



MEET THE CITY

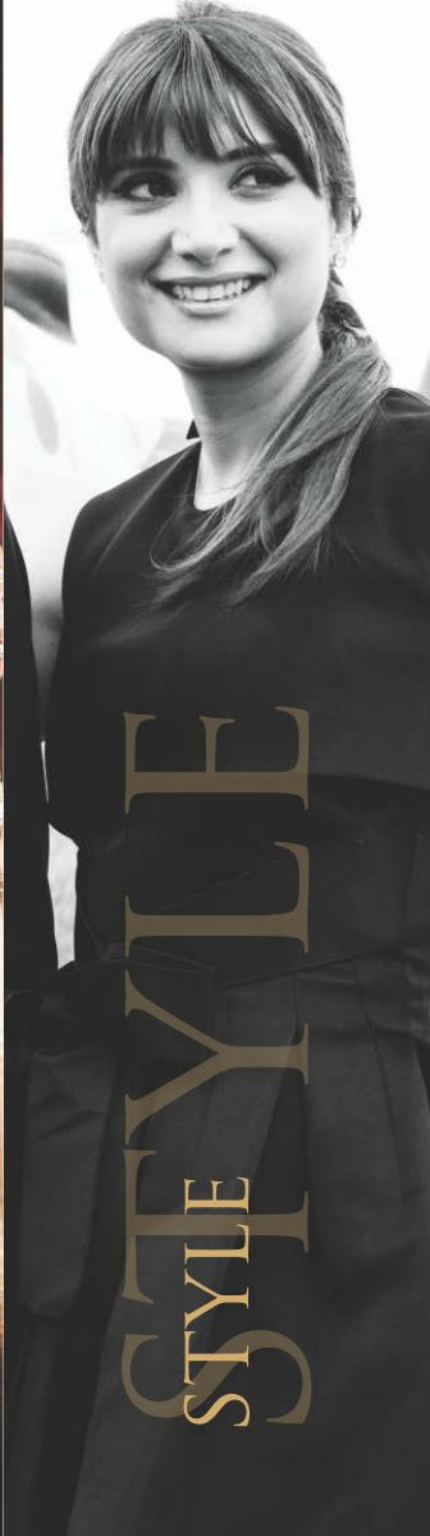
Pune - Vol. II / March-April 2015



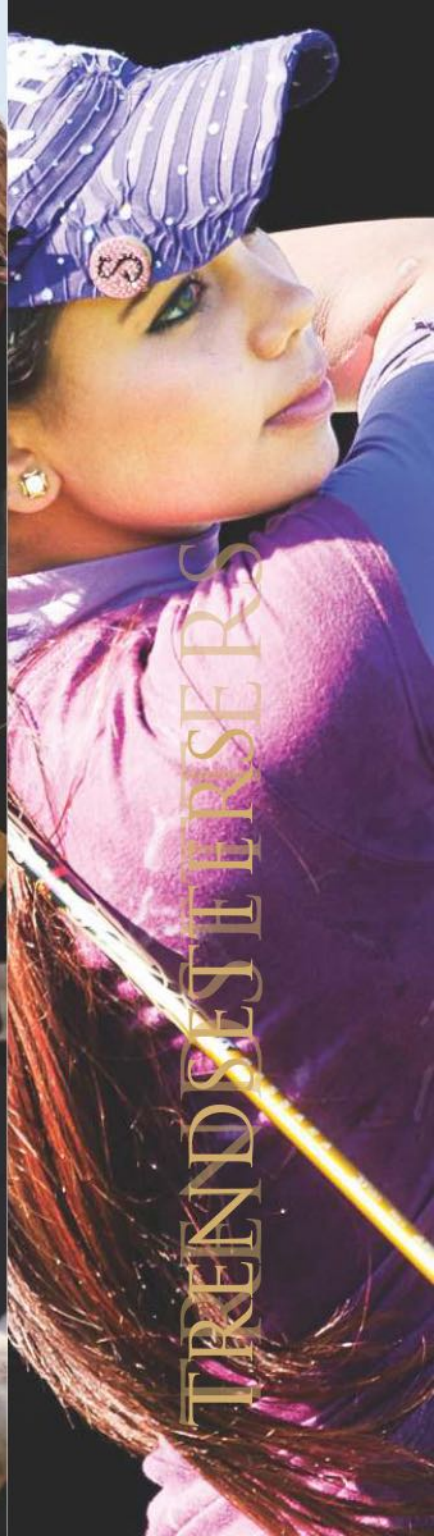
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An architectural rendering of two modern skyscrapers, Trump Towers Pune, set against a dramatic twilight sky with soft clouds. The taller building on the left is a slender tower with a glass facade, its interior lights glowing through the windows. The shorter building on the right is a more compact, rectangular tower, also with a glass exterior and illuminated interiors. Both buildings are situated behind a lush, green landscape with various plants and trees. In the background, the city skyline of Pune is visible, with several other high-rise buildings lit up. The overall scene conveys a sense of modernity and urban sophistication.

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FOREWORD

*As India forays into the new year and forges ahead into the future,
we at Meet the City would like to tip our hats to our country's glorious past.*

*We're dedicating our March-April 2015 issue to
India's golden age of durbars and kings.
We've featured interviews with erstwhile royals and at every turn of page,
you will be met with a fascinating tale of a
bygone era of old-world charm
and gentility.*

*We celebrate International Women's Day on
the 8th of March with 4 inspirational interviews of
the remarkable Belinda Wright, Kiran Rao,
Kalki Koechlin and Dipika Pallikal.
In keeping with the theme, all of our sections,
be it Reader's Corner, Sports or Travel,
talk of India's resplendent royal heritage.*

*We hope you enjoy our archival issue as we
take a walk down India's royal history and marvel
at the opulent sights of yore.*

ATUL CHORDIA

EDITORIAL & DESIGN : PANCHSHIL CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

CONTENT : CHAITRA PATEL, RASIMI ALEYOBI & CHAITANYA DESHPANDE | PRODUCTION & CO-ORDINATION : SURBHI GUPTA | PHOTOGRAPHY : NASIR SHAIKH, RITESH RAMAIAH |

'Meet the City' bi-monthly is owned by AZZ Online Services Pvt.Ltd. Printed & published by Pradeep Bantbia, printed at Silverpoint Press Pvt. Ltd., A-403, TTC Industrial Area, Near Anthony, Mahape, Navi Mumbai - 400 709.
Published at Tower E, S.No. 191A/2A/2, Next to Don Bosco School, Off Airport Road, Yerwada, Pune 411 006. Editor - Atul Chordia

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As the sun set on the horizon on January 26th 2015,
and the celebrations of the
66th Republic Day came to an end,
India was numbed by the news of the
death of an icon.

The immortal Common Man was
suddenly orphaned,
with the demise of India's best-loved cartoonist
Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Laxman,
better known as R. K. Laxman.
And his demise has brought about an
end to an era in the history of humour,
that was laced with satire, razor-sharp
wit and irony.

Meet The City pays tribute to the
legendary caricaturist - The Uncommon
Man of India!

Days of Glory

Traditional texts regarded India as *Sa Prathama Sanskrati Vishvavara* - the first and supreme culture in the world. Its vibrant culture is one of the oldest in the world, dating back around 5000 years.

Rashmi Alevoor invites you to read on as Meet the City explores India through the country's rich royal heritage.

India's past is filled with glorious tales of heroism, kings and queens, and inconceivable riches. The country was considered a storehouse of the world's gold and was rich in natural resources. India's spices, silks, exquisite jewels, handicrafts and handloom products were renowned the world over. Because of her delicate and abundant richness, India was called the Golden Sparrow.

The country abounded with spectacular natural beauty - snow clad mountains, dense forests, undulating expanses of desert, beaches and plains. Stories of this enchanted land beckoned the Western World to undertake several voyages to explore the country for themselves. India was ruled by as many as 565 kingdoms of dynasties belonging to different parts of the world.

The architecture of the land was largely influenced by the Mughal and British rule in India; its topography came to be adorned with magnificent forts, mosques, churches and palaces during that time. At the start of the late 18th century, when the Indian subcontinent fell under British domination, Indian princes no longer needed to maintain armies and wage war as their kingdom's borders were guaranteed under Pax Britannica or 'British Peace'. They were now able to direct their revenues toward leisurely pursuits such as building palaces and the acquisition of luxury goods.

This gave rise to the development of a new and modern Indian princely identity. With no holds barred, India's royals became leading patrons of luxury houses in London and Paris. They commissioned the finest products of European shops and the latest work of European artists. They hired European architects to design palaces in modern or historic-revival styles and ordered fleets of luxury cars.

Indian royalty became the picture of extravagance across the world and their lavish lifestyles provided fascinating fodder for many a coffee-table book.

In 1971 the Constitution of India de-recognised the royal families and their privileges and privy purses were withdrawn. Their lifestyles, however, continued to be rich and opulent. Most of the royals are now industrialists, businessmen, hoteliers, while some others are engaged in politics.

For most of them it is a unique exercise to straddle both worlds and to deftly blend old India with the new. As custodians of their royal ancestry, they need to find creative ways to fund the refurbishment of their vast aged properties. For instance, Maharaja Gaj Singh II of Jodhpur hosts the world famous Sufi music festival inside his family's Mehrangarh fort each year. The fort called the 'Citadel of the Sun' was once described by Rudyard Kipling as "the work of angels, fairies and giants." Since his family moved out of the fort in the 1930s, it lay in decrepit ruins until in 1972, under his conservation program, Singh hired workers to restore the fort to its former magnificence.

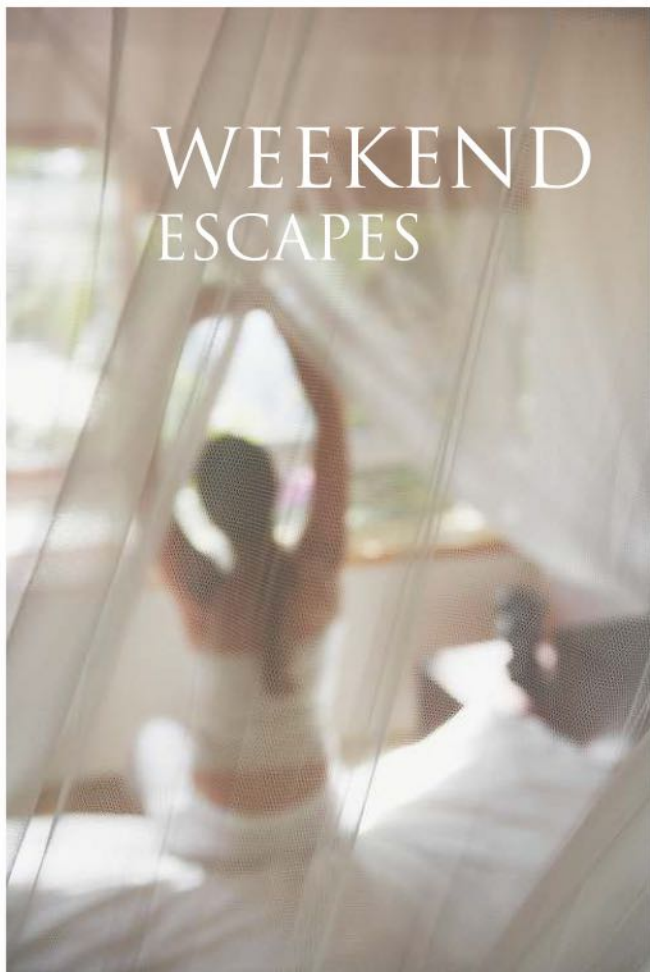
Jim Cuno, president of the J. Paul Getty Trust, which has given grants to Singh's project in Nagaur (Fort of the Hooded Cobra) says, "The ancient world is everywhere you look in India, but it's being neglected in the name of modernisation." He applauds Maharaja Gaj Singh II for his efforts towards "reinvigorating India's older story."

This issue of Meet the City attempts to bring together all of the fragments of India's royal era and to feature the current efforts of the erstwhile royals in preserving their kingdoms' rich legacy.

It is an ode to India's resplendent days of glory.



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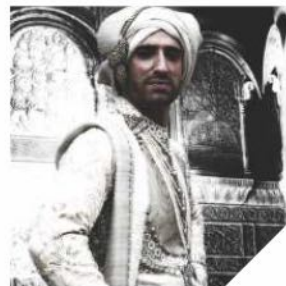
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MADE FOR
MAHARAJAS

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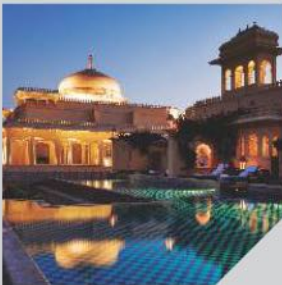
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CELEBRATING
THE SPIRIT
OF WOMANHOOD

PRINCELY INDIA

ROYALS OF INDIA



Image courtesy of 'Made for Maharajas - Design Diary of Indian Royalty',
Published by Ibil Books

Before the Partition of India in 1947, there were hundreds of Princely States, also called Native States, that existed in India. They were not directly governed by the British but by Indian rulers under a form of indirect rule like suzerainty.

These states were ruled by monarchs under a variety of titles such as Raja, Maharaja, Nawab and Nizam. These Indian monarchs were world renowned for their extravagant lifestyles and their appetite for luxury goods.

Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala and Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala were two noted patrons of jewellery showrooms of Europe of the time.

In 1900, Jagatjit Singh was reported to have spent over a quarter of his state's revenues on travel and leisure expenses.

During the time of Indian Independence, the British gave up their suzerainty and left the princely states to freely choose whether they wanted to join the newly formed independent countries of India and Pakistan. It was at this time of great transition that princely rulers found themselves grappling with issues of a changing identity.

A few royals took this change in their stride with unequivocal panache. Maharani Gayatri Devi was one such ruler. Born as Princess Gayatri Devi of Cooch Behar, she came to be the third Maharani of Jaipur through her marriage to Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II. She came from a family of fiercely autonomous women and was raised to be an independent thinker as well.

After the Partition of India, the classic beauty Rajmata Gayatri Devi, decided to learn the lay of the land and joined politics in support of C. Rajagopalachari's liberal and secular Swatantra Party. She ran for Parliament in 1962 and won the Jaipur constituency in the Lok Sabha, getting 192,909 votes out of the 246,516 cast (78.25 per cent) - a landslide victory that earned her a Guinness world record for winning the world's largest-ever electoral majority in a parliamentary race. She continued to hold this seat for two more terms through the 1967 and 1971 elections until she retired from politics after her 5-month imprisonment in Tihar jail during the Indira Gandhi government.

Join Rashmi Alevoor and Chaitra Patel as they interview three members of erstwhile royal families of Jaipur, Mewar (Udaipur) and Tripura, and learn first-hand the roles that they play in a modern and democratic world.

PRINCESS DIYA KUMARI THE UNCOMMON COMMONER

*I am just as much a **commoner** as anyone else," she insists. While she might, in her humility, insist otherwise, Princess Diya Kumari is not ordinary in any way.*

Scion of arguably one of India's most prominent erstwhile royal families, she is a picture of grace and quiet elegance.

Rashmi Alevoor spoke to her about what it means to be a mother, a politician and a princess.

Raised in cantonments across India, the Rajkumari experienced life in the palace only when the family came home for the holidays. This separation, and her parents' insistence on humility, simplicity and empathy, made her someone who always thinks of others first. Her father, Maharaja Sawai Bhawani Singh, was not one to rest on his lineage or inheritance. A decorated war hero and philanthropist, he along with the Princess' mother – Rajmata Padmini Devi, instilled a strong sense of duty in the Rajkumari from a very young age.

It is this sense of duty, and her innate drive, that help her fulfil all her varied roles with aplomb. Managing several hotels and schools, the administration of the palace and museum in Jaipur, and Jaigarh Fort, there is not an idle minute in her day. Recently, she has been supervising the extensive, and spectacular renovations of The Raj Mahal Palace Hotel. Further, as an MLA, her full-time job involves working towards the upliftment of her constituency, Sawai Madhopur, and ensuring inclusive growth and development for the people there. In addition to that, she is also the Rajasthan State Ambassador for the 'Save the Girl Child' Campaign, a cause close to her heart.

Grace Under Fire

As the titular Rajkumari, she is expected to always look radiant and distinguished - something she does effortlessly. Whether on the dusty campaign trail or at the sidelines of a polo match, the Princess is always full of poise and exceptionally well turned out. In her own words, she likes to keep it simple and doesn't go overboard with style statements. She does enjoy beautiful clothes and accessories, but now has little time to think about her appearance. As she spends a vast amount of time on the road and in rural areas, comfort and easy maintenance are her top priorities.

When she does have the time to think of more luxurious apparel and accessories, she gravitates towards items and brands which emulate quality, fine finishing, and real luxury, rather than items which are branded with logos advertising the designer or brand name. To her, luxury truly lies in the details.

Women Empowerment

The upliftment of women is also something the princess cares deeply about. In a very short time the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation (PDKF) has made a mark for itself in creating sustainable livelihoods for women by providing them with livelihood skills and a platform to sell the products they create. The foundation helps empower these women and makes them self-reliant, particularly in the fields of handicrafts, textiles, and agriculture. It is her opinion that, the best way to empower women is to give them the skills they need, to become economically independent. The work is challenging but gradually the mindset is changing and society is beginning to accept women as equal earners and breadwinners. In addition to economic empowerment, education, and skills development, PDKF is also hard at work on issues related to women's health, hygiene, nutrition, and of course against the shameful problems of child marriage and female foeticide.



BJP candidate Diya Kumari campaigning in Rajasthan

Philanthropy aside, she is also the MLA from the Sawai Madhopur constituency. For her, the biggest reason for joining politics was to give something back to society and people. She is doing everything possible for the people of Sawai Madhopur; with initiatives including infrastructure improvement, skills development, education, and access to water, sanitation, health, waste management, tourism development, among others, to support inclusive, social and economic development. Since industrial growth is limited due to the proximity of the Ranthambore Forest and Tiger Sanctuary, she is also working very hard on attracting private sector investors to create jobs in non-polluting industries, and much more.

"The role of women is changing, but the pace should be faster. The mindset that men in many parts of our country have towards women still needs to change drastically. It may take a while, but change is underway and is now unstoppable," says the princess.

The princess believes that women are probably mentally and emotionally much tougher than men and are working and competing shoulder to shoulder in demanding careers and proving themselves as able workers. But they do need as much support as possible and increased representation of women in both the economic and in political contexts is a must. She is clearly committed to doing her utmost towards improving the status of women from all walks of life - at home, in the workplace, and in society at large.

Finally, the Princess is truly close to her family and a nurturing mother to Padmanabh Singh (17), Gauravi Kumari (16) and Lakshraj Singh (12). She smiles and admits that despite all that she has achieved and the remarkable efficiency with which she manages her constituency, enterprises and NGOs, one of her biggest joys, and responsibilities, is being a mother. Her husband, Maharaj Shri Narendra Singh, shares her views on child rearing and together they are working hard to raise their family with the same princely values that were engrained in the Rajkumari: humility, simplicity and empathy.

LAKSHYARAJ SINGH MEWAR

THE PEOPLE'S PRINCE

Image courtesy : Alamy Images India Pvt. Ltd.

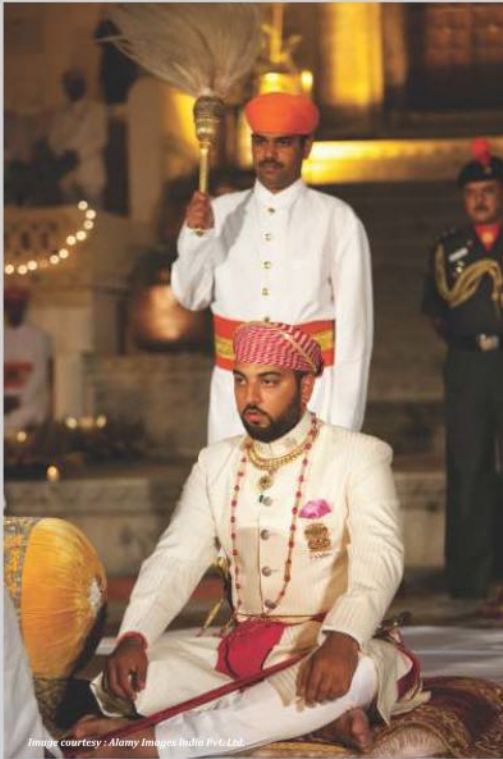


Image courtesy : Alamy Images India Pvt. Ltd.

Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar of Udaipur is the scion of the illustrious House of Mewar, which is acknowledged as the world's oldest-serving dynasty. The youngest child of Smt Vijayraj Kumari Mewar and Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar, who is the 76th Custodian of the House of Mewar, Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar represents the third generation of heritage-hoteliers and is the executive director of the family-owned HRH Group of Hotels.

Widely travelled across the world, Lakshyaraj Singh is also the Trustee of the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation and works on key developmental projects through the aegis of the Foundation.

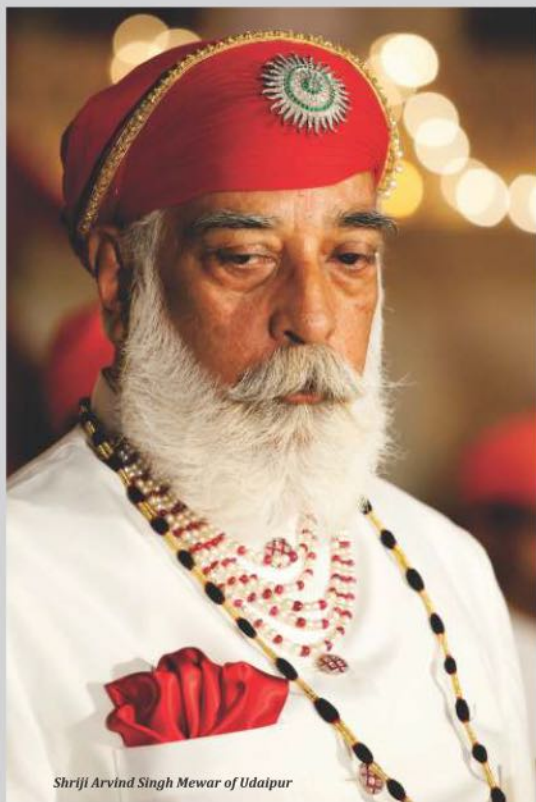
Chaitra Patel finds out more about the young man who will someday be the 77th custodian of the legendary House of Mewar.

The history of India is almost incomplete, without the mention of Mewar - an erstwhile Rajput kingdom, which came to be famously known as the princely state of Udaipur under the British. The House of Mewar across 76 generations has been headed by great warriors such as Maharana Sanga and Maharana Pratap, as well as other illustrious Maharanas, who have contributed immensely not just to the heritage of Mewar, but to the rest of Rajasthan and India too. This strong lineage and ancestry notwithstanding, every Maharana has regarded himself as the 'Custodian' of Mewar, and not the 'Ruler' of the kingdom. Lakshyaraj Singh elucidates, "Custodianship is about care-taking", and we are care-takers of the legacies we have inherited. We are not owners, but we take ownership of what we inherit and who we are". This distinction between 'custodians' and 'rulers' is very important to the history of Mewar that has survived through the turmoil of history, because each Maharana has managed to preserve his inheritance without compromising on dignity or core values; always re-inventing at every age.

One of the first things that is striking about Maharaj Kumar Sahib Lakshyaraj Singh Ji Mewar, as he is officially referred to, is that he's a 'People's Prince', and immensely proud of the 'Custodianship' that has been bestowed upon the House of Mewar. And yet at the very mention of the words 'royalty' or 'kings and princes' he is quick to point out, "we need to be politically correct! In the Republic of India, there is no royalty, there are no kings and princes". "You could call me a former Prince," he says, "but yet again I do not like that term one bit!" And that explains why he was "delighted to be treated as just another student from India who was eager to learn and work hard", while he studied for his graduation in Australia. "My mother Ms. Vijayraj Kumari Mewar, instilled in us the belief that we have to be a part of the world we live in, yet have the sensibility to remain apart," says Lakshyaraj Singh, of his impressionable growing years. "My childhood was like any other child's, even though we were living in palaces and were fortunate to be leading privileged lifestyles," he says.

Gracious Hospitality

Independent India witnessed many erstwhile royals convert their ancestral properties and palaces into flourishing hospitality ventures, some of which today are luxurious destination hotels on the tourist map of India. As Lakshyaraj Singh points out, "hospitality does come naturally to people of our background. We grow up with lots of people around us, there is protocol to be maintained, hierarchies have to be understood and followed. So you see, we are already well-trained to give orders as well as follow them". So, an education from The Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School in Australia, and coming back to the family-managed business of HRH Group of Hotels, seemed only a natural transition for the young prince. "Australia is a great land, and I feel like there is a free-wheeling Aussie inside me" he says. "I honed my hospitality skills with the best-in-class teachers and deans, and at the HRH Group of Hotels, I have been putting into practice what I have learnt over the years", says the Executive Director of the HRH Group of Hotels. His first charge on joining the business was the Jagmandir Island Palace, an integral part of Mewar's history over the last 400 years, which he transformed to one of the world's most exclusive wedding destinations.



Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar of Udaipur

Image courtesy: Akshay Images India Pvt. Ltd.

"One lives, one learns and one imbibes from the family's core values itself. I feel fortunate that at every stage, at every age, I have been exposed to Mewar's history, its personalities, spiritual and religious traditions and heritage. There is much to absorb through words and without words. As a youngster too, I was always accompanying my father at various festivals and religious ceremonies. Just watching him conduct the rituals and prayers is itself a learning process. It is like a journey that keeps going on, and you find new thoughts and ideas that are a bridge to the past. There can never be an end to this journey where we are learning new facets about our own heritage. Jai Mewar!"

- Lakshyaraj Singh on his father and mentor Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar of Udaipur, the 76th Custodian of the House of Mewar

"Our responsibility is towards the 'people', we have to ensure that our people, our communities are thriving.

We have to be entrepreneurial enough to create jobs for people, provide opportunities for education and ensure that they are ready to optimise the benefits the modern age is providing.

This is the reason I never shy away from going into village sabhas, panchayats and small towns of Rajasthan to address and motivate the youth and their families.

They have to be inspired. Sports and sporting activities are also a great way to inspire them. We are constantly organising and lending support to sports and sportsmen for this reason".

Custodians of the people of Mewar

As a scion of a legendary dynasty, Lakshyaraj Singh dispenses his duties in complete earnestness. As he explains, "the expectations from us are high at every stage in life, not just childhood or as young adults. One lives, one learns and one imbibes from the family's core values itself". As custodians of Mewar, he says, "we have developed a sense of ownership and are ensuring that our palaces, our museums and collections are in far better shape today than ever before". And as a trustee of the 'Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation' founded by his grandfather His late Highness Maharana Bhagwat Singhji in 1969, Lakshyaraj Singh is involved in the running of the various developmental, charitable, philanthropic, educational and spiritual projects under the auspices of the foundation. A project close to his heart is the running of the foundation's educational trust 'The Maharana Mewar Public School', located within the City Palace. "My aim is to make the school grow even further; it has the potential. We believe in empowering the teaching faculty and giving them the best opportunities, and creating an environment that inspires everyone to do their best", he says. He is also involved with the 'Maharana Pratap Smarak Samiti' that is active in the conservation of Mewar's cultural and historic heritage, and works to instil a sense of pride and confidence in people.

A Man of Many Interests

Like in the case of many true blooded royals, the House of Mewar too has cricket in its 'blood'. "Anyone who dons the cricket whites wishes he could just go on playing cricket for state and country," says Lakshyaraj Singh, who gave up a promising career in competitive cricket. But, that has not stopped him from being actively involved with the Rajasthan Cricket Association, mentoring young teams and promising players at the district and state levels. And he shoulders this responsibility with much élan.

It's not however always all about work and royal duties for Lakshyaraj Singh; an 'all-new' delightful experience of fatherhood has been keeping him and his wife, Ms. Nirvriti Kumari Mewar quite busy since the past few months. "Baby Mohalakshika is the apple of our eyes", gushes the doting father. "Bringing up a child is a great responsibility and we feel blessed to have so much love and support", he says.



The Royal Family Portrait

*"Both my sisters -
Ms Bhargavi Kumari Mewar and
Ms. Padmaja Kumari Parmar have doted on
me all through my growing years.*

*We are a close- knit family and trust
each other immensely.*

*With my brothers-in-law too,
I have developed a special
relationship. And I am very proud of them and
their achievements".*

Lakshyaraj Singh is also a self-confessed foodie, and "loves food that is freshly cooked and served with love and grace". "I am not partial to any cuisine or restaurant. Even though I love Mewari and Rajasthani cuisine, I thoroughly enjoy Awadhi, Parsi, Arab and continental cuisine," says he.

When quizzed further about the interests he likes to pursue in his spare time, the amiable prince jokingly retorts, "Spare time, what's that?" "I do have a large, very large circle of friends," he says. "Nothing can be more relaxing than the company of good and old friends". Lakshyaraj Singh is also very passionate about music, and reveres Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. "Every *qawwali* of the Ustad is sublime and unique. I have built up an entire collection of his *qawwalis* which I treasure" he says, and rues the fact that he never had the chance to listen to the Ustad live in concert.



"I love the sound and roar of bikes too", says Lakshyaraj Singh, about his fondness for motorcycles and customised bikes. "Hopefully I shall be hitting the road soon for some long distance rides", he says.

The good-natured and genial Lakshyaraj Singh for now certainly has his hands full; with the running of the charitable foundations he mentors, and being completely involved and 'hands-on' at the HRH Group of Hotels. But despite his official preoccupations, there resides in him a persistent sense of commitment towards his people and to ensure that people and communities continue to thrive under the custodianship of the House of Mewar.

PRADYOT BIKRAM MANIKYA DEB BARMA

OF ANCIENT DYNASTIES AND ROCK 'N' ROLL

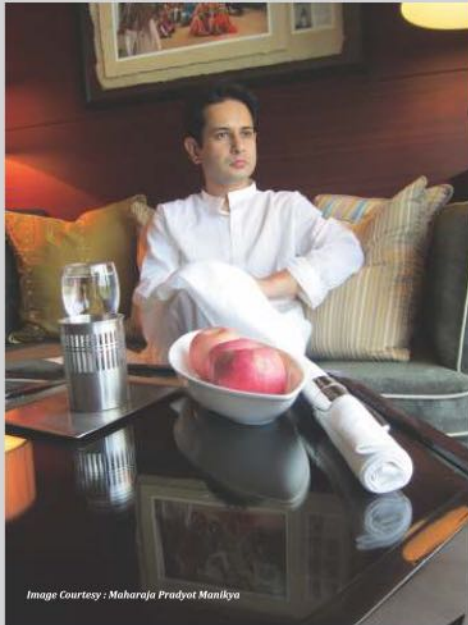


Image Courtesy : Maharaja Pradyot Manikya

PRADYOT BIKRAM MANIKYA DEB BARMA

The 186th king of Tripura, Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma is a man with a lot of heart and humility.

The Maharaja, also known as P. B. K. Manikya, resides in Agartala's Ujjayanta Palace which has 118 rooms with his 107 rescue dogs.

Rashmi Alevoor interviews the Maharaja of Tripura and finds out more about the great loves of his life.

One of the youngest kings in India at 34 years old, Pradyot Manikya is passionate about rock 'n' roll music. He smiles and says, "I studied in Shillong which is called the Mecca of Rock 'n' Roll in India hence you cannot ignore the influence when you are growing up in the hills."

The young maharaja has in the past made it possible for many international acts to perform in the Northeast with many of the artists becoming his personal friends like Axl Rose from Guns N' Roses.

"I think that the Hills of the East have always had a special place for music and the romance of good music carries on in the spirit of the Northeast people, I am no different."

His Beloved Homeland

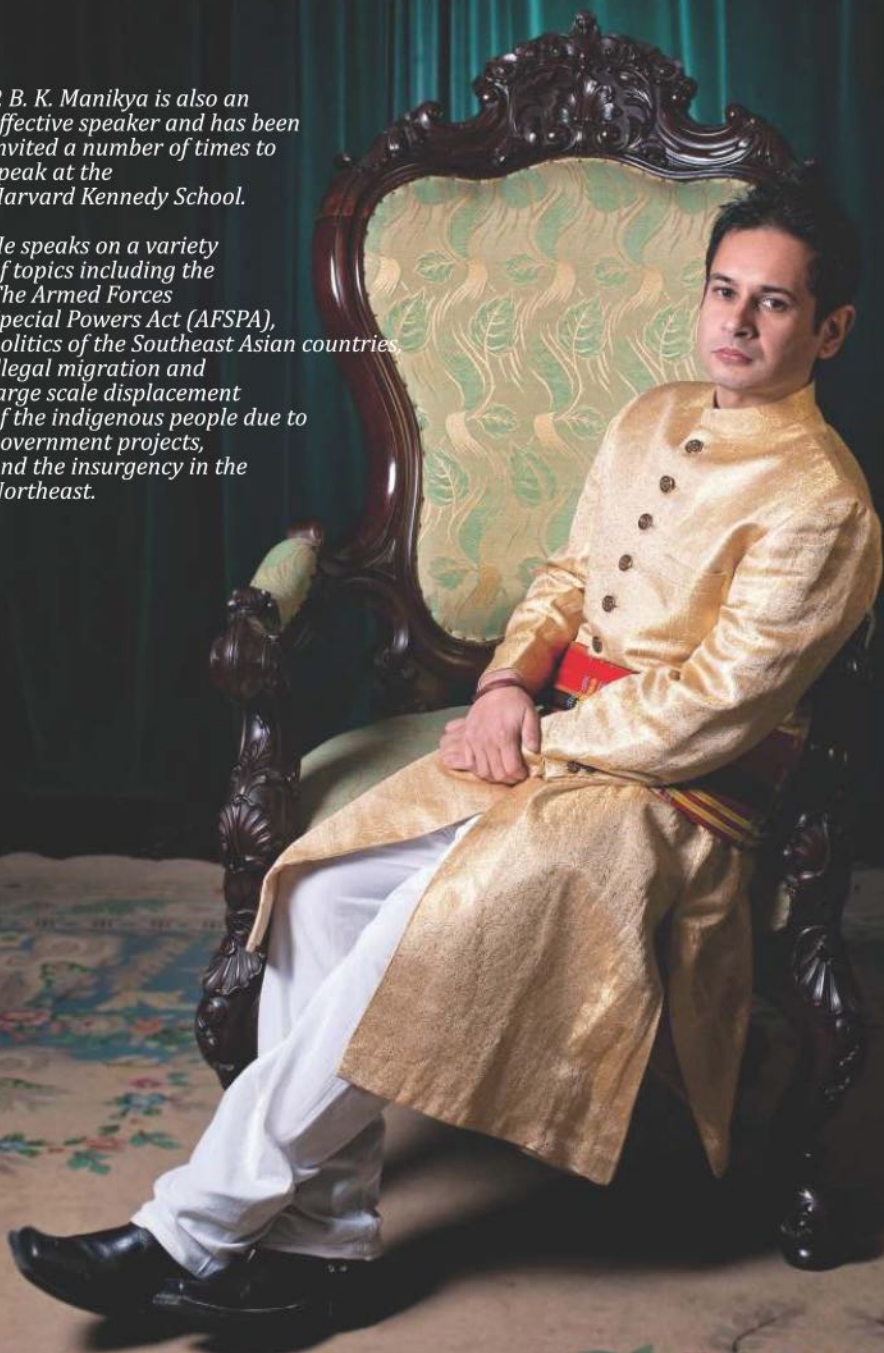
His passion for music is only trumped by his love for his homeland. P. B. K. Manikya belongs to the second longest and oldest dynasty in the world. The Tripura dynasty is the second oldest dynasty from a single line, the first being the Mikado dynasty from Japan. "I do feel that belonging to such a lineage means that one remains more humble, honest, and connected to the people of the state. I also feel that such a thing can only motivate you to aspire to greater things," he says on the matter.

He has great ambitions for his homeland, his state of Tripura. He works long and hard fulfilling his duties toward his people and never begrudgingly. "Work starts early and ends late and every once in a while I stop to realise that I do not consider this to be work at all but a passion. This is why I feel that Tripura is rightfully the place where my present is and my future will be." He has a hands-on approach to working with the state, working closely with the people of Tripura and is greatly invested in the economic activity of the land. "... in the Northeast I feel that Agriculture and Tourism are two of the key areas we need to promote. Sadly there has been a recent trend where large MNCs and certain power companies are looking at large scale mining and hydel power projects as an incentive, such projects do more to displace the people and create alienation from our traditional land."

As general secretary of the Tripura Congress, his aspirations for his state are simple - "A state free from communist rule and where education thrives on quality and not on mere statistics. The indigenous tribals of the state need to be given equal opportunities in all key sectors."

P. B. K. Manikya is also an effective speaker and has been invited a number of times to speak at the Harvard Kennedy School.

He speaks on a variety of topics including the The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), politics of the Southeast Asian countries, illegal migration and large scale displacement of the indigenous people due to government projects, and the insurgency in the Northeast.





With members of the Shillong Lajong Football Club

The Multi-faceted Maharaja

The maharaja of many passions is the founding editor-in-chief of a magazine devoted to the seven states called 'The Northeast Today' which will be completing its eighth anniversary this year. It is one of the highest selling magazines as well as a daily e-paper (tntmagazine.in) in the Northeast. "I started this way back in 2006 and we have one of the youngest editorial setup. Our aim has always been to portray the region in a positive way. When we started this publication way back the region was always reported in a negative way nationally and as a young team we felt that there was a need to highlight the region for its cultural richness as well as the diversity."

Sports are another roaring passion of P. B. K. Manikya. As part of promoting development in the Northeast, he encourages young men and women in the region to take up sports as he believes that sports have the ability to unite and educate. "Our region is known for violence and insurgency. For indigenous youth, I think sports can create brotherhood, unity and discipline. Drugs are also a big problem here and I think there is nothing better than physical activity to combat that."

The chairman of the Tripura Olympic Association and the president of the Tripura Royal Boxing Association, Deb Barma is also the co-owner of the Shillong Lajong Football Club, one of the top football clubs in India's I-League.



Addressing the crowd at a political gathering

"You'll notice that Manipur performs the best in the country in football. I think sports can be a great avenue for youth here, even becoming a rewarding career," he says. To promote sports, especially in rural regions, he organises various sporting activities throughout the year.

P. B. K. Manikya is also an effective speaker and has been invited a number of times to speak at the Harvard Kennedy School. He speaks on a variety of topics including the The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), politics of the Southeast Asian countries, illegal migration and large scale displacement of the indigenous people due to government projects, and the insurgency in the Northeast. He has also spoken at various conferences within India including the recently convened eighth edition of the Jaipur Literary Fest held in February this year.

Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barma is the current head of the Royal house of Tripura, Editor-in-Chief of the leading magazine/news portal The Northeast Today, the General Secretary of the Tripura Congress, a keen patron of rock music, a sportsman, and an animal lover. But at his core, he is the custodian of Tripura who feels a tremendous responsibility toward his people. "Tripura has a great past and history and we should ensure that our future is equally as bright as our heritage."



Maharaja Yeshwant Rao Holkar II of Indore in Maratha dress,
Oil on canvas by Bernard Boutet De Monvel, 1934

The ruler's engaging manner and his abiding interest in modern art won him the friendship of the artists and designers whom he commissioned.

Among them was Bernard Boutet de Monvel, whom Indore commissioned to create portraits of himself and his family.

MAHARAJAS

A DESIGN DIARY OF PRINCELY INDIA

'Made for Maharajas' attempts to bring together a range of luxury products and works of art made for Indian princes by western artists and designers.

The pieces serve as great examples of princely taste in colonial India.

But more importantly they speak of a rapidly westernising royal class in India and the extent to which they looked to

Europe to satisfy their appetite for luxury goods.

The interiors of Indian palaces were embellished with European decorative articles well before the establishment of the Raj in 1858. Writer Fanny Parks, for example, found that the palace of Lucknowi nobleman Hakim Mehndi was filled to the brim with exotic articles from the West, "Tables were spread all down the centre of the room, covered with the most heterogeneous articles: round the room were glass cases, full of clocks, watches, sundials, compasses, guns, pistols, swords; everything you can imagine might be found in these cases."

With the advent of the British rule in India and consequently the onset of Western education in India, the lifestyles of India's princes began to transform; they started to wear western clothes, adopt western practices and eat Western food. They abandoned their traditional residences and moved into grand Baronial or Palladian Revival style palaces that were designed by western architects.

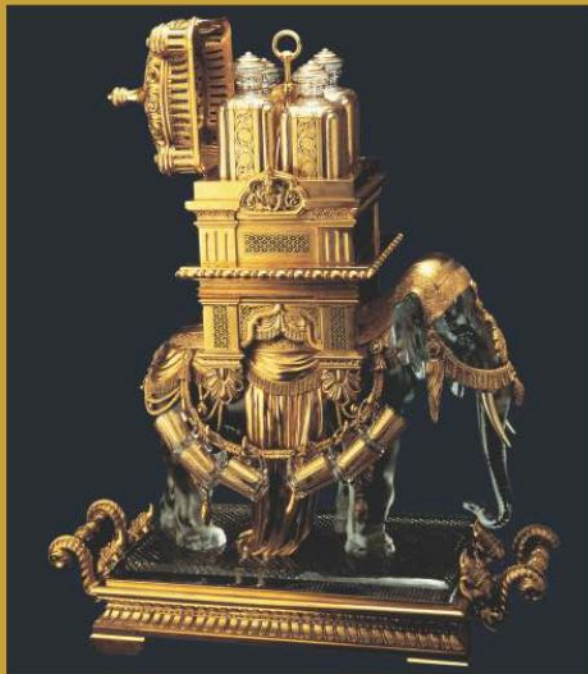
Tantalus, glass, with gilt bronze Made by Baccarat, 1877

Exhibited at the Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1878 and purchased by Gaekwar Sayajirao III of Baroda.

A locked set of decanters derives its name from Tantalus, a figure in Greek mythology who stole ambrosia and nectar from the table of Zeus, king of the gods.

The elephant is inspired by the design of a fountain commissioned in 1808 by Napoleon from the architect Jean-Anotine Alavoine.

The gilt bronze howdah is fitted with four engraved decanters and the harness supports twelve tumblers.



Indian princes proved to be substantial clients for western luxury firms like F&C Osler, Baccarat, Cartier, Boucheron, Louis Vuitton, Holland & Holland and Rolls-Royce, and during the Great Depression, were the mainstay of business.

The romance of princely India continues to exist, even today, in museum displays and heritage palace hotels that captivate western audiences and bring to the fore the allure of an age gone by.

*All pictures and captions are sourced from Made For Maharajas :
A Design Diary Of Princely India published by Roli Books.*

The author of the book, Dr. Amin Jaffer, is the International Director of Asian Art at Christie's, UK. He is the author of Furniture from British India and Ceylon and Luxury Goods from India, and the co-editor of Encounters: the meeting of Asia and Europe, 1500-1800.

Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala

by Vandyk, 1911

This formidable portrait conveys a sense of the ruler's appetite for precious stones.

In 1925 he decided to reset a large number of Patiala jewels, giving Cartier what is in quantitative terms the most substantial commission the firm has ever received.

Only three years later he supplied Boucheron with yet another extensive collection of stones, which was transformed into 149 pieces of jewellery.

"The maharaja [of Patiala] loved life and food and women and jewels, but because he was so splendid and rich, so extravagant, so generous and hospitable, because he shot well and drove his enormous cars at a fantastic pace and stopped them at once if the poorest of his subjects wanted to talk to him, because he laughed and scattered his money into the hands of beggars, his people were genuinely attached to him."

Rosita Forbes, India of the Princes, 1939.



Maharani Sunity Devi of Cooch Behar

by Lafayette

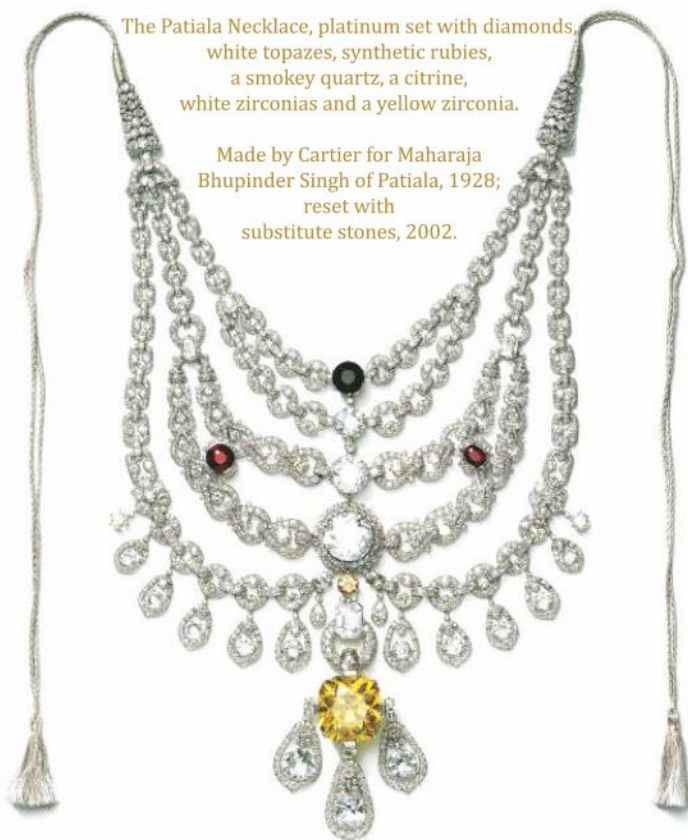
This photograph was taken at the time of Edward VII's coronation.

The sitter's gown and jewellery reflect her westernised tastes.

The pearl and diamond badge with the letters VRI, Victoria Regina Imperatrix, belong to the Imperial Order of the Crown of India, founded in 1887 for women of the English royal family, wives of Indian princes and senior government officials in India.



The Patiala Necklace



The Patiala Necklace, platinum set with diamonds, white topazes, synthetic rubies, a smokey quartz, a citrine, white zirconias and a yellow zirconia.

Made by Cartier for Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, 1928; reset with substitute stones, 2002.

This extraordinary ceremonial piece originally displayed a rich selection of Patiala diamonds, amounting to 962.25 carats. The central pendant solitaire is the light yellow 234.65 carat De Beers diamond, exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, 1889 and purchased by Maharaja Rajinder Singh of Patiala shortly thereafter.

The necklace mysteriously disappeared and resurfaced in a London jewellery store in 1998, the majority of its stones missing. Cartier purchased it and reconstructed the piece using substitute stones, displaying it to great acclaim in 2002.

Sandal, leather with multicoloured beads

Made by Ferragamo



Sandal, leather with multicoloured beads.

Made by Ferragamo for

Maharani Indira Devi of Cooch Behar,

1938.

In his memoirs,
Salvatore Ferragamo recalled extraordinary
commissions from the maharani,
among them a pair of shoes in green velvet
encrusted with pearls
and a pair in black velvet set
with diamonds.

Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur
c. 1955.

The photographer captured the likeness of the celebrated princess in a dreamlike composition, her ethereal beauty matched by a silken background and fragrant flowers.



Rani Sita Devi of Kapurthala
by Cecil Beaton, c. 1940.

The rani was a daughter of Raja Udai Raj Singh of Kashipur and was married to Karamjit Singh, younger son of Maharaja Jagjit Singh of Kapurthala.

Her intelligence - she was fluent in English, French and German - was matched by an innate sense of style.



Dressing set, silver, enamel, mirror and coral

Made by Cartier, 1925

Dressing set, silver, enamel,
mirror and coral.
Made by Cartier, 1925 and
purchased by Maharaja Bhupinder
Singh of Patiala.

This gentleman's dressing set consists
of a total of fifteen pieces executed in
a high Art Deco style.
Each component is applied with
Maharaja Bhupinder Singh's
monogram: MBS.



Gun, metal, wood and enamel

Made by Holland & Holland, 1930

Gun, metal, wood and enamel.
Made by Holland & Holland for
Maharani Badan
Kanwarji Sahiba of Jodhpur, c. 1930.

This richly worked weapon was
commissioned by the maharani as a present
for her husband,
Maharaja Umaid Singh of Jodhpur,
whose initials it bears.

It was probably ordered from London
via the firm Manton & Co.,
based in Calcutta and Delhi.



King Ghazi-ud-din of Haider

Oil on canvas, by Robert Home, c.1820.



The portrait depicts the ruler after the British Government elevated him to the rank of king in 1818.

He wears a western-style pointed crown and an ermine cloak in the manner of a European monarch.

Maharani Bakhtavar Kaur of Patiala, c. 1920.
Made by Cartier, 1925

This painted photograph depicts the senior wife of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala.



Miniature train, silver, with glass
Made by Armstrong Whitworth & Co.

Miniature train, silver, with glass.
Made by Armstrong Whitworth & Co.
for Maharaja Jayaji Rao Scindia of
Gwalior, early 20th century.

The train is designed to circulate digestive and delectables among guests attending state dinners at Jai Vilas Palace, Gwalior.

The lining of the silver carriage is sensitised so that the train stops as soon as a guest reaches out for any of the contents.

The manufacturer was one of Britain's leading producers of armaments, locomotives and automobiles.



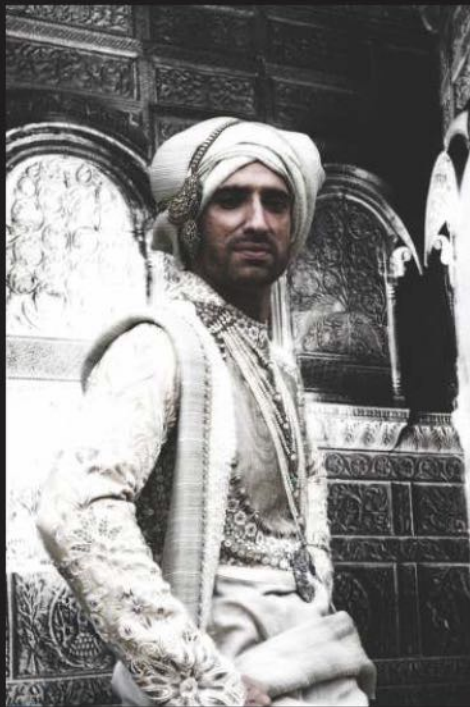


STYLE OF INDIA



Indian style has an impressive history of enlisting art as a stealth weapon in their arsenal to promote freedom of expression.

The book 'Style Of India' celebrates Indian style with a look back at the ten thousand years of evolution of the history of Indian looks.



It delves deep into the archive of the history of India in context of its culture to understand why we dress the way we dress in India today.

Geeta Khanna talks to Meet the City about her motivation for writing 'Style of India'.



STYLE OF INDIA

BY GEETA KHANNA

Through my adventures in New York, USA and other parts of Scandinavia and Europe, I was often asked what was it that I referred to as Indian style.

People have several views about it based on their experience of India. With its potpourri of cultures and variations, it can be a daunting task for anyone to 'figure out' what Indian style is in a heartbeat. A bit like the case of the elephant and the five blind men who seem to describe it according to what they can feel with their two hands.

Is it the sari that symbolises Indian style? Or is it the Hindi cinema costumes? Or is it the new Indian fashion designers? It is hard to see how each one of these derives from the other and vice versa with the naked eye. While there are several books on the sari of India, and may be on each of the other subjects, there are probably close to none that creates the connect between the three to show the evolution of Indian style through the years and centuries that is matured with invasions, influences and the indigenous arts and crafts of India.

Style of India is my endeavour to connect the dots for my reader. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, and therefore it is a visual buffet supported with authentic factual data through a sequence of stunning pictures that are placed in chronological order of time in India to walk the reader through a journey of 10 thousand years in 10 minutes.

Having worked with colossal fashion world talents like Marc Jacobs, Donna Karan, Tarun Tahiliani, amongst others, I distil the realities of Indian

design in context with its glorious past. Enlisting the influence because of invasions and new applications of old traditions, it is an enchanting trail that weaves the culture of India effortlessly into wearable art that we often refer to as 'fashion'.

As a professional stylist, I have used my creative skills to create stunning pictures to make the otherwise mundane history topics interesting. The book aims to enchant all readers – Indian or not, with equal zeal.

In view of the current times and information - The world seems to be a lateral plane where everybody knows everything, and it is easy to identify the phenomenon of parallel universe with a naked eye. A Caucasian girl in a sari, an Indian girl in western wear, white shirts with lungi, sherwani with jeans, corporate Indian girl - they all add up to give a 'morphed view' of Indian style and its emergence through the changes in governance, invasions and trade. Many do not see the invisible relation that art and design share with culture and style of any region. Where we know that fashion repeats itself just like the rest of the history of mankind, there are infinite ways of doing the same thing;



**Many do not see the invisible relation that art and design share
with culture and style of any region.**

**Where we know that fashion repeats itself just like the rest of the history of mankind,
there are infinite ways of doing the same thing;
we know it by the fact that no two faces
are the same on the planet...**

we know it by the fact that no two faces are the same on the planet, even though the population of mankind is growing every year. This phenomenon applies to Indian drapes as well. The sari has countless draping variations pan India. In my analysis of the history of Indian style, I realised the need to reintroduce innovative draping styles to the urban youth of India. The petticoat killed the sari drape possibilities, limiting it to a narrow few. Thus, this book also presents modern style interpretation of saris to introduce fresh ideas for its reader. The models are styled by me in unique Indian textiles that are innovatively draped and paired with couture garments by the Indian designers.

The entire look of this series of sari shoot is to introduce the sari as a trendy mass movement worthy of adoption by the young urban consumer. While style holds a more bourgeoisie connotation in the current times, there is much dilution in trends and fads making them rather ineffective. The age of information has blurred the identity of style as a definition to a particular region. What is rather important lately is to look 'within'. There is much that can be done in backward integration of 'style' in cultural context and certainly it seems like a great way forward to produce fresh style. I envision reintegrating Indian techniques of style and fashion into a global look that is "alluring, appetising and new". Style of India is a book that offers 'style application' to the unique Indian arts and crafts.

Origins of being stalwarts of Indian style - the Indian designers that I have listed are those from the beginning of 'fashion' as a movement in India up to the newer ones that have created an irreplaceable space for themselves as fine artists on the world platform. While the book celebrates the achievements and success of the veteran designers and costumiers, it also backtracks their work to important Indian crafts and weaves.



Having worked with colossal fashion world talents like Marc Jacobs, Donna Karan, Tarun Tahiliani, amongst others, I distil the realities of Indian design in context with its glorious past.

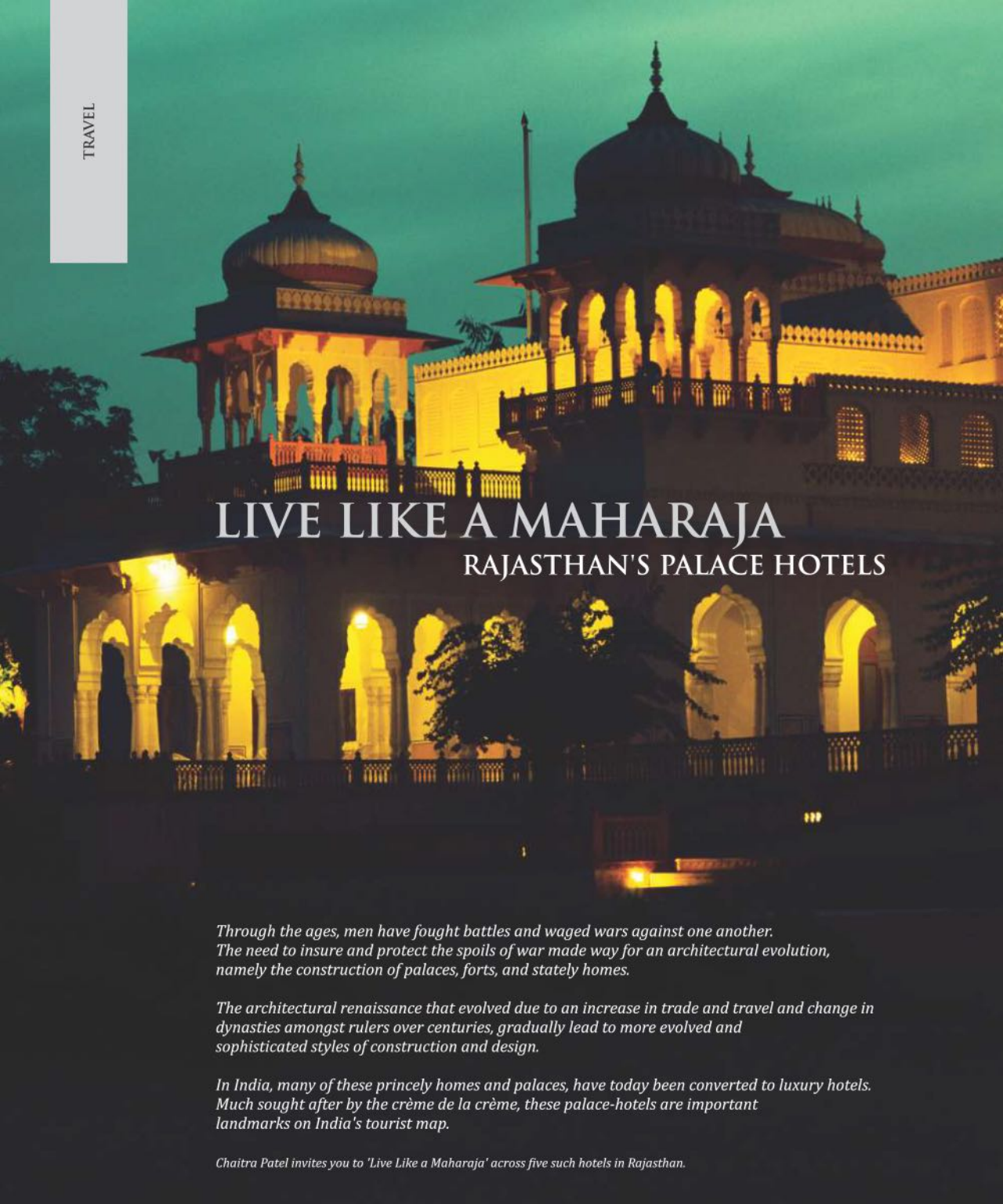
If you are a citizen of the world and are intrigued by India as I am, this one is sure to thrill you. Being the cradle of human evolution, India seems to have more layers than can be possibly imagined. Each one brings an inspiration to work with. Its sounds like a cliché to start from the start but what can I say, the start has to be a start and not the end.

There is no doubt that the two big passions of Indian people have to be Cricket and Bollywood. Bollywood at its helm is a great trigger to many fashion fads and dressing styles in everyday living of the Hindustani people. Besides being a direct reflection of the times in India, Indian movies are also a great way to see various regional outfits without doing a tour of the country or read history. India is a land of colour and celebrations. Narration and storytelling may be the most impactful medium for expression and communication.

If we look into Indian culture, starting from the Vedic age, where the Indian 'gods' narrated *Natyashastra*, there is a lot of importance given to dance and narration through dance. The longest poem in the world: Hindu epic - The Ramayana has been enacted as a stage drama for centuries. Taking narration art into live drama, the '*Ram Lila*' is a testimony of the love of narration art that Indians holds. The costumes worn by the actors are of great interest, a lot of effort is made months in advance to make this a memorable event to last a full year until it returns the next year. Other forms of narration are evident through the thriving puppet dance in India, which is also a medium to tell tales of sorrow and happiness. Also famous are the folk dances of India. There are folk dances of various regions of India, ranging up to 35 folk dances. They are unique to the region since there is always a local variation to the main outfit.



It was my vision to introduce a 360-degree view of Indian style for ten thousand years that can provide food for thought in style application and thus the book '*Style of India*' was conceived. But it was a team effort, and I have been fortunate to have a stupendous team of professionals to support me to realise this project along with the necessary support by the esteemed sponsors.



LIVE LIKE A MAHARAJA

RAJASTHAN'S PALACE HOTELS

Through the ages, men have fought battles and waged wars against one another. The need to insure and protect the spoils of war made way for an architectural evolution, namely the construction of palaces, forts, and stately homes.

The architectural renaissance that evolved due to an increase in trade and travel and change in dynasties amongst rulers over centuries, gradually lead to more evolved and sophisticated styles of construction and design.

In India, many of these princely homes and palaces, have today been converted to luxury hotels. Much sought after by the crème de la crème, these palace-hotels are important landmarks on India's tourist map.

Chaitra Patel invites you to 'Live Like a Maharaja' across five such hotels in Rajasthan.



Rambagh Palace Hotel, Jaipur

Image courtesy : Alamy Images India Pvt. Ltd.

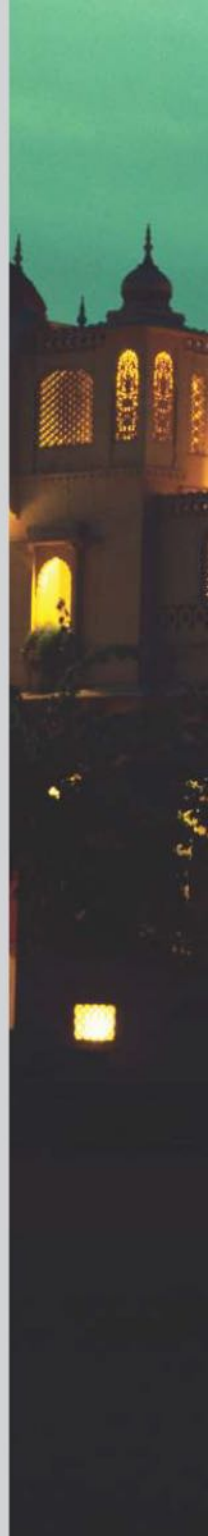
India was once a land of abundance and held the western world captive with her mysticism and exoticism. Mark Twain too had famously said of India, "the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all the rest of the world combined". Trade and commerce flourished in India, and the durbars of kings played host to a number of heads of state, travellers and messengers from overseas.

With the passage of time, quite a few of the ancient forts and *mahals* fell into decay. To add to this, princes who received a western education, on their return (to India), often found the ancient family properties cumbersome, and almost dampening their westernised lifestyles such as eating at dining tables, playing billiards and tennis, and entertaining their foreign guests.

The advent of British rule in India marked the dawn of a new form of architecture, from Baroque to Baronial, and changing lifestyles amongst the royals. Amin Jaffer writes in his book 'Made For Maharajas - A Design Diary of Princely India', "During the Raj, princes relinquished their traditional enclosed and fortified palace complexes in favour of residences developed on a western plan, projecting an impressive facade and set outside the city centre".

Indian independence in 1947 brought with it political reforms, and erstwhile princely states were asked to integrate with the rest of the country. Then in 1971, the privy purses that had been accorded to the erstwhile royals were withdrawn. Many royals retained their ancestral homes and palaces, while others chose to convert these into flourishing hospitality ventures, while yet others surrendered theirs' to the government.

While a number of ancestral mansions and palaces across the country, both big and small have today been converted to plush hotels, Rajasthan seems to win hands-down when it comes to grandiose living, and giving guests a taste of royal living, transporting them back to the glory of the lost years.



Umaid Bhawan Palace

Jodhpur



Umaid Bhawan Palace

Jodhpur

Built between 1928 and 1943 for H. H. Maharaja Umaid Singh, Umaid Bhawan Palace was commissioned to replace the Mehrangarh Fort, the former residence of the royal family, as a symbol of a new emerging Jodhpur, and to generate employment for the people of Marwar (south western Rajasthan, in the Thar desert), affected by droughts and famines of the time.

Named after Maharaja Umaid Singh, this golden-yellow sandstone monument was one of the last grand palaces to be built in India, housing 347 rooms, and served as the principle residence of the Jodhpur royal family. Built in fashionable Art Deco Style of the times, the palace was designed by renowned Edwardian architect Henry Lanchester, incorporating a blend of eastern and western architectural influences.

Perched high above the rest of the city and spread across 26 acres of lush gardens, this magnificent palace is home today to uber luxurious 64 rooms and suites under the management of the Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces. The palace hotel offers guests with resplendent accommodation such as the Palace Rooms, Historical Suites, Royal Suites, Maharaja Suite, Maharani Suite and the Grand Royal Suites, amidst grandly appointed services where guests are waited upon by palace butlers, page boys, ladies in waiting and valets.

How to get there

Umaid Bhawan Palace is a 15 minute drive from Jodhpur Airport and 2.5 kms from Jodhpur Railway Station.

Telephone: +91 291 2510101

Email: umaidbhawan.jodhpur@tajhotels.com



Rambagh Palace

Jaipur

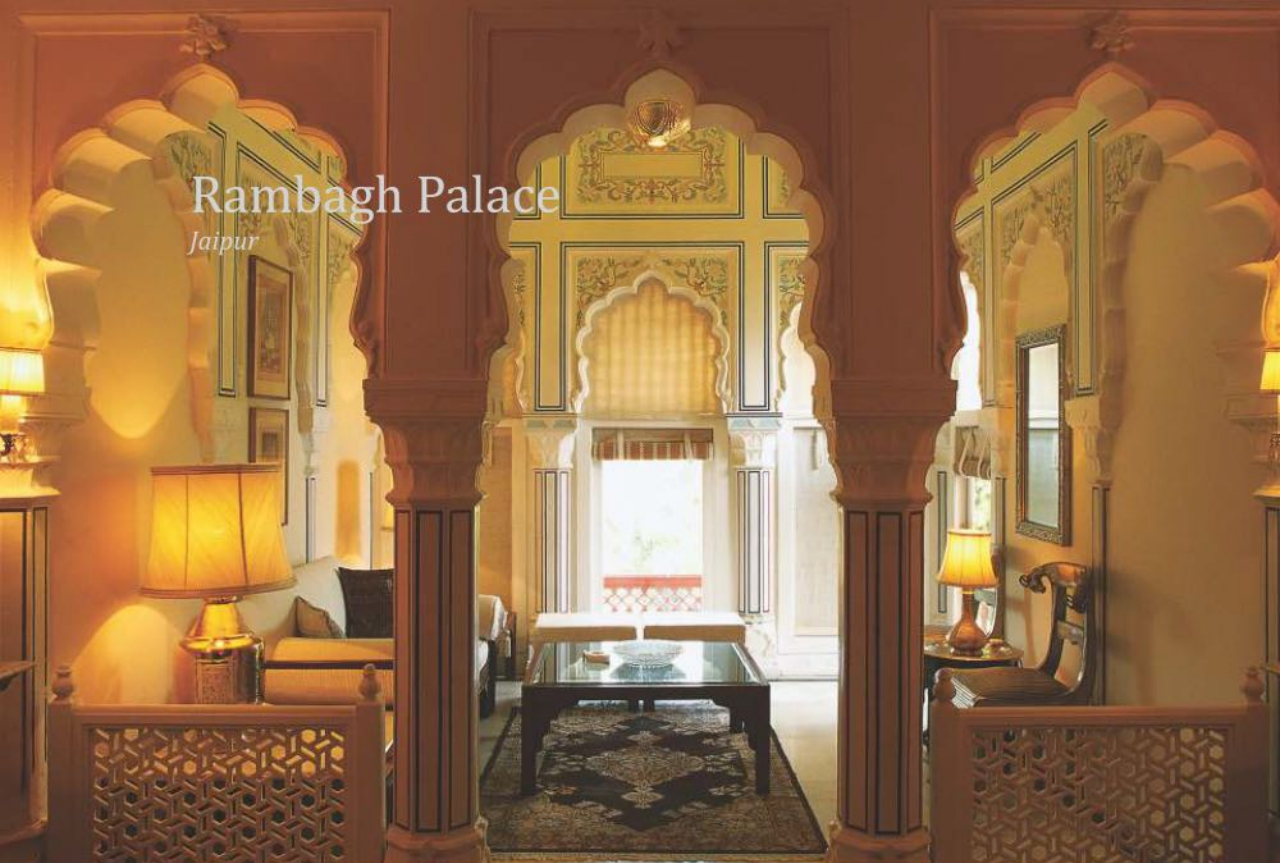
Image courtesy : Alamy Images India Pvt. Ltd.



*Over the years,
the Rambagh Palace has played gracious
host to several illustrious guests,
such as Lord Louis Mountbatten,
Prince Charles, Jacqueline Kennedy and
many other luminaries.*

Rambagh Palace

Jaipur



Known as the 'Jewel of Jaipur', Rambagh Palace is possibly one of the most luxurious and opulent of palaces in India. Built in 1835 on a modest scale, for Maharani Chandrawati's favourite maid-in-waiting Kesar Badaran, it was later refurbished as a royal guesthouse and hunting lodge. The mansion was renamed Rambagh, after the then reigning Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II. Today, a Taj Hotels and Resorts and Palaces property offering 79 rooms and stunningly restored suites, which were the chambers of the former Maharaja, the Rambagh Palace is undoubtedly a 'Tryst with Royalty'.

The Rambagh Palace remained home to Jaipur's royal family until 1957, which is when it was first converted into an upscale hotel that was managed by the family, before handing it over to Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces in 1972. Over the years, The Rambagh Palace has played gracious host to several illustrious guests, such as Lord Louis Mountbatten, Prince Charles, Jacqueline Kennedy and many other luminaries.

The Rambagh Palace is an architectural masterpiece that transcends time. A stay in this abode of luxury guarantees a wealth of experiences that resound with the memories, luxuries and extravagances of a bygone era. Every room in the property is richly renovated, and boasts of opulent interiors, hand painted motif work on walls, four-poster beds, walk in wardrobes, and luxurious bathrooms. Every aspect of the guest's stay is warm and regal as the surroundings.

How to get there

The Rambagh Palace is approximately 3.2 kms from the City Palace, and famous monuments such as the Hawa Mahal and Jantar Mantar. The palace is about 11 kms from Jaipur airport. Jaipur is well connected to all major cities across the country and approximately a 3 hour drive from New Delhi.

Telephone: +91 141 238 5700

Email: rambagh.jaipur@tajhotels.com

Oberoi Udayvilas

Udaipur



Image courtesy : Alamy Images India Pvt. Ltd.

'Unforgettable Holidays'

This is what the Oberoi Hotels and Resorts promises at their resplendent property Udaivilas at Udaipur. And the grand palace property promises its guests every bit of a luxurious getaway, in the beautiful city of majestic palaces.

Spread across a lush 50 acres, that includes a wildlife sanctuary across 20 acres, The Oberoi Udaivilas stands tall on the 200 year old hunting grounds of the Maharana of Mewar.

Located strategically on the banks of the Lake Pichola, The Oberoi Udaivilas offers spectacular views across the lush gardens and the sparkling lake.



The intricate design and layout of the hotel represents the layout of the lake city of Udaipur itself, which is linked by canals.

Oberoi Udaivilas is absolutely indulgent, to say the very least. It offers a total of 90 rooms and suites ranging from 600 sq. ft. to 2650 sq. ft. with luxurious furniture, Mewar inspired designs and every possible modern convenience, and swimming pools; some even private and attached to suites and rooms. The hotel also provides glorious dining experiences at its restaurants 'Surya Mahal', 'Chandni' and 'Udai Mahal'.

How to get there

The Oberoi Udaivilas is 27 kms (approximately a 45 minute drive) from Maharana Pratap Airport and 8 kms from Udaipur railway station. It is approximately an 8 hour drive from Jaipur. There is also a train from New Delhi that takes approximately 12 hours by Mewar Express.

Telephone: +91 294 2433300, +91 294 5151100

Email: reservations@oberoigroup.com



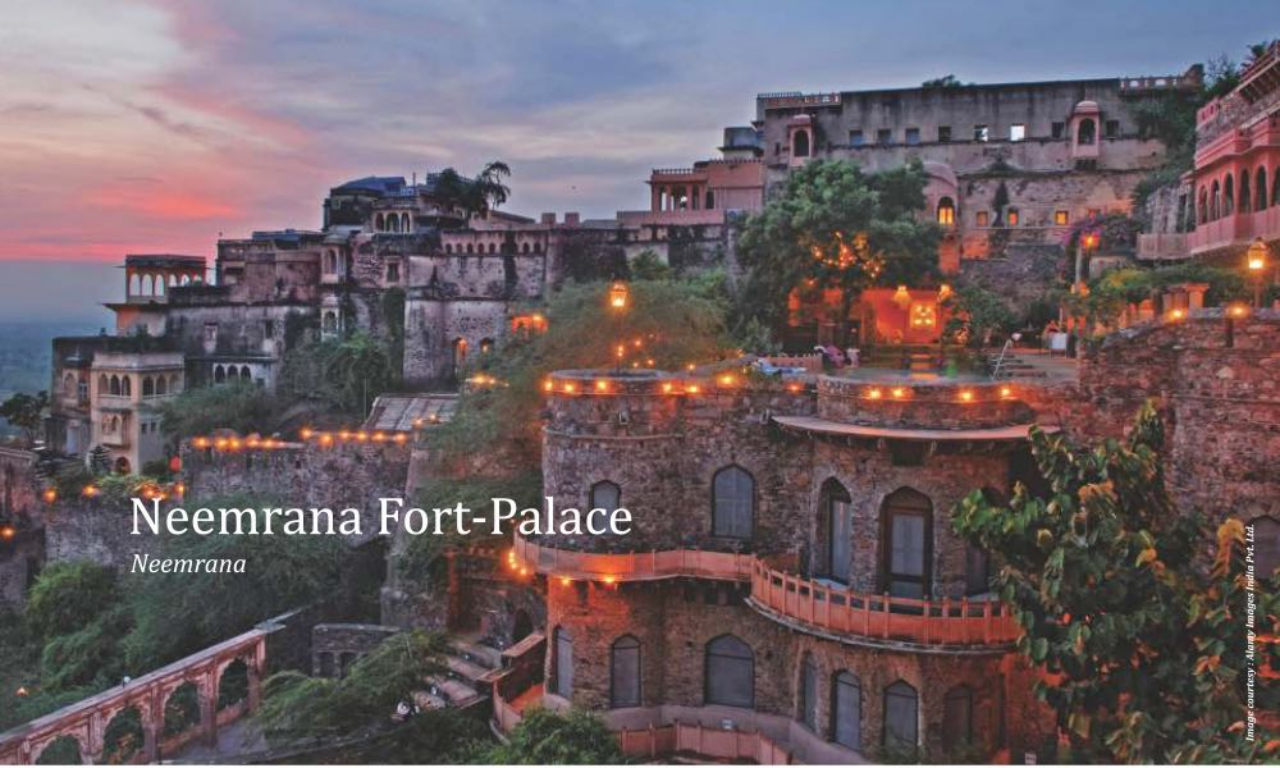


Image courtesy: Alamy Images India Pvt. Ltd.

Neemrana Fort-Palace

Neemrana

This 15th century heritage hotel is a popular weekend retreat away from New Delhi, and offers a walk down the lanes of history. In 1464, the Neemrana Fort-Palace served as the third capital of the descendants of Prithviraj Chauhan III. In 1947, when the facade of this fort-palace crumbled down, and its ramparts began to perish, Raja Rajinder Singh of Neemrana moved down to 'Vijay Bagh'. In 1986, the ruins were finally acquired for restoration, and in 1991 Neemrana Fort - Palace threw open its doors to business, starting off with just 15 liveable rooms.

Seven palace wings, built over 14 layers tiered into a hill across 6 acres of garden, make Neemrana Fort-Palace one of the most unique resorts near New Delhi. The hanging gardens, swimming pools, camel cart rides, vintage car rides, an Ayurvedic spa, and India's first zip-line are major attractions at Neemrana that draw people here.

The Neemrana Fort-Palace is no ordinary hotel; it houses 3 duplex deluxe suites, 10 deluxe suites, 3 grand suites, 2

duplex suites, 8 suites, 10 small suites, 6 grand rooms, 28 rooms, and 1 tent, which can accommodate a total of 190 guests. It offers a unique experience of 'seeing' and 'living' history, with every effort being made to maintain the old world charm of the palace. Weekends at Neemrana resound to the beats of cultural performances organised by the Neemrana Music Foundation; with India's leading dancers and musicians performing for guests and delegates. Neemrana was once a ruin; today it stands resplendent!

How to get there

Located on the Delhi-Jaipur highway, the Neemrana Fort-Palace is about 108 kms from New Delhi airport and about 120 kms from New Delhi Railway Station.

Telephone: +91 1494 246007/8, +91 9414050044 / 9587885001

Email: sales@neemranahotels.com

Playing host today to 21st century guests, the historic 17th century Jagmandir Island Palace is a magnificent heritage palace hotel managed by the HRH Group of Hotels. Referred to as *Swarg Ki Vatika* or Garden of Heaven, Jagmandir Island Palace is one of the most sought after venues for destination weddings, catering to every conceivable celebratory requirement complete with cocktails, theme-dinners, banquets, wedding ceremonies, flowers, special lighting, folk dancers and fireworks.

Set on the banks of Lake Pichola, the Jagmandir Island Palace has been an integral part of Mewar's history over the last 400 years. The construction of the palace credited to three Maharanas of the Sisodia Rajputs of Mewar, was started in 1551 by Maharana Amar Singh, continued by Maharana Karan Singh, and finally completed by Maharana Jagat Singh I.

The palace served as the summer resort for the royal family, a place where they dined and entertained. Legend also has it that in 1623, Prince Khurram (later Emperor Shah Jehan) had been given refuge here by one of the custodians of the House of Mewar, and ancestors of the present 76th

custodian Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar of Udaipur, who is also the Chairman and Managing Director of the HRH Group of Hotels. Khurram's stay at the 'Gol Mahal' inspired him as Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan to build the Taj Mahal in Agra.

Today, this grand palace hotel can be approached by boat, and offers only the very best to its guests; the 'Darikhana' restaurant for a great dining experience, the 'Panghat Spa', a quiet bar, and of course a string of plush suites at The Courtyard, all refurbished and as exclusive as they can get.

How to get there

The Maharana Pratap airport, approximately 28 kms from the hotel operates daily flights to and from New Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai, Jodhpur, and Jaisalmer.

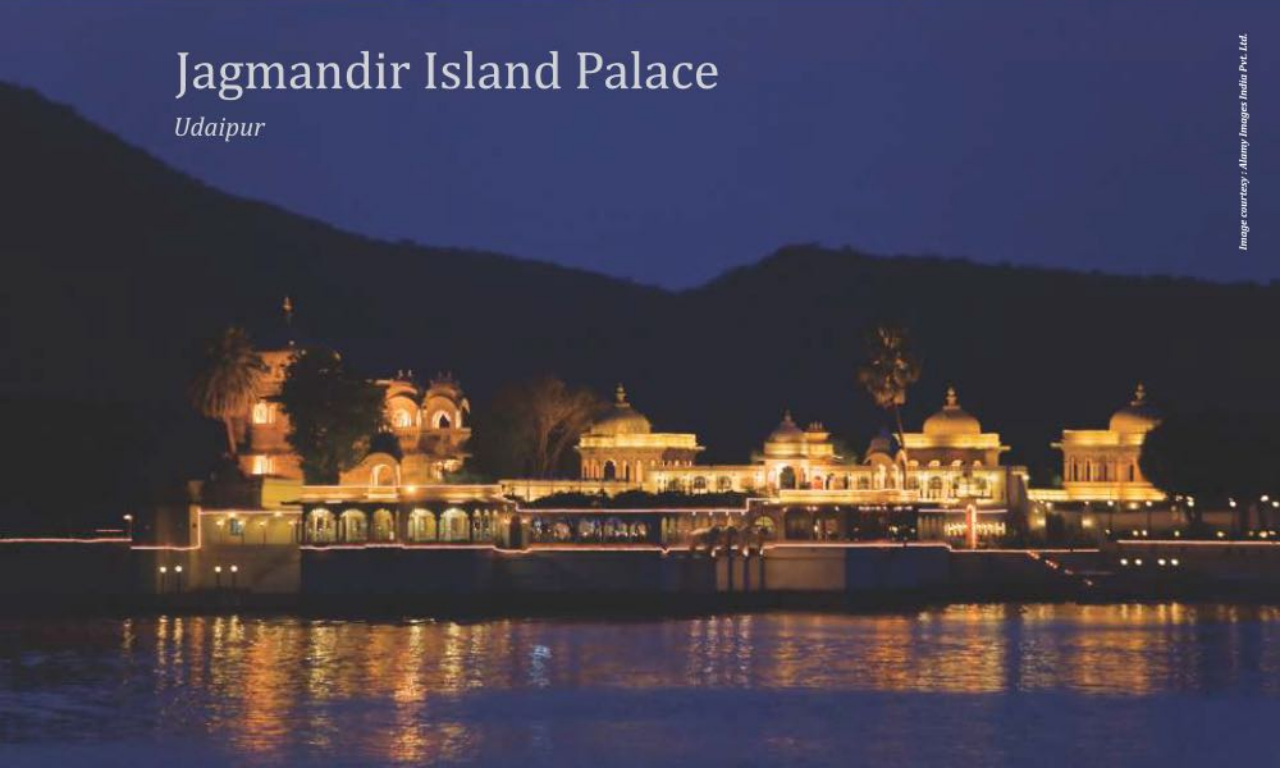
The Udaipur railway station is approximately 2 kms away. Daily buses from all major cities also ply to Udaipur.

Telephone: +91 294 2424186 - 8

Email: jagmandir@hrhotels.com, crs@hrhotels.com

Jagmandir Island Palace

Udaipur



FROM THE KITCHENS OF THE MAHARAJAS

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well"

Virginia Woolf

Palace kitchens in India were once centres of great culinary talent in themselves.

*These kitchens employed the best chefs from the country and abroad,
to churn out food that was lavish and literally 'fit for kings'.*

*Many of these recipes were closely guarded secrets and were passed on from one generation to the next
in an attempt to keep them in safe hands.*

*Today, in an age when most palaces have been transformed into privately or jointly owned luxury hotels,
some erstwhile royal families in India are re-discovering a part of their culinary legacies,
that were never really forgotten,
but probably only abandoned in time .*

Chaitra Patel finds out more...

Back in the old days of royal grandeur and incredible indulgence, the life of most princely households centred on good food, entertainment and lavish lifestyles. Endearing friendships were forged and wars were waged, treaties were signed and conquerors were left smitten and food diplomacy reigned supreme. Kings took immense pride in the food that was cooked in their palace kitchens, and left no stone unturned in their quest to ensure gastronomic satisfaction. The expenses incurred by royal kitchens to plate up only the very best were phenomenal, and under the supervision of hawk-eyed chefs, food was presented in a manner suitable for the refined aesthetics of the royals.

Cooking for the Maharajas was however never an easy task and chefs toiled hard and experimented to bring the flavours of the world to the kitchens of India. Dharmendra Kanwar, author of *Royal Cuisines of India* and the late Maharani Gayatri Devi's biographer is quoted to have said, "There was great competition between chefs, who tried to surprise the royalty by serving stuffed wild boars. Chefs liked to stun their guests. Live birds flew out when a piece of the puri was broken... Chefs were often sent abroad for training."

*Endearing friendships were forged and wars were waged,
treaties were signed and
conquerors were left smitten,
and food diplomacy reigned supreme!*



*Cooking for the Maharajas was however never an easy task
and chefs toiled hard and experimented to bring the
flavours of the world to the
kitchens of India.*

A TASTE FOR THE EXOTIC

Culinary traditions in India go back many centuries, and most stories about food are often related to the history of various invasions that India has witnessed. Conquerors introduced to India different flavours, recipes and cooking techniques. The best example of the evolution of one of the finest cuisines of India is Mughlai cuisine, dating back to a time when Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, better known as the first Mughal Emperor Babur, laid the foundations of the Mughal dynasty in India. Mughlai food is strongly influenced by Central Asian namely Persian cuisine, and went on to influence the cooking styles of various royal regions such as Kashmir, Hyderabad, and some parts of Uttar Pradesh in Northern India.

As time progressed, royals who had experienced a westernised education and upbringing would send their palace chefs abroad to train, namely France and England. And upon their return these chefs would often experiment with local food and ingredients to churn out the exotic, marking the beginnings of a whole new concept of fusion-food.

Food signified grandeur, and every dish had to be exotic. Chefs used local ingredients and innovated with cooking techniques, to whip up only the best of meats, breads, fruit and vegetables. So indulgent were the Maharajas, that a chef's level of sophistication was often judged by his ability to disguise the true identity of a dish, and present it to look like something else altogether.

The art of fine cooking for the royals has over the years been diluted, with the original recipes often getting lost in time in the royal kitchens themselves. Moin Mir, the son of the *Nawab* of Surat, recalls that *khansamas* (male cooks) so closely guarded their secret recipes that they didn't even share them with the *Begums*.

So indulgent were the Maharajas, that a chef's level of sophistication was often judged by his ability to disguise the true identity of a dish, and present it to look like something else altogether.



Mughl Maslum Laung Bakhri (Panaji)

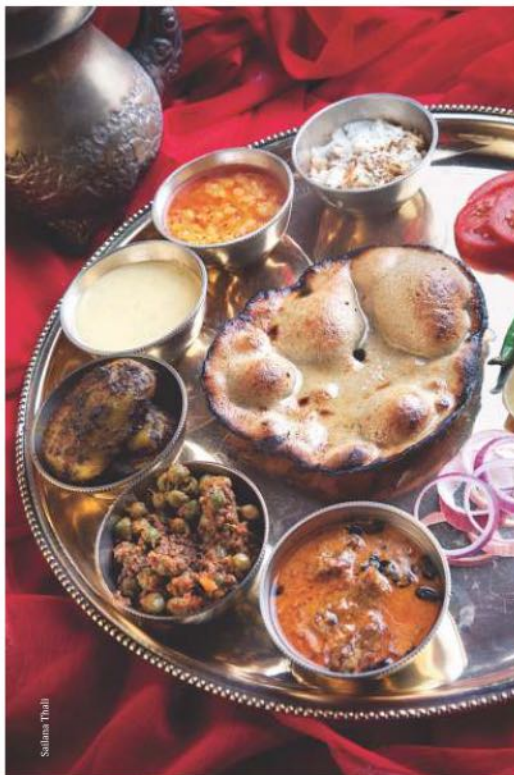


Korma Khale Masale Ka (Salara)

As time progressed, royals who had experienced a westernised education and upbringing would send their palace chefs abroad to train, namely France and England.

CHRONICLING CULINARY TRADITIONS

Then again there were some royals who not only enjoyed good food, but were also tremendously talented cooks themselves. The erstwhile princely state of Sailana in Madhya Pradesh, very close to the Rajasthan border, has a rich history of culinary culture that dates back three generations. Sailana boasts of a treasure trove of secret recipes over a century old, where each dish has a story to tell. Raja Sir Dilip Singh, skilled at the culinary arts himself, collected exotic and long-lost recipes from various states and provinces. He painstakingly translated ancient recipe books from Sanskrit, Urdu and Persian to ensure these recipes were well preserved and documented for posterity.

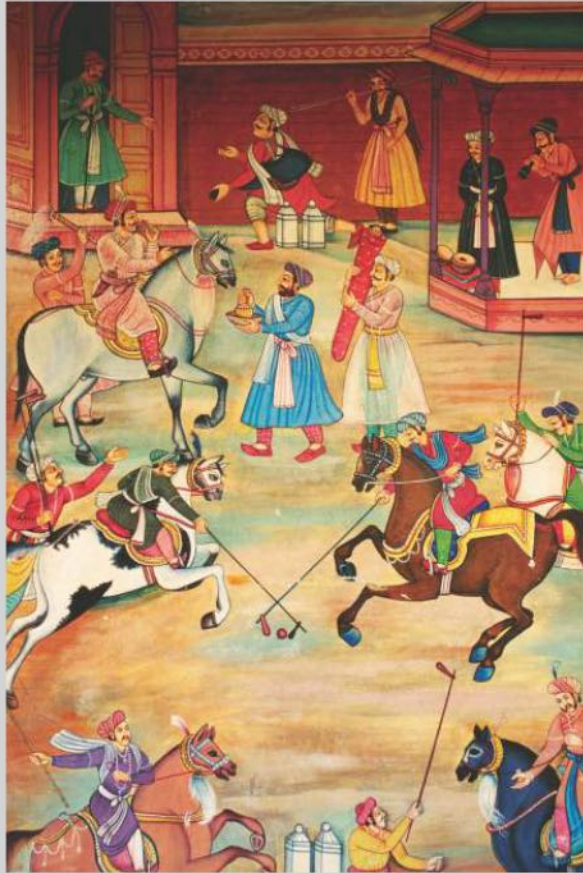


His son, Digvijay Singh later preserved these recipes through the famous cookbook 'Cooking Delights of the Maharajas'. The rich tradition of hospitality that the Royal House of Sailana is famous for is today being carried forward by Digvijay Singh's son Maharaja Vikram Singh, along with his daughter Shailaja and son-in-law Tikaraj Aishwarya Katoch, at the annual Sailana Food Festival at the Surajgarh heritage fort-hotel in Rajasthan.

The story of food in India narrates a beautiful lore of varied philosophies, cultures, traditions and customs; many lost through the passage of time. And now in Independent India, erstwhile royals, many turned hoteliers, are opening up their family recipe books to the world. Randhir Singh, scion of the erstwhile royal house of Patiala sums it up aptly, "Cooking a family recipe is like singing a ghazal. It sounds different each time, but you know the flavour."

All images Courtesy of 'Dining with the Maharajas', published by Ball Books

THE SPORT OF KINGS



"On the back of a horse, you will find paradise."
Winston Churchill

One day around 600 BC in the Persian hinterlands, one man discovered the joy of hitting a ball with a stick on horseback. Nearly 2,500 years since then, polo is now an international sport identified with royalty, champagne and refined competitiveness. Thanks to the British cavalry and Argentinean cowboys, polo is the sport of willow, leather, sunny days and thundering hooves.



Image courtesy: Nishu Co.

It's not a game that you can play easily down your local park or maidan; especially true considering polo must only be played with the right hand.

Chaitanya Deshpande embarks on a journey into India's history to learn about the origins of this royal sport.

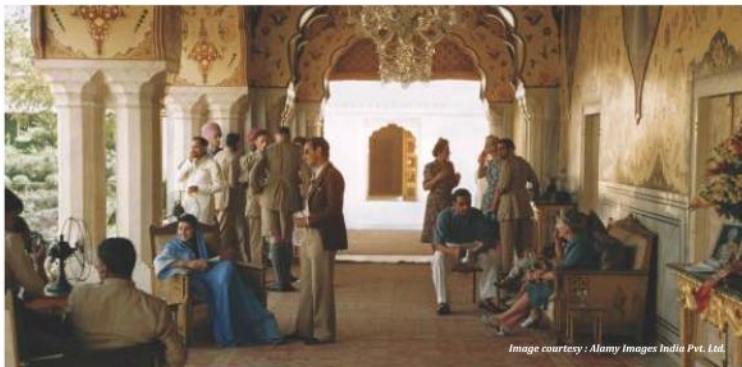
For the audience, polo is good-looking, fast and glamorous. Yet the glamour wears off the more familiar you are with the sport. You soon realise it is hard work and time consuming. Be it as it may, polo is undoubtedly a furious, skilful and aggressive game imbued with old-fashioned bonhomie and good sportsmanship.



POLO IN INDIA

India's tryst with polo goes back to the days of the Turkic ex-slave, Qutubuddin Aibak who ruled India from 1206 to 1210 CE. He died accidentally while playing polo on horseback, impaled by the pommel when his horse stumbled and fell.

Originally though, polo was played in Gilgit, Chitral and Manipur. The Mughals subsequently took it up and shaped it into the royal game it is today.



Polo, then called *chaugan*, thrived under the patronage of the Mughals and also the Rajput kings. Its modern form was then crafted by the British troops and the cavalry. The Indian Polo Association was formed in 1892 and patronised by the princes of the many states. Clubs were established in Jaipur, Alwar, Bhopal, Bikaner, Hyderabad, Patiala, and Jodhpur.

The cavalry regiments like the 15th Lancers, Central India Horse and the P.A.V.O. Cavalry contributed heavily to the sport and added dimensions of techniques in stick-work and horse control.

The British connection only made the sport stronger when Lord Mountbatten played his first game of polo in Jodhpur while he was accompanying Prince Edward on his 1921-1922 tour of India.



In his diary he wrote that he was "absolutely dippy about polo, which in my opinion is the best game in the world."

Today, a polo game on the grounds is a fusion of colours, fashion and culture. On gracefully galloping horses against the clear sky, the players exude elegance and confidence. The field is almost always a perfect rectangle of green and level. Invariably, surrounding every polo event in India is a grandeur that is truly royal.

GAME OF KINGS, KING OF GAMES

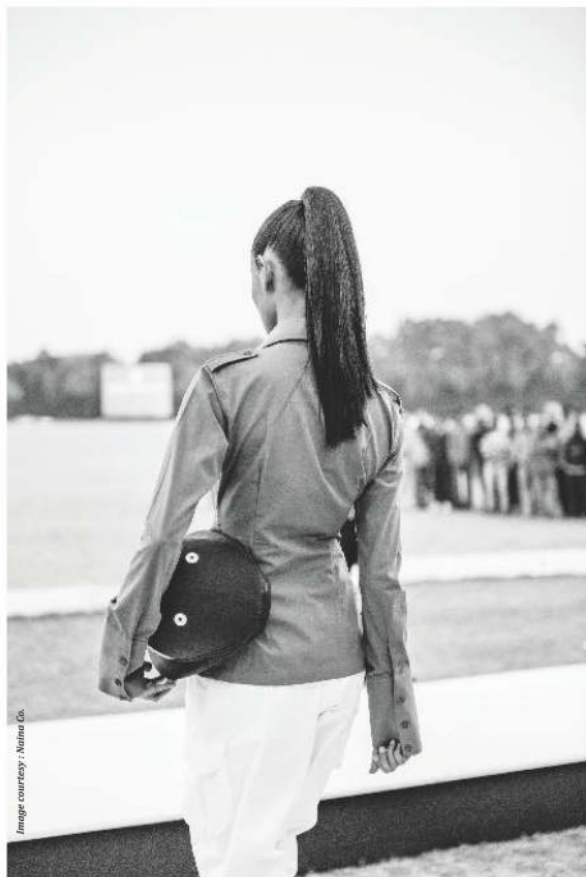
'The House of Marwar' by Kanwar Dhananajaya Singh (Roli Books, 1994) narrates the rise of Jodhpur Polo. As far back as in 1889 Sir Pratap Singh, younger brother of the Maharaja of Jodhpur, first invited a certain Col. Stuart Beatson of the infallible Bengal Lancers to help build the Jodhpur Lancers. The rest is the Golden Age of this house and its tryst with polo.

They won their first trophy in 1893 and then in 1897 when Sir Pratap led his polo team for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, they established one of the finest Indian teams to have graced the sport. At the dawn of the 20th century, Jodhpur was already an important polo centre. It is at this point that the 4th Hussars also had a young lieutenant, Winston Churchill for a brief time on their sheet. Also to play in Jodhpur was the Lord Mountbatten who played his first polo game ever here!

Later Maharaja Umaid Singh (1918-1947) continued building on the legacy of Jodhpur Polo. Jodhpur and its players held such a dominion on the sport that a Nawab of Hyderabad was heard complaining in Delhi, "Polo players seem to spring up like bloody mushrooms in Jodhpur!"

Today Jodhpur hosts some of the finest players and patrons of the sport. His Highness Maharaja Gaj Singh II personally looks after and nurtures the ambition to make Jodhpur the hallowed polo institution it has come to be.

Apart from hosting one-day exhibition matches, the Jodhpur Polo Season also presents the Jodhpur Polo Cup, the Umaid Bhawan Palace Cup and the prestigious Royal Salute Maharaja of Jodhpur Golden Jubilee Club.



BEYOND GREAT GATSBY

There is perhaps no better way to spend a winter afternoon in than to watch a game of polo.

During India's polo season, on a Sunday, the who's-who— royalty, diplomats, patrons, army officials, and socialites assemble to enjoy the game. But elegant spectators sipping champagne are not nearly as attractive as the horses.

Nothing is more important than the horse in polo. At its heart, polo is about the bond between horse and rider.

Speed, agility, mental soundness and competitiveness are the traits that are favoured in the horses. Polo is nothing without the horses. Many attest that polo is not just 'hockey on horses', but is more close to 'playing golf in an earthquake'.



All images courtesy : Shutterstock



Image courtesy : Naima Co.



Image courtesy : Naima Co.



Image courtesy : Naima Co.



All images courtesy : Shutterstock



Image courtesy : Naima Co.



Image courtesy : Naima Co.



All images courtesy : Shutterstock

ROYAL COUTURIERS



Meet The City features three prominent design houses that are associated with larger than life creations that both mesmerise and flatter.

*Chaitra Patel and Rashmi Alevoor take a look at three magnificent collections that are set against dramatic backdrops and born out of flamboyant imagination;
by Sahyasachi Mukherjee, Abu Jani-Sandeep Khosla and
Gaurav Gupta.*

"Ferozabad"

SABYASACHI MUKHERJEE

Sabyasachi Mukherjee's Ferozabad collection, much like the designer himself, is outstanding to say the very least.

True to the designer's trademark opulent style, and reminiscent of the yesteryears, Ferozabad opened the India Couture Week in 2014, amidst much pomp and vintage overtures.

Chaitra Patel takes a look at the collection.

Ferozabad images courtesy of 'Very Truly Yours'





The Ferozabad collection showcase was set against a dramatic backdrop of vintage railway cars and coaches; complete with luggage trunks, bogies with bunk beds, a bar and a dining area.

Amidst this old-world charm was a man reading a book, a woman chatting, and a couple sipping wine.

Models sashayed in and out of train coaches, displaying resplendent outfits, embellished with *zardosi*, *resham*, sequins and crystals.

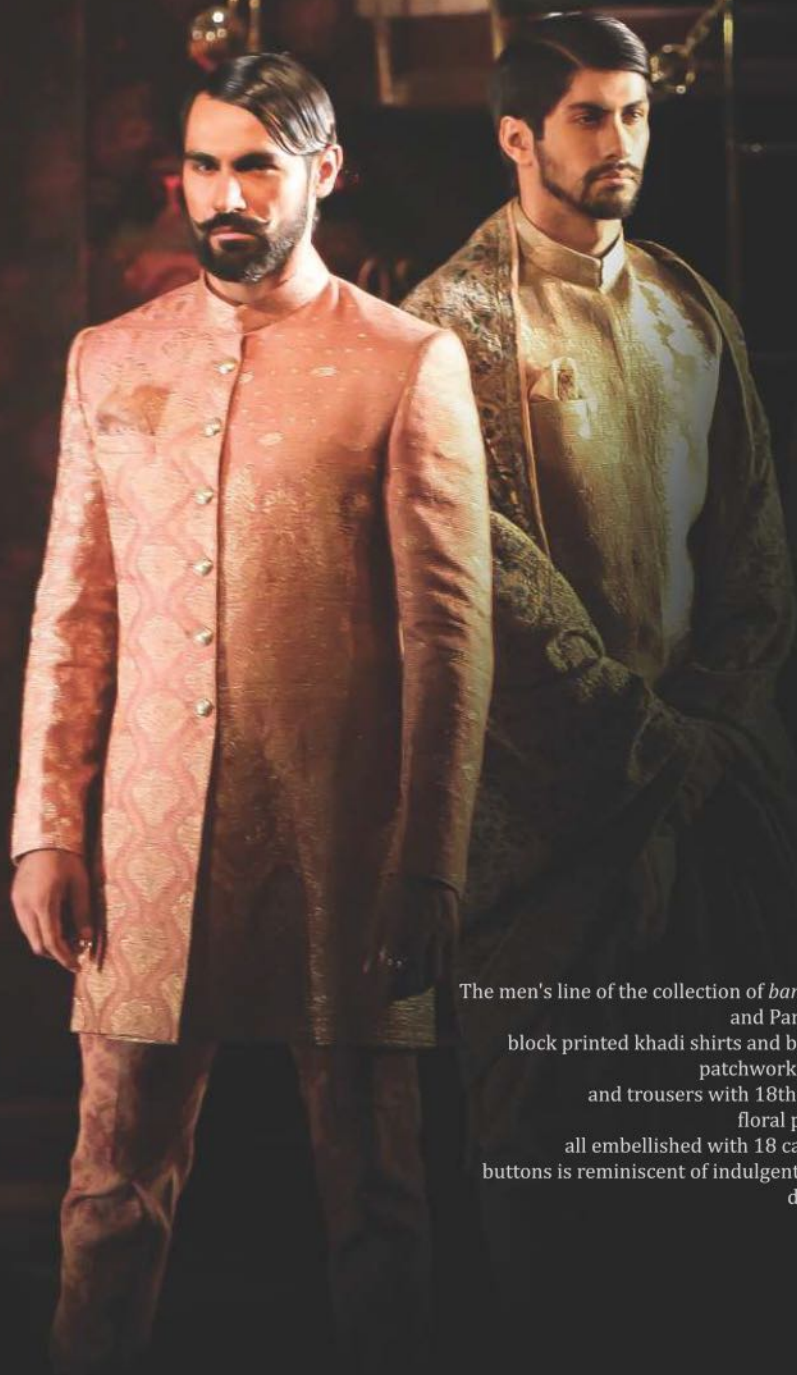
Bespoke ensembles for women and men comprising of *saris*, *kurtas*, *ghararas*, *lehengas*, *achkans*, coats and jackets were well accentuated by a soothing colour palette of beige, old rose pink and duck egg blue.

Ferozabad is a fascinating story, woven by master couturier Sabyasachi, infused with plenty of drama! The collection is all about complete paradoxes; where discipline is married with whimsy, laced with a touch of romanticism, and is wonderfully spun with reality!



Ferozabad is a subdued, delicate and elegant collection, much in line with the designer's own persona.

Rich in embroidery, the collection boasts of pastel coloured Indian silhouettes with plunging necklines, deep maroon Banarasi silk saris with *katha* work, a generous collection of dazzling *lehengas* and *ghararas* laden with *zardosi*, silver and gold embroidery and beadwork, floral prints that give the collection a subtle Parisian feel, and of course, the finest quality of thread work, with hand printed details and a nod towards femininity.



The men's line of the collection of *bandhgalas* and Parsi coats, block printed khadi shirts and breeches, patchwork blazers, and trousers with 18th century floral patterns, all embellished with 18 carat gold buttons is reminiscent of indulgent vintage detailing.

As is always customary of Sabyasachi's designs, the Ferozabad collection boasts of the highest degree of perfection in craftsmanship.

The intricate embroidery interspersed with shimmering embellishments and mirror work, bring to life a variety of fabrics such as taffeta, tulle, poplin, crepe, chiffon and pashmina, that have been used in this collection.

Ferozabad is a vintage dream, steeped in nostalgia, that evokes the romance of an era bygone!

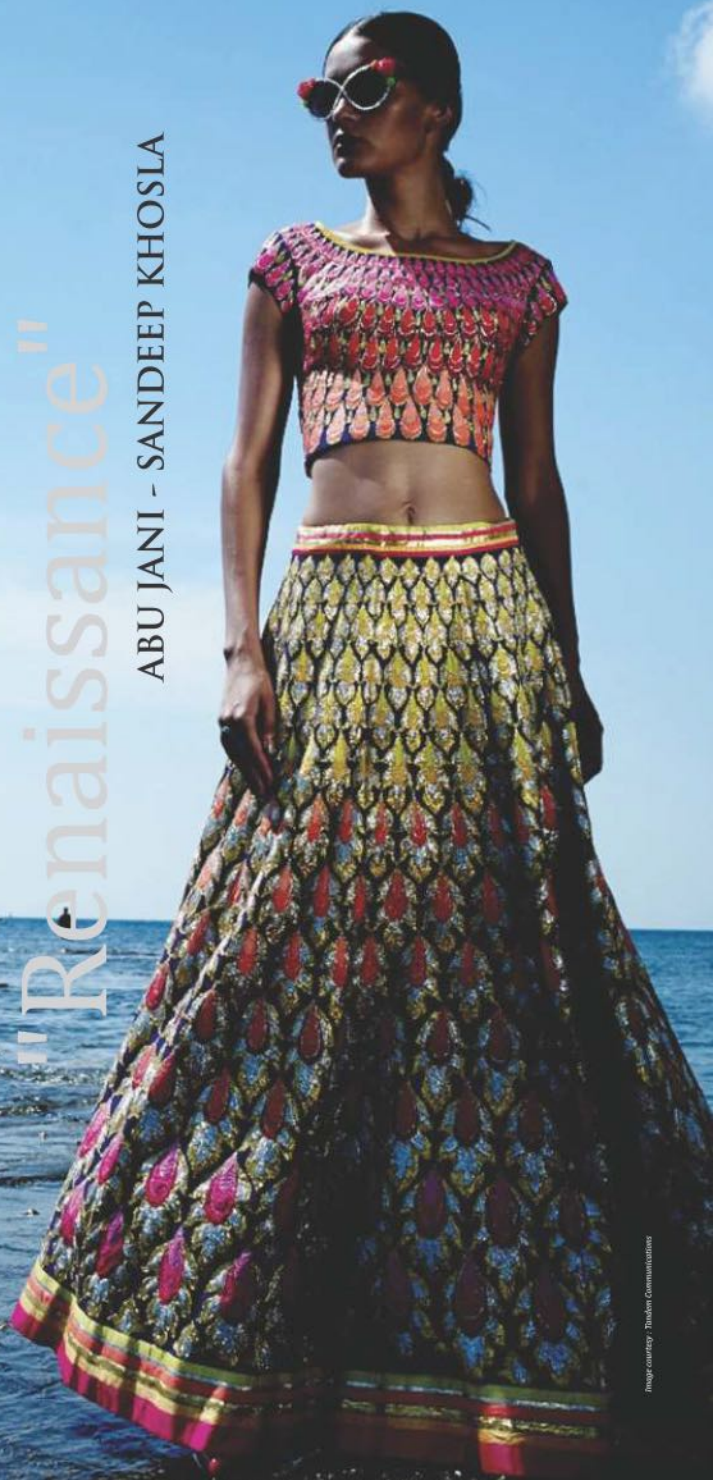


"Renaissance is our tribute to today's bride. We have dug deep into our own design history to reinvent our classical couture and re-interpret our core sensibilities to create for the contemporary woman as she dresses for one of the most important occasions of her life-her wedding."

It is a rebirth of sorts."
- Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla

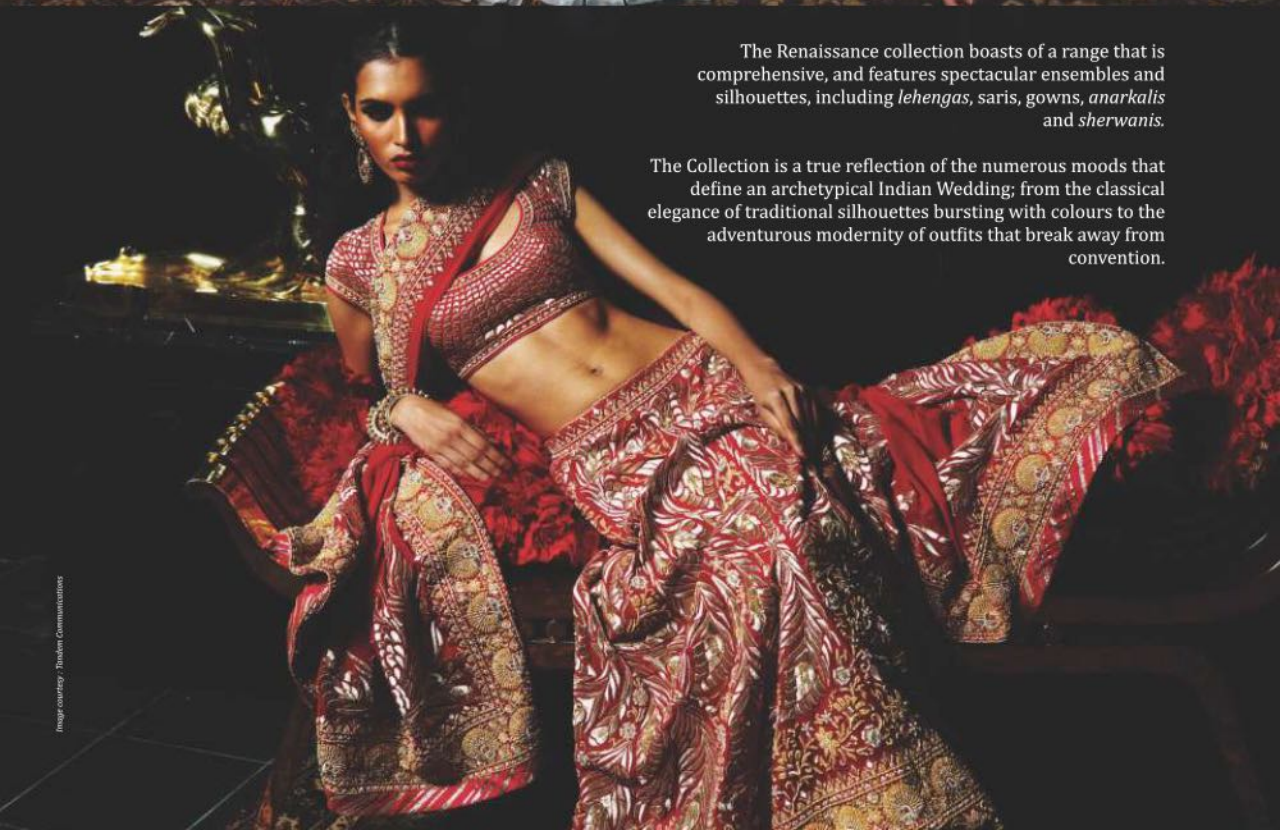
ABU JANI - SANDEEP KHOSLA

"Renaissance"





This resplendent collection is born out of quintessential elements that the label is famed for, and have been used across each range. Vintage techniques such as mirror work, crystals, and *zardosi*, *resham*, sequins and *gota* that have always been incorporated across Abu-Sandeep's collections, have been given a new lease of life through this dazzling collection.



The Renaissance collection boasts of a range that is comprehensive, and features spectacular ensembles and silhouettes, including *lehengas*, *saris*, *gowns*, *anarkalis* and *sherwanis*.

The Collection is a true reflection of the numerous moods that define an archetypical Indian Wedding; from the classical elegance of traditional silhouettes bursting with colours to the adventurous modernity of outfits that break away from convention.

"As you See I Become"

GAURAV GUPTA

"As the celebrations come alive, I also unveil my first ever campaign with the super talented Kalki Kochelin, shot by Tarun Vishwa.

Kalki is fantastical. She embodies mystery, womanhood and a childlike quality. She is a progressive artist in every way and that shows in the different expressions of her creativity – from theatre to philanthropy, cinema and fashion," says Gaurav Gupta.



"I remember the first time I did a fashion shoot with Gaurav was about five to six years ago, where I wore a florescent green dress. I still remember the shoot, it was stunning. He's not afraid to try new things and push fashion in daring directions. He's very talented and sure of himself. When he does something he does it properly, like this shoot had a vision, an art director, an entire production working together to make it stand out," says Kalki Koechlin.

Gaurav Gupta is India's youngest couturier. He is said to be a pioneer in bringing elements of fantasy, flight, and mythology to Indian traditional wear. His recent work uses ethereal tones of sand-blasted gold, dusty pinks and pristine whites with fabrics that gracefully hug and flatter the female form.

A much sought-after red carpet designer, Gaurav Gupta says that he has always been guided by the imagery of flight. He has been touted as an artistic designer who brings magic realism to the landscape of Indian fashion.

CELEBRITY STYLE

MICHELLE POONAWALLA
ZYP 1 FOR LOUIS VUITTON



There is a vast difference between fashion and style. Simply put, fashion is about clothes and style is about the wearer. One of America's grand old men of letters, Gore Vidal was of the opinion that "Style is knowing who you are, what you want to say, and not giving a damn."

Then it can be said that style is usually born from a sense of self-awareness, from an articulated sense of self.

Someone who is venerated for her unmatched grace and impeccable style even today is Maharani Gayatri Devi. Her style seemed effortless - her trademark coiffed hair, delicate French Chiffon saris, and jewellery that had been inherited from her mother were all that it took. She wasn't bedecked in couture but she was the epitome of style.

In her attempt to define style, Rashmi Aleveor asks four style icons of modern-day India what their description of style is.

STYLE IS A WAY TO SAY
WHO YOU ARE
WITHOUT HAVING TO SPEAK.

Michelle Poonawalla, illustrious fashionista and wife to Yohan Poonawalla, is no stranger to sports cars, horses, and high fashion.

The soft-spoken and elegant Michelle is admired not only for her vast wardrobe of couture clothing but also for her ability to carry it off with much grace at all times.

An interior designer from the American College, London, Michelle has an eye for good design. Here, she talks about her personal style and favourite buys.

(Image courtesy: Michelle Poonawalla)

MICHELLE POONAWALLA

How would you describe your style in a word?
Effortless.

What is your style philosophy?
Style is a way to say who you are without having to speak.

What are your go-to pieces?
My Hermes and Chanel anything.

Your everyday outfit.
Jeans and a top.

What would you never wear?
I would never wear something that I think didn't suit me.

What, according to you, are some common misconceptions about style?
*If it's in fashion it will suit you.
If it looks good on someone else it will look good on you.
You can buy style.*

Favourite quote on fashion that resonates with you.
Self confidence is the best outfit, rock it and own it.

Who are your style icons?
I like Kate moss, Olivia Palermo but I like to appreciate style everywhere, from street style to fashion bloggers like "Up Close and Stylish" on Instagram.

Latest purchase.
Louboutin Boots.

Latest beauty discovery.
Kiehls

Favourite clothes store.
Selfridges.

Favourite fashion city.
Paris

Favourite fashion designer.
I have lots of favorites. Chanel, Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Louboutin, Gucci, Peter Pilotto, Mary Katrantzou, ERDEM

Favourite upcoming label.
Clover Canyon

Favourite shoe designer.
Louboutin

Are you a clothes hoarder or do you streamline your closet each season?
I like to streamline my closet on and off.

Do you have any pieces of jewellery you never take off?
My Cartier love bracelets.

What is the best styling advice you can share?
Don't follow fashion blindly, wear what suits you. Always wear the right size outfit, there's nothing worse than something ill fitting.

One thing that we don't know about Michelle Poonawalla.
*Even though I may be out at some events I'm basically a very homely person and generally don't go out very much.
I love animals. I am an artist. And graduated with honours in interior design.*



Image courtesy: Michelle Poonawalla

STYLE

AGENTLEMAN'S DRESS CODE

Rahul Khanna

Image courtesy: Tarun Tahiliani

The son of actor-politician, Vinod Khanna, and ex-model and one of the founders of CRY, Gitanjali Taleyarkhan, Rahul Khanna is the picture of good manners and good breeding.

The self-described "Boutique Bollywood actor" frequently appears on best-dressed lists and is renowned for his minimalistic sense of style.

Rahul takes some time off from his ongoing role as a Pakistani intelligence officer on the American television period drama series, *The Americans*, to talk to us about a subject that he is well-versed with.

How would you describe your style in a word?
Clean.

What is your style philosophy?
I'm a staunch champion for simplicity. I like clothes that are high-quality but low-fuss. Trends can be fun to watch but I personally am most comfortable in clothes that are more classic than trendy.

What are your go-to pieces?
I love the way a really well fitted suit makes you feel. Teaming a dark suit with a crisp white shirt is a failsafe option for a formal event. For casual occasions, a smart button-down shirt and a pair of slim pants is a good combination.

Your everyday outfit.
Jeans and a cotton button-down shirt or a polo t-shirt

What would you never wear?
Anything with a big logo. And boot cut jeans.

What, according to you, are the some misconceptions about style?
That you have to blindly follow fashion trends to be stylish. That your clothes must be embellished or "loud" in some way to be noticed. That more expensive equals better. Big designers do make beautiful things but you shouldn't look like a mannequin from a store. Mix your big brand pieces with high-street brands or vintage finds. I don't believe you always have to spend a lot to be stylish. In fact, some of the most stylish people I know rarely wear expensive designer brands.

Favourite quote on fashion that resonates with you?
"Dressing well is a form of good manners." — Tom Ford

Who are your style icons, one living, one dead?
Living: Tom Ford, Dead: Cary Grant

Latest purchase.
A pair of dressy sneakers by a New Zealand brand called, I Love Ugly.

Latest grooming discovery:
Kiehl's Facial Fuel Sky Flyin' Foaming Multi-Gel. Tingly, menthol goodness in this genius 2-in-1 invention. It's a facial cleanser and a shave gel in one, which means packing one less product when I'm travelling.

Favourite clothes store:
Reiss in London. Sharp, simple, well-priced staples.

Favourite fashion city:



Image courtesy of Paul Gregory

New York.

Favourite fashion designers:
Tom Ford, Gucci, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Dior Homme.

Favourite sportswear brand:
Nike.

Favourite shoe designer:
Mr Hare.

Are you a clothes hoarder or do you streamline your closet each season?

If you were to look into my wardrobe you'd see that what I have most of is space. Men don't need too many of anything. If you have just a few classic staples that you can use with everything, you're pretty much good to go. Plus, I'm somewhat of a minimalist. I don't like the thought of collecting anything. Whenever I get something new I always give away something old.

Do you have any pieces of jewellery you never take off?
I don't wear any jewellery other than a watch, occasionally. Even then, I take it off at any given opportunity.

What is the best styling advice you can share?
Be yourself! Wear what makes you feel comfortable and good about yourself.

MEET SHARMILA NICOLLET INDIA'S MOST STYLISH GOLFER

Sharmila Nicollet, the Indo-French professional golfer has represented India in golf since the age of 13. The 24-year-old is also a state-level athlete and a former national-level swimmer.

In 2012, she became the youngest Indian to qualify for the Ladies European Tour (LET).

Apart from her achievements in sport, Sharmila is also known for her glamorous image both on and off the golf course.

The pro golfer has a fondness for fashion and is a professional model as well. But her true commitment is to the game of golf – she says, "I want to be portrayed as a golfer and not as a fashion icon."

Evidently, Miss Nicollet has proved to the world that she can be both.

How would you describe your style in a word?

Bold

What is your style philosophy?

Unique, classy, colourful and comfortable.

Confidence is what makes style!

What are your go-to pieces?

LBD - The Little Black Dress

Your everyday outfit.

Juicy tracks or leggings which are very fashionable with a trendy top

What would you never wear?

Off colour combos, socks with sandals and fur

What, according to you, are 5 common misconceptions about style?

"You Need To Be Thin"

"If it is not Expensive, it is not Fashionable"

"Some people are born Stylish"

"Brand names matter"

"You are stylish only if you're wearing the latest fashion"

Favourite quote on fashion that resonates with you.

Different is beautiful. Why fit in when you were born to stand out!

What are your style icons, one living, one dead?

Beyonce, Blake Lively, Taylor Swift and Marilyn Monroe

Latest purchase.

Jimmy Choo

Latest beauty discovery.

Oil your hair twice a week and Amway skin care products!

Favourite clothes store.

Juicy Couture and Victoria Secret

Favourite fashion city.

New York

Favourite fashion designer.

Louis Vuitton

Favourite shoe designer.

Ferragamo and jimmy Choo

Are you a clothes hoarder or do you streamline your closet each season?

Streamline!

Do you have any pieces of jewellery you never take off?

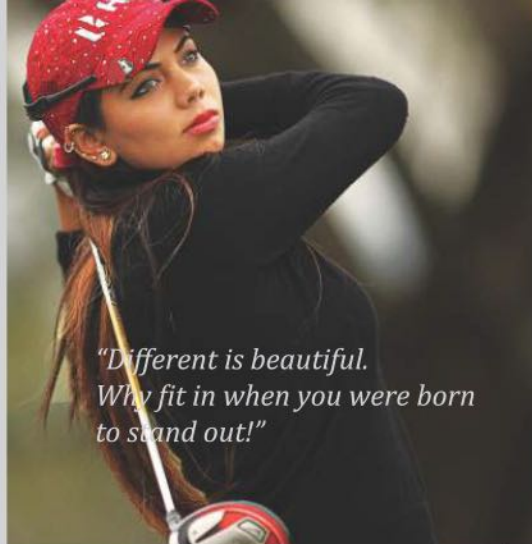
My diamond rings and earrings

What is the best styling advice you can share?

Create your own visual style... let it be unique for yourself and yet identifiable for others

One thing that we don't know about Sharmila Nicollet.

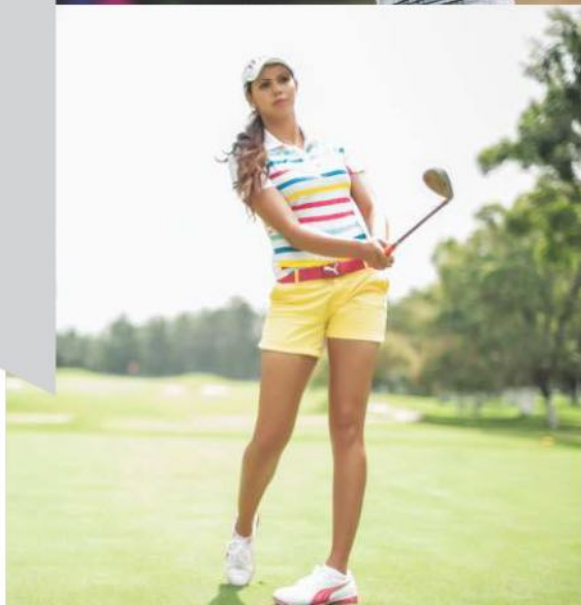
I am a neat freak, fitness addict and a person who is very conscious about skin and hair care and hygiene.



*"Different is beautiful.
Why fit in when you were born
to stand out!"*



Image courtesy : Tristan Jones, pictures taken during the Ladies European Tour



EVELYN SHARMA HAVING FUN WITH FASHION

Evelyn Lakshmi Sharma, the fresh new face on the block is a German-Indian actress and model. She made her acting debut with a small role in the 2006 U.K. film "Turn Left".

She made her entry into Bollywood in 2012 in the film "From Sydney with Love" and landed a role in the commercially successful "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani" the following year.

The daughter of Telugu film star Madhavi shares with us her fresh and cosmopolitan take on Style.

How would you describe your style in a word?
Fun!

What is your style philosophy?
Fashion is one way of expressing yourself. It should always reflect your personality and the way you feel. Send out a message to the world with the way you dress!

What are your go-to pieces?
Oversize shirts and leggings! I travel a lot and for me that's the most comfortable and stylish way to get around!

Your everyday outfit.
My everyday outfit would be a maxi dress. When I'm at home or roaming around off set you mostly see me in a comfortable maxi dress!

What would you never wear?
I am no fan of anything tight. Maybe it's because for work I mostly wear tight dresses and costumes that in my personal life I have given up on them!

What, according to you, are 5 common misconceptions about style?
*"One goes hand in hand with the other". you can buy all the fashion you want, but you can't buy style! "It costs a lot of money". since fashion is your own design of art, you can wear designers, medium brands like Top Shop or Zara, or even things you bought at the flea market! Who cares how much it cost if you look good?
"You need to be thin". Even the fashion industry is trying to kill this misconception. Fashion is for every body type!
"Fashion is fickle". Oscar Wilde once opined that "fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months". While it makes for a great quote, it's not always true. You will find that the key pieces of every season repeat forever.
"Men's fashion is boring". A classily dressed man always looks best, but then there are men like Ranveer Singh or Siddharth Malhotra who show how much fun men's fashion can be!*

Favourite quote on fashion that resonates with you.
"Buy less, choose well and do it yourself!" Vivienne Westwood

Who are your style icons, one living, one dead?
I love people who create their own style from Cleopatra, Audrey Hepburn to Olivia Palermo and Mary-Kate Olsen!

Latest purchase.
A Michael Kors handbag.

Latest beauty discovery.
Thick eye liner!



Favourite clothes store.
Top Shop

Favourite fashion city.
New York City.

Favourite fashion designer.
Diane von Fürstenberg

Favourite upcoming label.
My own label!

Favourite shoe designer.
Manolo Blahnik

Are you a clothes hoarder or do you streamline your closet each season?
I buy way too many things! I'm an impulse shopper. So every season half my closet goes to charity and I buy new stuff.

Do you have any pieces of jewellery you never take off?
My grandmother's ring.

What is the best styling advice you can share?
Stay true to yourself!

One thing that we don't know about you?
I have a personal shopper who gets me the most amazing stuff when I travel!

PREP UP FOR A SUNDAY THAT FEELS LIKE ONE!

INDULGE IN

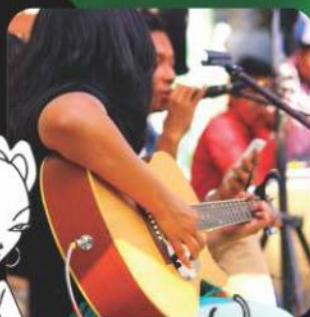
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DELIGHTFUL FOOD &
JOYOUS MUSIC

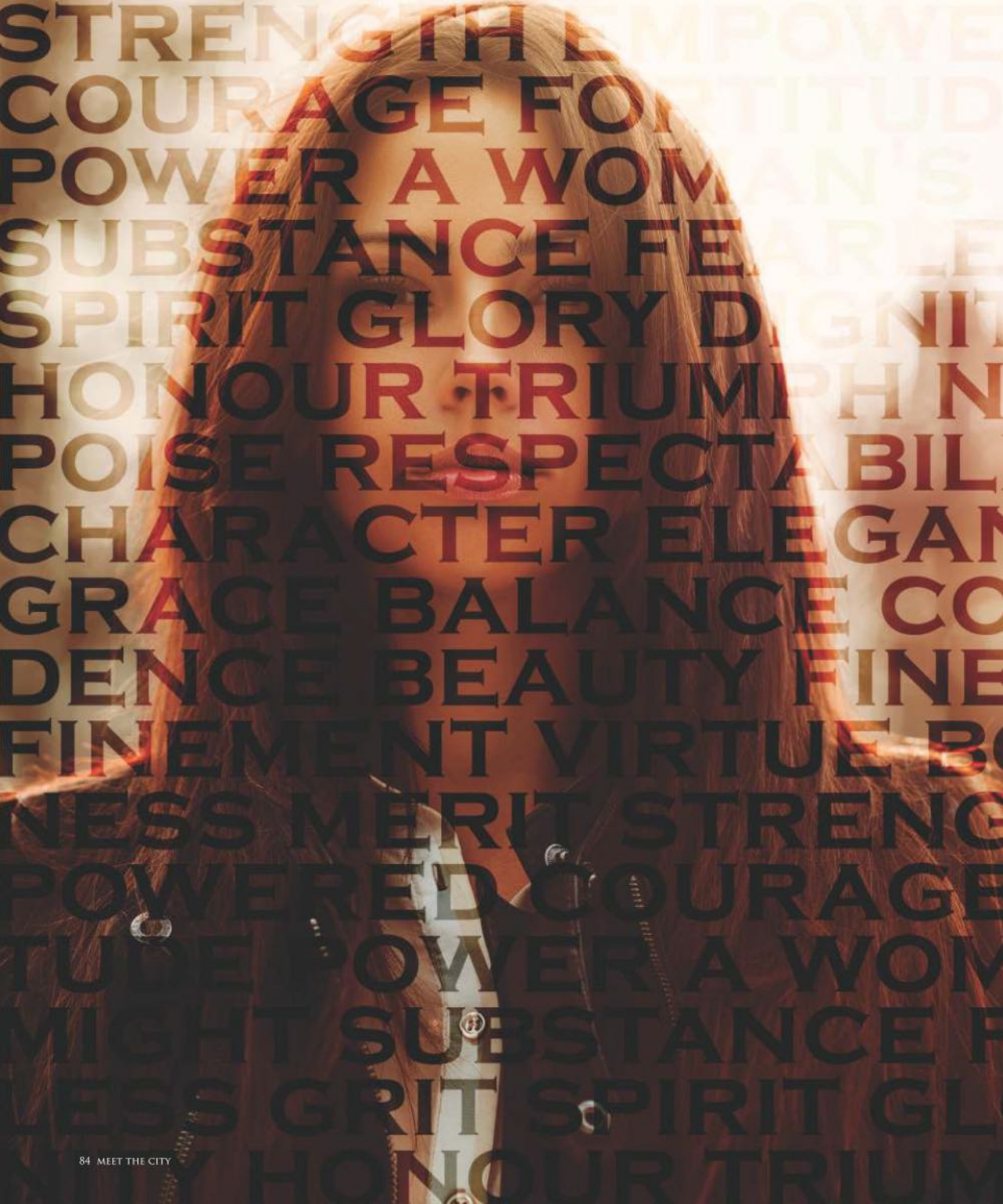


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CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF WOMANHOOD



"A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman"

- Melinda Gates

In celebration of the International Women's Day on March 8th 2015, Meet The City profiles four women from diverse fields, who make a difference - and not just to society or their professions alone, but even to their own selves, by being empowered women, in charge of their own lives.

In conversation with wildlife conservationist Belinda Wright, filmmaker Kiran Rao, film actor Kalki Koechlin, and India's international squash player Dipika Pallikal.

THE OUTSPOKEN HUMANIST

Strong and empowered, Kalki Koechlin is a good role model for young women everywhere. Over the past few years, the socially aware Bollywood actor has been an increasingly active voice for gender issues in India. Her 16-minute monologue titled 'An Intense Piece about the Truths of Womanhood' on International Women's Day at the India Today Conclave in 2014 was a powerfully-told gripping account of the suppression of women through the ages.



Though a strong supporter of equal rights for women, Kalki prefers to call herself a humanist over a feminist. She wishes that people would celebrate 'Equal Day' instead of Women's Day.

*In an interview with Rashmi Alevoor,
Kalki Koechlin shares her opinion on the shifting gender roles in India.*

What was it like for you growing up in India?

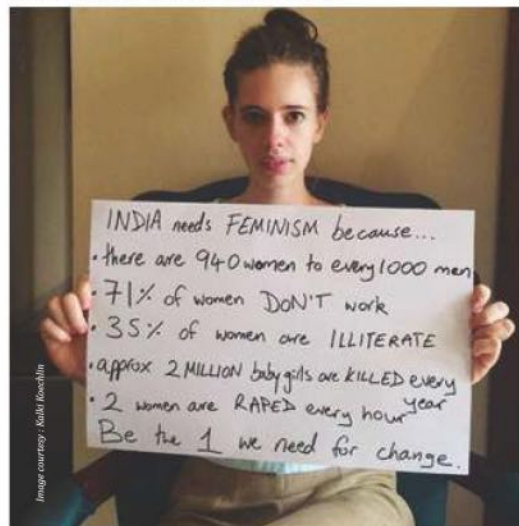
For me it was completely normal. For others it must have been strange to see this white, blonde little girl speaking fluent Tamil and playing cricket in a small Tamilian fishing village in South India with all the other south Indian kids. I didn't really feel like an outsider. In fact, me and the other kids would spot the 'foreigners' and stare at them, as we often do in India when we see 'white' people. I think it was only in my adolescence that I really noticed the different treatment - men staring at me, etc. But that could also just be because I'm a woman.

Who do you most identify with, Kalki - the writer, the theatre actor, Bollywood star, social reformist/feminist?

I identify with Kalki - the clueless artist struggling day to day with how to express herself better.

Why do you feel India needs feminism?

I think I answered that in this Buzzfeed picture. Because it's a question of humanity, a question of equality.

**What are your thoughts on 'Women Against Feminism'?**

I don't think such a thing exists. Every woman wants to be treated like a human being and is therefore a feminist. However I think there are women who are against the word 'feminism' because the word itself has been misused and tends to make people feel like feminism stands for man-hating and militant women-defending. If there was an ideal word for equality I suppose it would be humanism.

What can be done to improve gender inequality in India?

I think we need to focus on male education from an early age, we need to teach boys that it's okay to express feelings, to talk about issues, especially sex education. We talk about educating the girl child and it's high time we educate the boy child so that he can keep up with her.

Is there a strong female personality that you look up to? If yes, who? Who are some of your role models (women)?

There are so many, I'll mention a few, amongst the dead ones - Bette Davis, Sister Nivedita, Victoria Ocampo, Smriti Patil. And alive and well - Juliette Binoche, Karuna Nundy, Lakshmi Pratury, Lakshmi Rebecca, Emma Watson, Tabu, Revathy, Gayatri Jayaraman, Meryl Streep...the list could go on and on...

How can women in India learn/ be taught to be self-reliant?

Education, of course. Entrepreneurial skills, too because many women are educated but still don't feel they can go out and do things on their own. Also learning to handle society, sticking to one's beliefs even if they go against the norm, learning how to stand up for oneself in a patriarchal society, it's not easy to learn this except through experience!

What are some of the ways in which education can be used as a tool to better gender relations in India?

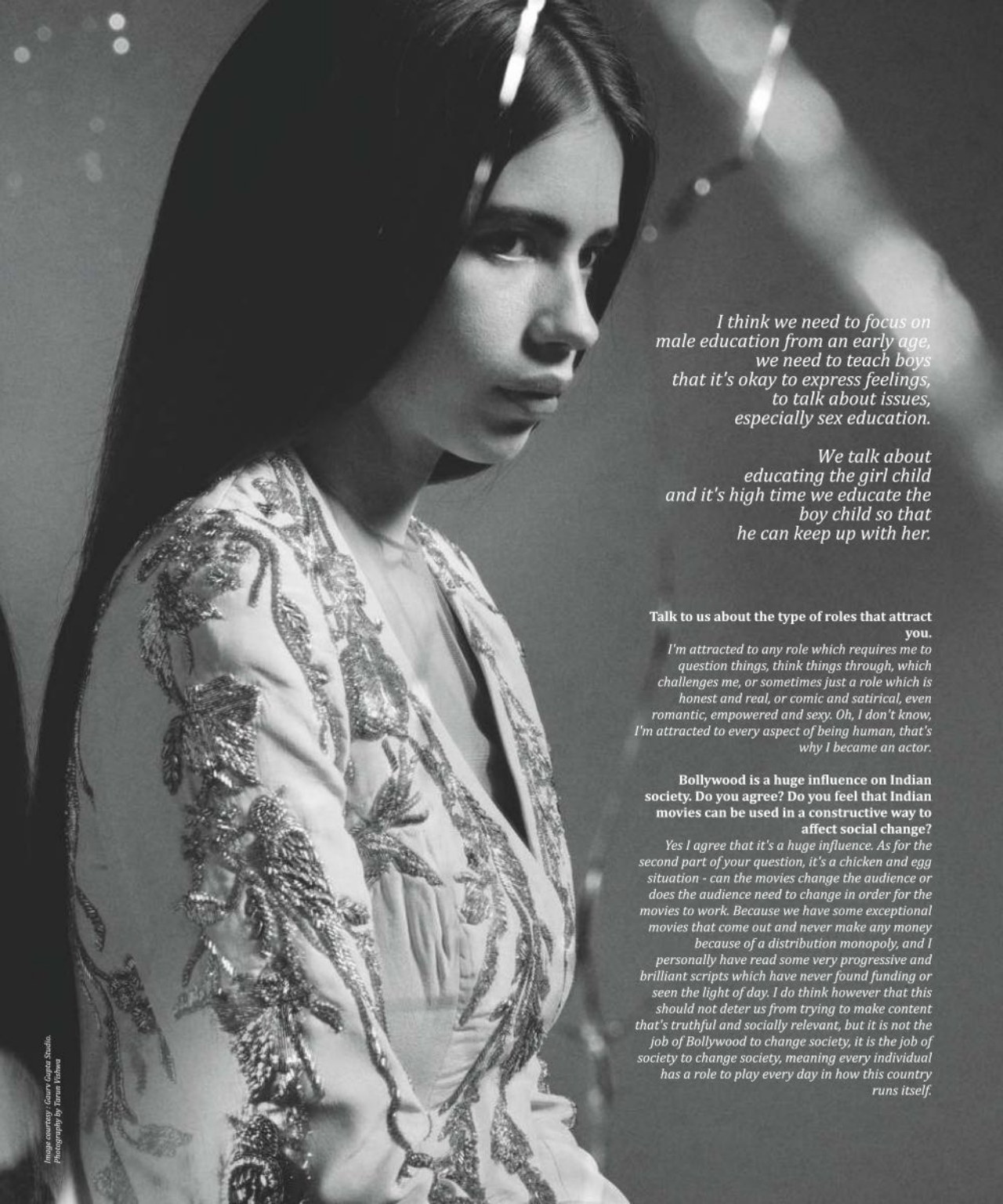
As I said earlier it's time to address boys and girls together rather than separately. If they can't sit and learn side by side in the classroom, how will they ever work side by side in an office? And sex education, please, it's high time we have some decent videos in the syllabus explaining how we became a country of 1.25 billion (after all, the kids have already seen everything on the internet...) and then there's the education of the parents too, so there isn't a large generation gap and there's emotional support to kids discovering their sexuality. I think one huge problem with Indian education systems, in general, is the lack of emotional support and compassion. We are very strong on success-tactics and career-drilling but we still don't know how to behave with other human beings who are different than us - be that gender, colour, religion or sexual orientation just to mention a few.

**Do you feel India has changed socially or culturally over the past few decades? Where do you feel we are headed?**

I've only been alive the past few decades, so it's hard for me to say! I do hear rumours that times were more liberated and more mature socially and culturally in the sixties, seventies and eighties, and that we are getting more regressive. I can only speak from my own experience and say that socially we have to fight day-to-day battles for acceptance as women, whether it means single women finding places to rent, or any woman worrying about what to wear before stepping out, or at what time she comes home and how. Culturally I'm more positive, I feel we are still a nation of givers. I have often found the help of neighbours, the support of strangers and deep friendships in the most unlikely places so I do believe Indian culture is special in that way. Although I can't deny the tension in political change over the last year has brought a religious divide and tendency towards intolerance of the minorities. But we can never lose hope because there's always the internet, uncensored, limitless and at our fingertips every moment of the day.

Do you feel Bollywood is reflecting this change? How specifically?

Sure, Bollywood reflects the nation's sexual repression, which manifests itself in unusually raunchy item numbers. Not that I have a problem with that, I feel only that there should be more male items around. And then the role of the heroine is still demure, beautiful and virginal but for a few welcome exceptions where we see a strong female lead.



I think we need to focus on male education from an early age, we need to teach boys that it's okay to express feelings, to talk about issues, especially sex education.

We talk about educating the girl child and it's high time we educate the boy child so that he can keep up with her.

Talk to us about the type of roles that attract you.

I'm attracted to any role which requires me to question things, think things through, which challenges me, or sometimes just a role which is honest and real, or comic and satirical, even romantic, empowered and sexy. Oh, I don't know, I'm attracted to every aspect of being human, that's why I became an actor.

Bollywood is a huge influence on Indian society. Do you agree? Do you feel that Indian movies can be used in a constructive way to affect social change?

Yes I agree that it's a huge influence. As for the second part of your question, it's a chicken and egg situation - can the movies change the audience or does the audience need to change in order for the movies to work. Because we have some exceptional movies that come out and never make any money because of a distribution monopoly, and I personally have read some very progressive and brilliant scripts which have never found funding or seen the light of day. I do think however that this should not deter us from trying to make content that's truthful and socially relevant, but it is not the job of Bollywood to change society, it is the job of society to change society, meaning every individual has a role to play every day in how this country runs itself.

"Belinda Wright was first taken into wild tiger habitat at the wee age of 7 weeks old. Born in Calcutta (Kolkata), she spent much of her childhood in the jungles of Bihar with her parents Anne, a Founder Trustee of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India and Bob Wright who established the famous Kipling Camp on the edge of Kanha National Park. Growing up in the Wright family, Belinda found herself at the frontline of wildlife conservationism.

As a young adult she started work as a photographer and later a documentary filmmaker with the National Geographic for many years. She won two Emmy Awards and 14 major international awards for her film, "Land of the Tiger," a film shot in Kanha and Ranthambore Tiger Reserves.

Rashmi Alevoor spoke to the wildlife protectionist and award-winning documentary filmmaker about her journey as a wildlife crusader and of her life in rural India.

THE INDOMITABLE BELINDA WRIGHT



Image courtesy: Alamy Images India Pvt. Ltd.

Belinda Wright has always been fascinated with wildlife and she bears a similar passion for India as well. "India is home. I was born here and I'll die here," she says. "It can be a tough life at times. But it is also equally rewarding."

She turned to full time conservation work in 1994 when she founded the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), an organisation that provides information and support to enforcement agencies to curb wildlife poaching and the escalating illegal trade in tiger parts.

In 2005, Belinda was a member of the team that revealed the extent of the illicit big cat skin trade in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, a province which had become the world's leading market for the contraband. WPSI, under her aegis, supports various wildlife conservation and community support projects throughout India.

Belinda has won numerous awards for her work in wildlife conservation, including the prestigious Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for her services toward the protection of wildlife and endangered species in India in 2003, the Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Award in 2005, and the Sanctuary Lifetime Service Award in 2012.

Sense of Identity

Belinda's work often takes her to the rural heartland of India, where strong patriarchal traditions persist. Her work also dictates that she come into contact with nefarious wildlife criminals. Yet none of this seems to faze the cheerful and headstrong Belinda Wright. "I suppose what propels me forward is a strong and stable sense of self," she says.



Belinda Wright with the famous elephant, TARA at Kipling Camp

She describes Indian society as "an extraordinary dichotomy" where there have always been "astonishing women" the likes of Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi and Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India, but also the existence of a repressive social order that denies its women the right to education.

"We need to empower our women through education. It is education that will give women the confidence to achieve their dreams no matter how treacherous the path."

She does however notice a shifting dynamic in gender attitudes in India. "There has been an increasing number of women forest officers over the last few years", she points out. "...and IAS officers, too. The change is gradual but ongoing nevertheless."

Belinda Wright has a fighting spirit and a positive approach to everything in life. There's a sweet air of hope about her. Currently on one of her many journeys through the interiors of the country, she says, "Travelling through rural India, through remote villages with fields of mustard shimmering in the sun, you cannot help but be inspired. India is truly one of the most special places on this planet."



KIRAN RAO THE ECLECTIC FILM MAKER

Kiran Rao dons many hats; ace filmmaker, who just happens to be married to one of India's biggest Bollywood stars - Aamir Khan, Chairperson of MAMI (the Mumbai Academy of Moving Image, better known as the Mumbai Film Festival), and a doting, hands-on mother to a three-and-a-half-year-old preschooler.

These conventional tags that seem to define her notwithstanding, Kiran Rao has come into her own as an independent and cerebral individual, who demonstrates a tremendous passion for the visual arts.

Chaitra Patel spoke to the celebrated director.

Image courtesy: AMP Films Pvt. Ltd.

Growing up in a middle class home in Kolkata, Kiran Rao's formative years were far removed from the glitz and glamour of film and Bollywood. "The influence of films was very minimal while I was growing up, and as a family we were more influenced by theatre and books," says Kiran. A quintessential Calcutta (as it was known then) upbringing for Kiran comprised of an education from the Loreto Convent School, followed by the La Martiniere School. She then headed off to Mumbai to study literature and economics at the Sophia college and then to Delhi for a post graduate degree in Mass Communication. In between all that, Kiran revelled in her growing years in the 'City of Joy', aptly complemented with piano lessons, sports, theatre and plenty of books.

While films and the art of filmmaking were initially never on her radar, Kiran was always captivated by the world of art, especially visual, prompting her to pursue a post graduate degree in Mass Communication from the Jamia Millia Islamia Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC). "I was always interested in all forms of art, especially visual art, photography and I felt the mass communication course was perfect, because it encapsulated almost all forms of art that I was passionate about, into one," says Kiran. Kiran soon moved to Mumbai after this, in pursuit of a career, assisting with advertising films. "I worked here for about a year and a half, networked with industry professionals and colleagues, and developed my contacts," she says. Acting on a suggestion by a friend, Kiran applied for the position of Third Assistant Director on the sets of the much celebrated period drama 'Lagaan' by Ashutosh Gowariker. Kiran assisted on a few more notable films such as 'Monsoon Wedding' and 'Swades' following 'Lagaan', and learnt the ropes of the trade from the experts, embarking on her journey of scripting, directing and producing her own film.

Dhobi Ghat

"I began writing 'Dhobi Ghat' in 2005, but finally made the film only in 2008," says Kiran about her directorial debut. "The film is essentially about the city of Mumbai, which is made up of a confluence of experiences. People are always moving home due to tenancy laws, leaving behind a fragment of their lives in a space that is soon occupied by someone else. This fascinated me," explains Kiran. The film was premiered at the prestigious Toronto Film Festival and Kiran received a standing ovation. "I didn't expect this, and certainly did not expect a standing ovation - it was a great high, especially because it's a wonderful festival, a 'people's festival', where the audience pays to watch world cinema."

Making the movies they love

Dhobi Ghat marked Kiran's debut as an intellectual film maker. It also saw her working side by side with her husband Aamir Khan, breaking away from the popular notion that working with one's spouse can be stressful. "We enjoy working together, and we carry work home all the time. But our work is also a shared passion; so working together has never really been a problem," says Kiran. "It's great fun to work with Aamir because he is a team player, who is tremendously excited about his work, and respects and incorporates inputs by others too." Working on a film as different as 'Dhobi Ghat', in terms of box-office parameters, one would wonder about the balance that Kiran needs to strike between the brand of cinema that she is known for and the more mainstream cinema that Aamir is a part of. "There never really has been a question of balance here - I'm a private individual who is only married to 'mainstream'. I enjoy being the person I am, without actively thinking about market parameters. As a production house (Aamir Khan Productions - AKP Films), we produce the kind of content we believe in, such as 'Peepli Live' and 'Taare Zameen Par', and more recently 'Satyameva Jayate' for television," elaborates Kiran. She further adds, "... urban audiences these days are in fact watching movies that may be considered highly commercial and



Kiran Rao on the sets of Dhobi Ghat

market-worthy, and yet at the same time are independent and unique in terms of their storytelling; About ten to fifteen years ago films such as these and say, 'Kahani' or 'Queen', with women protagonists, would probably have not enjoyed the same success as they do today."

Turning Presenter for the Ship Of Theseus

In 2013, Kiran made waves when she decided to present a movie called 'Ship of Theseus', by Anand Gandhi. "I watched the film at a festival and absolutely loved it. I spoke to Anand and offered him my assistance, to help in any manner that would aid the film". Anand Gandhi asked Kiran to 'present' the film, and she gladly obliged. "I felt if I lent my name to the film, it would be that much more accessible to audiences, possibly give the film maker a good break. I like to think I contributed to the film and its success by giving it a face, for people to associate it with," she explains. The film ran for more than 6 weeks, and was appreciated by audiences everywhere.

MAMI - A world of cinema

The much accomplished film maker has recently added another feather to her cap - she's been appointed Chairperson of MAMI, taking over from her predecessor Shyam Benegal, along with film critic Anupama Chopra who has been appointed festival director. "I am honoured to take up this position, and Shyam babu has been very kind indeed for recommending my name." Kiran has big plans for the festival, "We have added plenty of discussions, performances and workshops to the festival, that people can participate in." While the festival has always showcased top-notch cinema from across the world, it's recent woes have been monetary, and Kiran's aim is to now "make this a destination festival where people can engage with cinema and create spaces for conversation, and collaborate with each other." This is a big step up from merely screening movies, and an opportunity for young people to connect with one another.

Kiran's come a long way and has successfully carved out a space for herself amidst the film fraternity in India, and is recognised as one of India's foremost cerebral and independent film makers. She successfully balances work with domestic life and spends quality time with son Azad, who she says is "great fun to have around."

Currently, Kiran is hard at work on a new script, and a few other projects. Her sound advice to young women and budding film makers, and to everyone really is, "find what you love to do, find out who you are and what is a reflection of you and what makes you happy. Be true to yourself and find your voice, and help people experience joy."



A TRUE WINNER

ON AND OFF THE COURT

*Dipika Pallikal in an interview with
Rashmi Alevoor about what it means to be a sportswoman in India.*

At 23, squash player Dipika Pallikal has achieved far more than most of us will over our lifetime. Based in Chennai and Melbourne, where she trains with six-time world champion Sarah Fitzgerald, Dipika has her eyes firmly set on the prize.

She stormed the European Junior Squash Circuit, picking up titles like the German Open, Dutch Open, French Open, Australian Open and Scottish Open before turning professional in 2006.

The first Indian to reach the top 10 of the WSA (Women's Squash Association) rankings, Dipika is also the recipient of the Arjuna Award in 2012, and is the youngest recipient of the fourth highest civilian award in India, the Padma Shri Award in 2014.

Evidently no stranger to victory, Dipika is the picture of grit and self-confidence. And she has her family to thank for it all. She comes from a strong lineage of sportspeople: her mother, a former captain of the Indian Women's Cricket Team, her grandmother, a state-level athlete and her paternal grandfather, a national high-jump champion and her maternal grandfather represented three states in basketball.

"In my family, education and sport ran side by side. At the age of 8, I was taken to the tennis court, at the age of 10, I was taken to play squash at a summer camp and I loved it and since then there has been no looking back. At age 18, I was World No. 1 in the Under-19 'Rising Stars' rankings."

More recently, she paired up with Joshna Chinappa and clinched India's first Commonwealth Games medal for squash - a gold in Glasgow in 2014.

When asked about the status of women's participation in sport in India, the bold and beautiful Dipika Pallikal responds, "Times have changed and I see a lot more women competing at the highest levels and what is even more heartening is that I see women in sport coming back after maternity leave, and fighting their way to the top." She offers the case of Mary Kom as an example of this, "...with so much against her and with three bonny kids, she's still India's star. We're very proud of her."

While sports in India is no longer a male-dominated field anymore in terms of players' contribution, there is still discrimination with regards to prize money. Dipika has boycotted the national championships for the past few years now in protest against lower prize money for women in India.



"We train as hard as the boys and play as much as them. We make the same sacrifices but don't get our due," she says.

Whether it's fighting for her rights or for a title on the squash court, Dipika won't stop until her goal has been achieved.

Her simple message to young women across India, "I'm not made of anything different than you. I had a singular dream to be the best in my sport whatever it takes. Chase your dream with the greatest of will, grit and determination and you'll be surprised at how soon your dream will turn into a reality."

IN STORE

The Big Door

Heritage – Jewels – Collectibles



Some doors take you back in history. Some let you take history back with you. In the heart of Mumbai, there is a small camp corner that celebrates, and reminisces, Indian heritage.

This is The Big Door, a showcase of India's most valuable fine and decorative arts, jewellery, collectibles and other precious masterpieces.

Chaitanya Deshpande steps through The Big Door and discover a whole new world.



Located in the plush Pali Hill area, The Big Door's exterior is classic, almost hypnotic and reveals nothing of the space within. Walk through the towering imposing door and you are transported to an experience impressive and complete. This 7,500 sq. ft. space is opulent to say the least, even as limited-edition hand-selected antiques and curios reimagine colonial India for you. Inside, The Big Door is about artistic triumph as well as an interpretation of magnificence and luxury.

At The Big Door, every piece tells you the story of the era it was crafted in. Elaborate pichwai paintings, ornate marble *jaali* panels that work on aerodynamics, consoles from actual balconies from the royal courts of the *rajas* and hand-carved and uncut marble artefacts stand together with contemporary line of mirrors and tables fashioned from camel bone. Doors that once guarded ancient forts are a collector's dream and available only at The Big Door.

In its antiquated treasures, The Big Door is stately and royal. Its selection of interior accents comprise of pure silver furniture inspired from the days of the *Raj* to marble fountains, baroque *jaalis*, South India's splendid bronze artefacts and even Persian calligraphy and woodwork. Amalgamating sublime beauty with tradition and innovation, there is something to thrill every connoisseur here.



The Big Door also showcases curios from the courts of the Mughals, Nizams and also the Rajputs, including inspired jewellery ranging from precious and semi-precious jewellery set in gold, silver and gold plated metal, to Victorian, *polkis* and *jadau* pieces. Each of these mesmerising creations is unique and design oriented.

While each piece is one of a kind and a limited-edition, The Big Door works with select ancestral *karigars* who previously were commissioned by the royal families for their stately courts. Today, these artisans create exquisite articles that carry the same regal aura for The Big Door and also customise these pieces for various connoisseurs of luxury.



Image courtesy: Eshana



Redefining opulence through design & couture is menswear designer duo Rohit & Abhishek whose silhouettes are primarily power driven, with a synthesis of eastern and western sensibilities. The “Modern Maharaja” style has become synonymous with the brand's identity and The Big Door is bringing this style statement to the city's fashion forward men.

Adding to its gamut of bespoke services is India's only made-to-measure luxury trunk maker, Trunks Company Jaipur that aims at customising & handcrafting trunks to treasure possessions to perfection and introduce them to purveyors of luxury.

Bringing history back, The Big Door displays limited edition collections of Imperial wrist wear that includes a range of antique coin watches while the selection of Swarovski studded timepieces add that contemporary allure. The idea is to offer elegant timepieces for discerning customers across the globe.

Enveloping Indian heritage, The Big Door is a platform for collectors and connoisseurs who yearn to lend a hint of the bygone royal India to their spaces or their repertoire of collectibles.

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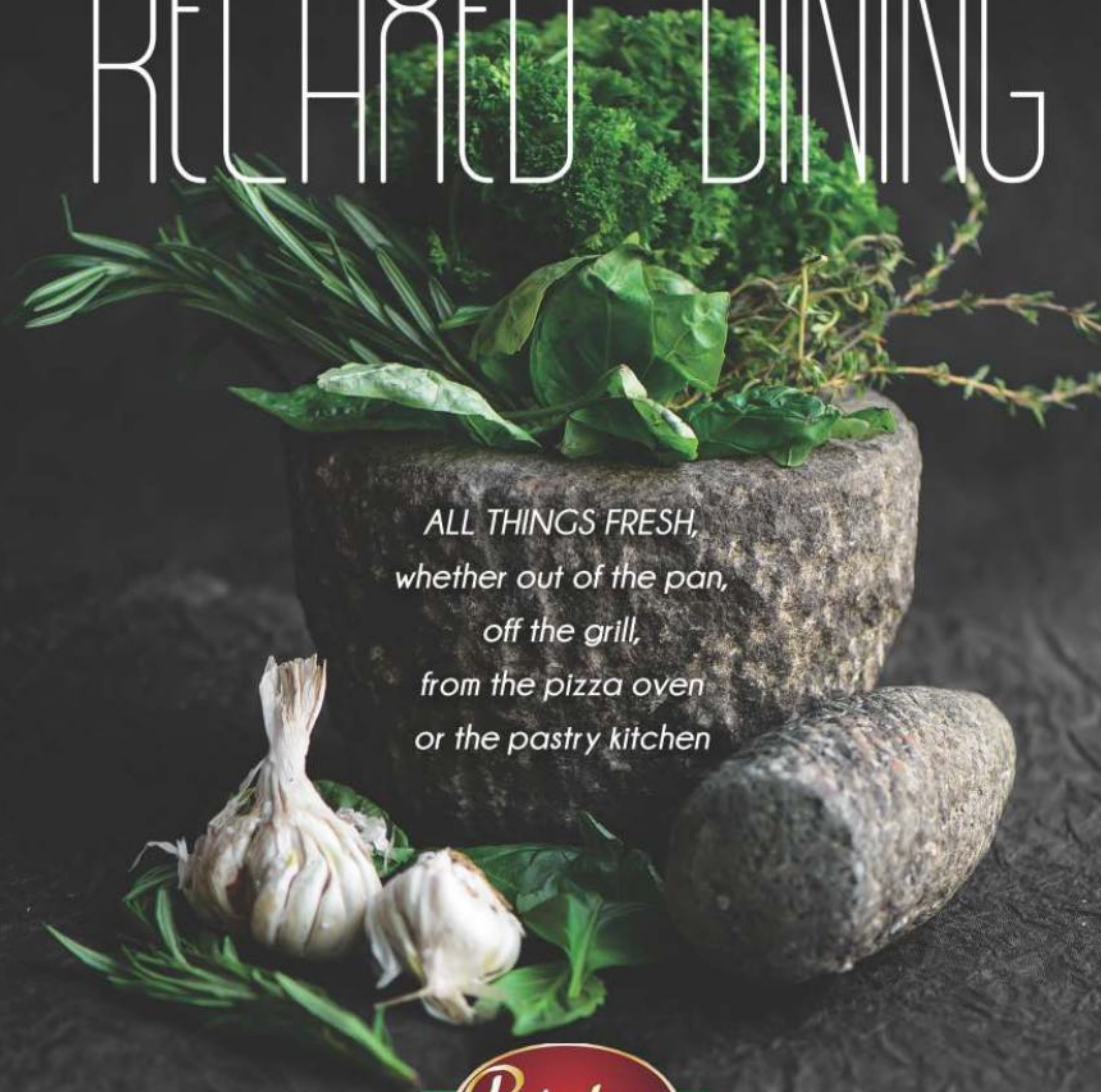
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A TALE OF 2



The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival Mumbai

The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival connects people to Mumbai's art and culture. Diversity is Mumbai's soul and nothing takes you inside the culture of India's dream city like Kala Ghoda does.

Chaitanya Deshpande finds out more

CITIES

A story of their art, culture and people.

Art reigned supreme in the month of February, across the neighbouring cities of Pune and Mumbai.

Pune played host to the 2nd edition of the Pune Biennale between the 6th and 15th, while Mumbai welcomed the 16th edition of Kala Ghoda Arts Festival between the 7th and 15th.

Aficionados were treated to a wealth of art, sculpture and installations at these two destination festivals, that have been responsible for putting Pune and Mumbai on the cultural map of India.

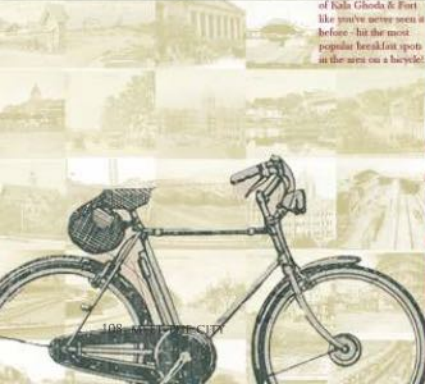
Meet The City reviews the two landmark festivals.



Pune Biennale 2015 Pune

The second edition of the Pune Biennale themed around "Heritage: Yours and Mine" was celebrated between the 6th and 15th of February, 2015.

Dr. Kiran Shinde, Principal - College of Architecture Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University and Founder, Director, Pune Biennale gives us an insight into the art festival.



of Kala Ghoda & Fort
like you've never seen it
before - but the most
popular breakfast spots
at the area on a bicycle!



The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival

Mumbai

The 16th edition of the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival with its theme of "SPARSH" was a shining example of the abundant talent that resides in Mumbai and that is attracted to it.

The community-based celebration that binds the city of Mumbai is held at the beautiful and historic precinct of Mumbai, The Kala Ghoda Art District. Witnessing phenomenal growth, today the festival attracts close to 150,000 people from all over the city. Remarkably, the funds raised, go towards the restoration and upkeep of the area.



This year's edition had food-lovers asking for more. From *brun-mask* and *chai* to classic Italian and Mexican home food and the art of plating up, Kala Ghoda was a gastronomic delight.

The theme for this year's KGAF — Sparsh or "touch"—was showcased via the medium of theatre in 20 different languages from Hindi, English and Konkani to Bengali, Punjabi and even Maithili. Not just award-winning plays but the KGAF also proved to be a platform for the new talent on and off the stage.

Cinema buffs were treated to screenings across three venues — the BNHS auditorium, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj museum and the Kumaraswamy Hall.

Art has been core to KGAF and this year, artists and the public were given the opportunity to interact with the likes of Arzan Khambatta, Jaideep Mehrotra, Sunil Padwal and Brinda Miller in a session titled "Under the Hood".

Kala Ghoda's special treat to children was *Kitab Khana* where young book-lovers and budding chefs came together for an Enid Blyton picnic. The aim was to help kids learn more about one of their favourite authors and enjoy some of the food mentioned in her books.

The Kala Ghoda Festival this year was held from 7 February, 2015 to 15 February 2015 at various locations across South Mumbai.

A woman in a traditional Indian dance costume, possibly Kathak, is captured in a dynamic pose. She wears a blue and red sari with gold borders and a large gold belt. Her hands are raised in a 'Nataraj' pose, with fingers in specific mudras. She has a white flower in her hair and is adorned with multiple gold bangles and necklaces. The background is a dark, textured wall with some faint, light-colored patterns.

PUNE BIENNALE 2015



“Heritage: Yours and Mine”

The second edition of the Pune Biennale themed around “Heritage: Yours and Mine” was celebrated between the 6th and 15th of February, 2015.

The Pune Biennale, a movement initiated by Bharati Vidyapeeth and supported by Pune Municipal Corporation reiterated itself as a confluence of multiple disciplines like architecture, visual arts, and photography.

The Biennale kick-started in November last year, and has since then conducted various outreach programs and out-of-the-box workshops over a period of three months, for different kinds of audiences, on various aspects of heritage and events.





Over 50 entries (of 149 registrations) were received from across 30 cities with heritage sites at Jammu, Chinatown in Kolkata, Kochi Fort, and the port of Bharuch, Varanasi, the mills of Mumbai, Bithoor, Baradwari, and Gwalior.



Photography as an art form took a new meaning with more than ten activities including photography exhibitions and workshops that were organised by Photographic Society of Pune. These included, "Timeless Compositions – Photography as Fine Art", "View Finder", "Heritage Photo-Walk", and "How to Learn Heritage Photography".

In "Dimming Lights", some of the hitherto lesser-known layers of architectural history of Pune were presented including the "Bungalows of Deccan Gymkhana area" and the streetscape of Raviwar Peth in the old city, where trading communities resided. "Rear Mirror" showcased conservation projects in Pune.





More than 200 volunteers and close to 300 artists were felicitated at the event and the herculean efforts that went in presenting the art extravaganza of Pune Biennale was well applauded.



The Pune Biennale was well attended by close to 300 artists from over 6 countries and 30+ cities, making it truly a participatory event. One of the highlights was a painting workshop for the elected representatives of Pune where they were assisted by artists in presenting their own expression about heritage and the city.





Rajeev Lochan, Director, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, inaugurated the ten-day Pune Biennale event, on 6th February 2015. The highlight of the inaugural ceremony was a fusion of sand-art, temple architecture, and a bharatnatyam performance by noted classical dancer Swati Daithankar and her troupe. Over the next ten days, visitors were treated to 10 exhibitions comprising of close to 300 artworks from the disciplines of visual arts, architecture and photography, spread across four landmark locations in Pune.

At the historic Deccan College, an exhibition titled "Future of Past" displayed more than thirty site specific installations and twenty life-size sculptures made from metal junk.

"Go Tell it on the Mountain" at the Balgandharv art gallery showcased more than 40 artworks of well known contemporary artists from over 25 cities.

"Pune Kala Pravah" at the Pt. Bhimsen Joshi Art Gallery was an exhibition of works by more than 80 Pune based artists. Under the guidance of Project Director, Johny ML, these displays were coordinated by Sushma Sabnis and Ashwini Pethé.

The Nehru Cultural Centre (on Ghole Road) had a medley of exhibitions dealing with architecture under the title of "Sculpting in Time" where three projects constituted major displays: 'Accommodating the Mélange', a collection of award

winning entries from a national level ideation competition of the same title and initiated by the Bharati Vidyapeeth's College of Architecture in association with Ethos, a non-profit organisation. According to Prof. Ashwini Pethé, Program Director, Pune Biennale, "the objective given to participants was to design/ redesign a public building or a space in the historic core of a city where they had to respect the rich heritage of the place while responding to contemporary needs of the society in that place". Over 50 entries (of 149 registrations) were received from across 30 cities with heritage sites at Jammu, Chinatown in Kolkata, Kochi Fort, and the port of Bharuch, Varanasi, the mills of Mumbai, Bithoor, Baradwari, and Gwalior. These projects ranged from adaptive reuse of existing heritage structures to the design of contemporary and contrasting structures in heritage-rich contexts. The esteemed jury panel included Prof. Dr. T.C. Chang from the National University of Singapore; Dr. Ajay Agarwal, from Queens University, Canada; Pradeep Sachdeva, Architect-Urban Designer from Delhi; Narendra Dingle, an eminent academic and architect from Pune, and Abhay Sardesai, Editor of ART India magazine.

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Performance art was also well represented by "Butoh", a contemporary Japanese art performance by Rhizome Lee, and "Haiku Hour" by Kala Ramesh and Milind Date.

The speakers at various seminars discussed topics such as "Public Space and Aesthetics: Heritage in Continuous Motion" (by T C Chang, Pradeep Sachdeva, and Narendra Dengle), "Is there such a thing as Safe Art?" (by Rekha Sameer), and "Public Art and Society" (by Subodh Kerkar).

The Pune Biennale was well attended by close to 300 artists from over 6 countries and 30+ cities, making it truly a participatory event. One of the highlights was a painting workshop for the elected representatives of Pune where they were assisted by artists in presenting their own expression about heritage and the city. Besides 40 corporators, the city Mayor and a Member of Parliament from Pune painted their visions of the city. Dr. Vishwajeet Kadam, the chief patron of Pune Biennale expressed his immense delight to see the response for such activities.

The closing ceremony on 15th February was marked with an exemplary musical performance of fusion by Girish Charvad, Yatin Mokashi, Anaya Gadgil, and Soham Saane at Pt. Jawaharlal Cultural Centre, Ghole Road. The closing ceremony took place in the eminent presence of Subodh Kerkar, a famous installation artist from Goa, Narendra Dengle, renowned architect and academician from Pune, and Shyam Dhavale, the Executive Engineer and head of the heritage cell of Pune Municipal Corporation who presided over the function. More than 200 volunteers and close to 300 artists were felicitated at the event and the herculean efforts that went in presenting the art extravaganza of Pune Biennale was well applauded.

Participants from different walks of life held the vivid canvas of Pune Biennale and the event was successful in showcasing and positioning Pune as a city for arts. The importance of Pune Biennale for Pune city is evident when social stakeholders such as the Panchshil Realty come forward to support it whole-heartedly with their resources. "This year's Pune Biennale was a monumental success; we saw phenomenal participation from the entire city and were overwhelmed by the response received from across the country. With such massive support from art enthusiasts, we are inspired to come back in 2017 with a better, bigger, and brighter Pune Biennale", said, Dr. Kiran Shinde, Founder Director, Pune Biennale.



**"I think a hero is any person
really intent on making
this a better place
for all people"**

- Maya Angelou

And true to the adage, two organisations in Pune are intent on becoming 'heros' in the lives of two separate groups of people, and making a difference to their lives.

While Equal Community Foundation seeks to put an end to gender discrimination and violence against women, Umed Pariwar works for the welfare and betterment of individuals affected by mental retardation and cerebral palsy.

Chaitra Patel finds out more.

EQUAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



ECF founders Will Muir and Rujuta Teredesai-Heron with a mentor

35% of women in India face gender violence at the hands of men, while reportedly almost 37% of men are found to be perpetrators of the violence against women, (ICRW 2011). Such appalling statistics only demonstrate the extent of discrimination against women prevalent in our society. This very discrimination in turn denies women their rightful access to basic human and civil rights such as sanitation, education and healthcare. Like many other organisations across the country, Equal Community Foundation in Pune too works towards the cause of empowering women, but with a slight difference - they empower men to empower women!

Violence and discrimination against women, especially at the hands of men, is a much discussed and researched issue across the world, with most organisations associated with women empowerment, working with the victims themselves. However, not all men are perpetrators of the crime; though there is no denying that all men do need to be a part of the solution. And this is exactly what Equal Community Foundation (ECF) in Pune seeks to achieve.

Founded in 2009 by Will Muir and Rujuta Teredesai-Heron, ECF is a pioneering human rights organisation, that empowers men and boys to empower women. Will, Founder-CEO, Equal Community Foundation, with his extensive consulting experience in the areas of social and environmental risk management is a visionary who leads the team at ECF. Rujuta, on the other hand is a trained journalist with vast experience of working and volunteering for non-profit organisations.

ECF was founded on the belief that in order to achieve gender equality, it is imperative for men to be a part of the solution. Says Will, "Not every man is part of the problem, but every man can be part of the solution. Our mission is to ensure that every man in India has the opportunity to study and practise gender equitable behaviour to end violence and discrimination against women". Research by ECF has established that NGOs that support women to tackle gender discrimination and violence against them, do not however tackle the attitudes and behaviour of men, which sit at the root of this discrimination. This in turn does not contribute in any manner in reducing inequality and violence against them, while women in fact shoulder the burden of the empowerment process.

Action For Equality

"Give respect, get respect", says seventeen year old Akshay who lives in a local community called Bibbewadi Ota in Pune with his parents and two older brothers. Akshay is a 'Graduate' of the Action for Equality (AfE) programme by ECF. The programme seeks to develop a scalable model that engages young men between the age group of 14 to 17 years, from low-income communities, to end violence against women in India, by creating leadership in these young men, who in turn would work with influential groups of parents, teachers and the media, towards the cause. Today, Akshay is a volunteer leader for the Alumni Programme, which provides volunteering opportunities to graduates to develop, prepare and deliver interactive and multimedia community activities on issues that focus on violence and discrimination against women.

The programme trains 'Mentors' to engage young men in the community, and give them a chance to uncover the crucial role of women in their lives. Sunil Chachar, a mentor at ECF since the last three years, works with over 600 boys a year. Says Sunil, "We provide the boys with knowledge, skills, peer support and leadership skills to end violence and discrimination against women in their communities and beyond". The Graduate Programme ensures that the participating young men are trained and coached suitably through a process of personal behavioural change through engaging activities conducted by the mentors. Sanjeevani, mother of fourteen-year-old Shreyas from the Gulistan Nagar community watches proudly as her son talks about issues that affect women in his community. "He has become more sensitive. He makes an effort to advocate this change to others", she says.

Through their extensive research ECF established that unless these AfE Graduates were provided with continued 'touch points', overtime the frequency and effectiveness of the activities of the Graduate Programme would eventually drop. The Alumni Programme was therefore developed on this insight to provide volunteering opportunities to graduates, to carry their work forward, and help them develop interpersonal communication skills.

ECF's Impact

What started off as a journey with just three team members and one local community, today boasts of almost eighteen team members, with more than three thousand young men from across twenty low income communities, coached and guided by seven mentors. This speaks volumes about the impact that ECF has had over local communities in Pune.

Fourteen year old Mehboob from the fourth edition of the AfE programme says "The way of bringing up women must change. Men should stop their violent behaviour against women". His mother Mumtaz adds "Mehboob and the other boys share a rapport with their mentor and I am very glad that they learn about important issues and how to behave right".



Mother-son duo from a community

ECF has successfully worked with several young men like Akshay, Shreyas and Mehboob. An impressive 61% women who live with the graduates have in fact reported a reduction in the extent of violence and discrimination they experience, at the hands of the graduates.

The Road Ahead

ECF recently turned five, and this is just the beginning! The organisation has tied up with the Hummingbird Foundation that works towards preventing trafficking of women and girls for sex. Together, the two organisations have developed 'Project Raise', to help scale the AfE programme and take it to West Bengal, and over the course of three years, Project Raise will seek to provide support and seed funding to twenty community based organisations in West Bengal that work with women.

The organisation also enjoys corporate backing, and over the next few years, looks forward to getting more corporates involved in their journey ahead, by encouraging them to adopt a community, or by conducting awareness sessions within their office premises, for the benefit of the employees.

ECF also looks forward to partnering with other NGOs, and individuals, to educate, inspire and implement projects that make a lasting difference to this world.

The path that Equal Community Foundation is treading on is certainly not easy; but it is not impossible to walk the entire length with them either; with a just a little help from society!

If you would like to make a difference and be a part of the work being carried out by Equal Community Foundation, and to know how you can help:
Email: info@ecf.org.in, **Tel:** +91 020 2616 0086

*The legendary Bob Marley once famously crooned
"One Love, one heart . . . Let's get together and feel all right".*

*Rajendra Nahar, a trustee at Umed Pariwar,
a Pune based association of parents that works for the welfare and
betterment of children affected by mental retardation and cerebral palsy,
would probably agree whole heartedly.*

UMED PARIWAR



Umed - a Ray of Hope

Twenty five years ago, government and public apathy at large towards the mentally disabled was a disturbing scenario. "There was no point in hoping that the government would do something," recalls Rajendra Nahar. Way back in 1990, a group of parents tied together by a common thread of their children affected by mental retardation and cerebral palsy, used to visit the KEM Hospital in Pune, with the hope of seeking treatment for their wards. "We were frustrated and helpless, and really wanted a way out for our children and for ourselves" recounts Mr. Nahar. These regular visits and chanced meetings slowly forged an association between the parents, and thus grew an idea of starting a cooperative centre for the children, with an objective to provide them with unflinching care and rehabilitation. Says Mr. Nahar, "Our objective was to provide total care to children (like ours) including prevention, early intervention, training, education, re-training, research and total rehabilitation".

The regular informal meetings between parents gradually grew into an active association, finally culminating into Umed Pariwar, ably managed by a founding set of parents as its trustees. What started off as just a residential vocational training centre, today seeks to sensitise society in meeting the special needs of the differently-abled.

With a vision to help parents deal with both emotional and psychological challenges, and to enable the intellectually disabled to contribute to society, Umed Pariwar has been aptly recognised by the Rehabilitation Council of India, by being awarded 'The Best Parents Association in India' in 1996.

Over the last two decades, Umed Pariwar has been actively involved in a variety of rehabilitation programmes, to empower persons affected by mental retardation and cerebral palsy. Mr. Nahar elaborates, "our mission is to carry out ongoing training and re-training for special children so that they can contribute as best as they can, and become an acceptable part of society". Among the various activities carried out, such as providing guidance and assistance to enable educational, vocational and medical accessibility, workshops for teachers and social workers, running day care centres, undertaking state level conferences, one of the pet projects initiated by the organisation is Arvind Saurabh.

Arvind Saurabh

True to its name, Arvind Saurabh which translates to 'Lotus Fragrance', is an ambitious residential rehabilitation centre, spread across 10 acres of land on the Pune-Saswad road, at the foothills of the Sahayadris. Just like a lotus mired in slush, that dares to blossom and fill the air with its sweet scent, differently abled children at Arvind Saurabh can dream to walk their paths of challenge-strewn lives with courage and dignity.

Arvind Saurabh, a residential cum vocational centre, aspires to eventually be home to almost two hundred individuals, which will include residents, caretakers and visiting family members. The project also seeks to provide much needed facilities such as therapy centres, a special area for recreation and sports, a hydrotherapy centre and an amphitheatre.

Pune is home to a number of schools and vocational centres that support differently abled individuals till about the ages of 23 to 25 years. But, to identify an institute that promises to take care of these individuals for a lifetime, is almost impossible. Naturally, a nagging concern that grips parents of all differently abled children is the care of their wards, upon the death of the parents. Arvind Saurabh aptly addresses this concern by admitting the residents under the concept of 'Transfer of Parentage', promising to look after the residents all through their lives, even in the absence of the parents.

At Arvind Saurabh, children are trained in essential life skills that also address their physical, mental and spiritual development, and (they) are provided with employment opportunities as simple as office file and envelope making, packaging and diya making, in a bid to help improve their self esteem and self confidence.

Chaitraban - Plant a Sapling

Umed Pariwar also gives back to society by providing 'greener avenues'. 'Chaitraban', an innovative concept, encourages people to adopt or plant a sapling in memory of their loved ones who have passed on. The organisation takes complete responsibility to nurture and look after the sapling at a very nominal charge, thereby serving a dual purpose; one of promoting a greener environment by growing trees, and the second by raising much need funds for the organisation.

Over the years, Umed Pariwar has carried out a variety of activities to benefit the mentally challenged, and to sensitise society towards their cause. The organisation regularly conducts medical camps, drawing competitions, a two-day bi-annual state level conference to address relevant issues and achievements of the children, and above all



counselling parents and educating them about their rights and responsibilities.

The organisation has also successfully rallied for support across India and to their credit have managed to get the category of 'Mentally Challenged' included under section 80DD of the Income Tax Act, which provides tax relief to the parents and providers of disabled dependents, to meet their medical expenses.

Umed Pariwar today boasts of a very robust support system in terms of the organisation's donors, sponsors and well wishers, ranging from private individuals to small entrepreneurs and large industrial houses. As Rajendra Nahar aptly sums it up, "A dream you dream alone is only a dream, a dream you dream together is a reality. We dreamt together 25 years ago, and it is slowly taking shape in the form of Umed Pariwar."

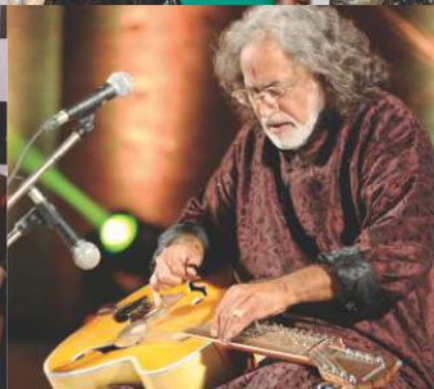
Umed Pariwar seeks the involvement of like-minded individuals, institutions, and corporate organisations. Those wishing to contribute can do so either by volunteering their services, by donating funds on a regular basis, sponsoring an event or helping to raise funds for the betterment of MR/CP individuals.

For more details:
Contact: Rajendra Nahar
Tel: +91 +20 64140456 or +91 9822030093
Email: rknahar@umedpariwar.org



EVENTS AND





HAPPENINGS



Smita Patwardhan & Naina Mutha



Sunetra Pawar



Usha Kakade



Maheka Mirpuri

Bigger and Better

Pune saw the fifth edition of 'Couture', a luxury and lifestyle exhibition on the 12th and 13th of January, 2015 at The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. This year the event was conducted in association with Indian Roots, NDTV's e-commerce venture that partners with India's finest designers and craftsmen. The showcase was far more extensive this time around with various designers exhibiting indo-western apparel, jewellery, exclusive stationary and gift articles, and home accessories.

Rahul Narvekar, Founder CEO at NDTV Ethnic Retail Ltd. said that he was happy to showcase his brand and collections by India's top designers the likes of Rohit Bal, Neeta Lulla, Mandira Bedi, Anmol Kakkad at Couture 2015. The two-day exhibition was inaugurated by Ritu Chhabria, Director of Mukul Madhav Foundation, Rahul Narvekar, fashion designer Maheka Mirpuri, and the ladies behind all of it, Smita Patwardhan and Naina Mutha. The exhibition offers a wide array of couture clothing by ace designers all under one roof.

"The idea of Couture is to bring unique and affordable fashion to Pune," says Smita Patwardhan.

PUNE COUTURE WEEK



Naina Mutha & Varsha Chordia



Monika & Shribala Chordia



Neelam Shiroliya



Aparna Firodia



Ritu Chhabria



Girish Bapat with foreign delegates



Tanuja Mukherjee

The thirteenth edition of Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) was held in the city from 8th January 2015 to 15th January 2015. This year the theme of the festival was 'War Against War' to commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War I.

The festival opening ceremony was attended by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Union Minister for Environment and Forests Prakash Javadekar, Maharashtra Minister for Cultural Affairs Vinod Tawde, Pune Guardian Minister Girish Bapat, PIFF Director Jabbar Patel and PIFF Chairman Jury Krzysztof Zanussi. Actors Shatrughan Sinha, Tanuja and poet-lyricist N D Mahanor were honoured for their 'outstanding contribution to the Indian Cinema'.

The week-long festival presented over 200 movies from 75 countries. Cuban film Behavior (Conducta) by Ernesto Daranas, produced by Isabel Prendes, Danileo Leon, Joel Ortega and Adriana Moya, won the Government of Maharashtra Prabhat Best International Film Award.

PUNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



Sudhir Gadgil



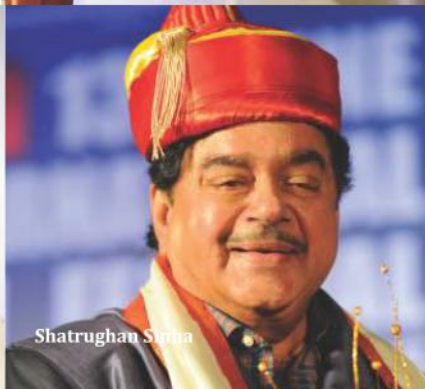
Tanuj Qureshi



Prakash Javadekar



Subhash Chai



Shatrughan Sinha



Devendra Fadnavis



Roopkumar Rathod



Rajesh Vaidya - Electric Veena

PUNE TAALCHAKRA

Sur, Laay and Taal

The Festival of Rhythm, Taalchakra, organised by celebrated tabla maestro Pandit Vijay Ghate was held at the Ganesh Kala Krida Manch in Pune from January 30 to February 1.

The three-day festival began with a tribute to the late mandolin player U Shrinivas by his brother U Suresh. This was followed with rousing performances by Pandit Vijay Ghate (tabla), Rajesh Vaidya (electronic veena), U Rajesh (mandolin), George Brooks (saxophone), Shridhar Parthasarthy (mridangam), Mukul Dongre and Arun Kumar (drums), Shital Kolwalkar (kathak), Manasi Tapikar-Deshpande (kathak), Shama Bhate (kathak choreography), Atul Raninga (keyboards) and Roopkumar Rathod (singing).

Vijay Ghate orchestrated the entire sound designing of the show which was a wonderful blend of sur, laay and taal.



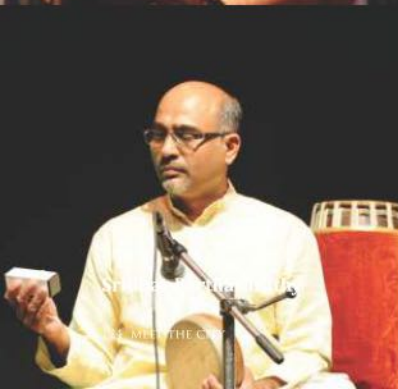
Mukul Dongre



George Brooks



Runa Rizvi



Shridhar Parthasarthy



Manasi Deshpande and Shital Kolwalkar

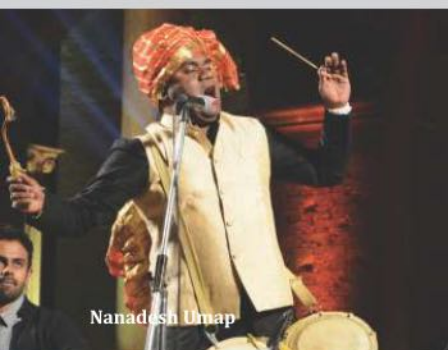


Vijay Chote Vishwa Mohan Bhatt



Trilok Gurtu

VASANTOTSAV



Nanadesh Umap

The 8th edition of Vasantotsav, held in the memory of Late Vasant Rao Deshpande Pratishthan, commenced on the 16th until the 18th of January at New English School Ramanbaug ground in Pune this year.

The inaugural day began with a performance by the renowned Grammy-award-winning Indian classical music instrumentalist Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt who played a soul-stirring set with his Mohan Veena.

Some other noted performances were the fusion session by Trilok Gurtu, Ravi Chari, Nitin Shankar, Sangeet Haldipur and Rahul Deshpande, a Sufi performance by Daler Mehndi, and an instrumental jugalbandi by Pandit Tejendra Majumdar (sarod) and Shashank Subramanyam (flute).



Rahul Deshpande



Daler Mehndi





OAKWOOD SUNDAY HARVEST





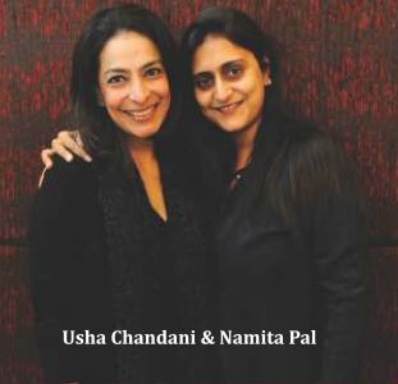
Pune Harvest Market

Oakwood Premier Pune, the leading hospitality Suite and Serviced Apartment brand in Pune, hosted the Pune Harvest Market on the 8th of February 2015.

Started on the 11th of January, the Pune Harvest Market will be organised every fortnight. The food festival aims to bring in the local farmers, artisan growers and small culinary business owners present and sell their homegrown goods and offer crowds the finest in organically grown fruits, vegetables and specialty items like custom baked deserts.

Each market has typically been focused on the themes of Curated, Rustic, Organic, Crafted, Local, Farm fresh, Authentic, Raw, Friendly, Fun, Owned, Street, Talent and most of all Community.





Usha Chandani & Namita Pal



Seema Malhotra



Rekha Bharadwaj

TIGER LILY MEET



Ritu Nathani & Rhea Gupta



Dr. Jasni Singh, Meenakshi Malhotra
& Tanya Anklesaria

The Tiger Lily Women's Club recently organised an entertaining Question-Answer session with acclaimed singer Rekha Bharadwaj. The singer spoke about her musical journey so far, and the songs she has been famous for.

The event was well attended by prominent members of the club, the Tiger Lily Women's Club comprises of like-minded women who are open to the idea of having fun and new experiences. Membership to the club is purely based on invitation or recommendation and gives its members a space of their own to 'let their hair down'.

REFRACTING ROOMS



The Fresh, New Face of Pune's Art Scene

Khoj International Delhi in collaboration with the Good Artists of Pune (GAP) organised 'Refracting Rooms', a 15-day workshop, at the Talera Institute of Fine and Applied Arts (TIFA) Working Studios at Hotel Shalimar starting on the 15th of February, 2015.

The art project saw 20 national and international artists come together to create some unforgettable and unique art.

The workshop culminated in an interactive public art show on the 1st of March.

Refracting Rooms was made possible because of the generous contributions of Pune's supporters of the arts the likes of Atul and Arti Krioskar, Satish Magar, Sulajja Firodia Motwani, Ajinkya Firodia, the Talera family among many others.





FARHAN AKHTAR LIVE



The multi-talented director, producer, actor, and singer Farhan Akhtar wowed audiences in Pune on the 22nd of February at the Poona Club Cricket Grounds with his band "Farhan Live".

The packed show featured singer and music composer Ankit Tiwari and Farhan who performed songs from his films, Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Zindagi Naa Milegi Dobara, Rock On, and Dil Chahta Hai.

The actor enjoyed the show as much as the people of Pune - he later tweeted, "Last night @FarhanLiveBand in Pune was smokin'!!"



Ankit Tiwari



Farhan Akhtar

By the lighting of the lamp the FLO Pune chapter was launched on 27th, January, 2015 by Honourable CM Devendra Fadnavis, Shaina NC, Neeta Boochra and Pune chairperson Varsha Talera. Mr. Fadnavis stressed on the need for financial empowerment of women, also announcing that his government would initiate skill-based training for women, and try to create more jobs for them.



Neeta Boochra, Shaina NC, Devendra Fadnavis, Varsha Talera & Sabina Sanghvi

FICCI LADIES MEET



Varsha Chordia & Supriya Mohite

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