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LIFE & LEISURE

Autumn Issue 2025

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A Stunning Maximalist Home Japandi: Calm Meets Chic

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AMANDA JOY PURAVANKARA
Executive Director
Provident Housing Limited

My daybed by the window is my cosy little sanctuary. Reclining there, I watch the sunlight shift across the room, catching the edges of furniture, the folds of a curtain, the gentle sway of a plant. It's a space that asks nothing of me, yet gives me everything—a pause, a breath, a moment to simply be.

I love how a view framed by glass turns ordinary light into something alive. Birds hop along the ledge, clouds drift lazily across the sky, and for a few moments, the world feels softer, slower, calmer. Time stretches, thoughts untangle, and small joys settle in quietly.

As someone who has spent years creating homes, I realise how much these little corners matter. A home is more than walls and rooms; it is the spaces where life whispers to you, where laughter bubbles up, where dreams quietly gather. Those twinkling lights on a balcony, a child curled up with a book, a cup of tea steaming beside me—these are the outcomes I chase, the moments I hope every house I build will hold.

For 50 years, Puravankara has had the privilege of being part of these stories—creating homes where lives unfold, dreams are nurtured, and ordinary moments quietly become memories.

This daybed, bathed in sunlight and stillness, is my small promise to myself and to the families I build for: that happiness can live in calm spaces, that serenity can be a home's heartbeat. It reminds me, always, why I do what I do—because giving people a place where life feels lighter, richer, and brighter is, in its own quiet way, the most rewarding work I can imagine.

Amanda Joy



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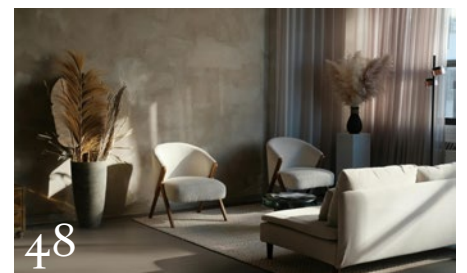
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Please Recycle This Paper

editor's note



Dear Readers,

This autumn issue is here to inspire, delight, and maybe even make you linger a little longer over your coffee. Imagine stepping into a home filled with heritage treasures—you can almost feel the history in your hands, and the charm in every corner.

For anyone who loves to gather around the table, renowned food photographer Gouthami Yuvarajan sheds light on the little touches that turn a meal into a story on a plate.

We're also launching a new column on mental health. Counselling psychologist Lara Gulia will be answering your pressing questions, so don't hesitate—send them our way.

And then there's Vandana Vasudevan's book *OTP Please*, published by Penguin Randomhouse. I was genuinely blown away by its brilliance—and the excerpt we've included will give you a taste of just how captivating her writing is.

As the days grow shorter and the leaves turn golden, we hope you'll find a quiet corner, curl up with this issue, and savour it page by delicious page.

Shubhra



Samuel Shetty

INDIA'S LARGEST LUXURY MOBILITY COMPANY

Luxury Cars Private Jets Yachts

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INDIA DUBAI UK FRANCE ALASKA ITALY SPAIN BAHAMAS COSTA RICA MALDIVES NEW ZEALAND USA

The A List

TRENDING RIGHT NOW



HYDROPONICS GLASS PLANTER WITH WOODEN STAND

Fill the bottle with coloured water or put some cobbles, flowers, plants or a little fish.



HANDCRAFTED VERSATILE WOODEN SHELF ORGANIZER

Beyond its stylish appearance, this organizer with a drawer is a versatile workhorse.



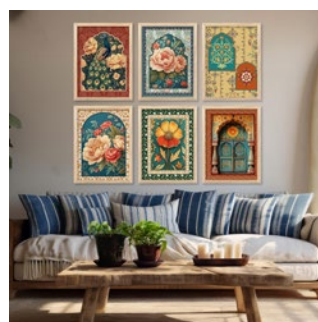
RED BULL GREEN EDITION

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TRADITIONAL INDIAN WALL ART MADHUBANI PAINTINGS

A perfect gift for your loved ones.



LAPHROAIG ISLAY SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY FOUR OAK

A full-bodied whisky with a complex flavour and a velvety texture.



LYNE ORIGINALS COOLPODS 11 TWS EARBUDS

50 hours of pure wireless freedom.



YOGA CAT

Made from high-quality polypropylene, this showpiece is durable and designed to last.



OVERSIZED HANDBAGS FROM BOTTEGA VENETA

Effortless practicality with bold, spacious silhouettes.

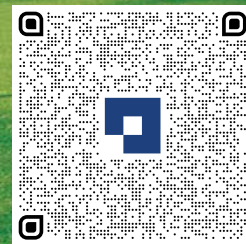


Nature At Your Doorstep. The City Within Reach.

Imagine a home where you wake up to the sounds of birds and rustling leaves, a home where a breeze awakens and refreshes, a home where open windows welcome warm and fulfilling sunshine.

Imagine having a cup of tea by the same open window and beholding a view that is beautiful, pristine, untamed and yet still.

 **PROVIDENT
BOTANICO**
SOUKYA ROAD, WHITEFIELD



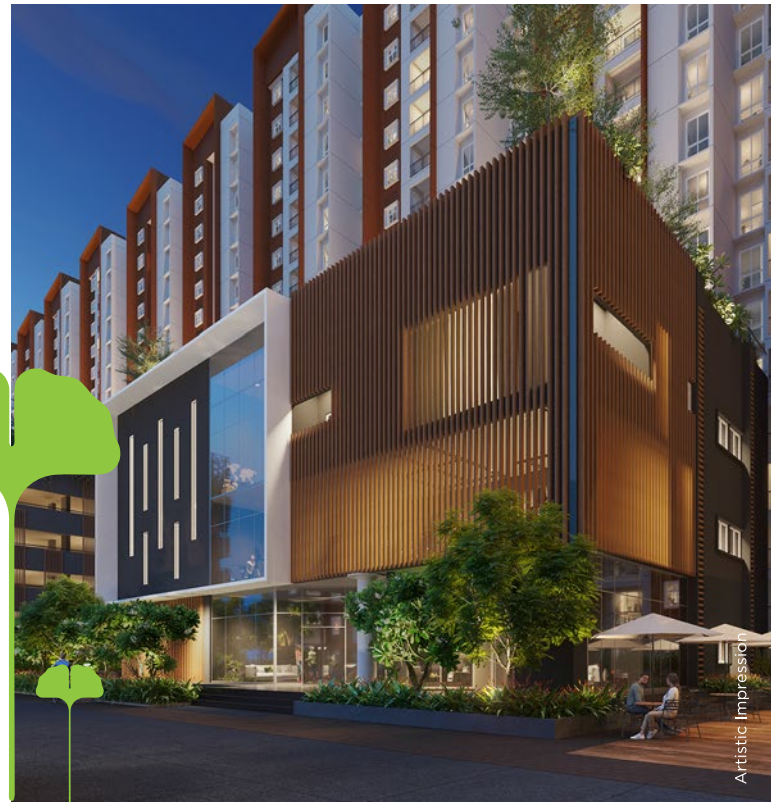
PRM/KA/RERA/1250/304/PR/210324/006726 | <https://rera.karnataka.gov.in/>

At Provident Botanico, such homes are no more figments of imagination, they are real havens blessed by the boons of nature. Located at Soukya Road, a beautiful area of Whitefield, homes at Provident Botanico promise the warmth of nature and well-being, without compromising the comfort that the city of Bengaluru provides.



Let the grind and hustle of city life wash away, as you step into a sanctuary where clean air fills you with positivity and beautiful landscapes nurture your soul.

The city, however, is not too far behind. Provident Botanico is prominently situated in a location that has access to tech parks such as ITPL and is just 12 minutes away from the



Hope Farm Channasandra metro Station. One also has access to the Whitefield-Hoskote Main Road, the Satellite Town Ring Road as well as the Outer Ring Road, in addition to reputed educational institutions and hospitals.

With luxurious two & three bedroom homes, a massive and welcoming 20,000 square foot clubhouse and over 40 amenities spread across 4 acres of greenery, Provident Botanico is a promise of a lifestyle unlike any other – a harmony of both natural beauty and urban comfort.





THE BEST
THINGS
ANYBODY
EVER
SAID
ABOUT...

DOORS

**“Step through
the door of
curiosity, and
wonder will
follow.”**

- Alex Shearer, author

**“Behind each door
is a choice; choose
with courage.”**

- Rumi, poet

**“Knowledge opens
doors; wisdom chooses
which to enter.”**

- Aloo Denish Obiero, Kenyan poet



**“A very little key
will open a very
heavy door.”**

- Charles Dickens

**“Each door is
a promise that
something new
awaits.”**

- Patti Digh, author &
storyteller

**“He who opens
a school door,
closes a prison.”**

- Victor Hugo

**“Be an opener
of doors.”**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

**“If opportunity doesn’t
knock, build a door.”**

- Milton Berle, American actor



AMORE



HOW CAN I MAKE A SMALL LIVING ROOM LOOK BIGGER?

 *Ananya, Pune*

Trick the eye with smart design! Use light, neutral colours on walls and furniture to create an airy feel. Mirrors amplify space—place one opposite a window to reflect light. Opt for multi-functional furniture (like an ottoman with storage) and keep clutter minimal. Vertical stripes or tall plants draw the gaze upward, making ceilings seem higher. Lastly, let in as much natural light as possible—skip heavy drapes for sheer or light-filtering curtains.

WHY DO MY BANANAS RIPEN TOO FAST?

 *Deepak, Indore*

Separate the bunch - individual bananas ripen slower. Wrap stem ends with plastic wrap to block ethylene gas. Once ripe, refrigerate (skin will darken but fruit stays good). For overripe bananas, peel and freeze for smoothies. Keep away from other fruits unless you want them to ripen faster!





HOW OFTEN SHOULD I CHANGE MY PILLOWS, AND HOW DO I KNOW IT'S TIME?

 *Neha, Ahmedabad*

Pillows lose support and collect dust mites over time! Replace every 1–2 years for synthetic fills and 2–3 years for memory foam or latex. Telltale signs: constant neck pain, visible lumps, or allergies flaring up. Fluff your pillows regularly, and use protectors to extend their life. Pro tip: Fold your pillow in half—if it doesn't spring back, it's time for a new one.



WHAT'S THE BEST PAINT FINISH FOR HIGH-HUMIDITY AREAS LIKE BATHROOMS?

 *Karan, Kochi*

Go for satin or semi-gloss finishes—they're moisture-resistant and easy to wipe down. Avoid flat/matte paints, which trap humidity. Opt for acrylic or epoxy-based paints, and prime walls with a mildew-resistant primer first. Pro tip: Ensure proper ventilation (exhaust fans or windows) to extend the paint's life.



HOW DO I ARRANGE A GALLERY WALL WITHOUT IT LOOKING MESSY?

 *Aditi, Hyderabad*

Plan before you hammer! Lay frames on the floor to test layouts. Stick to one theme (all black-and-white photos or colourful art) and consistent spacing (2–3 inches between frames). Mix sizes but align tops or bottoms for structure. Use painter's tape to mark walls. Pro tip: Start with the largest piece as the anchor and build around it.

Got a burning home decor dilemma or a kitchen conundrum you need advice on? Send your queries to [<amore@puravankara.com>](mailto:amore@puravankara.com) with your name and city, and you might see your question featured in the next issue of Ask Amore!

an ode to Linen

Aeka is a planet- positive brand that consists of linen sarees and separates. The endeavour at Aeka was to empower the wearer to lend her personality and style to the garment.

We work with breathable fabrics and relaxed silhouettes and believe in slow fashion and living.



aeka

BY ANUPRIYA

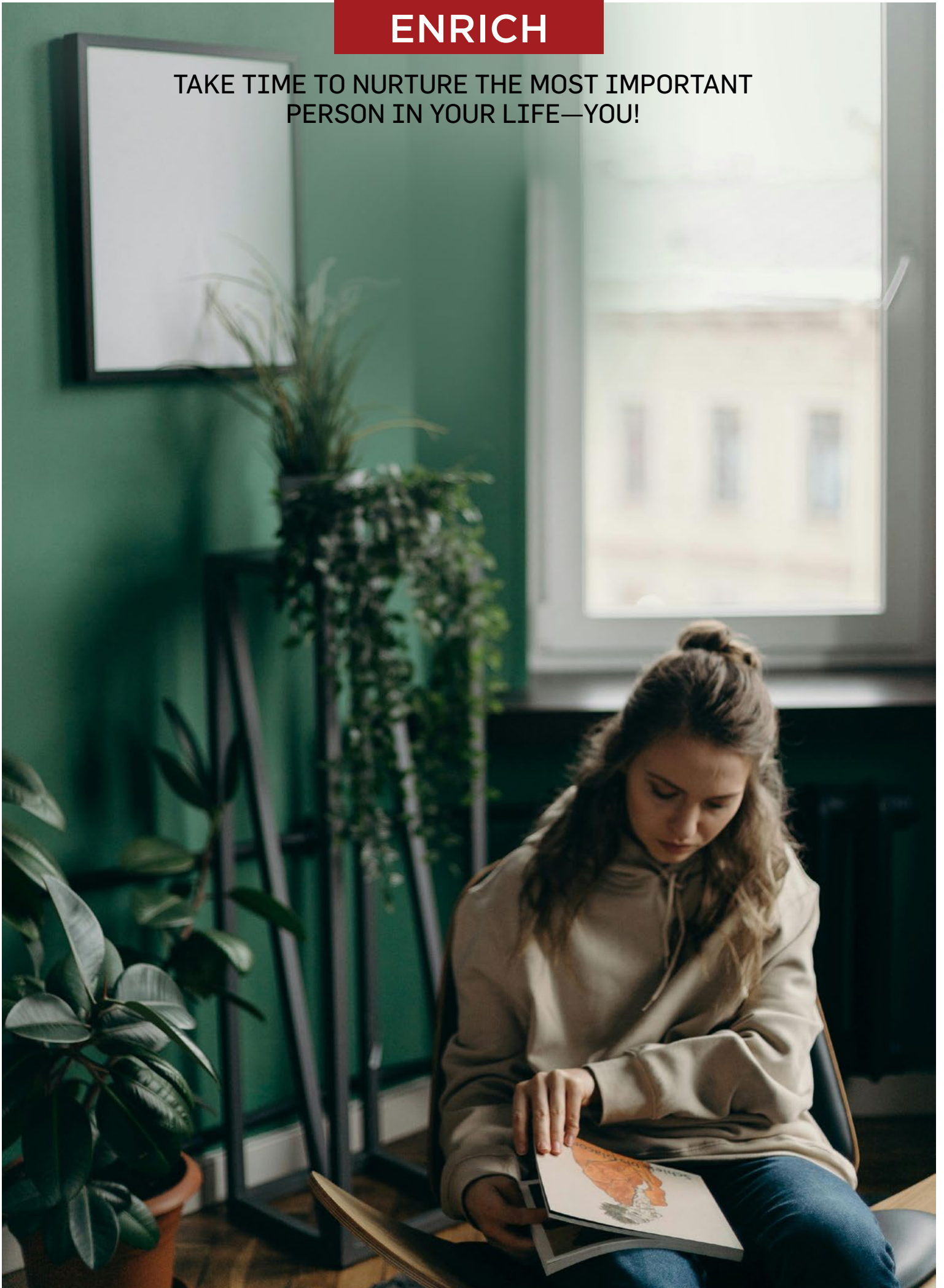
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PERSON IN YOUR LIFE—YOU!



INSPIRATION BOARD

Because you are what you read, watch and think

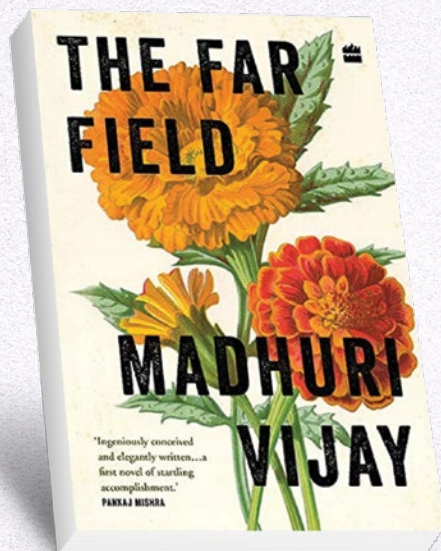


BOOKS THAT DEFY THE ORDINARY

"THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY"

by Matt Haig (UK)

A philosophical, heartwarming story about a woman who gets the chance to explore different versions of her life in a magical library. It's a stunning blend of speculative fiction and life lessons about regret, choice, and happiness.



"THE FAR FIELD"

by Madhuri Vijay

In this award-winning novel, a young woman from Bangalore journeys to Kashmir in search of a mysterious figure from her past, exploring grief, political turmoil, and the complexities of human relationships.



FILMS THAT PROVOKE AND INSPIRE



MYSTIC PIZZA (1988)

A charming romantic comedy-drama following three young Portuguese-American waitresses navigating love and coming-of-age during a memorable summer. Set in a Connecticut pizza parlour, it explores their dreams, relationships, and the bonds of friendship. (Amazon Prime).



NONNAS (2025)

A comedy-drama where a man, grieving his mother, opens an Italian restaurant uniquely staffed by real grandmothers. Based on a true story, it's a heartfelt celebration of food, family, and community. (Netflix).



THOUGHT-PROVOKING TALKS

Watch these TED & TEDX gems on YouTube



SOPHIE SCOTT

"Why We Laugh"

A fun and informative TED talk on the science of laughter—why we do it, what it means for our well-being, and its universal nature across cultures



DANIEL PINK

"The Puzzle of Motivation"

An insightful exploration into what truly drives human behaviour, challenging traditional notions of rewards and punishments.



MARC KUSHNER

"Why the Buildings of the Future Will Be Shaped by You"

A look into how modern architecture is changing and becoming more inclusive, interactive, and influenced by the people who use the spaces.



SCROLL TO SANCTUARY

Home Décor Inspiration on Instagram

@myscandinavianhome »»

A stunning Instagram feed that celebrates minimalist Scandinavian interiors. Expect bright, airy spaces with a focus on natural materials and calmness, creating a serene and inviting atmosphere.



@timlevensoninteriors »»

This creative gallery will kickstart a thousand imaginative ideas in your mind.



@dezeen »»

A global platform known for cutting-edge design, this account offers a curated view of offbeat interiors that redefine architectural creativity. Expect clean lines, futuristic forms, and striking interior pieces.



M M Javed
Homini Designer

YOUR LUXURY WEAR SPECIALIST





BOOK EXTRACT

**‘AN ENTERTAINING, INSIGHTFUL AND NUANCED READ
THAT TIES TOGETHER SO MANY DIFFERENT STORIES!’**

R. MADHAVAN, ACTOR

OTP Please!

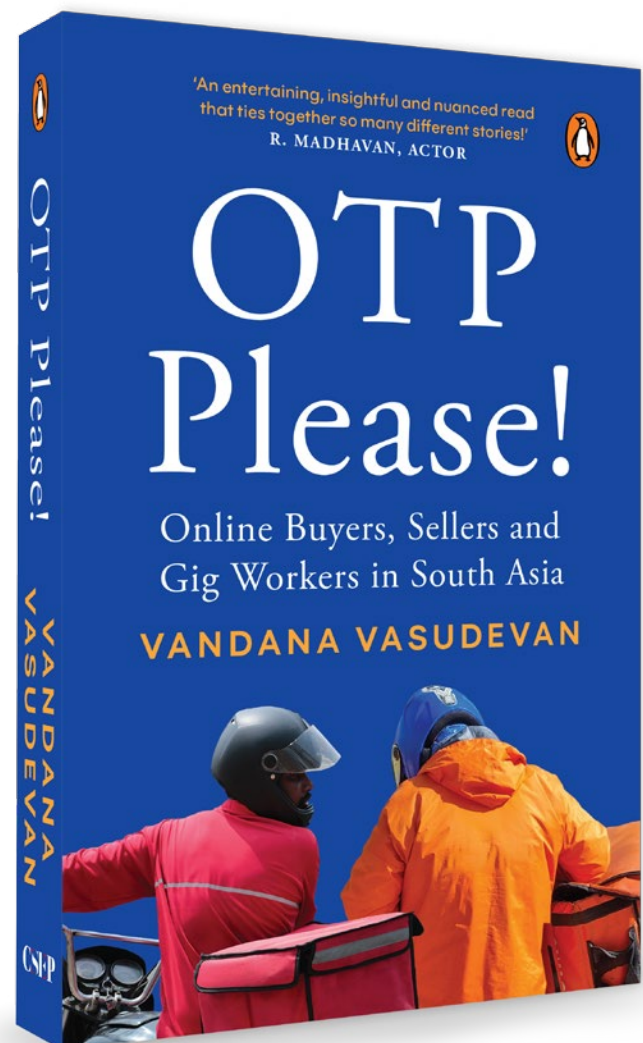
**ONLINE BUYERS, SELLERS AND
GIG WORKERS IN SOUTH ASIA**

Published by Penguin Random House India

Naveen Konella has spent five years in food and grocery delivery company operations. As he had just quit one of them and joined a different industry, he was willing to speak candidly about how the tech works behind the scenes.

‘There is a first mile and a last mile in logistics. The first mile is when the delivery boy gets an order to pick up a package from a restaurant. He does not get paid to reach the restaurant. His payment calculation starts once he picks up the order and proceeds to the customer’s location. Algorithms are designed in such a way that they will try to ensure the first mile is shorter than the last mile. So, it will choose from among the pool of delivery agents who, at that time, are close to the restaurant. But in peak hours, if there is no delivery person close by, they extend the radius and look for someone a little further away who is free.’

When a girl in Mumbai’s Andheri West orders a lasagna from an Italian place in Lokhandwala, the algorithm starts looking at the delivery boys around the area. So, if Ram Dayal has driven into Lokhandwala, he, along with Kanhaiya Lal, Prem Kumar and Arbaaz Ali, who were already there, come into the consideration pool. Who gets the order depends on a host of parameters such as exact location, proximity to the restaurant, typical speed of delivery, how promptly he delivers and how customers rate him, to name a few obvious criteria. Within seconds, an optimal decision is made using a calculation embedded in the algorithm’s logic, and one of the men hears his phone ping.



‘Every few weeks, managers study the data, tweak the algorithm and introduce a new rule. Rules are always designed to enhance customer experience. Customer is the

God, whether it's quick commerce, food delivery or ride-hailing. Sometimes, the new rules impact the payment structures of the delivery fleet, and they get angry and go on strike. The changes are not intended to lower their earnings. However, the company cannot bear losses, and the customer is a priority. So somebody's got to pay,' says Konella.

That 'somebody' is the worker. Workers are mystified about the functioning of this digital antaryami. Rajesh Singh,* who has worked for Swiggy and Zomato, was baffled by the inscrutable logic of the app and finally decoded it as biased against older workers.

'In the initial stages, the company drives you crazy. Pagal kar deti hai. You get lots and lots of orders. Even if fifty other riders are sitting around, the newbie's phone will buzz. You're on a high. You work twelve hours, thirteen hours, fourteen hours, keep taking orders, driving around from restaurant to customer, back and forth. Of course, it affected my health. Madam, you'd be surprised if you saw my old photographs before I started this job. I had a gym body, my waist size was 32, and now it is 28. I have lost so much weight just overworking, running here and there, and the cash kept rolling in.' But then, after a few weeks, Rajesh found he was working just as long, maybe more, but his weekly earnings had dropped from Rs 16,000 to 12,000. He thought maybe, for some reason, business was slow, and there weren't as many orders as before. Then, slowly, the earnings dropped to Rs10,000 per week.

Sometimes, you are the pigeon, and sometimes, you are the statue. After flying high as the pigeon, Rajesh found that he had become the statue; newer riders were flying over him, and he was covered in droppings. He would sit outside the restaurant and see another worker coming from two kilometres away and taking the order. From thirty-five orders a day, he started getting twenty orders, severely reducing his earnings. It dawned on him that the honeymoon was over. 'Brahmit kyon kar rahi hai humein?' he asked angrily. 'Brahmit' means to confuse someone, to make it hard for them to know what is happening. 'Why isn't the company giving us the work it used to when we joined? Why is it confusing us?'

Eighteen-year-old Rinku in Delhi, who delivers food, observes, 'Just when the target is going to be completed, and one becomes eligible for incentives, we start getting orders late. We've to wait for hours to get a single order.'

A few months later, when I was in Kathmandu, I got some clues on how to solve these mysteries. On a pleasant afternoon in October, I met Sixit Bhatta at Dhokaima Café in Kathmandu's Patan area, which has a lovely courtyard and garden setting. Sixit is the creator of Nepal's first ride-hailing app, Tootle. It was also the first bike ride-hailing app, which started way before Pathao in Bangladesh and Rapido in India. I say 'was' because Tootle wrapped up after running for about six years, from 2016 to 2022.

Sixit knows a thing or two about how the algorithms of platforms work because, as an electronics engineer with experience in the telecom sector, he created the Tootle app with his team and made all the decisions about the logic on which it should run. There were some things that Tootle could have done, but Sixit decided not to step over the ethical line, which he thinks is part of the reason they couldn't compete with the game's present-day champions. For instance, it is possible for a ride-hailing app to visually show many more vehicles in a location than there are in reality so that when the customer opens it, she feels that there are many cabs and stays on the app. The fact that this is possible to do was proven in 2017, in a New York Times exposé which unveiled how Uber was manipulating data to make these 'ghost vehicles' appear on the screens of certain regulatory officers or competitors whom it did not want to give a ride to.

'But we didn't do things like that because I didn't start Tootle to make it into some humungous, million-dollar valuation. I was just fooling around with the tech out of curiosity to see where it goes. But everyone in the business does it.'

He likens the creation of an algorithm to two people creating the same dish with the same ingredients but with different desired outcomes. 'The mix and match of the parameters could be likened to a recipe. If my mom makes chicken curry with chicken, tomatoes, onions and spices, her desired outcome would be to create a likeable dish while ensuring her family's health. But if a restaurant cooks the same dish, the aim is taste, customer approval and profitability, and so the chef will play around with those ingredients differently. Similarly, there are different metrics you could use to build your algorithm—newness in the system, ride completion ratio, ratings and so on.' *Available on Amazon.in.*

BANDHANI

A KNOTTY ART



WHAT IS BANDHANI?

- Bandhani (also known as bandhej) is a traditional tie-dye technique from Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- A celebration of vibrant colours, this art form is known for its intricate patterns created by tying the fabric in knots before dyeing it.
- The technique has been passed down for generations, and each region has developed its own unique designs.

THE ORIGINS OF BANDHANI

- **Ancient Beginnings:** Bandhani dates back over 5,000 years to the Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeological findings suggest the art was used in the weaving of textiles in the early settlements of Mohenjo-Daro.
- **Royal Influence:** It was during the Mughal era that Bandhani truly flourished, particularly under the patronage of royal families in Gujarat and Rajasthan. It became a symbol of wealth and status.
- **A Practical Beginning?:** Some say Bandhani originated as a way for women to create durable fabric using natural dyes. Tying the fabric tightly in small knots before dyeing it allowed for intricate designs and helped preserve the fabric's integrity over time.



THE TECHNIQUE: HOW IT'S DONE

- **Step 1: Tying the Fabric:** Small portions of the fabric are tied with fine threads, creating small knots. Each section is tied tightly to resist the dye.
- **Step 2: Dipping in Dye:** The tied fabric is then dipped in vibrant, natural dyes. The knots prevent the dye from reaching the tied portions, forming intricate patterns.
- **Step 3: Untying the Knots:** Once dried, the fabric is untied, revealing the stunning design.

POPULAR BANDHANI PATTERNS

- **Chowk:** Square-shaped designs, simple but elegant.
- **Bhujia:** A circular, highly detailed pattern, often used for bridal attire.
- **Shikari:** Represents a hunting motif, commonly used in festive and wedding garments.

BANDHANI TODAY

- **Traditional Uses:**
 - Sarees, dupattas, and turbans for weddings and festivals in Gujarat and Rajasthan.
 - Bridal lehengas in Rajasthan, symbolising good fortune.
- **Contemporary Style:**
 - Modern tunics, dresses, and scarves in Bandhani prints.
 - Trendy home decor items like cushions and wall hangings.
 - Designers like Anita Dongre and Manish Malhotra use Bandhani creatively in their collections.



BUYING BANDHANI

- **Gujarat:** Kutch and Ahmedabad – the heart of Bandhani craftsmanship.
- **Rajasthan:** Jaipur – known for Bandhani lehengas and sarees.
- **Online:** You will find a Craftsvilla, Jaypore, KutchCraft and many more Instagram stores that offer authentic and sustainable pieces.

THE BEAUTY OF BANDHANI

- **Symbolism of Colours:**
 - Red = Marriage and fertility
 - Yellow = Celebration and wealth
 - Blue = Calmness and purity
- **Eco-Friendly Art:** Bandhani often uses natural dyes, making it an eco-conscious choice in today's fashion world.
- **Crafts of the Future:** Many modern artisans focus on creating organic, sustainable Bandhani, combining tradition with environmental awareness.

BANDHANI CARE

- Wash in cold water by hand to preserve colours.
- Avoid direct sunlight while drying to prevent fading.
- Iron on the reverse side to keep the fabric intact.





QUICK TIP

Always ensure your used coffee grounds are completely dry before storing them or using them for purposes where moisture could cause mould. Simply spread them out on a baking tray or newspaper for a day or two in a well-ventilated area, perhaps even under the warm sun!

So next time you brew up your morning joy, remember: the journey doesn't end when the cup is empty.

GROUND FORCE

12 BRILLIANT WAYS TO REPURPOSE YOUR USED COFFEE

That steaming mug of filter coffee? It's more than just a wake-up call—it's a hidden treasure! Don't toss those spent grounds just yet. Surprisingly versatile, they're packed with nutrients and abrasive power that can transform your home, garden, and beauty routine. In a world embracing sustainability and "best out of waste," repurposing what we'd discard is impactful. With old coffee grounds, possibilities abound—nourish your plants, freshen your kitchen, and discover the secret life of your daily grind!

Here are 15 brilliant ways to give your old coffee grounds a second shot.



GARDEN GOLD

Your garden will perk up with these natural boosts:

01

FERTILISER FANTASTIC

Coffee grounds are a gardener's secret weapon, brimming with nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus. Sprinkle them directly around acid-loving plants like vibrant hibiscus, fragrant mogra (Jasmine), lush ferns, or even areca palms for a natural nutrient surge.



02

COMPOST CATALYST

Chuck those grounds into your compost pile! They act as a "green" nitrogen source, supercharging the decomposition process and yielding rich, healthy compost faster.



03

PEST PATROL

The strong scent of coffee is a natural deterrent for unwelcome garden guests. Create a protective barrier by sprinkling grounds around plants to ward off snails and common garden ants.

04

WORM WHISPERER

If you're into vermicomposting, your wiggly friends will adore coffee grounds! They're a favourite food source, helping your worm farm thrive, especially for enriching soil for your vegetable patch.

HOME HERO

Move over, chemicals! Your coffee grounds are about to become your new household cleaners:

05

ODOUR OBLITERATOR

Coffee grounds are masters of absorption.

- **Fridge Refresh:** Place an open bowl of dried grounds in your refrigerator or freezer to neutralise any lingering, unpleasant smells, like that of stored spices or cooked food.
- **Hand De-Stinker:** After chopping ginger, garlic, or onions for your curries, rub a small amount of grounds on your hands to instantly banish the lingering scent.

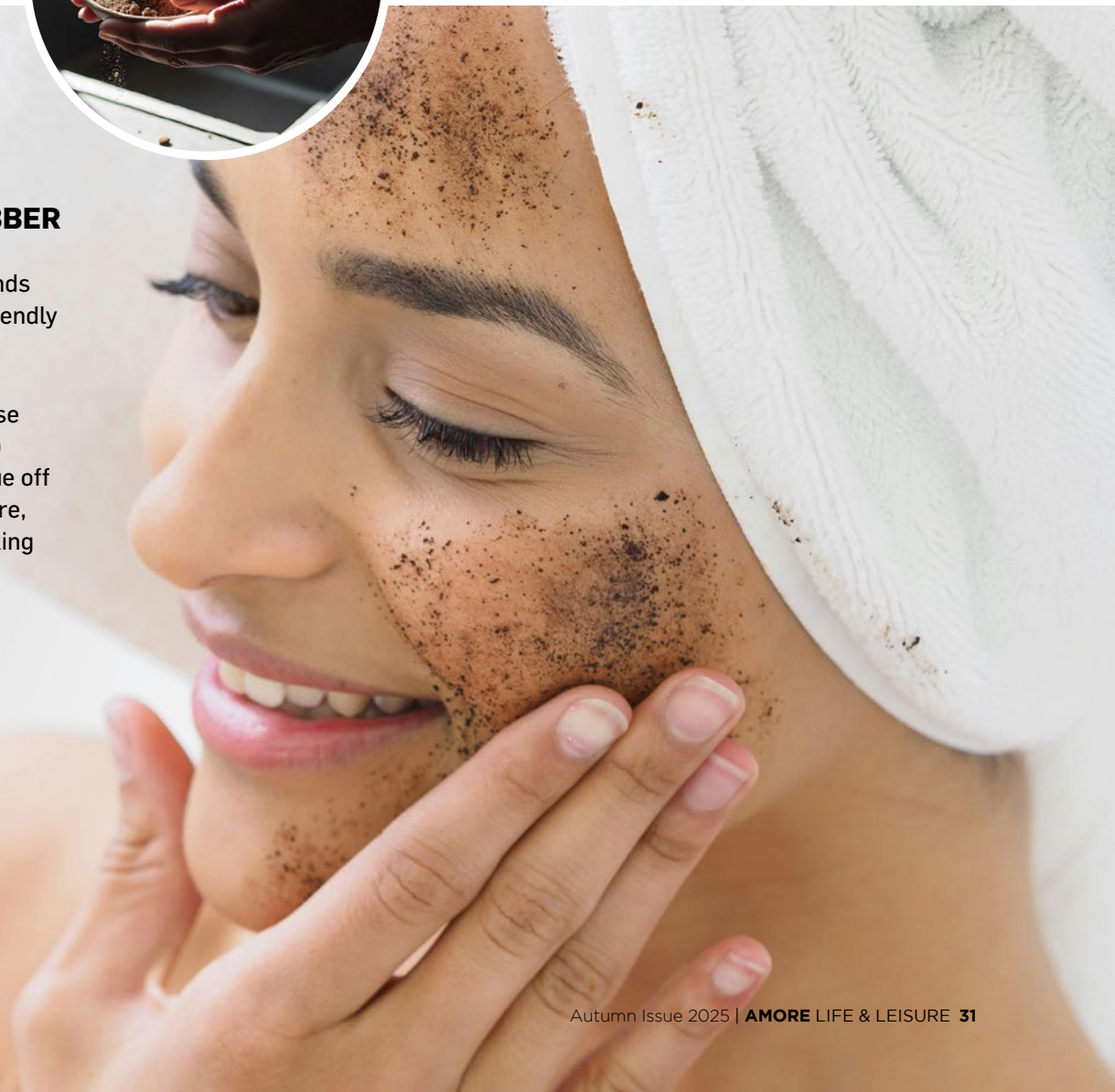


06

NATURAL SCRUBBER

The slightly abrasive texture of coffee grounds makes them an eco-friendly cleaning alternative.

- **Pot & Pan Power:** Use them to gently scrub stubborn food residue off non-scratch cookware, especially after cooking greasy dishes.



BEAUTY & BEYOND

Ready for a glow-up? Just remember to patch test any new skin applications first!

07

EXFOLIATING ELIXIR

The finely ground texture makes coffee grounds a fantastic natural exfoliant. Mix with a touch of coconut oil, almond oil, or honey for an invigorating DIY body or face scrub (avoid the delicate eye area). Bonus: coffee boosts circulation and can reduce the appearance of cellulite.



08

HAIR HUE ENHANCER

A cooled, strong coffee rinse can add brilliant shine and even subtly deepen your hair's natural colour. Use it as a final rinse after shampooing, especially if you have a rich brown or black hair colour.



09

FOOT FIXER

Treat tired feet to a revitalising scrub, perfect after a long day. Use grounds to slough away rough skin, leaving your feet feeling soft and refreshed.



CRAFTY & CREATIVE

The Art of the Grind



10

NATURAL DYE

Looking for an earthy, aged aesthetic? Coffee grounds can naturally dye paper, fabric (think traditional Indian cottons!), or even give diya (earthen lamp) decorations a beautiful sepia tone.



11

CRAFTY CREATIONS

Incorporate grounds into various craft projects to add unique texture, earthy colour, or a rustic feel to your home decor items.



12

AGED WOOD STAIN

For a rustic, distressed look on unfinished wooden items like carved frames or small tables, brew a strong batch of coffee, let it cool, and brush it on. The grounds can also be used directly for a more intense, textured stain.



CAPSULE WARDROBE

BASICS FOR A SMART, STYLISH YOU

In a world where fast fashion is tempting, the concept of a capsule wardrobe is a breath of fresh air.



A capsule wardrobe is a collection of versatile, timeless pieces that can be mixed and matched to create countless outfits, without the clutter of endless choices. For the modern Indian woman, building a capsule wardrobe means embracing simplicity, sustainability, and style without breaking the bank. While you may already have your traditional Indian attire—sarees, salwar-kameez, or lehengas—organized and ready for festive occasions, a capsule wardrobe helps you curate a stylish, Western look for daily wear. It's about embracing simplicity, sustainability, and style, without the stress of constantly keeping up with trends

Here's your guide to creating a capsule wardrobe that's both practical and chic—perfect for every occasion.



START WITH YOUR BASICS: THE FOUNDATION OF ANY WARDROBE

A capsule wardrobe is built on the foundation of simple, timeless basics that you can mix and match effortlessly. These pieces should be versatile, well-fitted, and in neutral colours that work with almost anything. Here's what you'll need:



PLAIN T-SHIRTS AND TOPS

Stick to solid colours like white, black, grey, and beige. These can be paired with anything from jeans to skirts or layered under jackets.



BUTTON-DOWN SHIRT

A classic white shirt or one in neutral tones is a must-have. It's perfect for office wear, casual outings, or dressing up for an evening.



TAILORED PANTS AND JEANS

A pair of well-fitted jeans in a classic wash and tailored trousers can take you from casual to polished.



A LITTLE BLACK DRESS (LBD)

Every woman needs a simple black dress in her wardrobe. It's a versatile piece that can be dressed up or down depending on the occasion.

02 CHOOSE TIMELESS OUTERWEAR

Outerwear adds an element of style while being functional. Here's what you'll need for both comfort and elegance:

A BLAZER

A fitted blazer in a neutral colour like cream, black, navy, or grey works wonders. It can instantly elevate any outfit—from a T-shirt and jeans combo to a more formal dress.



A TRENCH COAT OR TAILORED JACKET

A lightweight coat or jacket is perfect for layering during those transitional months. It can be paired with dresses or trousers for an effortlessly put-together look.

03 INVEST IN QUALITY FOOTWEAR

Footwear is key to a capsule wardrobe, and it's worth investing in quality pieces that can be worn with almost anything. Here are a few essentials:



NEUTRAL FLATS

Comfortable, neutral-toned flats that go with everything from dresses to jeans.



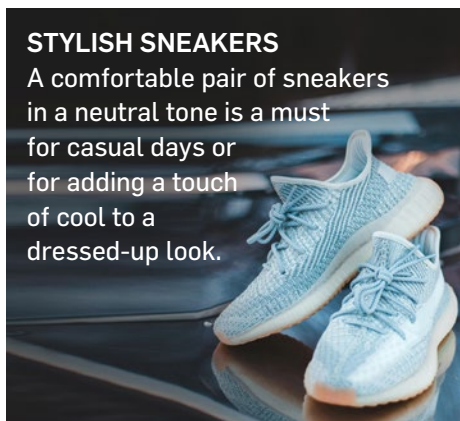
CHIC HEELS

A pair of classic nude or black heels can instantly elevate a casual outfit and is perfect for formal events.



STYLISH SNEAKERS

A comfortable pair of sneakers in a neutral tone is a must for casual days or for adding a touch of cool to a dressed-up look.



04 INCORPORATE VERSATILE ACCESSORIES

Accessories are the finishing touches that can transform any outfit. Keep it simple but stylish with these wardrobe staples:



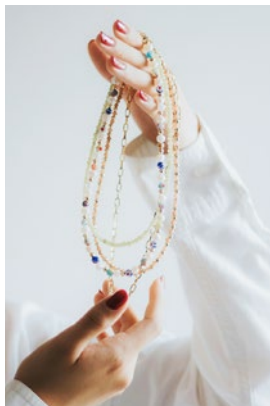
A CLASSIC TOTE

A sturdy, neutral-coloured tote bag can carry all your essentials and work for both casual and professional settings.



SCARVES

A couple of well-chosen scarves can add colour and style to any outfit, whether you're draping it over your shoulders or tying it around your neck.



JEWELLERY

Simple gold or silver pieces like studs, hoops, and delicate necklaces can be worn every day and suit any outfit. Avoid overly trendy pieces, as they won't stay in style long.

05 ADD A POP OF COLOUR



While neutrals form the bulk of your capsule wardrobe, adding a few pops of colour can inject personality into your outfits. Think classic prints like stripes or floral patterns on tops, dresses, or scarves. Opt for pieces in vibrant colours like rust, teal, or mustard that complement your neutral basics. Focus on quality fabrics like organic cotton or bamboo to stay sustainable.

EMBRACE SUSTAINABILITY

Building a capsule wardrobe is not just about style but also sustainability. When curating your collection, choose high-quality, durable items that last longer. Here are a few sustainable practices to consider:

SHOP MINDFULLY

Buy pieces that fit into your capsule wardrobe and that you'll wear regularly. Avoid impulse purchases.

BUY LOCAL

Support Indian artisans by shopping from local brands that use sustainable materials and ethical manufacturing practices.

REPURPOSE & RECYCLE

If you have pieces in your closet that are no longer in style or need some TLC, get creative and repurpose them into something new or donate them.



BUILD YOUR CAPSULE SLOWLY

Rome wasn't built in a day—and neither is your perfect capsule wardrobe. Take time to build it up over a few months, adding pieces that work with what you already own. Focus on buying quality over quantity. Remember, this is a long-term investment in your wardrobe that will save you time and money in the future.



FLAVOURS *in* FOCUS

Gouthami Yuvarajan's Journey in Food Photography



Chennai-based photographer Gouthami Yuvarajan has transformed a personal passion into a thriving creative journey. Her love for food and curiosity about photography converged in 2015 when she bought her first mirrorless camera to capture moments with her newborn son. Soon, her kitchen became the canvas for her lens, documenting the meals she cooked daily and eventually leading to the creation of her food blog.

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After leaving her full-time IT job in 2018 to focus on motherhood, Gouthami continued to blog and share her work on social media. It was here that her talent caught the eye of a potential client, leading to her first professional project. Since then, she has worked with several brands, primarily in food and skincare, creating visually arresting images from her home studio, equipped with lighting gear and carefully chosen props.

A Passion Ignited by Food and Photography

Gouthami's journey began with a simple combination of her two loves: food and photography. "I have always been a foodie, so the love for food came naturally. Photography had always intrigued me, and when I got my first camera to shoot memorable moments of my newborn, I found food to be the perfect subject to exercise my creative muscles. Capturing what I cooked at home allowed me to merge these passions. Starting a food blog helped me document my cooking and provided content that I shared on social media," she explains. After quitting her job in 2018, she challenged herself with an A-to-Z food photography project, shooting a dish for each letter of the alphabet. This caught the attention of her first client, and her professional journey was underway.





Highlight Projects

While every project holds a special place in her heart, Gouthami recalls one in particular. “One of my favourite projects was the packaging shoots for Sweet Karam Coffee India. I loved incorporating traditional props and styling to showcase their snacks and sweets. All the images turned out beautifully, and it remains one of my favourite galleries to date,” she says.

Tools of the Trade

For Gouthami, equipment is important, but understanding it is paramount. She currently shoots with a Sony A7iii camera and uses artificial lighting to achieve consistent results, particularly for client projects. Her setup includes SK400II-V strobe lights, which help her create the mood and precision her minimalistic style demands.

Sources of Inspiration

Asked about photographers who inspire her, Gouthami says, “There are many, but Abhishek Khanna is someone whose work I admire deeply. His photography is wonderful, and his sense of styling leaves me in awe. He has certainly inspired me.”

Storytelling Through a Single Frame

One image that stands out to Gouthami is a tea-themed still life. “I wanted to tell a story about Indian chai time without showing any chai itself. By incorporating all the relevant props—tea glasses, a small radio, items reminiscent of a tea shop—I was able to create the scene and evoke the atmosphere I wanted. I really liked how it turned out.”

Words of Wisdom

Her advice for aspiring photographers is simple but profound: observe and practise. “My foremost tip is to observe light. Without light, there is no photography. Watch the sunlight streaming through your windows, the shadows it casts, and the moods it creates. Notice how it changes throughout the day. Once your eye is tuned to it, your photography will naturally improve. Also, practice relentlessly. A 365-day challenge is an excellent way to grow and refine your skills.”

Instagram: @gouthamiyavarajan

DECORATE

IDEAS & INSPIRATION ON HOW TO MAKE
YOUR HOME A BEAUTIFUL SANCTUARY



MAXIMALIST MAGIC

Step inside a home where every piece tells a story and every act has purpose

Upasna Sharma's home is a living masterpiece—a vibrant tapestry of Indian heritage, contemporary art, and personal stories spanning over three decades. A seasoned collector of antiques and fine art, her space is a living gallery, blending rare finds from across India and the world with works by artists like Shalina Vichitra, Seema Khemka, Ramesh Gorjala, and her son, Mauraya. Every corner tells a story—from Portuguese mirrors and vintage chairs in Goa to her mother's 65-year-old sitar and a carved wooden jharokha mandir.

Beyond her passion for art, Upasna champions education and skill development for marginalised children through Asha Pathshala, turning her dining room into a classroom and guiding over 20 kids into schools. Her interiors, rich with texture and narrative, mirror a life devoted not just to beauty, but to compassion, learning, and community.



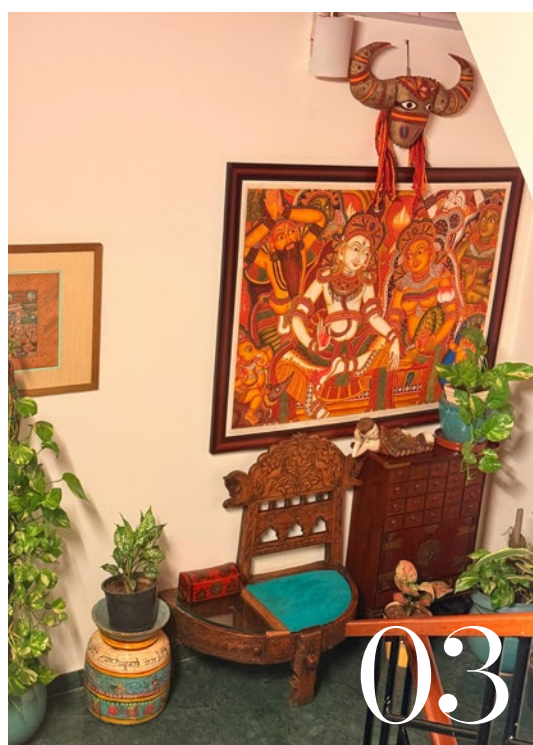


01 The mask is 75 years old and depicts Garuda, crafted by traditional dancers in Odisha. It is made of papier-mâché. The sitar belonged to my mother during her college years and is over 70 years old.

02 The wooden frame has been in my in-laws' family for over 100 years. It was used as a mandir and painted in orange and gold, bearing soot marks from burning dhoop and diya.

03 Traditional temple art from Kerala.

04 A collection of Raja Ravi Varma lithographs. I was inspired by the calendars we had at home when I was a child. The barrel is an old ship's barrel, repurposed into a bat.





05

05 An antique South Indian door, reflecting the region's traditional artistry.



06

06 The painting of a pregnant woman is by Mauraya Sharma. The white architectural drawings are also by him. The pregnant woman, from a rural community close to nature, contemplates whether to give birth in an industrial urban landscape. The architectural paintings serve as a commentary on

migration. Other works include Vishnu with dastavars on his body by Ramesh Gorjala. The paintings on the top are by Shyamal, and the one at the bottom is a Pattachitra Katha from Odisha.

07 Jatayu attacking Ravan during Sita Haran. Wooden piece from Indonesia.

08 Round acrylic paintings by Mauraya Sharma.



07

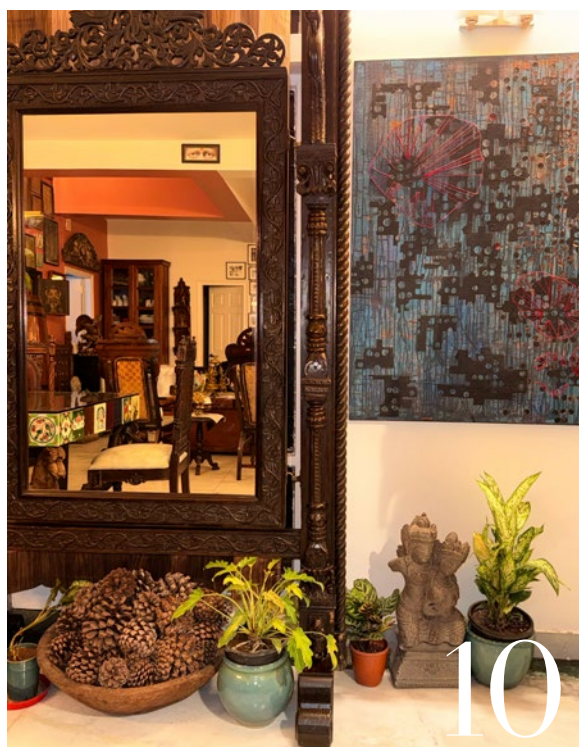


08



09

09 Black and white photographs of my family: my parents' wedding, my grandparents, and my great-grandmother.



10

10 Antique Portuguese mirror from Goa. The blue painting is by Mauraya Sharma, created in response to empty buildings during COVID.



11

11 Paintings by national awardee Chotu Lal. Most of the plates are antiques collected during

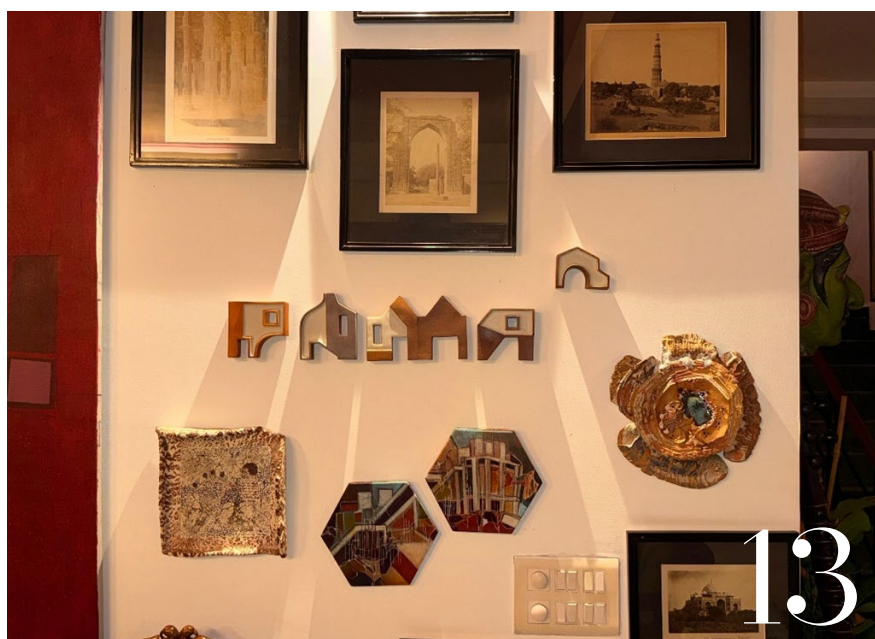
my travels around the world, including one released by the Austrian Government when the princess came out in society. The Japanese garden plate is the first print by Lenox Ceramics.

12 A unique antique wooden chandelier, featuring a Nash and a peacock, with exquisite aesthetic appeal.

13 Ceramic houses by the renowned artist Shalina Vichitra. Plates by Serbian artists. Other ceramic works include pieces by Sareena Khemka and Aninda Singh.



12



13

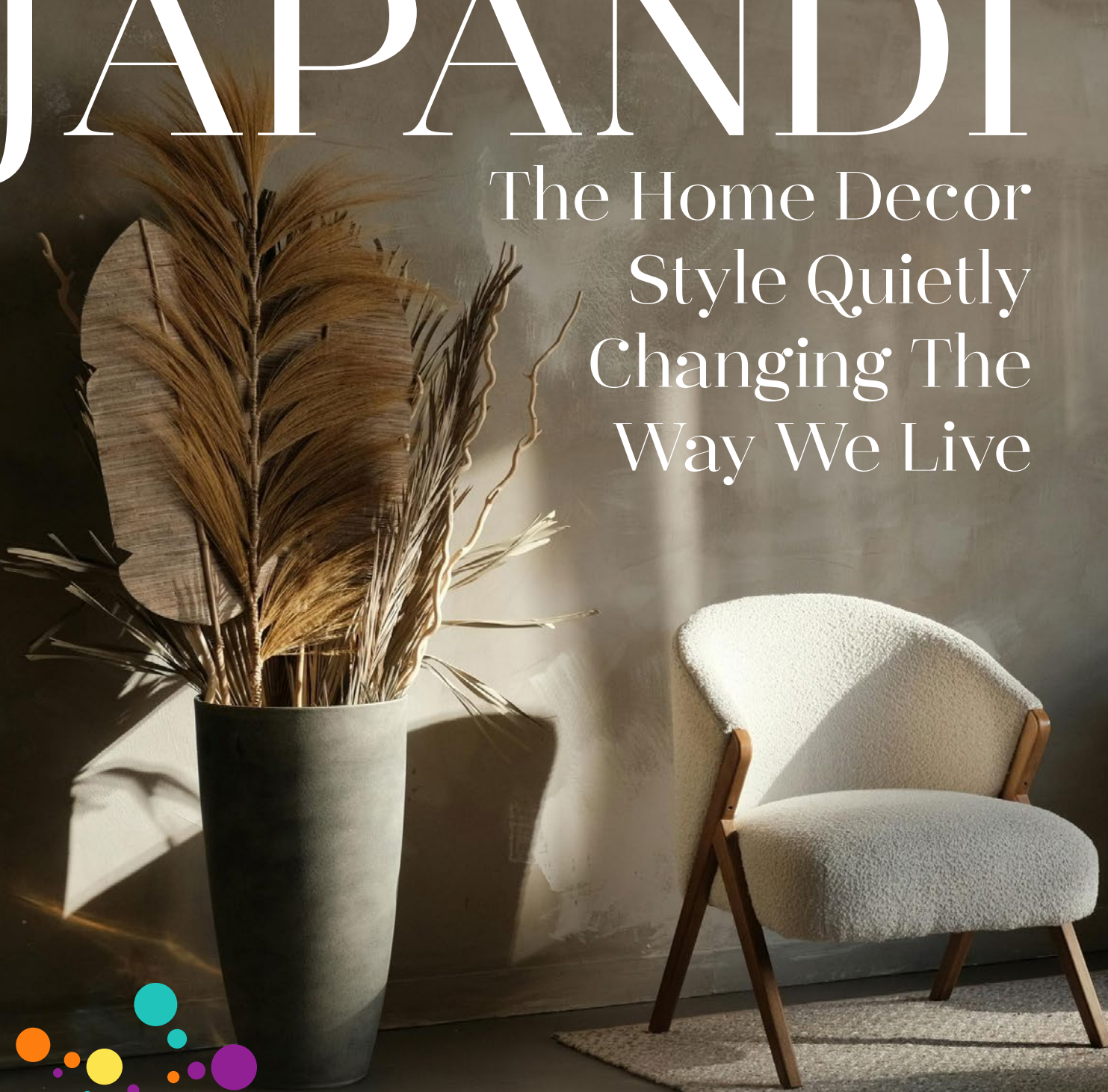


14 Red canvas by Mauraya Sharma, part of the *Migration of Banjara to Urban Cities* series.

15 The centre table is crafted from old Chettinad pillar tops.

JAPANDI

The Home Decor
Style Quietly
Changing The
Way We Live



In a world of overstuffed interiors and high-tech gadgets, a quiet revolution is reshaping how we live: Japandi. This trend fuses Japanese minimalism with Scandinavian functionality, producing homes that are serene, practical, and timeless. Japandi isn't just décor—it's a philosophy for 21st-century living.



JAPANDI: THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE TREND



At its core, Japandi is about intentional living. Every piece has a purpose, every texture tells a story, and every corner is designed to bring calm.

- **Japanese roots:** Inspired by wabi-sabi, Japandi embraces the beauty of imperfection, simplicity, and handcrafted artistry.
- **Scandinavian influence:** Hygge, the Danish idea of comfort and coziness, informs Japandi's warm, inviting spaces.

Modern relevance: In a time of clutter, fast consumption, and urban stress, Japandi reflects contemporary desires for mindful, serene, and sustainable interiors.



QUICK TIPS

- **Colours:** Soft neutrals with black or navy accents
- **Materials:** Wood, bamboo, stone, clay, linen
- **Furniture:** Low-profile, multipurpose, functional
- **Décor:** Minimal, meaningful, handcrafted
- **Lighting:** Warm, diffused, layered
- **Greenery:** Indoor plants, bonsai, ferns



A HISTORICAL EAST-WEST CONNECTION

Japandi design traces its roots back roughly 150 years, when Scandinavian designers began traveling to Japan once the country opened its borders to tourists. Designers quickly realised that both cultures share some fundamental principles:

- Simplicity and functionality
- Appreciation for handcrafted objects
- Affinity for natural materials

This fascination with Japanese design inspired a fusion of East-West aesthetics, which evolved over time into what we now call Japandi. Today, it is celebrated in interior design circles, curated design stores, and popular blogs, influencing both residential and commercial spaces globally.





CREATING A JAPANDI HOME: PRACTICAL TIPS

- 1. Start with a Neutral Base**
Walls, floors, and large furniture in muted shades form a calming backdrop. Soft greys, taupe, and cream work beautifully.
- 2. Choose Functional Furniture**
Invest in pieces that are both beautiful and practical. Low-profile beds, storage benches, or minimalist dining tables are perfect.
- 3. Incorporate Natural Materials**
Wood, bamboo, stone, clay, and linen add warmth and texture. Avoid synthetic or overly glossy surfaces—they break the Japandi ethos.
- 4. Keep Décor Minimal**
Display only what you love or use daily. One statement vase, a single art piece, or a handmade ceramic bowl can define a room.
- 5. Add Greenery**
Indoor plants, small bonsai, or simple ferns for a green touch without cluttering the space.
- 6. Focus on Lighting**
Soft, warm lighting enhances calm. Paper lanterns, shaded lamps, or LED strips under shelves maintain serenity.
- 7. Mind the Layout**
Open spaces, minimal furniture, and clear pathways allow movement and mental clarity.

GLOBAL HOTSPOTS FOR JAPANDI HOMES

- **Tokyo & Kyoto, Japan:** Apartments integrate Scandinavian furniture with traditional Japanese minimalism.
- **Copenhagen & Stockholm, Scandinavia:** Homes feature Japanese-style tatami corners alongside functional Nordic furniture.
- **Europe & USA:** London, Paris, and New York lofts showcase Japandi in open-plan apartments.
- **Singapore & Australia:** Designers use neutral tones, natural light, and airy layouts in apartments and townhouses.

Browse Pinterest and Instagram (#JapandiStyle, #JapandiHome) to see real-life examples and get inspired.





EXPLORE

WHERE ARE YOUR DREAMS
TAKING YOU THIS SEASON?

POSTCARD PERFECT 7 ENCHANTING EUROPEAN VILLAGES

While Europe is famed for its grand cities and iconic landmarks, the real magic often lies in its quieter corners. These seven picturesque villages, tucked away from the crowds, are full of charm, history, and breathtaking beauty. Perfect for those seeking a more intimate, picturesque escape, these villages will fill your camera roll with memories that feel straight out of a dream.



01 HALLSTATT, AUSTRIA

A Lakeside Fairy Tale: Hallstatt's stunning location between the shimmering Hallstätter See and towering mountains creates a picture-perfect scene. Its pastel-coloured houses reflect on the lake, offering a dreamlike atmosphere. Wander through the charming market square, visit the fascinating Beinhaus (Bone House) with its painted skulls, and hop on a boat for an even more dramatic view of this lakeside gem.



Getting There: Hallstatt is about a 3-hour drive from Salzburg or Vienna, but if you're up for a scenic adventure, take the train to Obertraun and then the bus or a short boat ride to Hallstatt.

Tasty Tip: After exploring, treat yourself to Kaiserschmarrn (a fluffy shredded pancake) at a local spot near the lake. It's a perfect, sweet end to a day spent surrounded by beauty.



Kaiserschmarrn



SINTRA, PORTUGAL

Romantic Palaces and Lush Gardens: Just a 40-minute train ride from Lisbon lies Sintra, a UNESCO World Heritage site that seems plucked from a fairy tale. Its famous Pena Palace is a must-see, but it's the winding cobblestone streets, charming shops, and panoramic views that steal the show.

Tasty Tip: Indulge in Travesseiros, a puff pastry filled with almond cream, at a hidden cafe tucked in the streets. It's the perfect snack to enjoy as you sit back and relax before catching the sunset.

Getting There: Trains from Lisbon's Rossio Station will take you to Sintra in under 40 minutes. Once there, the village is easy to explore on foot.



LAUTERBRUNNEN, SWITZERLAND

Valley of 72 Waterfalls: Lauterbrunnen is a picture-perfect village in a dramatic U-shaped valley surrounded by snow-capped peaks and majestic waterfalls. With its charming chalets and lush meadows, it's the perfect base for exploring the Swiss Alps.

Tasty Tip: After visiting the Trümmelbach Falls, indulge in a slice of Nusstorte, a rich nut-filled pastry, at a local bakery. It's the perfect way to warm up after exploring the stunning waterfalls.

Getting There: Lauterbrunnen is easily accessible by train from Interlaken, with scenic views along the way.



04 COLMAR, FRANCE

Alsatian Wonderland: Colmar, with its vibrant half-timbered houses, charming canals, and cobblestone streets, feels like a fairy tale come to life. The town's "Little Venice" area is a must-see for leisurely strolls along flower-lined waterways, and the colourful facades of the buildings make it one of the most photogenic villages in Europe.

Tasty Tip: Try a Tarte Flambée, a crispy flatbread topped with cream, onions, and lardons—perfectly paired with a glass of local Alsatian white wine, enjoyed by the canal as the sun sets.

Getting There: Colmar is about a 3-hour train ride from Paris or Strasbourg. The village itself is walkable, with most attractions just a short stroll away from each other.





05

GIETHOORN, NETHERLANDS

The Village Without Roads: Known as the “Venice of the North,” Giethoorn’s peaceful canals replace roads. The village is best explored by boat or on foot, crossing charming wooden bridges as you go past thatched-roof farmhouses and lush gardens.

Tasty Tip: After boating through the canals, enjoy a warm Dutch Stroopwafel, a delicious caramel-filled waffle, at a cozy spot while you watch the boats drift by.

Getting There: Giethoorn is about a 1.5-hour train ride from Amsterdam, followed by a short bus ride to the village. It’s worth staying the night to fully soak in the peaceful vibe.





OIA, SANTORINI, GREECE

Sunset Perfection: Oia, perched on the edge of the caldera in Santorini, offers one of the most iconic views in Europe. With its whitewashed buildings, blue-domed churches, and narrow cobblestone streets, this village is a true feast for the eyes, particularly during the breathtaking sunset hours.

Tasty Tip: Indulge in Loukoumades, golden, honey-drizzled dough balls that are crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. These little treats are often sprinkled with cinnamon and crushed walnuts—perfect for a sweet moment as you watch the sunset over the Aegean Sea.

Getting There: Oia is easily reached by car or bus from Fira, the capital of Santorini, and is a must-visit on any trip to the island.





07

REINE, NORWAY

Lofoten's Arctic Beauty: Reine is a small fishing village above the Arctic Circle, nestled among dramatic peaks and sapphire-blue fjords. Its iconic red fishermen's cabins (rorbuer) on the water's edge, combined with stunning natural beauty, make it a photographer's paradise.

Tasty Tip: After a hike up Reinebringen for a breathtaking view, treat yourself to Rømmegrøt, a warm porridge made with sour cream, butter, and sugar—comfort food for the soul.

Getting There: A 3-hour drive from the Lofoten Islands' main airport at Leknes, Reine is well worth the journey for its unmatched views and tranquility.





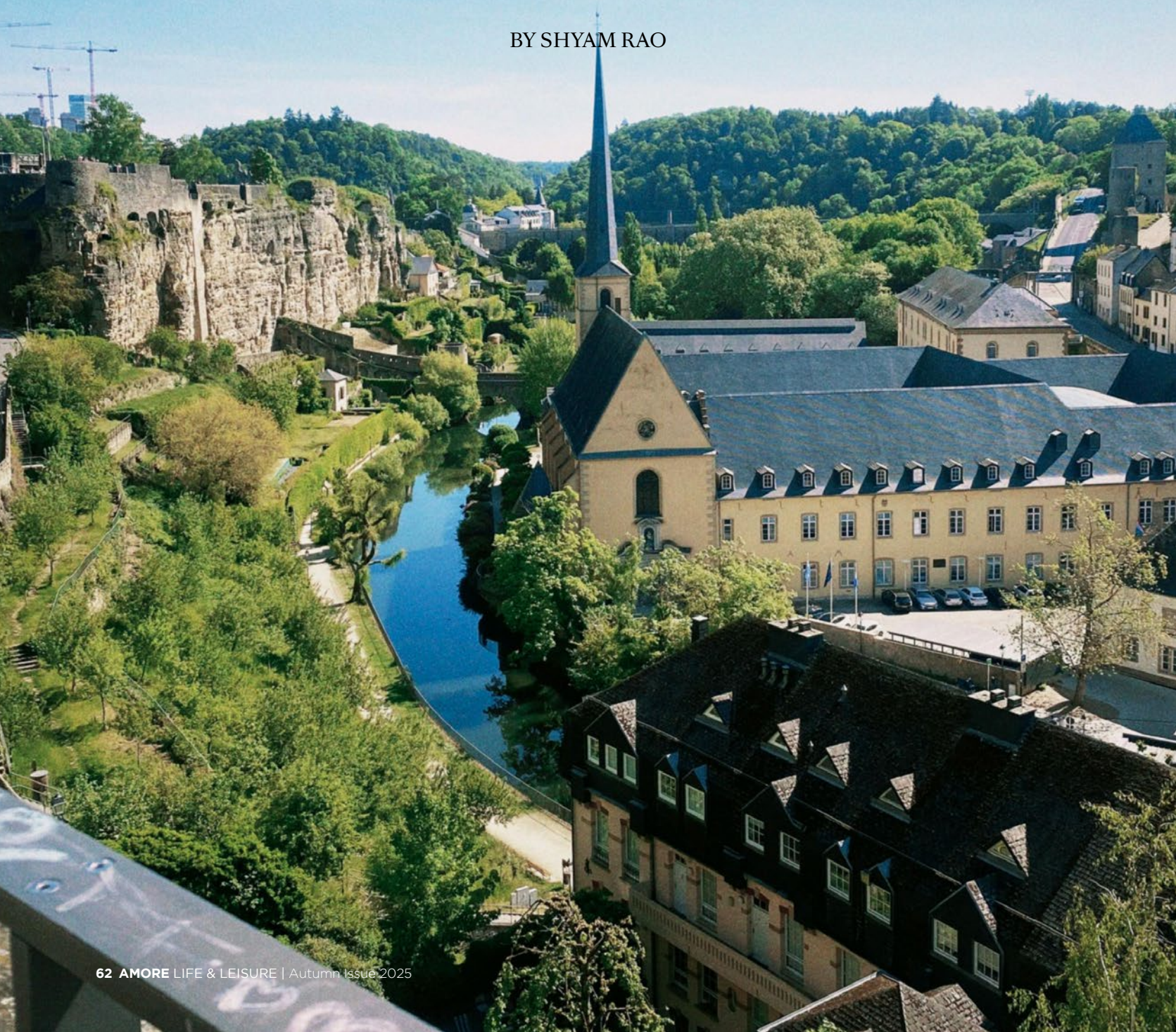
These villages each offer a unique slice of European charm—whether it's a secret cafe, a local delicacy, or a hidden sunset viewpoint. So pack your camera, put on your walking shoes, and let the road less travelled lead you to some of Europe's most enchanting spots.

LUXEMBOURG

SMALL CITY. BIG SURPRISES

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, (the world's only remaining sovereign grand duchy), is a small, landlocked country bordered by Germany, France, and Belgium. Though not usually on most main tour agendas, this highly developed country is charming, and offers a blend of history, culture, heritage buildings and architecture, and natural beauty, making it an ideal weekend or short getaway from any of the bordering countries, or even from further afield like The Netherlands.

BY SHYAM RAO





GETTING THERE

Though you could fly in or drive, a train is probably the most convenient option. There are good and frequent connections, and you could reach Luxembourg from Paris in under 3 hours, and the journey from as far as Amsterdam would take only around 5 to 6 hours.



ACCOMMODATION

As with any developed European capital, Luxembourg city offers a wide spectrum of accommodation to cater to different budgets. Having said that, I would say that it is among the more expensive cities in Europe, and you would need to explore a bit to find good accommodation which is reasonably priced. Some of the nice areas to look for accommodation are Kirchberg, Ville Haute and Belair.

Keep in mind that all public transport is free for everyone throughout the

whole of Luxembourg, (yes, you read that right), and it would certainly help to find accommodation within easy reach of it.



PLANNING YOUR VISIT

If you have not decided on what you want to do on your Luxembourg visit, it would be a good idea to start at the Luxembourg City Tourist Office at Place Guillaume II. The staff are extremely helpful, and will give you all the detailed information you need.

A free giveaway here is a useful booklet called "100 things to do in Luxembourg." It pretty much covers everything you can do during your stay, and you can pick and choose to see what interests you, and what you can fit into your schedule. Consider getting a Luxembourg Pass which gives you free or discounted access to a number of tourist spots, attractions, bike rentals and the like. Of course, you would need to decide what you want to do and do the math to see if the Pass is worth it.



FOOD

Luxembourg's cuisine is much influenced by its neighbours, and traditional Luxembourg dishes are hearty and meaty. However, probably as a reflection of the very cosmopolitan nature of the city's population, you can get cuisine from almost anywhere in the world in Luxembourg.

The streets around Place Guillaume II and Place D'armes, are full of lively bars and eateries, and you can always find something to your liking. One place that everyone recommends for traditional Luxembourgish food is Café-Restaurant Um Dierfgen on Cote d'Eich.



SUGGESTED ITINERARY



Gelle Fra



Place de Metz



Notre Dame Cathedral



Adolphe bridge



Petrusse Casemates cannon



Bock Casemates

Petrusse Casemates

Petrusse Casemates AV show

You could take a conducted tour or DIY with one of the apps and audio tours available. Walk through the Old City (the whole of which is a UNESCO World Heritage site), starting from Place de Metz, crossing the Adolphe bridge, and reaching the “Gelle Fra” memorial on Place de La Constitution.

You could then visit the Notre Dame Cathedral which was originally a Jesuit church, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1613. The cathedral is renowned for being a melange of Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance architectural styles. Though not as grand as some other European cathedrals, the stained-glass windows are worth seeing, as is the crypt.



Grand Duchess Charlotte- Bridge (Red Bridge)

Thereafter, you could explore Luxembourg City Underground by visiting either Bock Casemates, a 17th century Spanish built underground defence system consisting of a network of corridors, or the Petrusse Casemates also dating back to the 17th century, and built as a fortification, but which has since seen many avatars including being used to grow mushrooms. Of course, if you have the time, you could do both.

For scenic vistas, there are two elevators connecting Ville Haute to the rest of the city, namely the Grund lift and the Pfaffenthal panoramic lift.

The latter offers breathtaking views of both the lower and upper city, the Alzette valley and the Grand Duchess Charlotte- Bridge (also known as the Red Bridge), and is well worth a ride!



Musical Fountain

Wind up the day near the musical fountain near the “Gelle Fra” memorial, enjoy a beer or a snack, and take in vistas of the Petrusse Valley and the buildings across.



DAY 2

Trip to Vianden Castle





Vianden Castle medieval Festival Musician



Medieval Festival - Village Blacksmith and Falconers birds



Vianden Chairlift

Nestled in the Ardenne region, Vianden Castle was built between the 11th and 14th centuries, and is one of the largest and most beautiful feudal residences of the Romanesque and Gothic periods in Europe. It was home to the Counts of Vianden who were connected to the Royal families of France and the German Imperial Court. It was subsequently sold, and fell into a state of ruin, till it was taken over and restored by the state since 1977.

Vianden can be reached by taking the bus or train to Ettelbruck. There, you change to the Bus going towards Vianden, and get off at Place Engelmann, from where the castle is a short walk. While the castle may not be as imposing as some of the larger forts and fortified palaces in India, it is probably everyone's perception of an archetypal medieval European family residence castle.

Every year, there is a week-long medieval festival, and, if your visit coincides with the festival, the castle forms the backdrop to depictions of life in those bygone times. From the market place featuring hand crafted wares, to the Village blacksmith and Wagoneer, to knights in armour, fencing and archery tournaments, jugglers, falconers, you name it.

Everyone is also dressed for effect, instantly transporting you to the days of yore. If you have time after the visit to the Castle, you can visit the Victor Hugo House Literary Museum where the renowned Author spent a lot of time.

You can also take the Vianden Chairlift to take in spectacular views of the castle and surrounding areas.

Though Luxembourg is a small country, there is so much to see and do, and the suggested itinerary is just suited for a short 2-day break. There are plenty of museums, hiking trails, modern architecture, and the like that may be more interesting to some. Whatever your interest, Luxembourg is certain not to disappoint, and may well be worth more than just a short visit.

Shyam Rao is a retired Naval Officer who is an avid traveller. He has travelled extensively to many parts of the world, both on and off the beaten track. He loves exploring new destinations along with their culture, food, and often hidden sights.

THE GREAT SUITCASE DEBATE: HARD VS. SOFT SHELL

Choosing between a hard shell and a soft shell suitcase often depends on your travel style and priorities. Let's take a closer look at the pros and cons of each to help you make an informed decision.

HARD SHELL SUITCASES

PROS:

- **Durability & Protection:** The rigid, hard exterior offers excellent protection for delicate items like electronics, glass, and other fragile belongings. It's less likely to get damaged during rough handling.
- **Security:** Many hard shell suitcases come with built-in locks, making it harder for thieves to access your belongings.
- **Weather Resistance:** Hard shell cases generally perform better in bad weather conditions, protecting your items from rain or snow due to their water-resistant exterior.
- **Modern Aesthetic:** Their sleek, stylish and minimal design makes them look more polished.
- **Easy to Clean:** With their smooth surfaces, hard shell suitcases are easier to wipe clean and maintain, keeping them looking pristine.

CONS:

- **Heavy:** Hard shell suitcases are made of durable material, which can add up when you're trying to keep your baggage weight under control.
- **Less Expandable:** While some models offer expandable zippers, they generally don't give you the flexibility of soft shell luggage to accommodate extra items.
- **Storage Issues:** Hard shell suitcases are not as collapsible and take up more space when stored. If you have limited storage space, this could be a concern.
- **Fewer Organisational Features:** The lack of internal compartments or pockets means you may need to invest in packing cubes or organisers to keep things tidy.



SOFT SHELL SUITCASES

PROS:

- **Flexible & Expandable:** Opening zippers allows you to pack a little more when needed. This flexibility makes it ideal for those who like to shop during their trips.
- **Lightweight:** A significant benefit if you want to avoid excess baggage fees or simply prefer a lighter suitcase.
- **More Organisational Options:** Multiple compartments and external pockets make packing and unpacking a breeze.
- **More Storage Space:** Soft shell luggage can be squeezed into tight spaces. This makes them easier to store at home too.
- **Affordable:** Generally, soft shell suitcases tend to be more budget-friendly than hard shell ones, providing great value without compromising on functionality.

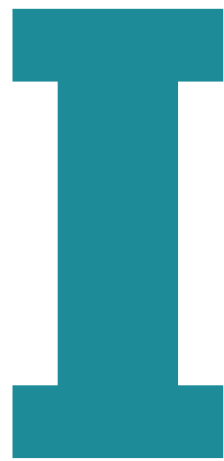
CONS:

- **Less Protection:** Fragile items inside may be more vulnerable to damage, especially if the suitcase is roughly handled.
- **Not as Secure:** Although you can use locks, they are more prone to being cut open or broken into due to their flexible nature.
- **Weather Vulnerability:** Soft shell bags are less water-resistant than hard shells, so your belongings may be at risk in heavy rain or snow.
- **Prone to Wear and Tear:** Soft shell suitcase fabric gets scratched, scuffed, or ripped more easily than a hard shell case.



If ironclad protection for your valuables, sleek durability, and top-tier security are non-negotiable, a hard shell is the one for you. But if you crave flexible packing, lightness, and compartments galore for easy access, the adaptable soft shell wins out. So, which will it be? Choose wisely, because your perfect travel companion awaits.

FOUR STAYS THAT TURN INDIA'S HISTORY INTO A LIVING EXPERIENCE



India's past is not tucked away in dusty textbooks or distant ruins. At some rare resorts, history comes alive in the form of the arch of a doorway, the swirl of a classical dance performance, or the whisper of legends echoing through the halls.

Here are 4 resorts that you can escape to to take an immersive journey into India's architectural and cultural legacy. Each of these places transforms historical detail into something immersive and meaningful, honouring tradition without compromising on comfort.



EVOLVE BACK, HAMPI

Evolve Back Hampi brings history to life by immersing guests in the architectural grandeur and storytelling of the 14th-century Vijayanagara Empire. The resort is designed to echo the era's distinctive elements, ranging from Hindu-style arches and teardrop balustrades to intricately carved bay windows.

What makes the experience truly immersive is how history is woven into the stay. Guests can take curated tours led by local guides, explore the ruins of ancient temples, and attend storytelling sessions that narrate the legends of Hampi. Every suite balances regal aesthetics with modern luxury, ensuring comfort while staying rooted in context. Through community engagement, Evolve Back also fosters a deep cultural connection between guests and the land.



RAMBAGH PALACE, JAIPUR

Once the residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur, Rambagh Palace blends regal architecture with immersive cultural experiences. Its preservation is meticulous. From hand-painted motifs and intricate carvings to luxurious textiles and period décor, every space retains the charm of its royal past, offering guests an authentic taste of princely living.

Guests can dine in opulent courtyards, enjoy a traditional Rajasthani thali aboard a vintage steam train, or ride in horse-drawn carriages across the palace grounds. Royal wellness rituals, polo experiences, and classical performances all contribute to a rich cultural narrative.





UMAID BHAWAN PALACE, JODHPUR

Perched atop Chittar Hill, Umaid Bhawan Palace is one of the world's largest private residences still partially occupied by royalty. Its Indo-Deco architecture, blending Western Art Deco with Indian styles, is breathtaking and carefully preserved. Every suite, garden, and corridor exudes historical charm.

The palace offers guests an immersive experience of Rajput hospitality. From traditional folk performances to guided heritage tours, the hotel ensures that each stay is deeply personal and culturally rich. Local cuisine, bespoke experiences like cooking classes, and a commitment to showcasing Rajasthani craftsmanship make Umaid Bhawan Palace a beacon of cultural pride in luxury travel.

03

KUMARAKOM LAKE RESORT, KERALA

Kumarakom Lake Resort captures the spirit of Kerala's architectural and healing heritage through carefully restored ancestral homes and a design that reflects local craftsmanship. Traditional peaked roofs, open courtyards, and teakwood furnishings transport guests to another time.

The Ayurmana Spa, housed in a 200-year-old structure, offers authentic Ayurvedic treatments passed down through generations of physicians. Guests can enjoy Keralite cuisine, classical performances like Mohiniyattam, and curated cultural activities. All of this is seamlessly paired with luxury offers, both cultural immersion and indulgence.



04

INDULGE

A CORNUCOPIA OF LIGHT & LOVELY FLAVOURS,
CURATED TO SERENADE YOUR SENSES





One Pan Wonder

Shakshuka

Forget fussy brunches! Meet Shakshuka, bursting with flavour and colour. It's a dreamy blend of spiced tomatoes and perfectly poached eggs, ready to make your tastebuds sing. Get ready for a delicious adventure – no culinary acrobatics required!

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp chilli flakes (optional, for a little kick!)
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- Salt & pepper
- 4 large eggs
- Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)

WHAT YOU DO:

1. **Sizzle:** Heat olive oil in a large pan. Add onion and cook until soft (about 5 mins).
2. **Add Veggies:** Stir in bell pepper and garlic. Cook for another 5 minutes.
3. **Spice It Up:** Mix in cumin, paprika, and chilli flakes. Cook for 1-2 minutes until fragrant.
4. **Tomato Time:** Pour in chopped tomatoes. Season with salt & pepper. Simmer for 10-15 minutes until the sauce thickens.
5. **Egg Nest:** Make 4 small wells in the sauce. Crack an egg into each. Cover and cook 5-7 minutes, or until eggs are just right.
6. **Garnish & Serve!** Top with fresh parsley and dig in with crusty bread!

SHAKSHUKA SECRETS:

- **Origin Story:** This gem comes from North Africa and the Middle East – pure deliciousness!
- **Your Twist:** Add extra veggies, different spices, or even a sprinkle of feta!
- **Healthy & Happy:** It's packed with protein, vitamins, and healthy fats. Win-win!





A slice of life

Restaurant Review: Serious Slice, Bengaluru

BY SHINIE ANTONY



Eating is necessary to stay alive, but once it becomes routine, and the ‘why we eat’ is replaced with ‘what we eat’, it becomes the most scrutinized activity in the world – also the most corporate. In this multi-buck industry catering to the fussiest of diners the demand for different and newer culinary experiences is a loud clamour. To find a quiet, unpretentious corner to sup, where the food is the only concern, is a modern ongoing quest – for college gangs, dating couples, as also large, loud, unwieldy families... What Serious Slice brings to the table is carefully curated unpretentious and filling fare. Like the make-up that goes into the no-make-up look, the effort to keep it all looking this simple is, thankfully, kept invisible.

Located on a bustling side of the Cunningham Road in a deceptively small area, the place still manages to convey a sense of privacy between tables. The sun and the sidewalk

are a part of the décor despite being behind long glass walls. Among the five salads they offer is one with burrata, a semi-soft white Italian cheese, that gets all lemony zesty on the tongue. The teeth, meanwhile, must deal with Caprese, their signature dish: a wood-fired sourdough sandwich with a balsamic glaze. It is filled with enough things that burst when bit.

The Napoli Pizza series, starring a cast from Og Margherita to Cinque Formaggi, is where the Seafood Marinara plays the lead – especially if you are a pescetarian living in a world where snooty non-vegetarians refuse to include you in their tribe. When shrimp and squid take the floor, it is the most romantic dance of a dish. There is also a yuzu-infused butter sauce somewhere in a pasta, while ghee puts in an appearance in another. Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme – like the music album by Simon & Garfunkel – are also present as signature oils.

Sweet nothings come in three, as per the laws of pillow talk: Frittelle, Classic Cheesecake and Tiramisu. Frittelle



SERIOUS SLICE

This modern Neapolitan trattoria blends traditional Italian flavours with bold, contemporary twists, celebrating the craft of slow-fermented sourdough, handmade pasta, and open-fire cooking.

SERIOUS SLICE

HM Geneva House, Vasanth Nagar,
Cunningham Road, Bengaluru- 560052

Dine-in | Takeaway
Price for two: Rs. 2000++

Shinie Antony is a celebrated author and is the festival director of Bangalore Literature Festival and Bangalore Poetry Festival.

is further divided into a trio of lemon curd, hazelnut and chocolate, mandarin orange cream. Strictly for those not counting calories or only nibbled during previous rounds.

Serious Slice is kept busy all day, its tables never free for long. Lightness and laughs per force what a diner brings along to balance, as the place is serious about its slices.

COFFEE CULTURES OF THE WORLD

A SENSORY JOURNEY

From the hiss of an Italian espresso machine to the slow drip of Kyoto-style cold brew, every culture has its own way of turning beans into magic. Let's step into homes, cafés, and street stalls around the world to discover how coffee is truly lived.



ITALY: ESPRESSO AS A DAILY RHYTHM

The Scene: The morning air in Naples hums with the chatter of baristi and the sharp clink of tiny cups. At the counter, men in sharp suits and workers in paint-splattered trousers stand shoulder to shoulder, knocking back their caffè in one swift gulp. No one sits—this is a quick, purposeful act, a jolt of energy before the day begins.

The No-Nos:

- **Never order a cappuccino after 11 AM.** Milk-based drinks are breakfast-only—ordering one in the afternoon marks you as a tourist.
- **Don't ask for "to-go" cups.** Espresso is meant to be savoured immediately, standing at the bar.
- **No pumpkin spice lattes here.** Italians take their coffee seriously—keep it simple.

Ordering Like a Local:

- *"Un caffè, per favore."* (A straight espresso.)
- *"Un macchiato caldo/freddo."* (With a dash of hot/cold milk.)
- *"Un caffè corretto."* (Spiked with grappa—for the brave.)



TURKEY: COFFEE STEEPED IN CEREMONY

The Scene: In a dimly lit Istanbul living room, the scent of cardamom and finely ground coffee rises from a copper cezve. The host pours the thick, unfiltered brew into delicate porcelain cups, the dark liquid swirling with grounds. Fortune-telling from the leftover sludge is half the fun—every sip is a conversation, a pause, a moment of connection.

The No-Nos:

- **Never stir after pouring.** The grounds must settle naturally.
- **Don't rush.** Turkish coffee is about patience—sipping too fast is rude.
- **Skip the milk.** This is a pure, strong experience.

Ordering Like a Local:

- *"Orta şekerli."* (Medium sweet.)
- *"Sade."* (Unsweetened—for the purists.)
- *"Menengiç kahvesi."* (A pistachio-infused alternative.)



▶ JAPAN: THE ZEN OF COFFEE PERFECTION

The Scene: In a Tokyo kissaten (traditional coffee shop), the barista moves with the precision of a tea master. Water temperature is exact, the Hario V60 pour is slow and circular, and the resulting cup is clean, floral, almost ethereal. Kyoto's cold brew drips like amber syrup, one precious drop at a time—a meditation in liquid form.

The No-Nos:

- **No loud slurping.** Unlike ramen, coffee is enjoyed quietly.
- **Don't add sugar before tasting.** The brew is designed to be appreciated as-is.
- **Never rush a siphon brew.** The spectacle is part of the experience.

Ordering Like a Local:

- "*Kōhī, onegaishimasu.*" (Simple black coffee.)
- "*Aisu kōhī.*" (Iced coffee—but never with milk unless specified.)
- "*Mizudashi.*" (Cold brew, Kyoto-style.)

▶ VIETNAM: STREET-SIDE SWEETNESS ▶▶

The Scene: On a sweltering Hanoi corner, a vendor crouches over a tiny aluminum phin filter, letting thick, tar-like coffee drip onto a pool of condensed milk. The sound of motorbikes roars past as locals sip their cà phê sữa đá through a haze of humidity, the ice clinking like wind chimes.

The No-Nos:

- **Don't ask for skim milk.** Condensed milk is non-negotiable.
- **Avoid instant coffee.** The phin filter is sacred.
- **Never drink it hot in summer.** Iced is the default.

Ordering Like a Local:

- "*Cà phê sữa đá.*" (Iced coffee with milk.)
- "*Cà phê đen đá.*" (Black iced coffee—strong and bitter.)
- "*Cà phê trứng.*" (Egg coffee—a Hanoi specialty.)



SWEDEN: FIKA—THE ART OF PAUSE

The Scene: In a cosy Stockholm apartment, golden afternoon light spills over a table set with cinnamon buns and a pot of freshly brewed coffee. This is fika—not just a coffee break, but a state of mind. Friends linger, conversation flows, and for a moment, time slows down.

The No-Nos:

- **Never skip the pastry.** Coffee without something sweet is unthinkable.
- **Don't drink alone.** Fika is inherently social.
- **No rushed gulps.** This is about savouring, not caffeine intake.

Ordering Like a Local:

- *"En kopp kaffe, tack."* (A cup of coffee, please.)
- *"Kan jag få en kanelbulle till?"* (Can I get a cinnamon bun with that?)

THE SOUL OF COFFEE

Coffee is more than a drink—it's a window into how people live, love, and connect. Whether you're standing at an Italian bar, lounging in a Swedish café, or perched on a tiny plastic stool in Vietnam, the ritual is what makes it unforgettable.

So tomorrow morning, as you brew your cup, ask yourself: How do I want to live this moment? Like a Neapolitan, swift and strong? Like a Kyoto master, slow and deliberate? Or like a Hanoian, sweet and unhurried? The world's coffee cultures are waiting for you to take a sip.

Gourmet Grains

Elevate Your Cooking with Artisan Salts



Embrace the subtle art of gourmet salts and transform your everyday cooking into an extraordinary culinary experience. A pinch of the right salt isn't just seasoning; it's a sprinkle of personality, a dash of delight, and a testament to the incredible diversity found in nature's simplest gifts!

01

HIMALAYAN PINK SALT: THE ROSE-TINTED GEM

What it is: Mined from ancient sea beds deep within the Himalayan mountains, this beautiful salt gets its signature rosy hue from a rich array of trace minerals. It has a mild, clean flavour and a satisfying crunch.

BEST FOR:

- **Finishing Salt:** Its pretty colour and gentle crunch make it perfect sprinkled over finished dishes.
- **Roasts & Grills:** Adds subtle minerality to meats and vegetables.
- **Baking:** A delicate sprinkle on chocolate chip cookies or brownies enhances sweetness.

CREATIVE BITES:

- **Avocado Toast Glow:** A few flakes over creamy avocado toast for colour and crunch.
- **Roasted Veggie Sparkle:** Sprinkle over roasted asparagus or grilled peppers straight from the oven.
- **Cocktail Rim:** Grind finely for a stunning rim on margaritas or palomas.



02

FLEUR DE SEL: THE "FLOWER OF THE SEA"

What it is: Hand-harvested by skimming the delicate crystals that form on the surface of seawater in salt marshes, primarily along the French coast. It's moist, irregular in shape, and offers a complex, briny flavour with a delicate crunch.

BEST FOR:

- **True Finishing Salt:** Best added just before serving to preserve its texture and flavour.
- **Delicate Dishes:** Enhances fresh seafood, salads, and eggs.
- **Desserts:** The ultimate partner for caramel, chocolate, and butter-based sweets.

CREATIVE BITES:

- **Seared Scallop Perfection:** A pinch over perfectly seared scallops brings out their sweetness.
- **Dark Chocolate Dream:** Sprinkle on high-quality dark chocolate for a sweet-salty revelation.
- **Caprese Elegance:** A few crystals over fresh mozzarella, tomatoes, and basil.





03

SMOKED SALT: THE CAMPFIRE WHISPER

What it is: Natural sea salt slow-smoked over aromatic wood fires (like applewood, alderwood, or hickory). It infuses a deep, smoky aroma and flavour directly into the crystals.

BEST FOR:

- **BBQ & Grilling:** Adds instant smoky depth without needing a smoker.
- **Vegetarian Dishes:** Imparts a “meaty” flavour to plant-based meals.
- **Soups & Stews:** A secret weapon for adding a cosy, rustic note.

CREATIVE BITES:

- **Smoked Paprika & Egg:** A pinch over scrambled eggs or a fried egg for an instant breakfast upgrade.
- **Sweet Potato Fries with Attitude:** Toss with olive oil and smoked salt before baking for an addictive side.
- **Smoky Tomato Soup:** Stir a small amount into your favourite tomato soup for surprising depth.



04

BLACK LAVA SALT: THE DRAMATIC TOUCH

What it is: Often from Hawaii or Cyprus, this striking salt is sea salt blended with activated charcoal, which gives it its dramatic black colour and subtle, earthy, slightly sulfuric undertones.

BEST FOR:

- **Visual Impact:** Creates stunning contrast on light-coloured foods.
- **Eggs & Seafood:** Pairs beautifully with the richness of eggs and the delicate flavor of fish.
- **Finishing Salt:** Best used to impress, sprinkled right before serving.

CREATIVE BITES:

- **Devilled Eggs with Edge:** A few flakes on devilled eggs for a show-stopping appetizer.
- **White Fish Wow:** Sprinkle over pan-seared cod or halibut for a chic presentation.
- **Avocado & Radish Delight:** A few flecks on a bright green avocado and thinly sliced radish salad.



SALT SAVVY TIPS FOR GOURMET GOODNESS

- **Taste, Then Add:** Gourmet salts are potent! Start with a small pinch and add more if needed.
- **Finishing Touch:** Most gourmet salts are best used as finishing salts – sprinkled on food after cooking to preserve their texture, aroma, and delicate flavours.
- **Grind if Needed:** Some larger crystals (like coarse Himalayan) benefit from a quick grind in a salt mill just before use.
- **Storage is Key:** Keep gourmet salts in airtight containers in a cool, dry place to prevent clumping and preserve their unique qualities.

SELF

TAKE TIME TO NURTURE THE MOST IMPORTANT
PERSON IN YOUR LIFE—YOU!



 **ASK AMORE**

MIND MATTERS

In need of some tell-me-what-to-do? Our therapist's got the answers. No couch required!

BY LARA G. DAVARE



LARA G. DAVARE is a trauma-informed, client-centered integrative psychotherapist and counselling psychologist, who helps people navigate life's messiness with authenticity, resilience, and grace. With over a decade of experience in grassroots social impact and a passion for living in alignment with our deepest truths, she accompanies others in discovering their own truth, feeling more connected, and living richer, more fulfilling lives.

"I'M A NEWLY MARRIED WOMAN IN MY EARLY THIRTIES, TRYING TO GROW MY COUNSELLING BUSINESS. BUT MY HUSBAND AND IN-LAWS EXPECT ME TO CANCEL CLIENT APPOINTMENTS OFTEN WHEN GUESTS COME OVER. THIS IS HURTING MY WORK AND MAKING ME FEEL PULLED IN TWO DIRECTIONS – MY CAREER AND MY FAMILY. HOW CAN I SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES AND HANDLE THESE FAMILY PRESSURES WITHOUT CAUSING ARGUMENTS OR FEELING GUILTY?"

Dear Newlywed,

You are not alone in this tension between selfhood and expectation, between wanting to be good for others and also true to yourself. That feeling you describe—being pulled in two directions—is a classic sign of conflicting roles that many women are conditioned into. The message? “Be available,” “be accommodating,” “be self-sacrificing.” And if you’re not? Well, we know how that goes...!

It sounds like the part of you that wants to belong and maintain peace is wrestling with the rational you that knows your business needs consistency, respect, and clients to thrive. And somewhere in there, the part that dreams wants autonomy and boundaries – but doesn’t know how to do that without getting people upset.

Guilt is tricky! It often comes from our fear of disapproval stemming from an irrational belief like: “If I don’t meet everyone’s expectations, I’m a bad daughter-in-law, or I’m failing my role as a wife.” But what if you challenged that? Ask yourself:

- Is it true that I’m wrong or unkind if I honour my professional commitments?
- Would I expect my husband to cancel meetings every time guests show up?

You are not selfish for wanting to maintain your work schedule. That’s not rebellion, it’s one of the foundations of professional ethic. Replace your unhelpful beliefs with something more rational, like: “I care about my family and I am also allowed to prioritize my work. Their discomfort doesn’t mean I’m doing something wrong, it means I’m being real and honest and we all will need to learn to adjust into our new lives; one in which boundaries are important to me.”

Remember, boundaries don’t break relationships, they clarify them. You’re not choosing between your family and your career. You’re choosing to show up authentically in both. Have an honest chat with your husband and start building the relationship you want with each other, you are family now! ☺

Warmly,
A Therapist Who’s Been There Too



"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A SUPER ACHIEVER AND A PERFECTIONIST. BUT LATELY, MY REPETITIVE ACTIONS, LIKE CONSTANTLY CHECKING THINGS OR NEEDING TO CLEAN, HAVE BECOME EXCESSIVE ENOUGH TO CAUSE ME GREAT ANXIETY. IT'S ALSO AFFECTING MY WORK AND SOCIAL LIFE. WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO MANAGE WHAT I THINK MIGHT BE OCD?"

Dear Perfectionist-in-Overdrive,

First, let me say this: there's courage in what you've written. You've set high standards and achieved, and now you're realizing that some of those helpful traits have grown into something that's no longer serving you. That is great self-awareness and awareness is where real change begins. It sounds like the same part of you that helped you succeed; the part that says "do it right, do it again, make it perfect" has taken over your entire control panel - pushing, checking, criticizing, never satisfied. What might've started as being careful has grown to an extreme leading you to feel anxious.

There could be some irrational beliefs you're holding onto, like: "If I don't do it perfectly, something bad will happen. I must be in complete control and not make any mistakes otherwise I'll be a failure or judged a bad person."

But is that really true? Of course not. It's an irrational belief dressed up as productivity. Challenge the irrational beliefs and ask yourself:

- What do I think will happen if I don't check this again?
- Has that outcome ever actually happened?
- Am I confusing being perfect with being human?

Practice Good Enough. This might sound hard, but deliberately leave something slightly imperfect as a fun experiment! Send the message with a typo, or leave one dish in your sink overnight and sit with that discomfort, that anxiety - and let it prove to you if it makes you a total failure the next day or not.

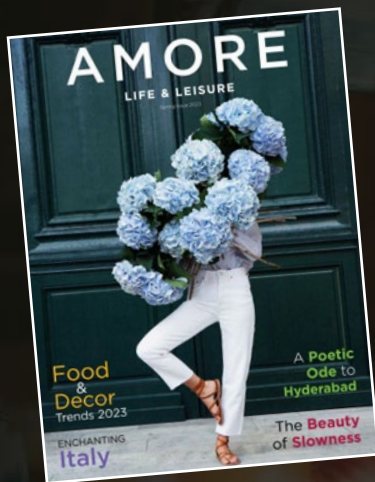
Sounds like your older scripts are not serving you anymore and it is time to update our internal software and stop letting perfectionism take over the control panel. If the anxiety persists, try speaking to a therapist to help bring more objectivity. ☺

Warmly,
A Therapist who deliberately leaves a spoon in the sink overnight



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HEALTH FLASH



01 THE BRIGHT SIDE OF DARK CHOCOLATE

Beyond its well-known benefits for heart health – like potentially lowering “bad” LDL cholesterol and improving blood flow due to its flavanol content – new research suggests that dark chocolate might also be a natural mood enhancer. The Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials, in a July 2025 article, highlighted that polyphenols in dark chocolate can help lower cortisol, the stress hormone, and may contribute to a better overall mood. So, a square or two of high-cocoa dark chocolate could be a delightful way to support both your heart and your happiness.





SAFFRON: THE “SUNSHINE SPICE”

Research published in MDPI (February 2025) has confirmed the beneficial effects of saffron extract on depressive and anxious symptoms, as well as its role in improving sleep quality. Its rich antioxidant profile is believed to play a role in its mood-boosting effects, as well as offering protection against oxidative stress. A pinch of saffron in your dishes or teas could add a touch of wellness to your day.



BLUE TEA: MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY COLOUR



Blue tea, made from the butterfly pea flower, is gaining popularity for its potential health benefits beyond its vibrant hue. Recent studies are highlighting its rich antioxidant content, which can help protect your body's cells from damage and may contribute to a stronger immune system. Bonus: blue tea could support brain health and memory, reduce inflammation, and even aid in weight management by helping regulate blood sugar levels. So, that calming cup of blue tea might be doing more for your well-being than you think!



THE “WEEKEND WARRIOR” WORKOUT

Great news for those with busy schedules! A large study, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine (July 2025), found that “weekend warriors” – individuals who get most of their recommended weekly physical activity (at least 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous exercise) in one or two sessions – experienced similar reductions in the risk of various diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, as those who exercised more frequently. So, if your weekends are your prime time for activity, you’re still on the right track!

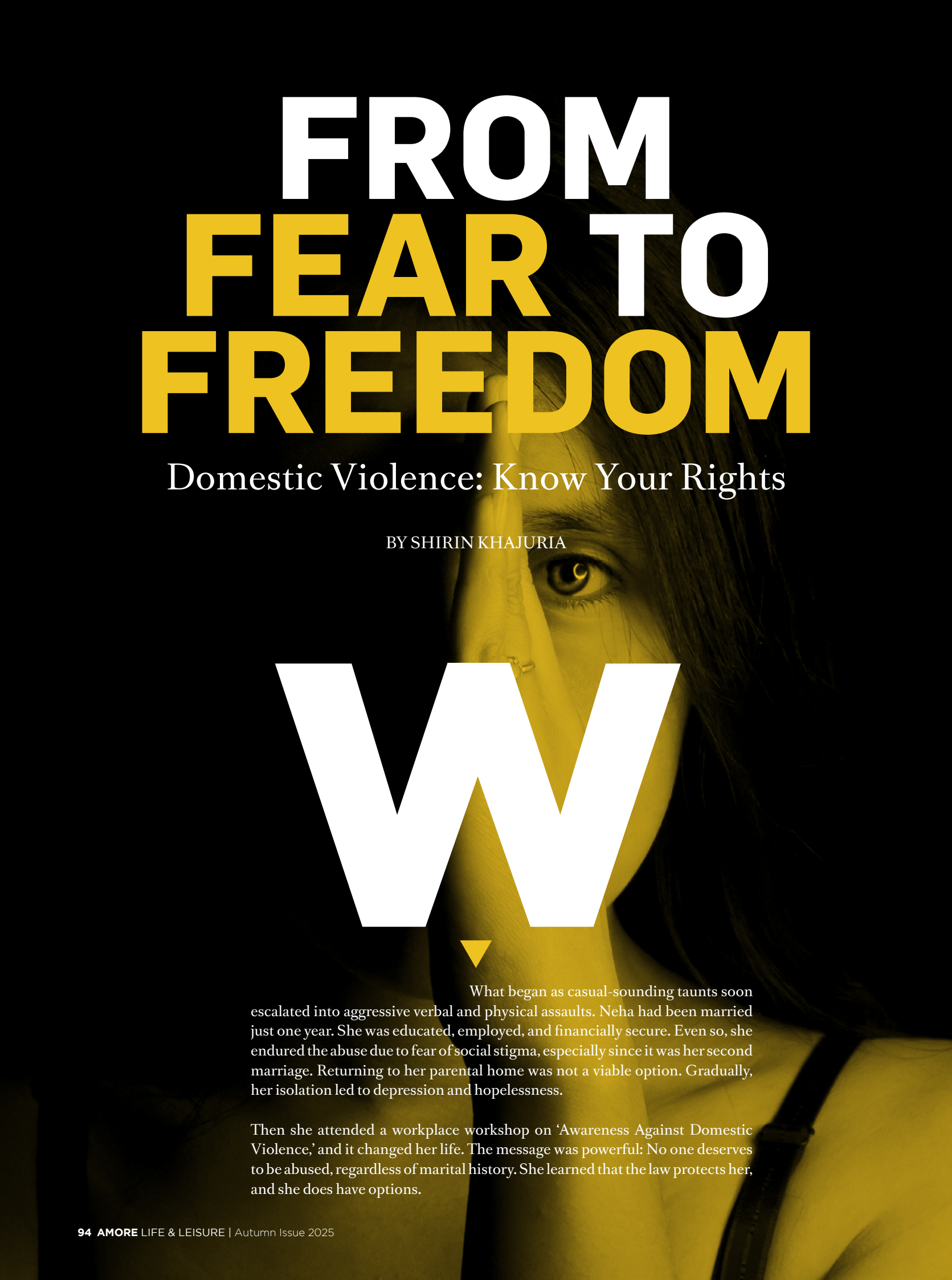


RESISTANT STARCH: YOUR GUT’S NEW BEST FRIEND



A study in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition found a cool trick: simply freezing and then toasting bread significantly boosts its resistant starch content, making it easier on your blood sugar. You can apply this same idea to everyday staples like cooked and then cooled potatoes, pasta, and rice. It's a simple, smart way to make your meals even more gut-friendly!





FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM

Domestic Violence: Know Your Rights

BY SHIRIN KHAJURIA

W

What began as casual-sounding taunts soon escalated into aggressive verbal and physical assaults. Neha had been married just one year. She was educated, employed, and financially secure. Even so, she endured the abuse due to fear of social stigma, especially since it was her second marriage. Returning to her parental home was not a viable option. Gradually, her isolation led to depression and hopelessness.

Then she attended a workplace workshop on 'Awareness Against Domestic Violence,' and it changed her life. The message was powerful: No one deserves to be abused, regardless of marital history. She learned that the law protects her, and she does have options.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WHO CAN SEEK RELIEF?

Under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (DV Act), domestic violence includes physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic abuse. Relief is available not just to wives, but to mothers, sisters, daughters, and live-in partners i.e. any woman in a domestic relationship. While the complainant or the abused must be a woman under the Act, the perpetrator may be male or female.

WHERE CAN A SURVIVOR SEEK IMMEDIATE HELP?

- **Women Helplines (1091 or 181):** For emergencies and police intervention.
- **Sakhi – One-Stop Centres:** Available in every district, they offer integrated support—medical, legal, counselling, police support, and temporary shelter for the woman and even her child.
- **Local Police Station:** File a written complaint or diary entry and request acknowledgment. Take two copies of a comprehensive complaint rather than an on-the-spot complaint.
- **CAW Cells / Mahila Thanas:** For intervention and counselling.
- **Government Health Centres:** They medically examine and document abuse and even offer legal referrals including of NGOs and Legal Aid Authority. The survivor must approach them at the earliest to have a record of abuse.
- **Protection Officers:** Appointed under the DV Act to assist with legal and procedural support. Their contact numbers are found on websites of State government departments
- **State Legal Services Authority:** Offer free legal aid and advice.
- **NGOs / Service Providers:** Recognized under the DV Act.
- **Other mechanisms:** like Special Cells for Women in select Police Stations, the Bharosa Cell in Maharashtra and others Special Cells.
- **National/State Women's Commissions:** For grievances and systemic support.

LEGAL REMEDIES FOR SURVIVORS

Mutual respect is one of the key building blocks of a successful relationship. Disrespect and violence not only strikes at the very root of a relationship but also scars the person so abused. Given the intricate and fragile dynamics of family relationships, such issues need to be handled with utmost caution and deliberation. If you are in an abusive relationship, you must know the civil and criminal legal remedies available to you.

1. **Family Counselling:** You can approach a counsellor/ marriage counsellor directly or at a well-reputed organisation like 'Vimhans.' Early intervention through counselling can prevent escalation. Family Courts also provide counselling.
2. **Mediation:** If counselling does not yield the desired result, you can opt for pre-litigation Mediation at Court Annexed Mediation Centres, Mediation Institutes or private mediators. Mediation is when a neutral third person, called the mediator, helps resolve disputes amicably, through negotiation techniques. The decision or settlement terms are determined by the parties themselves and not the Mediator. Yet, such a



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW – Survivors of domestic violence

LEGAL RIGHT	WHAT IT MEANS
 Right to Reside	You cannot be evicted from your shared/matrimonial home.
 Right to Protection	Courts can stop the abuser from approaching or contacting you.
 Right to Maintenance	You are entitled to financial support, even if working and even after divorce.
 Right to Alternate Housing	Court can order abuser to pay rent or himself vacate shared home.
 Right to Child Custody	Temporary custody can be claimed under the DV Act.
 Right to Compensation	For mental, emotional, and physical trauma.
 Right to File Criminal Charges	For cruelty or dowry under the BNS, 2024.
 Right to Free Legal Aid	Available via Legal Services Authorities and notified NGOs.

A woman can seek monthly maintenance for her needs, including for medical expenses, even if she is earning or has the capacity to earn.

settlement under law is treated like a decree or Order of the Court and the parties are bound to honour the agreement. Courts usually recommend mediation in non-violent cases.

3. **Approach Courts under various legislations:** If the above two steps have not been successful or cannot be adopted, there are three main laws under which a woman can, with the assistance of advocates, Legal Services Authority or NGOs, seek justice through the Courts:

a) **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (DV Act)**

This Act is your most powerful remedy for protection without need to file for divorce. It allows you to stay in the shared household, seek maintenance and obtain protection from abuse for yourself and your child/children. Some of the critical rights a woman can seek under this Act, by filing an Application in the relevant family court, are:

- i. **Right to reside in a shared household:** A woman cannot be evicted from her shared or matrimonial home. Even if you don't own it or your name isn't on the lease, you have a legal right to reside there.
- ii. **Protection orders:** A woman can get court orders restraining the husband or members from committing acts of domestic violence of any kind not only against her, but her dependents/relatives/persons giving her assistance from domestic violence. She can also seek restraint order against the male member from contacting her or entering her workplace.
- iii. **Residence orders:** Court can even remove the husband from the shared house if needed for the woman's safety. Alternately, it can also direct him to provide you rented accommodation similar to his standard of living, and his financial capacity.
- iv. **Monetary relief & maintenance:** A woman can seek monthly maintenance for her needs, including for medical expenses, even if she is earning or has the capacity to earn. This would depend upon the comparative salaries and the standard of living in the matrimonial home.
- v. **Custody orders:** A woman can seek temporary custody of children.
- vi. **Compensation:** You can claim compensation for mental and emotional distress, including

for threats, humiliation and fear, in addition to monthly maintenance.

b) **Hindu Marriage Act**

- i. **Divorce:** A wife can approach the family court to seek divorce on various grounds, including cruelty, which may be physical or verbal, or desertion or adultery.
- ii. **Interim Maintenance:** During legal proceedings. This right is available to the wife in addition to claim for maintenance under the DV Act.
- iii. **Permanent alimony:** Application is usually filed along with a petition for divorce and is for post-divorce maintenance. The permanent alimony would depend both upon the financial needs of the wife and the paying capacity of the husband.
- iv. **Additional Relief of Maintenance:** Under Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, for both mother and children.

In the landmark decision on maintenance of wife, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Rajneesh vs Neha, has held that though a wife can seek maintenance simultaneously under different Laws, the subsequent Courts will consider the maintenance already granted previously, and adjust accordingly.

c) **Criminal proceedings:**

- i) **Maintenance:** Can be sought by a woman under the recent law, BNSS, 2023 (Bharatiya Nagarik, Suraksha Sanhita), which replaces Section 125 of the Cr.P.C.
- ii) **Cruelty:** Criminal proceedings can be initiated against the husband or his relatives, for cruelty, including demand for dowry (Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, which replaces Section 498A of Indian Penal Code). It provides for imprisonment up to three years and a fine.

In matrimonial matters, it is however, recommended to use the criminal law, BNS, only as a last resort, where there has been grave offence and the relationship cannot be restored.



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HAPPINESS FLASH

N 

New research

shows your daily chai is a potent mood-booster. A study found that savouring a warm drink and a biscuit activates your brain's pleasure centres. The key? No phone. Just you and your biscuit.

F 

Feeling overwhelmed?

Don't climb a mountain. A Harvard study on 'micro-achievements' found that ticking off three tiny tasks—like making your bed or watering a plant—triggers a massive dopamine hit. The sense of control is a direct route to a happier brain.

S 

Stop trying to be happy all the time.

Psychologists now say that accepting low moments is key to long-term well-being. The next time you feel a bit low, instead of fighting it, just acknowledge the feeling. This simple act of acceptance makes a huge difference.



S 

Spend time with a child.

Research from the University of Oxford found that adults who regularly engage in playful activities with children report higher levels of joy and less stress. Their uninhibited curiosity and laughter are infectious, reminding you to be present and find wonder in the small things.

T 

The 'Thank You' List.

A daily practice of gratitude, focusing on what you already have, is proven to rewire your brain for happiness. But a new twist from researchers at UCLA suggests a simple "Thank You" list—writing down three small things you're grateful for each night—can reduce feelings of envy and social comparison. It's a quick, powerful way to shift your perspective.

HOW ARE YOU DOING? LET'S TAKE A QUICK WELLNESS CHECK!



Take a moment for yourself. No guilt, no pressure—just a gentle check-in. Tick what feels true for you

MIND

- ☐ I take a few minutes each day to pause, breathe, or simply enjoy a quiet moment.
- ☐ When life feels hectic, I allow myself a short break instead of pushing through blindly.
- ☐ I feed my curiosity—reading, exploring, or learning something new.

BODY

- ☐ I move my body in a way that feels good—walking, stretching, dancing, or even household hustle.
- ☐ I notice how my body feels after meals, sleep, or activity, and respond kindly.
- ☐ I give myself enough rest without feeling guilty.

SPIRIT

- ☐ I pause to notice the little joys—sunsets, smiles, or a perfect cup of chai.
- ☐ I nurture my passions, the things that make my heart feel alive.
- ☐ I forgive myself for small mistakes and celebrate little victories.

REFLECTION

How many boxes did you tick Even one or two is a step in the right direction. Could you add one more small act of care for yourself today—a short walk, a mindful cup of coffee, or a deep breath

Wellness isn't about perfection. It's about noticing, appreciating, and gently caring for your mind, body, and spirit.

'PARTIES' ARE OLD-FASHIONED. LET'S PLAN A SOIREE.



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