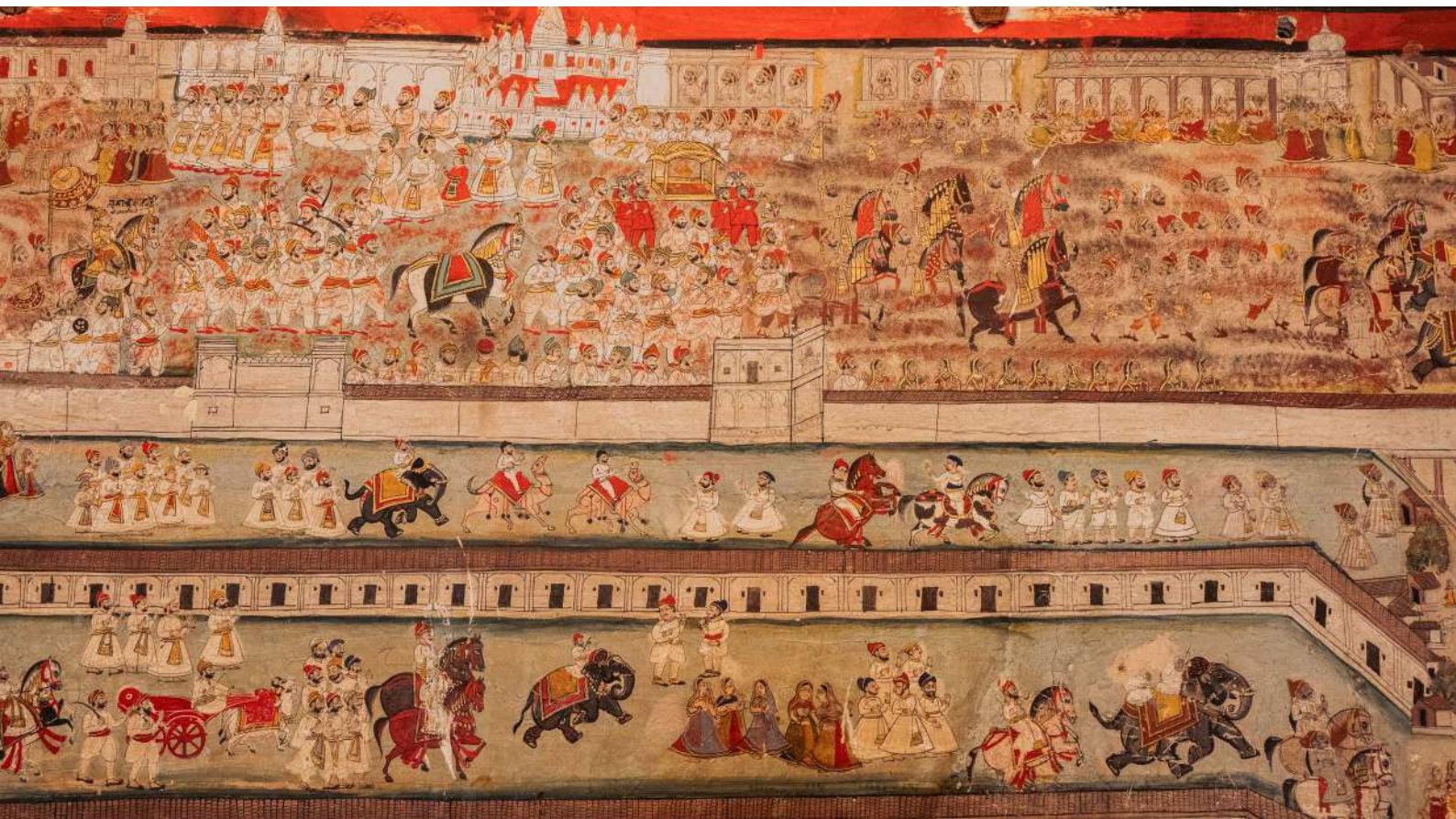
More than decoration, Rajasthan's murals tell complete stories through colour, symbolism and intricate narrative scenes across generations.



Heroes, horsemen and folklore became recurring themes, capturing Rajasthan's martial spirit while preserving community memories through expressive wall paintings.



The peacock, symbolising beauty, prosperity and renewal, appears across Rajasthan's murals, reaching exquisite refinement in Jaipur's City Palace.

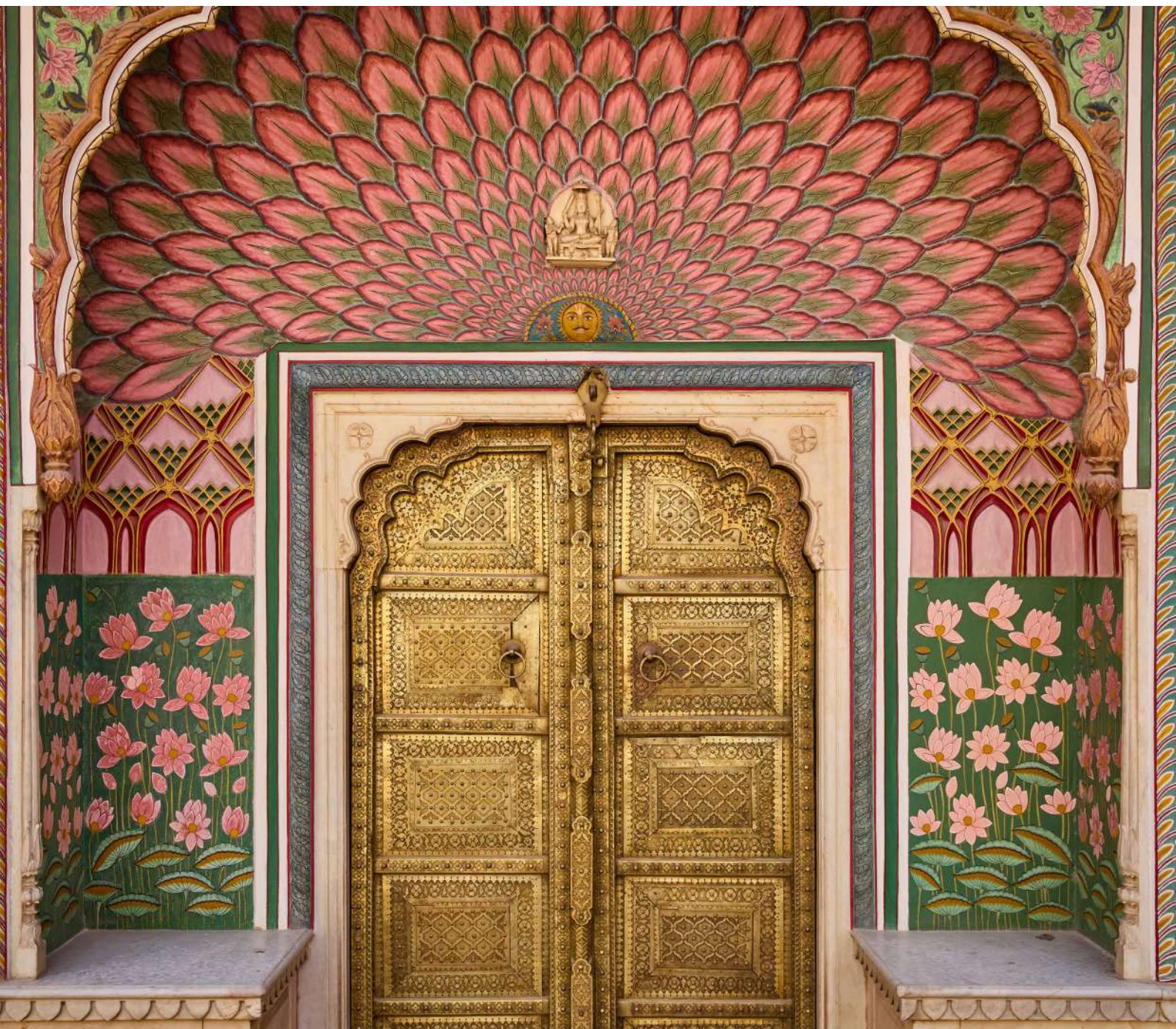


(Top): In Udaipur, delicate murals complement grand architecture, reflecting the Mewar court's enduring patronage of painting, craftsmanship and decorative arts.

(Bottom): Nagaur Fort's painted interiors, specially at *Diwan-e-Khas* or Hall of Private Audiences, reveal how fresco traditions flourished across royal centres, adapting regional styles while preserving exceptional artistic detail.

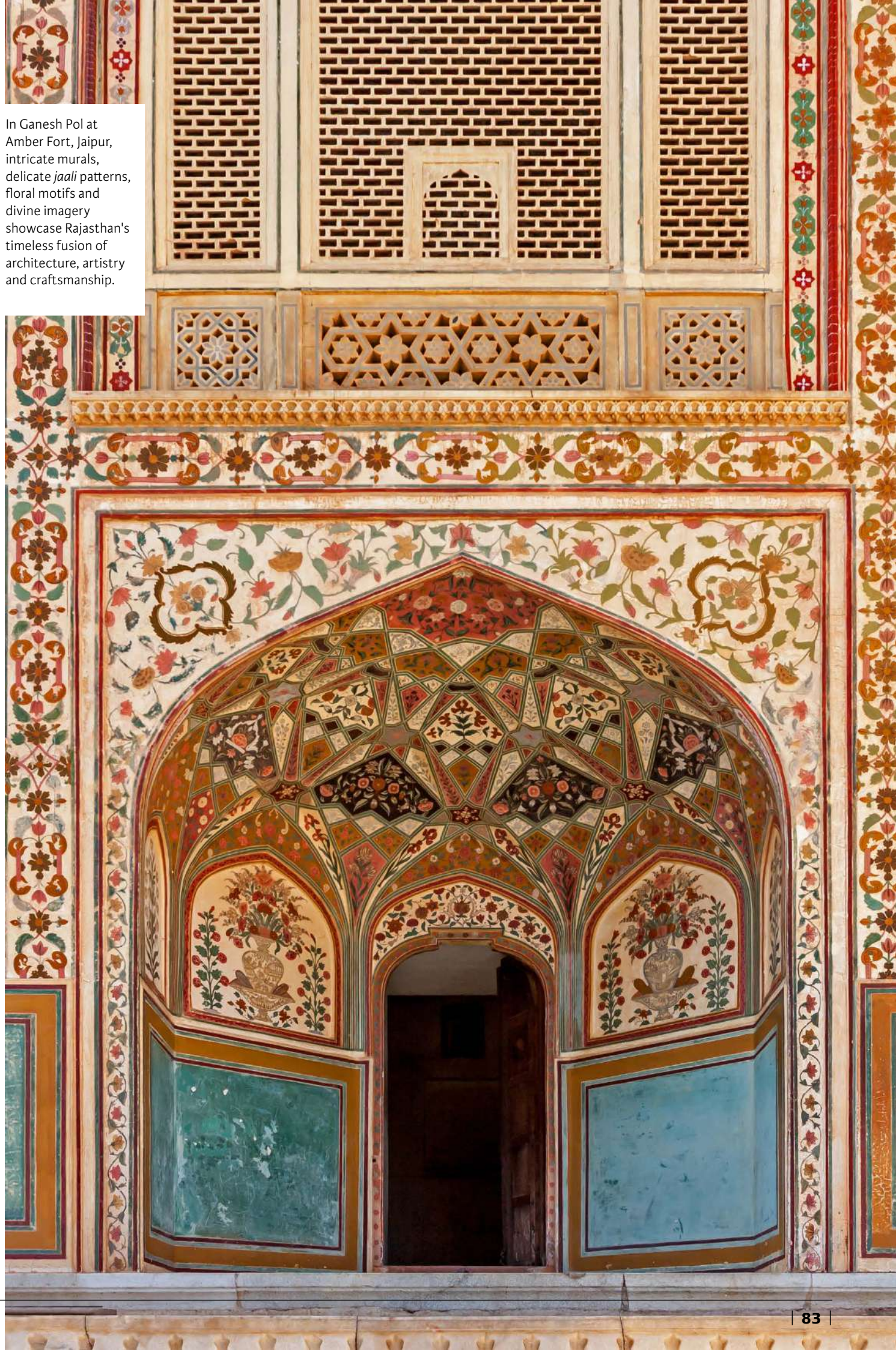


Natural pigments made from minerals, plants and precious stones lend Rajasthan's murals remarkable brilliance.



Painted gateways remind visitors that Rajasthan's artistic heritage extends beyond galleries, making every threshold a work of enduring cultural expression.

In Ganesh Pol at Amber Fort, Jaipur, intricate murals, delicate *jaali* patterns, floral motifs and divine imagery showcase Rajasthan's timeless fusion of architecture, artistry and craftsmanship.





Along the Shores OF THE LUIT

*Shaped by the Brahmaputra and illuminated by Muga silk,
Assam is a living cultural, ecological and civilisational tapestry,
where sacred institutions, festivals, tea gardens, river islands and
wildlife habitats meet in one enduring landscape.*

By Julie Kagti





At first light, Assam unfolds in layers of a pale river veiled in mist, tea gardens rolling in waves of green, bamboo groves lining village paths and distant hills dissolving into the horizon. Through this landscape meanders the Brahmaputra River, a presence both physical and deeply emotional. Along its banks lie homes and fields, songs and rituals, monasteries, markets and ferry routes, all lending Assam a character that feels fluid, rooted and profoundly alive.

Land of the Brahmaputra

Assam is often called the "gateway to India's Northeast", but that phrase only launches the story. It is a river valley, a tea country, a centre of devotional art, a home to many communities and a rich ecological landscape. Its identity is carried in living images of the beat of the dhol during Bihu, the glow of Muga silk, the evening chant in a *namghar*, red tea (*laal saah*) and the one-horned rhinoceros moving through tall grass.



WILD ASSAM —

Assam is home to the majestic Royal Bengal tiger, Asian elephants, wild water buffalo, swamp deer and the one-horned rhino.

It is home to 17 wildlife sanctuaries, along with celebrated national parks that protect the one-horned rhinoceros, hoolock gibbon and white-winged wood duck.

Assam lends itself to the idea of a tapestry of communities, languages and belief systems interacting within a geography of mountains, wetlands, forests, river islands and plains, connected by the Brahmaputra.

Shared Symbols

The cultural life of Assam rests on its people. Assamese, or Axomiya language, is central to the state's literary and public identity, yet Assam is also home to Bodo, karbi, Mishing, Rabha, Dimasa, Tai-Ahom, tea garden communities and many other groups, each with its own festivals, dialects, attire and social customs. In



the Barak Valley, Bengali-speaking traditions add another dimension to this multilingual world. Assam's diversity is central to its social imagination.

This shared world is expressed through objects of grace and ceremonial meaning. The *gamucha*, *jaapi*, *xorai* and *tamul paan* remain widely recognised markers of welcome, respect and hospitality. Alongside them, Assam's communities preserve their own material vocabularies, including the Bodo dokhona and aronai, Mishing textiles and stilt-house traditions, Karbi and Dimasa garments and bead ornaments, Tai-Ahom ritual objects, Rabha craft practices and the dress, jewellery and performance traditions of tea garden communities. Together, cloth, bamboo, metal and ritual objects become carriers of memory.

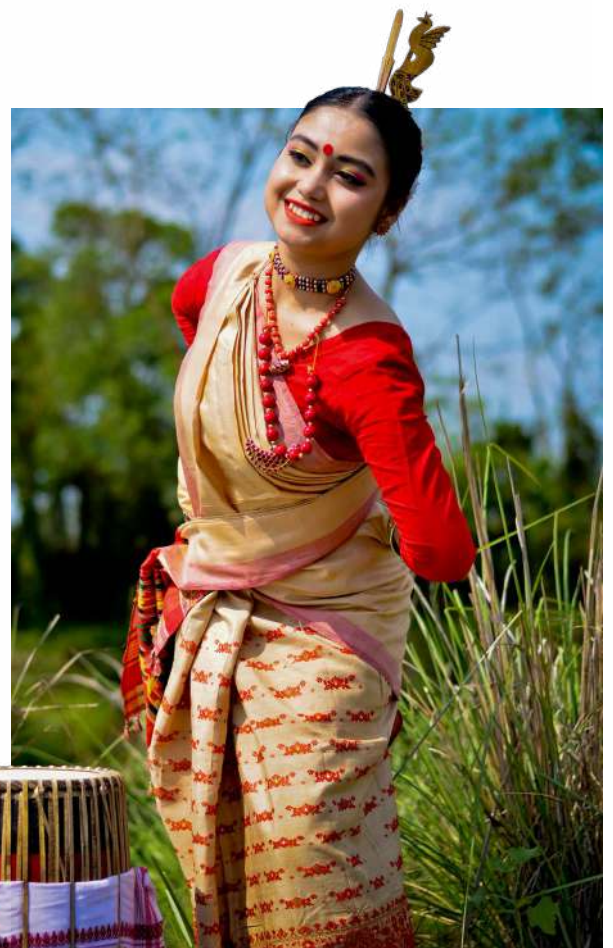
Living Traditions

Assam's spiritual and artistic life owes much to the Vaishnavite movement associated with the 15th-century saint-reformer Srimanta Sankardeva. The *satra*, a monastic-cultural institution and the *namghar*, a community prayer hall, continue to serve as spaces of devotion, music, theatre, discussion and social cohesion. They remain active centres where performance and prayer meet community life.

Majuli, the great river island of the Brahmaputra, gives this inheritance a distinctive setting. Its *satras* (monasteries) preserve devotional music, dance, manuscripts, mask-making and dramatic forms, while the riverine landscape gives the island a fragile beauty. Sattriya, recognised as one of India's classical dance traditions, emerged from this devotional environment and expresses spiritual storytelling through gesture, music and movement.

Festival Rhythms

If the Brahmaputra gives Assam its movement, festivals give it cadence. Bihu, the best-known festival cycle, grew from the rhythms of agrarian life, when farming communities depended on rainfall, sowing, harvest and seasonal renewal. Rongali Bihu welcomes spring and the Assamese New Year with music and dance; Kongali Bihu is quieter, marked by lamps and prayers for the standing crop; and Magh Bihu (or Bhogali Bihu) celebrates post-harvest abundance through food, bonfires and community feasts.



Kholasapori Pitha with **Laal Saah** embodies Assam's culinary heritage, pairing **traditional rice pancakes** with **aromatic red tea**.

Festival Calendar of Assam

Dates may vary according to traditional calendars and local observances.

Festival	Usual timing	Cultural significance
Bohag / Rongali Bihu	Mid-April	Assamese New Year, spring renewal, dance, music and community celebration.
Kati / Kongali Bihu	Mid-October	A quieter agrarian observance marked by lamps, prayer and hope for the growing crop.
Magh / Bhogali Bihu	Mid-January	Harvest festival associated with feasting, bonfires and community gatherings.
Ali-Aye-Ligang	February-March	Mishing community festival associated with paddy sowing.
Me-Dum-Me-Phi	31st January	Tai-Ahom observance honouring ancestors.
Junbeel Mela	Mid-January	Traditional fair known for historic barter practices.
Ambubachi Mela	Mid-June	Major spiritual gathering at Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati.
Majuli Festival	November	Celebration of Majuli's arts, crafts, cuisine and performance traditions.

Today, Bihu is a shared emblem of Assamese identity, yet its cultural roots also reflect the seasonal traditions of many communities, including Bodo Kachari, Mishing, Tiwa, Sonowal Kachari, Moran, Deori and Dimasa groups. The Bodo festival *Bwisagu*, celebrated around the Bohag season, offers one important parallel within this wider agrarian world. Beyond Bihu, Ali-Aye-Ligang, Me-Dum-Me-Phi, Junbeel Mela, Ambubachi Mela, and the Majuli Festival celebrations tie to land, ancestry, faith, exchange, music and collective memory.

The Craftscape

Assam's textile heritage gives form to its elegance. The state is associated with three celebrated silk traditions: Muga, known for its natural golden hue; Paat, admired for its pale sheen and Eri, valued for warmth and comfort. Muga silk received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2007, strengthening its association with Assam's landscape and skill traditions. Assam contributes most of India's Muga silk and a large share of its Eri silk, making sericulture both a

Assamese, or Axomiya language, is central to the state's literary and public identity, yet Assam is also home to Bodo, karbi, Mishing, Rabha, Dimasa, Tai-Ahom, tea garden communities and many other groups.



cultural inheritance and a livelihood tradition. The *mekhela chador*, worn by Assamese women, remains among the most graceful expressions of this craft world.

Sualkuchi, near Guwahati, is a prominent weaving centre where looms produce *mekhela chador*, saris, *gamuchas* and ceremonial textiles. Across the state, weaving continues in homes and workshops, while designers and artisans experiment with natural dyes, traditional motifs and fibres such as water hyacinth, now used for lifestyle products.

Yet Assam's handmade culture extends well beyond silk. Bell-metal work, bamboo and cane objects, *satra* masks, *jaapi* and domestic craft traditions reveal a society in which beauty is often linked to use. Craft here appears in dress, worship, hospitality, ritual and memory.

Flavours of the Land

Assam's cuisine reflects river, field, forest and community life. Rice is



TASTE OF ASSAM

Assam is endowed with a variety of delicious fish species like *puthi*, *dorikona*, *goroi*, *kawoi*, *muwa*, *hingora*, *rou*, etc.

A traditional meal in Assam comprises *dal*, leafy vegetables (*xaak*), fish (*maas*), meat (*mangkho*), *khar* (alkaline dish), sour dishes (*tenga*) and a slice of the famous Assamese lemon (*nemu*).

central to daily meals and festive cooking, though its forms vary across regions and communities. Fish, especially *masor tenga*, a light sour curry, expresses the state's riverine character, while duck with white gourd, pigeon meat, banana flower, leafy greens, bamboo shoot, mustard, herbs and seasonal vegetables reveal a cuisine rooted in locally sourced produce. Among Bodo, Mishing, Karbi, Dimasa, Rabha and other communities, food traditions bring in smoked meat, fermented preparations, rice-based dishes, forest greens and community feasts shaped by farming, fishing and foraging.

During Bihu, homes prepare *pitha* (a kind of rice cake), *laru* (traditional round sweet balls made of sesame, coconut or puffed rice), flattened rice, curd and jaggery, turning food into a language of affection. Yet Assam's festive table extends beyond Bihu.

Mishing celebrations include *purang apin*, rice wrapped and cooked in leaves, while many communities





mark festivals with rice, meat, fish, local greens and traditional beverages. Together, these foodways show that Assamese cuisine is not one table, but many kitchens.

Tea is another unmistakable flavour of Assam. The gardens of Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Tinsukia and adjoining areas have shaped the state's economy, landscape, global image and tea garden social worlds. A cup of strong red tea carries soil, labour and hospitality.

Exploring The Landscape

Guwahati, with the Kamakhya Temple and the Brahmaputra riverfront, offers a lively entry point. Sivasagar preserves the Ahom past through historic tanks, temples and monuments such as Rang Ghar and Kareng Ghar. Nearby, the Charaideo Moidams, the mound-burial system of the Ahom dynasty, add a deeper civilisational layer. Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2024, Charaideo became

Bihu is a shared emblem of Assamese identity, yet its cultural roots also reflect the seasonal traditions of many communities.

Assam's third World Heritage Site, after Kaziranga and Manas National Parks.

Majuli offers a slower encounter with *satras*, river ferries, mask-making and island life. Jorhat and Dibrugarh lead visitors into tea country, where estates, bungalows and plantations shape one of Assam's most recognisable landscapes. Haflong, with lakes, slopes and quiet journeys, opens another view of the state beyond the river valley.

The ecological chapter is equally compelling. Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is globally known for the one-horned rhinoceros and also shelters tigers, elephants, wild water buffaloes, swamp deer and migratory birds. Assam is also home to the white-winged wood duck, or Deo Hanh, its critically endangered state bird. Together, these places show how Assam's heritage moves naturally between sacred history, working landscapes, river islands and fragile forest habitats.



Julie Kagti is an Assam-born fibre artist and curator of immersive journeys across Northeast India, celebrating its culture. She has earned recognition in both national and international exhibitions.

Riding A New WAVE

Surfing is a young sport in India, yet its growth has been meteoric.

By Vaibhav Gupta



In a historic milestone, India has secured four slots for the Asian Games 2026 to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, where surfing will make its debut. With a coastline stretching around 7,500 kilometres, the country is waking up to its maritime potential.

Surfing is often cited as having the steepest learning curve in sports; your playground changes every second. To reach a professional level, living by the ocean isn't just an advantage; it's a necessity.

Children of the Ocean

The true pioneers of this movement are those born along the coast. These are the kids who grew up swimming in the sea and fishing with their fathers. They understood the language of the sea long before they touched a surfboard. When the opportunity arrived, surfing came easily to them.

Located in the coastal town of Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram), Tamil Nadu, a famous surf spot known as "the Point" delivers some of the finest waves on mainland India. Travelling surfers have visited the beach since the 1960s, but now the town hosts major international surfing competitions. Here, Kamali Moorthy stands alone as her village's only female surfer, shattering stereotypes to become a National Champion in both surfing and skateboarding. In nearby Kovalam, 18-year-old Kishore Kumar stuns onlookers by pulling off elite technical manoeuvres way beyond his age.

Further south, Ramesh Budihal's story epitomises this rise. Growing up in Kerala's Kovalam, Ramesh began his journey through the Kovalam Surf



What began as a sport introduced by Western travellers has been redefined in India, bringing diverse coastal communities together.



Despite the talent, surfing remains out of reach for many.

- **Cost & Gear:** A high-performance shortboard runs from ₹50,000 to ₹80,000 (US\$ 525 to US\$ 835 approximately), with no domestic manufacturing and heavy reliance on imported equipment.
- **Scarce Coaching:** A shortage of high-level coaches limits elite technical progress.
- **Limited Funding:** Off-the-radar for corporate sponsors, the sport depends on government grants and local fundraising.

Club. His dedication earned India's first-ever medal at the Asian Surfing Championship, a feat that secured our slots for the Asian Games.

The spirit extends into the surfing hubs of Varkala (Kerala) and Mulki (Karnataka). Set against dramatic cliffs and clear waters, Varkala has built a supportive culture where local surf schools partner with one another rather than compete. Meanwhile, Mulki, with its mangroves and old houses, offers a beginner's paradise.

Protectors of the Seas

To be a surfer is to be a steward. When the beach is your playground, you protect it like your home. Across

India, surf communities lead regular cleanups, yet they face a tide of plastic that can be stopped at the source.

The impact of these athletes goes beyond environmentalism; it is about public safety. In a country where an estimated over 30,000 people die from drowning annually, surfers act as unofficial lifeguards. Most of the Indian population lacks swimming skills, and public beaches are rarely patrolled. Every surfer has a story of a life saved that never made the news.

Reclaiming Our Coasts

What began as a sport introduced by Western travellers has been redefined and given new meaning in India.





Members of Team India at the Asian Surfing Championships 2025



In the water, the hierarchies of the Indian mainland dissolve. There is no class divide in the lineup; there is only the wave bringing joy to see everyone sharing it. Surfing has become a "third space" where the rural youth and the urban traveller coexist on equal footing. The shared adrenaline of a heavy session promotes unity. The surf lifestyle allows the youth to interact with surfers and tourists from all around the world without ever leaving their home beach, which gives them social confidence that serves them well beyond the surf.

As the first generation of professional Indian surfers prepares to carry the tricolour into international waters for our first Asian Games in Japan, they carry more than just their athletic ambition. They carry the pride of their country.



Vaibhav Gupta is an official photographer and videographer for the Surfing Federation of India. He has spent the last six years stationed along India's coastline, capturing the culture, athletes and the evolution of Indian surfing.



EV India Expo 2026

It is India's biggest electric motor vehicle show and the 6th international exhibition on electric/hybrid vehicles, automotive components & accessories, etc. The expo will feature a comprehensive display of electric passenger vehicles, two-wheelers, three-wheelers, commercial vehicles, EV components, charging infrastructure, smart mobility solutions, software, power electronics, and advanced manufacturing technologies.

Date: September 1-3, 2026

Venue: India Expo Centre, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Tarnetar Fair

Held 75 km from Rajkot, Gujarat, the Tarnetar Fair celebrates folk dance, music and arts, and matchmaking, inspired by Draupadi's *swayamvar*. It is held every year on the grounds of the Trinetrishwar Mahadev, or the three-eyed god.

Date: September 14-17, 2026

Venue: Trinetrishwar Mahadev Temple, Tarnetar, Gujarat



Ladakh Bike Week

It is a vibrant week-long festival set amidst the spectacular landscapes of Ladakh. The festival goes beyond adventure biking, and brings together live music performances, local Ladakhi cuisine, motorcycle showcases and interactive sessions, creating a lively community atmosphere.

Date: September 1-7, 2026

Venue: Ladakh

Bengaluru Space Expo 2026

The 9th Bengaluru Space Expo (BSX), organised by CII with ISRO, IN-SPACe and NSIL, will bring together global space leaders in Bengaluru for a three-day conference and exhibition on "Harnessing Space for Global Progress: Innovation, Policy, and Growth."

Date: September 7-9, 2026

Venue: Bangalore International Exhibition Centre, Bengaluru





The Ziro Festival Of Music

The Ziro Festival of Music 2026 is a four-day eco-friendly event, celebrating independent music and indigenous cultures, featuring artistes from Northeast India and around the globe. It is held on sustainable, bamboo-built stages.

Date: September 24 – 27, 2026

Venue: Ziro Valley, Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh



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