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Neelima Vallangi

On January 20, 2025, Donald Trump withdrew the United States, the largest historical greenhouse gas emitter and second-largest annual emitter currently, from the Paris Agreement for the second time and promised record fossil fuel expansion. With that, the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal that was already on life support earlier is now decidedly out of reach. It may even arrive earlier than expected if global emissions soar due to Trump's climate policy backtracking and its knock-on effects, counteracting the emission reductions from the rest of the world and other large emitters such as China.

For a vast country like India, the challenges from climate impacts are not only numerous but can also be drastic, severely impacting development goals. 2024 being the first time any single year has crossed 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming and the hottest ever, probably in the whole of human history – about 1.6 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial levels – is a grim and symbolic marker of the world's failure to limit warming.

This portends turbulent times ahead for India in dealing with the fallout of increasing emissions and breaching 1.5 degrees of long-term warming in the near future (2030s). But what exactly does it mean for a highly populated and climate vulnerable, developing country with diverse geographies, a growing economy and great inequalities? We ask leading climate scientists to weigh in on what India at 1.5 degrees Celsius would look like and how to prepare for changes that were expected by 2100 but are now imminent in the coming decade.

Extreme heat

Last year's heatwave sent shockwaves around the globe when Delhi, one of the world's most populated capitals with a large section of people in highly vulnerable conditions, recorded temperatures as high as 52.3 degrees Celsius, prompting both fear and scepticism if perhaps a faulty sensor was responsible for the confusion. However, 50-degree days are already becoming more frequent around large parts of the country as the global temperature rises.

Krishna AchutaRao, Dean and Professor at the Centre for Atmospheric Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, says, "The effect of even a small change in the tropics is significant because we are already at the edge of what is possible to live with – be it extreme temperatures or rainfall. The full extent of the impacts we face – either from the slow-moving changes in the mean or the increased extreme events – is not yet fully accounted for."

In order to help climate science inform adaptation policy, his group at IIT Delhi analysed future heatwaves over India in both 1.5 degrees Celsius and 2 degrees Celsius warmer worlds. In a recent study, they found higher extremes in temperatures are unlikely, but the increasing coverage is more worrisome. "The likelihood of large parts of the country experiencing two-month-long heatwaves is alarmingly high and we are not prepared for such events. The chance of heatwaves into July are also projected to increase, which is an alarming prospect considering that the monsoon would have set in already by then and the humidity will be high," says AchutaRao.



1.5 DEGREES OF ABERRATION

With 2024 crossing the global temperature goal, and the U.S. withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, changes that were expected by 2100 are now imminent in the coming decade. And India is unprepared for it

Previous studies have found that high humidity can create dangerous conditions even in seemingly lower temperatures due to the inability of the human body to thermoregulate and cool itself down through sweating. Another study found that 3.7 billion people in the tropical belt, which includes peninsular India, will be at high risk of high humidity-induced heat stress nearing the human physiological limits if temperature crosses 1.5 degrees Celsius. Humidity is the reason why the dry heat of Delhi or Hyderabad seems much more bearable than the humid summers of Mumbai or Chennai.

However, beyond heat stress, heatwaves can cripple communities, systems and economies in several ways. In another recent study by AchutaRao's research group, the team mapped the various ways the 2022 heatwave impacted crucial sectors such as health, economy, agriculture, environment and transport. The authors highlight that rising temperatures will render coping mechanisms inadequate, leaving the urban poor the most exposed and vulnerable to extreme heat. "We could have a nationwide summer-long heatwave, where more fundamental issues like food and water security will

be tougher to face," he says.

Impact of ocean warming

While the Bay of Bengal has always been known to bring devastating cyclones to the eastern coast, prompting excellent disaster response, the western coast, which was previously safe from this type of disaster, is now being forced to learn how to cope with destructive tropical cyclones, thanks to climate change. For example, 2020's Cyclone Nisarga was the first to hit Mumbai in June in over 100 years, but will not be the last anymore. Latest research says the intensity of cyclones has increased in the Arabian Sea by 40% pre-monsoon and 20% in the post-monsoon season, and the number of cyclones increased by 52% over the last four decades, along with a projected increase in the frequency of cyclones in the future.

Roxy Mathew Koll, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, says the Indian Ocean is warming at a rapid pace. Climate models predict accelerated warming, at a rate of 1.7°C to 3.8°C per century during 2020-2100, with the Arabian Sea experiencing maximum warming.

"Cyclones are becoming more intense, forming rapidly, and lasting longer. The storm surges caused by these cyclones, combined with sea-level rise, lead to prolonged and severe coastal flooding," says Koll, on one of the major impacts of rising ocean heat.

The Indian Ocean and its surrounding countries stand out globally as the region with the highest risk of natural hazards, according to Koll, with coastal communities of nearly 40 countries bordering this ocean vulnerable to weather and climate extremes. The Indian Ocean is also moving to a near-permanent marine heatwave state, with periods of extremely high temperatures in the ocean expected to increase from 20 days per year to 220-250 days per year.

"As we cross the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold, curbing fossil fuel emissions remains critical to slowing global warming. However, achieving this requires a transformational global effort, which has been lacking. In a country like India, where fast-moving tropical weather systems can devastate large populations, we cannot wait for the globe to act. Our lives and livelihoods are at stake," he adds.

Extreme events (Clockwise from left) Aftermath of the flooding in Wayanad, Kerala, last year; queuing up for water during a heatwave in Delhi last June; and damaged roads in Teesta Valley due to the landslide in Sikkim last August. (PTI, GETTY IMAGES, PRAFUL RAO)



Climate adaptation has been a pressing imperative in India where a large population is exposed to climate risks and is deeply vulnerable because of non-climatic factors [poverty, inequality, unemployment, infrastructure deficits]

CHANDNI SINGH
Lead at School of Environment and Sustainability, Indian Institute for Human Settlements

Too much water, too little water
Every monsoon, India is increasingly seeing costly disasters compounded by extreme rainfall events such as last year's deadly Wayanad landslide in Kerala, which claimed over 250 lives and recorded over ₹1,200 crore in damages.

The latest Global Water Monitor report finds water-related disasters caused major damage in 2024, causing over 8,700 deaths, displacing 40 million people, and inflicting more than \$550 billion in damages. In comparison, the total pledges from developed countries to help all developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change from all types of disasters is only \$100 billion per year. Flash floods, landslides, and tropical cyclones were the worst types of disasters in terms of casualties and economic damage.

Vimal Mishra, a professor at the department of Civil Engineering and Earth Sciences, IIT Gandhinagar, whose research focuses on climate change and hydrologic extremes says, "The hydrological cycle will be intensified under the increased warming, with notable rise in extremes – rainfall extremes, floods, droughts, compound hot and dry extremes, and whiplashes. Multi-day

extreme rainfall events can cause large floods, disrupting agriculture and infrastructure."

Beyond the clearly visible "excess" water related disasters, slow moving, invisible impacts such as groundwater depletion and droughts are also a major concern in an agrarian country with low productivity and infrastructure ill-equipped to deal with water extremes, where even small changes in water availability can lead to significant damages.

According to Mishra, higher warming will cause hotter and shorter flash droughts enhancing the irrigation water demands, which can lead to more groundwater pumping as seen in North India that has already experienced a rapid depletion of groundwater storage in the last two decades. Increased warming will also cause more variability in the Indian summer monsoon leading to more floods and droughts during the same season with profound implications for water and food security.

Melting mountains

According to a study, at 1.5 degrees of warming, nearly half of the world's glaciers will melt by 2100. Today, 79% of all glaciers are small, with less than 1 sq.km. area and of them, nearly 60% will be lost at 1.5 degrees of warming. The Hindu Kush Himalaya region also experiences elevation-dependent warming, due to which the high-altitude region has warmed by over 2 degrees Celsius.

This means several mountain communities that depend on glaciers for agriculture and sustenance in the Himalayas will be parched. And being in remote, rain-shadow regions with no rainfall or energy access, their lives will be upended, also leading to migration and emptying of mountain villages. This is already underway, and set to become more severe in future. Additionally, they face several glacial and cryosphere hazards such as glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), avalanches, debris flows, cloudburst cascades and permafrost degradation.

In a recently published paper analysing last year's devastating Sikkim flood, the researchers found permafrost thaw to be one of the major drivers of South Lhonak lake's outburst flood.

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» PAGE 4



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Paul Lynch seems to have lost count of the number of media interviews he has given after he was awarded the 2023 Booker Prize. “I’ve done over 200... way more than 200,” murmurs the Dublin-based novelist, whose prize-winning novel *Prophet Song*, set in an Ireland that is slowly sliding into the morass of totalitarianism, was aptly described by the Canadian novelist and judging chair, Esi Edugyan, as “soul-shattering and true”.

Lynch, one of the speakers at the recently concluded Kerala Literature Festival in Kozhikode, is clearly itching to return to his desk. “Sooner or later, every winner of the prize of the magnitude of the Booker has to decide what kind of person they are, whether you’re a public-facing person or a writer again,” he says, squatting on concrete so hot that it threatens to slough flesh off bone, the only quiet corner we can find as the colourful chaos of the festival unfurls around us. “And I’ve made the decision to go back to writing... this is one of the only big trips I’m doing this year,” he says with a smile, the shimmer of the Arabian Sea, just a few yards away, reflecting on his dark glasses.

There is something oddly apt about talking to Lynch, now 47, with the ocean so close to us, embodying the primordiality and agelessness of some of the ideas explored in the “mythic novel” that *Prophet Song* is. “In all my fiction, in all five novels, I’ve always tried to drill down to essential human experience, to get very close to human truths, the things that define what it is to be a human being throughout the ages,” he says. Edited extracts from the interview:

▲ Paul Lynch
(GETTY IMAGES)

IN CONVERSATION

THAT WHISPER IN THE EAR

Fiction, unlike news and Instagram, can take the reader into that lived space where real empathy is possible, says Booker 2023 winner Paul Lynch

Question: *This novel is often referred to as one that captures today’s zeitgeist, given the sort of unrest we’ve been constantly encountering, most recently in Gaza and Ukraine. But it is also a story about the human condition.*

Answer: I totally agree with that reading. *Prophet Song*, in many ways, feels like lightning in a bottle, considering the moment that we’re in. But that was not my goal. My goal was to articulate a particular aspect of the human condition, which is what we do to ourselves again and again.

There is this myth of progress, particularly in the West, that we’re always moving in this direct line towards some sort of utopian ideal. We’re not capable of that. Utopia is a

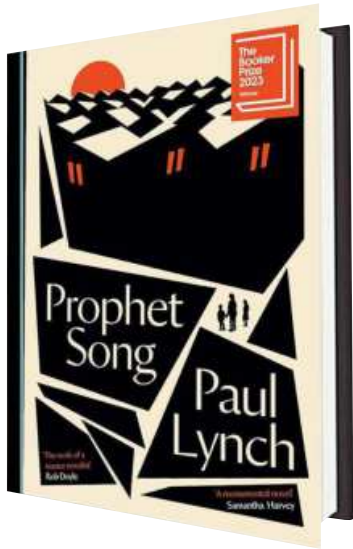
We’re seeing, right now, a massive disruption to the idea of what a liberal democracy is. In *Prophet Song*, it goes back to the proverbial frog in the pot of water. We know scientifically that the frog does jump out, but symbolically, human beings do not because changes are always slow and very rarely dramatic. We always rely on the fallacy that common sense is going to prevail... The idea of just becoming a refugee, the idea of getting into a boat... these are extraordinarily difficult things to do. Leaving home is the hardest thing to do in the world. The idea of this book was to demonstrate the complexity of this.

Q: *One of the most emblematic images of the refugee crisis is the 2015 photograph of the little Syrian boy washed up on a Turkish beach. I couldn’t help but think of that photograph when I read this book because that image changed the way we think about refugees. Can you tell us more about the idea of “radical empathy” that you hope this novel will awaken in its readers?*

A: Alan Kurdi was the kid’s name. I remember him on the news. I’m a dad; I’ve got two kids. I remember feeling a certain degree of sympathy, but not enough. And it’s that aspect of ‘not enough’ that I was interested in. Why am I not moved by this?

We are inured against the spectacle that we get every day in our lives. It’s not natural to have war beamed into your sitting room. And so we put this high wall up around our feelings. And I think it’s possibly necessary because how can one individual take on the world’s suffering? But at the same time, as a society, there are questions we have to ask ourselves about the humanitarian aspects of what we’re seeing.

The sentences [in *Prophet Song*] are designed to get you deeper than what you see on your news or your Instagram feed. Fiction can do something really special. It’s that whisper in the ear that the novelist has. No other art form can do that in the way that fiction can do it. You take the reader into that lived space where empathy, real serious empathy, is possible because you start to feel the pain for yourself.



dangerous idea because it relies entirely on reason to get you there. And reason is never truly reason in itself; it is always corrupted by belief. Human beings aren’t capable of pure reason.

Q: *I was very invested in the character Eilish Stack, and was rooting for her to get out, but she took her time with it. Could we talk about her absolute faith in the idea of a liberal democracy?*

A: One of the chief problems of being alive in liberal democracies is that most of us have come of age entirely within that structure. So, the conditioning is that we always assume it’s going to last. But why should it?

Preeti Zachariah
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Fiction can reveal to us the truth of our life at a symbolic level, which is hugely important because human beings are symbolic animals,” said Irish novelist Paul Lynch, winner of the 2023 Booker Prize for his fifth novel, *Prophet Song*, a stunning portrayal of the ease with which liberal democracies can backslide into authoritarianism.

Lynch, who was in discussion with the literary and culture editor of *Open Magazine*, Nandini Nair, at a panel discussion titled ‘Prophet Song: Chaos in a Modern World’, was one of six Booker Prize winners and nominees at the eighth edition of the Kerala Literature Festival. At the four-day festival – with its 380 sessions, 600 speakers and over six lakh participants – fiction became a conduit to explore some of the most pressing issues of today, from war, migration, loss, and belonging to race, gender, and Donald Trump. The role of stories in shaping our world, especially given how imperilled it is at the current moment, was also discussed by all the Booker celebrities within the large, packed marquees erected on the tawny sands of Kozhikode beach.

Trump’s in the tent

At a moment when fear is in the air with several governments around the world, including the one headed by Trump, the newly-elected President of the United States, coming down hard on undocumented immigrants, questions around migration

KERALA LITERATURE FESTIVAL

FICTION IS THE REAL TRUTH

From Donald Trump and undocumented immigrants to the politics of nostalgia, Booker Prize winners speak out on today’s hot button issues

cropped up repeatedly in these conversations. Lynch, for instance, spoke about the refugee crisis and how leaving behind home is hard, even when it’s inevitable, since our identities are so complex. It is only “when there is nothing left... when you become dehumanised [that] you leave,” he said.

Journalist Shobha Warrier asked Ivorian author and journalist GauZ’ what he thought about the kind of backlash against migrants all over the world and its impact on diversity in a conversation titled ‘Standing Heavy: Immigrant Lives, Migrant Expectations.’ “We are all migrants,” he responded with a laugh. GauZ’s novel *Standing Heavy*,

a satirical commentary on the legacy of colonisation and capitalist consumption, was shortlisted for the 2023 International Booker Prize. “Every human. Homo sapiens come from Africa.”

Movement is programmed in our DNA, and nobody can stop this, added GauZ’, who thinks of himself as “a goddammed optimistic guy”. He firmly believes it “will all be alright” and envisions a world where “everyone will

be mixed”. If people are racist or xenophobic, that is their problem, he said. “We people have one thing to do, and that is to be.”

Sophie Mackintosh, on the other hand, didn’t sound quite as optimistic. It was during Trump’s first term, when he pandered to his base, that Mackintosh’s ideas around toxic masculinity, a key theme of her debut novel, *The Water Cure*, came into being. “I



▲ (Clockwise from left) Georgi Gospodinov; GauZ; Jenny Erpenbeck; and Sophie Mackintosh. (AFP, R. RAGU R, AND GETTY IMAGES)

mostly wrote it in 2016-2017, when there was quite a shift. Donald Trump’s rise to power, the Brexit vote in the U.K. too, and a lot of #metoo stories were being shared,” said the London-based Welsh writer, whose novel, which follows the lives of three sisters inhabiting a sheltered island away from the toxic effect of men, was longlisted for the 2018 Booker Prize. “It felt like there was a lot of shifting and toxicity in the atmosphere,” she told academician and writer Rishikesh K.B. at a session titled ‘Through a Lens, Darkly’. “It made me think about the psychological impact of it... what if toxic masculinity was literally toxic?”

Illiberal lives

The politics of nostalgia, which can be a driver of extremism worldwide, was another theme dissected and decoded at the festival. Most notably at a panel discussion titled ‘Once Upon a Time in the USSR’, which had winners of the International Booker Prize Jenny Erpenbeck (2024) and Georgi Gospodinov (2023) in conversation with German writer Max Czollek and Thiruvananthapuram-based academician and writer Meena T. Pillai.

Erpenbeck, whose novel *Kairos* (translated by Michael Hofmann) tells the story of a tempestuous relationship between an older man and a younger

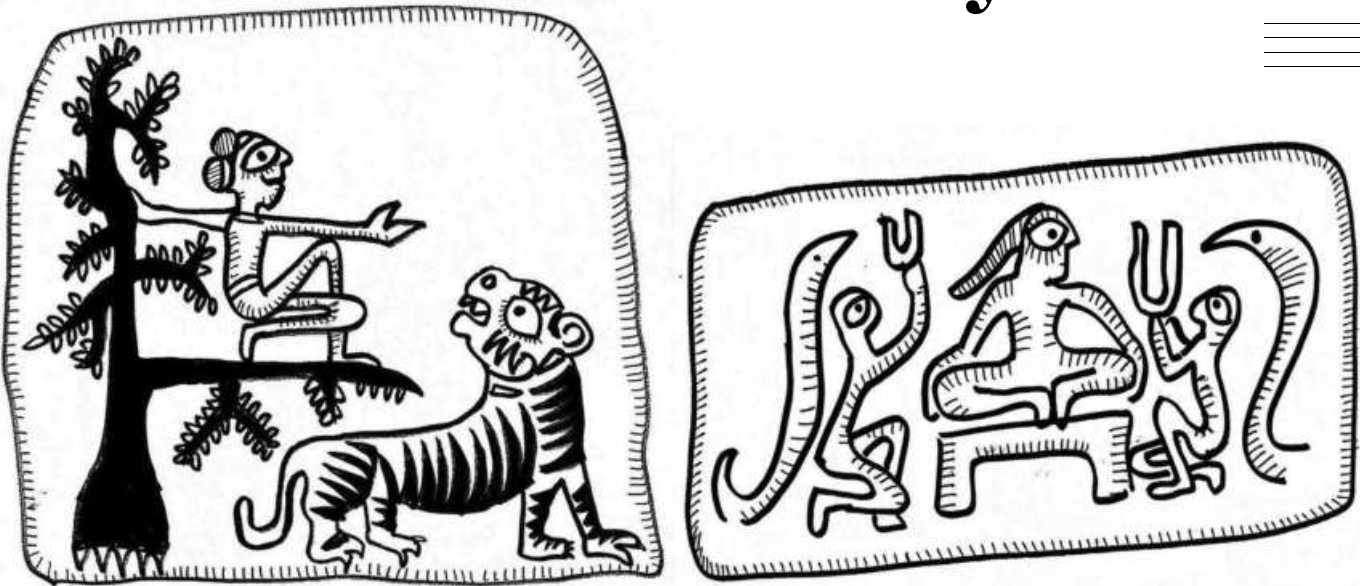
woman around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, talked about the Soviet Union and the core values they espoused. “I talk about the dark side of the system in *Kairos*,” she said, before discussing the failure of the socialist state, the violence it often unleashed, the layered complexity of truth and the malleability of memory.

The culture of memory is also vital to Gospodinov, whose book *Time Shelter* tells the story of an enigmatic therapist called Gaustine, who runs a “clinic of the past”

for people afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease. “The idea that you can bring the past back to the present could be very seductive but also very dangerous,” he said, adding that, as a society, we tend to choose the past when we have a problem with the future. “I think that now is such a moment,” he said, pointing out that populists, in general, are excellent storytellers. “We must be better than them.”



Scan the QR code for highlights from the Kerala Literature Festival, on magazine.thehindu.com



Game over

A new book sends an SOS to the sporting industry to take global warming seriously



Hot spell Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine cools off with some ice between games, at the U.S. Open tennis championships last August, in New York. (AP)

Suresh Menon

For four decades I have been travelling the world reporting on sports from cricket to Formula 1. In the early days I took it all for granted, oblivious to the impact on the environment of either the sports or the travel. Carbon offsets were unheard of. Like everybody else I complained when rain washed out play, when matches had to be postponed because a city didn't have water or when it was so hot the concrete media box seemed to close in on me. I once had to brush my teeth in beer because the taps in the city had run dry. No one connected the dots. Climate change was becoming a climate crisis, heading towards a climate emergency.

Today ignorance cannot be an excuse. Sport reflects society, and is a useful medium for the necessary conversation about the subject. Some sportsmen, like Australia's cricket captain Pat Cummins, are ahead of the curve. Others in the fraternity need to be educated. *Warming Up* looks at the crisis through the lens of sport, with interviews and case studies, making it an important text book.

Deep impact

Sport revels in the practice-play-travel-perform cycle which then repeats itself. How do these events impact us? How does a tennis surface or maintenance of a golf course or the construction of yet another unnecessary cricket stadium in India affect the quality of our lives and those of generations to come? What of sports equipment reliant on carbon fibre or other petro-based non-recyclable products? Sailing, rowing, canoeing, cycling, skiing, tennis, bobsleigh, luge, golf, ice hockey all contribute to the waste generated by sports. Golf links are disappearing. Beijing hosted the Winter Olympics in 2022 with one hundred per cent artificial snow. Only one of the 21 previous hosts can host ski and snowboard events at the Winter Olympics by the end of the century. The message is being hammered into us.

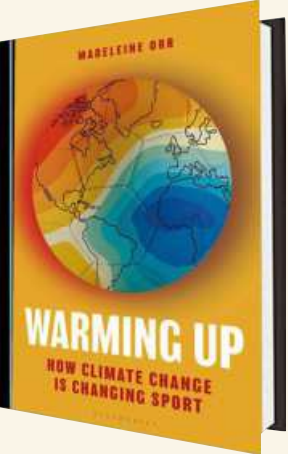
How to fight back

By 2085, only 33 cities in the northern hemisphere – of 645 which were studied – can host low-risk Olympics, according to research by the University of California published in *Lancet*. The question, says Madeleine Orr, a climate ecologist and a Toronto University Professor, is not whether climate change will impact sports. It is already doing so. Writing in *Scientific American*, Jules Bykoff, author of books on the Olympics, says if the organisers want them to be sustainable, the Games must reduce their size, limit the number of tourists, greenify their supply chains and open up their eco-books for bona fide accountability. “Until then,” he says, “the Olympics are a greenwash, mere lip service when facts demand

systematic transformation.” Greenwashing is today as much part of sport's lingo as sportswashing is. The former is defined as a marketing tactic to make the public believe that a company's products, goals, or policies are environmentally friendly. The latter is the use of sports to distract from an entity's unethical activities.

Mixed signals

The twain meet in West Asia. Saudi Arabia will host the 2029 Asian Winter Games after building 36 km of artificial ski slopes in Neom, a futuristic city yet to be completed. But before Saudi Arabia and Aramco and the threat of oil to sports from football to golf, there were U.S. oil companies, as Orr reminds us, who used the same strategy, with



Warming Up: How Climate Change is Changing Sport
Madeleine Orr
Bloomsbury India
₹1,999

investments in the NFL and other American sports. “The Super Bowl and the NFL as we know it wouldn't exist today if it weren't for the voracious greed of a few oil tycoons,” she writes. It is convenient to believe that sport got into bed with fossil fuel companies only since oil was discovered in West Asia. As COP29 showed in Baku recently, smaller and vulnerable societies will continue to pay for the climate misdeeds of the rich and powerful. “Climate action is a team sport,” writes Orr, reminding us that U.S. President Donald Trump has called climate crisis a “hoax” and “pseudoscience”, thus giving us a glimpse into the difficulty of doing the right thing. *Warming Up* is not all doom and gloom, though, even if some of the suggestions, like playing golf “between cooling towers, on the grounds of decommissioned fossil-fuel refineries and abandoned sports stadia,” sound impractical. “One player [is] gonna die,” complained Daniil Medvedev in the middle of a match on the hottest day of the US Open tennis in 2023. *Warming Up* throbs with urgency.

The reviewer's latest book is Why Don't You Write Something I Might Read?.

INTERVIEW ‘THEY DIDN'T GLAMOURISE VIOLENCE’

Devdutt Pattanaik illustrates his fascination for the Harappan civilization, a 100 years after the world learnt of it on September 20, 1924

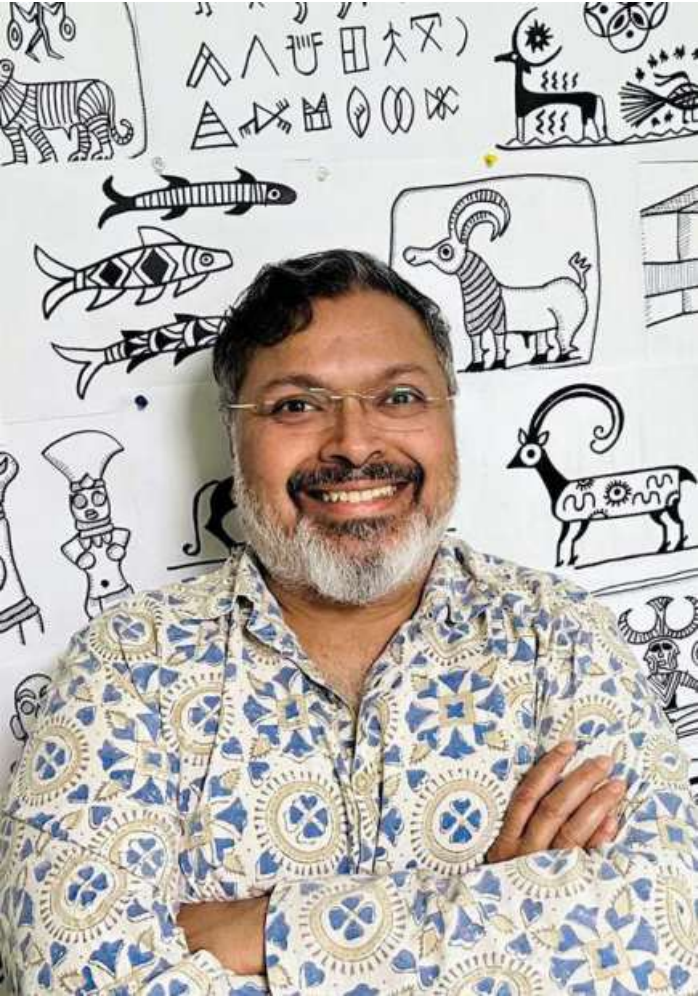


Parvati Sharma

A century after the world learned of the existence of the Harappan civilisation, as ancient as Mesopotamia and Egypt, Devdutt Pattanaik reflects on the “peculiar” but peaceful Harappans in his new book, *Ahimsa* (HarperCollins), which he has also illustrated. Edited excerpts from an interview.

Question: You've dedicated *Ahimsa* to 'those who choose dialogue (sam-vaad) over debate (vi-vaad)'. Was this inspired by your experiences on Twitter?
Answer: More than Twitter, that's a silly space, it was academia. The way the academy is designed is through argument and debate. When someone does their PhD, we say 'defend your thesis', it's very combative. The academy comes from the idea that there is one truth – this works in science because, at the end of the day, you have to get mathematical, objective evidence. In the realm of history, to a large degree, you can get it, but when it comes to more subjective things like art, mythology, ideas, it becomes extremely difficult to figure out what's going on. I say: don't argue, listen. Try to figure out different ways in which we can understand the same thing.

Q: You list the prejudices historians might bring to the study of Harappa. E.H. Carr once wrote that all historians have bees in their bonnets, you have to listen to the buzzing. Do you have any bees of your own?
A: I do. I don't like this notion of triumph or the greatness of the past. I don't see the past as



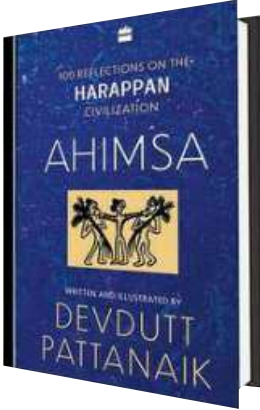
Riverine trails (Clockwise from above) Devdutt Pattanaik; a view of the Dholavira Harappan site in Kutch; and illustrations by the author. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, VIJAY SONEJI, AND DEVDUTT PATTANAİK)

better or worse than the present. A discourse in which the past was great or the past was terrible, both bother me a lot, and my instinct is to counter it, to see if there is an alternate way of looking at the same thing. There are good people, bad people, difficult lives, good lives. Technology keeps changing but emotionally, do we really change? You'll see that sense in my writing a lot.

Q: Why did you choose Harappa?
A: I was interested in the art. Some of the art in my book was done years ago in a fit of inspiration. I kept sketching the bull, the unicorn, the rhinoceros, the crocodile [from the Harappan seals]. As I was drawing, I noticed that the animals are anatomically absolutely correct, almost like photographs – it's quite impressive. I went down a rabbit hole of information, you

go in deeper and deeper and your head starts to spin. I'm not a historian – I'm not interested in the history, I'm interested in the mythology of that period, how they imagined the world. The timelines [are fascinating]: the pyramids are built exactly when the Harappan cities are being built. The lapis lazuli – a stone found only in Afghanistan – made its way to Mesopotamia along the sea coast from Harappa. It's something every child in India should know, but we don't talk about this – 4,000 kilometres, 4,000 years ago at the time of the pyramids, by a culture that has no big monuments, does not seem to glamourise violence and power. This is a very peculiar civilisation.

Q: Your broad interpretation of the civilisation is 'ahimsa' - of peace deriving from a mercantile ethic. But there is also a thread on the 'resistance' to this regulated society. How did these contrasts play out in your mind?
A: There is definitely a lot of standardisation, clearly there is institutional control, but



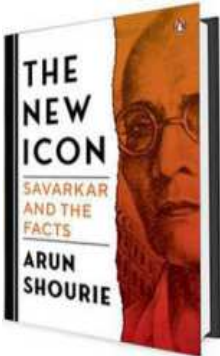
there are also regional differences, and that caught my eye. Punjab is very different from Sindh, which is very different from Gujarat or Haryana. The climate is different, the animals and crops are different. This whole ecosystem was very different from the drab 'city state' [idea of Harappa] that has been amplified. All that excited me.

I noticed when I started my study of mythology that we glamourise kings and the priestly class but we never talk about merchants. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* do not talk of trade at all. The Jatakas talk a lot about trade, and the Jatakas are the mercantile and monastic traditions coming together. My thesis was – if the Jains are traders and they are following ahimsa and talking about monasticism, and if Harappa was also a trading society, and they established these institutions without violence, the only logical thing is that there is some kind of a narrative, some ideological control that is happening, probably through monks, or some quasi-monastic order.

The interviewer is the author of Akbar of Hindustan and Jahangir: An Intimate Portrait of a Great Mughal.

The New Icon: Savarkar and the Facts

Arun Shourie
India Viking
₹999
A veteran journalist raises questions about Hindutva ideology V.D. Savarkar and answers them after poring through his books and statements. Shourie asks: What did Savarkar think of Hinduism?; what sort of a state did he envisage?; why is Savarkar being resurrected.



Lōal Kashmir: Love and Longing in a Torn Land

Mehak Jamal
Fourth Estate
₹599
How do people go about their lives in the time of conflict? This volume has real-life narratives of people who are trying to build, and hold on to, relationships. 'Lōal', the Kashmiri word for love and affection, is the common thread running through all the narratives.



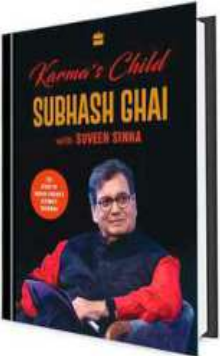
Astad Deboo: An Icon of Contemporary Indian Dance

Ketu H. Katrak
Seagull Books
₹999
Astad Deboo (1947–2020), considered a pioneer of modern dance in India, was known for his distinctive style, gravity-defying backbends, and signature whirls. This biography unveils Deboo's remarkable journey.



Karma's Child

Subhash Ghai with Suveen Sinha
HarperCollins
₹699
The filmmaker who directed blockbusters like *Kalicharan*, *Karma*, *Ram Laxman*, *Saudagar* and *Taal* has penned his memoirs. Subhash Ghai says it is also the story of the Hindi film industry, and of Mumbai, the city of dreams where countless stars are born, and just as many fade away.



On the brink (Clockwise from right) A waterlogged Kolkata street in the wake of Cyclone Dana last October; tourists being rescued after landslides in Sikkim last June; and climate scientist Dr. Rony Mathew Koll. (ANI, PTI)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Lead author of the study, Ashim Sattar, Assistant Professor at School of Earth, Ocean and Climate Science, IIT Bhubaneswar, whose research focuses on glacial modelling and GLOF, says, “Widespread permafrost (frozen ground) in the high mountains is becoming warmer with time, thereby increasing the susceptibility of the mountain slopes to potential failure, leading to ice-rock avalanches that can impact infrastructure. Hydropower too will be impacted as many hydropower projects are constructed in high mountains in valleys fed by glacier melt, and are also susceptible to GLOFs due to their locations.”

GLOFs are expected to triple in the High Mountain Asia landscape by the end of the next century, as per one study. And incidents such as Sikkim’s South Lhonak disasters are likely to become more frequent and cost billions in damages. “If we look into the GLOF hazard situation in the Himalayas, the eastern and central Himalayas have been identified as the regional hazard hotspot in the present. However, this hotspot is expected to shift towards the western Himalayas in the future,” says Sattar.

While the relationship between increasing temperatures and extent of glacial melting can be pretty straightforward, glacial lake outburst floods are not so easy to predict or model due to



1.5 DEGREES OF ABERRATION

uncertainties in the various triggers and failure mechanisms of the lakes and moraine or ice dams. Sattar believes there will be more clarity on this going forward as research is emerging on this topic, but it is impossible to accurately predict the timing of failure of the several thousands of glacial lakes that have formed over the recent years and are rapidly expanding at the moment.

The way forward
From a knowledge standpoint, India is no longer lacking in scientific expertise, relevant data or in-depth understanding of various climate extremes. However, integrating the latest information to enact climate-aware policy remains a huge challenge as the adaptation response is still scattered and limited.

According to Mishra, “India should enhance early warning systems and combine indigenous and local knowledge with



technological advancement to develop successful climate adaptation approaches, addressing groundwater resource management, reservoir operations, maintaining crop yields, enhancing prediction of extreme weather and climate events.”

Chandni Singh, a leading researcher working on climate adaptation and Lead at the School of Environment and Sustainability, Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), says, “Even before we breach the 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature goal,

adaptation has been a pressing imperative, especially in India where a large population is exposed to climate risks and is deeply vulnerable because of non-climatic factors [poverty, inequality, unemployment, infrastructure deficits, etc].” Observing that we *do* have a range of feasible options, many of which India is already implementing, she says the gaps remain in moving beyond sectoral solutions to systemic ones. “This is tougher and requires simultaneous transitions across various systems – agriculture, energy, infrastructure, society – which is currently not happening at the speed and scale required,” says Singh.

Additionally, IIHS’ ongoing research on pathways to the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal found that the current funding for adaptation in India is grossly inadequate even though there has been an increased focus on improving adaptive capacity in vulnerable

sectors. Climate finance is also skewed in favour of mitigation (about 90%) with only about 10% investment for adaptation.

While all the scientists interviewed for this article lament the lack of global ambition to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, they stress on the urgent need to use latest science to inform policy.

Koll says, “We urgently need to tailor adaptation plans and policies based on the climate risks we face locally. Achieving this requires collective action supported by strong political will, adequate financing, scientific expertise, and interdepartmental cooperation.”

Even while acknowledging more is needed, Singh remains hopeful. “The government has been taking promising steps in involving researcher and practitioner communities on various aspects of climate action – from expert workshops on loss and damage, to annual national workshops on heat preparedness and risk management. These are promising and pave the way for evidence-based policy making.”

The writer is an independent journalist and filmmaker covering climate change in the Himalayan region and South Asia.

What is the 1.5 degrees goal?

● **Not what it seems:** Many people wrongly believe the world is coming to an end as 2024 becomes the first-ever year to breach 1.5 degrees of warming, signalling the failure of the 2015 Paris Agreement. However, this is not true. The agreement refers to long-term warming, which would require at least 20 or 30 years to consistently record annual temperatures of over 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to the pre-industrial average. 2024 marks only the beginning of this trend, but it is still a rude wake-up call of a symbolic milestone that has been breached, on the 10th anniversary of the landmark treaty, no less.

● **Not when the world ends:** 1.5 degrees Celsius is neither a tipping point where things drastically spiral out of control nor a physical limit defined by science where the world ends. 1.5 degrees Celsius was a political and an economic choice, something that countries and world leaders could accept, rally around and plan for. Scientists have not identified any amount of warming as the optimal or as a defence line drawn in sand. What they have said with certainty is that every tenth of a degree of warming increases the risk of extreme weather events, frequency and intensity of disasters, and ecosystem collapse.

● **What it actually means:** 1.5 degrees Celsius is a lodestar that has helped catalyse global ambition on climate action, providing a tangible goal post against which countries, organisations and communities can plan their mitigation and adaptation strategies. It helps provide a meaningful way to translate the latest climate science into policy relevant insights, to understand and predict climate impacts, measure progress, and design safe pathways to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

A CHANGING SOCIAL ORDER

How India’s middle class, which forms 31% of the population, has come to play an important role in the country’s social, political and economic development

Manisha Pande

Do you belong to the middle class? Eight out of 10 replies to this simple query I put forth to people while researching for my book, *Middle Class India: Driving Change in the 21st Century*, are in the affirmative. What is most remarkable about this exercise though is that these people come from different economic backgrounds, presenting a broad spectrum of incomes ranging from less than ₹3 lakh to more than ₹40 lakh per annum.

The variation in definition is due to different perceptions. While the latter is based purely on income, the former relies

on self-identification. In short, middle class is a notional concept today. Those at the periphery of the middle class at the lower end are identified as the aspirational middle class, displaying the same behaviour patterns and inflation, coupled with recession and job scarcity, has pushed the middle class, which is by nature insecure, towards exclusivity to protect its economic interests. It was this factor at play that made the middle class bring Trump back to power in the U.S., despite his apparent headline stance. A similar trend can be seen in the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the last Lok Sabha elections, despite its failure to deliver the promised development. Of course, here the economic interests work in

the garb of religion to drive the political agenda. This exclusivity is also a result of the insularity that the middle class has adopted by choosing to remain in clusters defined by religion, caste and class.

Widening gaps
Today, we are looking at a middle class that is different not only in attitude and behaviour but also in composition and structure from the previous generation as new social groups have emerged, adding to its inherent contradictions. It is, essentially, Generations Y and Z that have scripted the story of modern India both in terms of thought as well as action. Take the queer community, for instance. It has emerged as a strong social group fighting for

representation in state politics. Yet, while talking about the various categories of the Indian middle classes, there is scarce mention of this community, which is the largest in the world at around 135 million, according to the globally recognised Kinsey scale.

During my interaction with members of the community, I realised the extent of discrimination they go through. Professor Ivan John, who teaches at Mumbai’s Sophia College and identifies as queer, says that parents had strong reservations against their children being taught by a queer person.

However, it is in Gen Alpha that we see the scope of real social transformation. They see caste, religion, gender and,

to some extent, class as non-issues. This generation, especially the urban upper- and middle-middle classes, identifies itself as global citizens. They are defying the very characteristics that have been associated with the middle class till now. For example, they are not looking for stability anymore. Neither in career nor in relationships.

Economically, the picture that has emerged points to a widening gap between the upper middle and lower middle classes. Their aspirations and goals differ considerably. While the upper middle class is now into collecting “experiences” rather than assets, for the lower middle class, financial security is still very much the priority, though it emulates the consumption pattern of the upper classes.

Lack of awareness
Through all the social, political and economic change sweeping across the country, my biggest worry lies in the fact that much of the middle class has stopped reading. This change happened sometime in

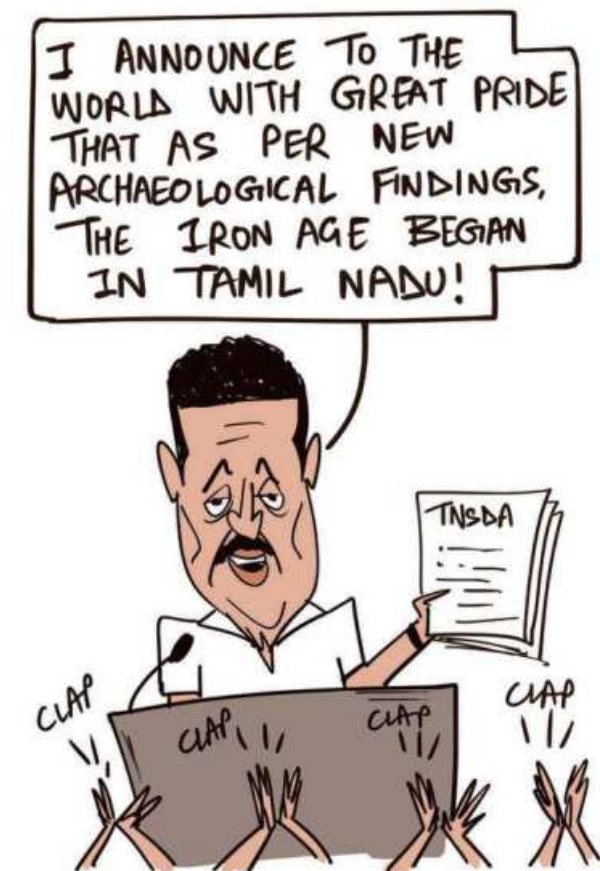
the 90s. The effects of this can be seen in the lack of awareness about issues crucial to democracy and the inability to think logically. Historian S. Irfan Habib is right in saying that the current generation doesn’t value democracy. “They do not know because they don’t study. They do not read history,” he says.

From a humble, nondescript social group to a catalyst of change, the middle class, which forms 31% of the population and is expected to touch the 60% mark by 2047, has come to play an important role in the social, political and economic development of India. As of now, the conflicts and contradictions that mar the unity of this amorphous class give the impression of a highly disintegrated society in the future. However, rapid globalisation and the creation of a global middle class, to which the upcoming generation aspires, hold the promise of a new social order in India.

The writer is a journalist and author.

GREEN HUMOUR

Rohan Chakravarty



Finding resonance (Clockwise from left) There is No Holiday II, a woodcut print on recycled cotton sari; installation view of An Eye Inside; Jayeeta Chatterjee; and the artist at the Chemould LaB residency. (COURTESY JAYEETA CHATTERJEE AND CHEMOULD COLAB)

INDIAN DOMESTICITY AND FEMININE POLITICS

Why Jayeeta Chatterjee’s printmaking and embroidery are grabbing eyeballs, and now an Asia Arts Future award

Lesley Simeon

It’s a very Bengali thing!” laughs Jayeeta Chatterjee, 29, talking about her artistic bent of mind. “As a young child in a Bengali household, you need to either learn dancing, singing or some form of art.” The Bengaluru-based artist found her passion in wood cut print making quite early – after an encounter with the works of veteran artist and printmaker Suranjan Das when in Class X – and chose to pursue the art form as a career. Now, after years of experience with the medium, Chatterjee is the recipient of the Asia Arts Future (India) award, at the Asia Arts Game Changer Awards this week at the India Art Fair.

Hailing from Bolpur, West Bengal, Chatterjee studied fine arts and printmaking from Kala Bhavan in Santiniketan. And observations she made on her daily commute to and from the university led her to anchor her work in a strong element of storytelling. “I noticed the aesthetics of homes change drastically,” she recalls. “Every

household object seemed to define the class or caste of the families living in that house.”

Her observations intrigued her enough to interact with the residents, and she learned, for example, that those who chose bright wall colours (much like her own home with its yellow walls) were influenced by financial factors, as vivid colours last longer. Such conversations informed her 2017 wood cut print series, *Yellow Journey*.

“When people share their stories with me, they’re sharing their lives and journeys. But, at times, it also gets a bit overwhelming, and I struggle with portraying the stories in the best possible way,” shares Chatterjee, who has exhibited her work at forums such as the Ulsan International Woodcut Print Art Festival, South Korea; Haugesund International Festival of



Relief Printing, Norway; and most recently in 2024, at Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai. Her solo, *An Eye Inside*, tracked her journey evolving from an interest in interiors and



architecture to her current documentation of domestic feminine politics.

Wood cut prints and kantha
Chatterjee’s recent collections have focused on the lives of women in

different social settings, and it nudged her to incorporate fabric in her work. “When I started documenting women, I started collecting their used saris, *dupattas* and even blouse pieces,” she explains, adding how she uses her phone to capture candid moments, and

records short videos and snippets of conversations.

She then began combining mediums for the first time – preparing woodblocks, printing designs on the fabric, and stitching them like a quilt, overlaid with *nakshi kantha* traditions. “I grew up seeing the *kantha* stitch in my household, but I never really paid it any attention. When I started learning the craft is when I first realised how painstaking the process is,” she says. Chatterjee learnt *nakshi kantha* embroidery – a style with elaborate motifs influenced by religion, culture, and the lives of the women stitching them – from artisans in Mahidapur, in West Bengal’s Birbhum district.

Her art highlights the mundane: a woman sweeping a floor, tending to a child, selling wares in a market, sorting and drying fish, or women gossiping on their haunches. As she states in the exhibition note for *An Eye Inside*, “These homemakers do important work and yet rarely get respect, and somehow there was resonance for me as I work at home too, and people don’t understand the work of an artist either!”

Story reigns supreme

Today, after years of working with *nakshi kantha*, Chatterjee takes little over a month to complete a single piece of art, which she stresses is actually speedy work. One of her ongoing projects is an 8x16 ft. quilt that she started work on last July, during her stint at the Hampi Art Labs residency by the JSW Foundation. The lives and stories of the women at JSW’s Bunkai Handloom Studio in Vijayanagar, Karnataka, form the subject of this massive piece.

So, what comes first for Chatterjee: the medium or the story? “The first thing I think about is the subject. I also think of representing the conversations I’ve had with people as sound waves, which I can then transfer on fabric using *nakshi kantha*,” says Chatterjee, given that some of the stories are too sensitive, personal or complex to simply play out loud. “If I’m working with someone, my goal is to portray that particular moment I share with them in my work.”

The writer and theatre artist is based between Bengaluru and Delhi.

The Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk, author of novels such as *Flights* and *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*, is one of the most critically acclaimed writers of the last decade, having won both the Nobel and the International Booker Prize in that time-frame. It’s safe to say that she has added thousands of new readers over the past few years, thanks to these accomplishments. And recently, Tokarczuk participated in a YouTube interview that may have landed her an army of new followers – a conversation with Dua Lipa, one of the biggest pop stars on the planet.

Hosted on Lipa’s lifestyle platform Service95 (named after the fact that the singer was born in 1995), the 30-minute interview already has over 200,000 views and it’s been just two weeks. The conversation was centred around *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* but towards the end, Lipa made sure that her fans got an overall idea of the themes prevalent in Tokarczuk’s body of work: eco-feminism, man’s rapidly shifting relationship with animals, the mechanisms guiding memory and trauma.

Obviously, Lipa is a voracious reader. But I have to tip my hat to the team that manages Service95. The interviews and podcasts are well-researched, and thanks to Lipa herself, well-executed. She has now interviewed literary heavy hitters such as George Saunders and Chimamanda Adichie, musicians like Patti Smith, and comedians like Trevor Noah, doing a stellar job in each case.

Discovering books and culture
Service95 is the latest example of a phenomenon that has driven a lot of mass media culture in the 21st century – the idea of celebrities being “taste-makers”, introducing their followers to books, movies, music, art, décor, health and wellness, et al. Celebrities aren’t just offering the odd standalone “tip” anymore, they are curating their followers’ entire lives, online and offline. It’s the logical endpoint of the kind of brand/marketing thinking that tells these celebrities, “You ARE the product”. A lot of fans will pick up that book or stream that film not because they are convinced of the merits of the work, but because

BINGE WATCH

When Dua met Olga

On the rising power and influence of celebrity taste-makers and how they bridge gaps between art and the audience



Influential Talk show host Oprah Winfrey; author Twinkle Khanna; singer Dua Lipa and former U.S. president Barack Obama.

their favourite celebrity told them to do so. And in doing so, they will advance the personal, para-social relationship they have with the celebrity.

Oprah Winfrey is the template for this phenomenon, especially the ‘Oprah’s Book Club’ segment on her show. The segment debuted in 1996 and by the turn of the millennium, it had become a cultural juggernaut, with publishers estimating that Winfrey’s power to sell a book is anywhere from 20 to 100 times

that of any other media personality (*Publisher’s Weekly*, 2005).

Today, the likes of Reese Witherspoon and Drew Barrymore have their own book clubs, and legions of fans who hang on to their every word. Former U.S. president Barack Obama’s end-of-the-year lists too have become a staple of American pop culture. It has become one of the most popular ways in which American youngsters are discovering books, films,

music, etc. from around the world – a much-needed antidote to American exceptionalism, one might say. In recent years, Obama has picked quite a few Indian artists and writers – in 2019, Prateek Kuhad’s song ‘cold/mess’, and more recently, the Payal Kapadia film *All We Imagine As Light*. Indians on social media have reacted rapturously to these picks – they see it as representation, Indian pop culture reaching millions of homes and computers that would not have otherwise got a taste of them.

Lessons for India

Closer home, a few Indian celebrities have made the first tentative moves in this direction. In 2019, Twinkle Khanna launched Tweak, a digital media platform for women. A couple of years later, Tweak Books was announced, and it has now co-published with Juggernaut (who also publish Khanna’s own books). On Tweak, you can find interviews with writers, artists, filmmakers, as well as “uplifting” stories from across the country. It is a slightly different, more organised model of ‘curation’ than Oprah or Obama’s, but it is definitely on the same spectrum.

A couple of years ago, Disney+Hotstar released *Moving In With Malaika*, a reality TV show where actress Malaika Arora dished about her personal life – marriage, divorce, the usual gossip column stuff. But there were also several ‘tips and tricks’ and recommendations that spoke to the ‘moving in’ part of the show’s title – décor, wardrobe hacks and so on.

So far, the Indian iterations of this phenomenon have yet to take it to the next level and achieve the kind of cultural ‘taste-making’ power wielded by their American counterparts. Perhaps they ought to closely survey Lipa’s Service95 channel and see the passion and attention-to-detail on display. After all, one of the quickest ways to make people care about a work of art is to convince them how much you care yourself.

Aditya Mani Jha is a writer and journalist working on his first book of non-fiction.



Dear readers, once again a new American president is upon us. And this new fellow is a huge inspiration for many of our dearest friends and relatives, all of whom, from this day onwards, will be known as factchuckers.

Oho! A new word! But what does factchucker mean? Let me explain. Please be patient.

As some of you may be aware, one of the greatest drawbacks of the English language is that it is absolutely full of sentences.

In fact, at this very moment, you are holding in your hands a newspaper that is jam-packed with sentences from front to back. Why are there so many sentences? Do we even need so many? And why are we using them all without any self-control? What if there is an emergency tomorrow? Should we not keep some sentences in reserve?

Also, what do some of these sentences even mean? For instance, sometimes I will open a news website and it will have a huge headline that reads: 'Indian

TRICKTIONARY EPISODE 6

NOBODY CARES ABOUT THE FACTS

The collapse of our modern civilisation will be due to this one sentence: “Is it true?”

Government Securities Experience Slight Decline in Yield Due to Unforeseen Convergence of Market Sentiment and Economic Indicators, Potentially Influenced by Unaccounted Variables in the Fiscal Policy Framework’.

There is no circumstance in which the above sentence needs to exist.

I am reminded of the song ‘Jiya Jale’ from the 1998 movie *Dil Se*. This unbearable song came out when I was in college. And at least three times a day, someone would come to

me and say, “Hello Sidin, you are from Kerala, no? What is the meaning of *munjiri kunjiri kinjiri binjiri*?”

That lyric is my second most-hated sentence in the world.

My first most-hated sentence in the world is the following: “Is it true?”

Friends, we live in the great age of “Is it true?”

“Is it true?” is a cancer upon society.

The collapse of our modern

civilisation will be due to this one sentence: “Is it true?”

This sentence begins its life with someone you know – a wayward

It is the *Brahmastra* of the Information Age. And now with a new American president in office, *Brahmastras* are going to fly helter and, often, skelter, like never before

Factchucker
/fæktʃʌkə/
noun
Plural: factchuckers
Definition: A person who aggressively shares unverified information on social media and messaging platforms, but masterfully evades responsibility for veracity by adding “Is it true?” at the end.

uncle, a rapscallion neighbour, an annoying classmate, or a reprobate co-worker – who comes across some kind of nonsense information. Usually on their WhatsApp or on the Internet.

They look at this information and then process it carefully. The information is something very intelligent such as: ‘CONFIRMED BY RESPECTED NASA SCIENTIST: Statue of Liberty is actually wearing Kanjeevaram sari, international media shocked by revelation.’

They will then think to themselves, this is absolute shenanigans. But if I share it on the Internet, it will sell a minimum 5,000 copies. What a dilemma! How to do this without looking like a total buffoon?

Then five minutes later, they will find the perfect solution. They will take the exact same message, paste it directly on WhatsApp or Facebook but then add one sentence at the end: “Is it true?”

Friends, this simple three-word sentence immediately absolves them of all responsibility. It is the anticipatory bail of social media. Because if anybody dares call them a buffoon for sharing nonsense, they will say “How dare you! I was

checking only. Will I ever share lies on the Internet? Are you calling me a liar on the Housing Colony WhatsApp group? Just because you have read three books means you have zero respect for elders! Why are you ashamed of Kanjeevaram sari?”

One thing will lead to another. Now your parents are upset and have removed you from all inheritance. Your siblings refuse to be seen with you in any public space. And finally, there is a separate WhatsApp group with all residents except you that is called, ‘Housing Society (Decent and Traditional Values Only).’

This is the true power of “Is it true?”. It is the *Brahmastra* of the Information Age.

And now with a new American president in office, *Brahmastras* are going to fly helter and, often, skelter, like never before.

Which is why, my friends, you have to be very careful when you deal with purveyors of this dark art. Or as we will call them henceforth: factchucker.

Example sentence: “This morning, Saudamini aunty sent a message that an Egyptian pyramid archaeologist from NASA has discovered an ancient inscription that reads “Made in India.” I was just about to respond to her blatant factchucking when my mother interjected across my face with the soda maker.”

Do you want to lose your inheritance? Never.



Sidin Vadukut is head of talent at Clarisights. He lives in London and is currently working on a new novel.

GOREN BRIDGE

Larry's gift

Both vulnerable.
West deals

Bob Jones

Today's deal is from the club's most recent Saturday night duplicate. When Hard Luck Louie declared this deal, he rose with dummy's queen on the opening spade lead, winning the trick as East followed with the jack. Louie led a club to his ace and ran the jack of diamonds, winning the trick. He cashed dummy's ace and king of diamonds,

felling the queen, and crossed back to his hand with the king of clubs to cash two more diamond tricks. When he tried to build his ninth trick in hearts, East grabbed his ace and returned his low spade, West took the rest of the tricks for down one. “I did my best,” said Louie. “I knew West had to hold the queen of diamonds for me to have a chance, but I still couldn't quite make it.”

Lucky Larry played the same contract with the same

NORTH
♥ Q 7
♠ Q 5 4 3
♦ A K 4
♣ J 10 7 5

WEST
♠ A 10 9 8 6 3
♥ 6
♦ Q 7 5
♣ Q 3 2

EAST
♠ J 4
♥ A J 10 8 2
♦ 8 3
♣ 9 8 6 4

SOUTH
♥ K 5 2
♠ K 9 7
♦ J 10 9 6 2
♣ A K

The bidding:
WEST 2♠
NORTH Pass
EAST 3NT
SOUTH 2NT
All pass

Opening lead: 10 of ♠

opening lead. He played low from both hands on the opening spade lead, making West a present of the 10 of spades. West cashed the ace of spades and led another spade to Larry's king. Larry also took the diamond

finesse to take five tricks in that suit. When he finally led a heart to dummy's queen and East's ace, East had no spade to lead, so Larry made his contract with one spade trick, one heart trick, five diamonds and two clubs. Nicely done!

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

There are no impossible obstacles; there are just stronger and weaker wills, that's all: Jules Verne

Berty Ashley

1 On February 2, 1709, Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish naval officer was rescued after four years. He had been left behind by an ill-fated ship on an uninhabited island in the South Pacific. He survived by using whatever he found on the island. His adventurous life inspired Daniel Defoe to write what novel that is a favourite among children?

2 This is actually a collection of stories by an author born in India. Mostly set around the forests of Madhya Pradesh it follows a boy, who after being raised by wolves is helped by two wild animals to return to his family. By what name would you remember these stories?

3 This novel by Scottish author R.L. Stevenson was first published as a series in a children's magazine. The story is almost completely responsible for most modern depictions of any pirates in popular culture. Which book is this from which we get ideas such as 'X marks the spot' and 'Parrots on shoulders'?

4 One of the greatest American novels, this book is narrated by a sailor as he records the events that surround a captain's search for a particular animal. It has inspired many modern entities such as a global coffee chain and the stage name of electronic DJ Richard Melville (a distant relation). What is the title of the novel?



Prolific and versatile
English novelist and merchant Daniel Defoe was also a pioneer of business journalism. (WIKI COMMONS)

5 This book's original title was actually “Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World”. Written as a satire on ‘traveller's tales’, it was an instant success and has been made into multiple movies. What book is this, which gave us the words ‘Yahoo’ and ‘Lilliput’?

6 *The Faraway Tree* is a series of books set in an enchanted wood, centred around a giant magical tree. The top-most branches contain houses, and different lands float by. A group of

children have multiple adventures on the tree. Who is the author of this beloved series?

7 This French novel follows d'Artagnan, a young man who travels to Paris to join a military force. The members of this force are guards who get their name from the rifle they use. He meets a trio of guards, who get involved in many adventures. What is the English title of this novel?

8 This science fiction novel by French author Jules Verne

was inspired by the French submarine Plongeur. It was the first ever to be propelled by an engine and not human power. His accurate descriptions of the vehicle, and life onboard inspired many real-life submarine voyages. What is the title of the book that refers to the distance the vehicle travelled?

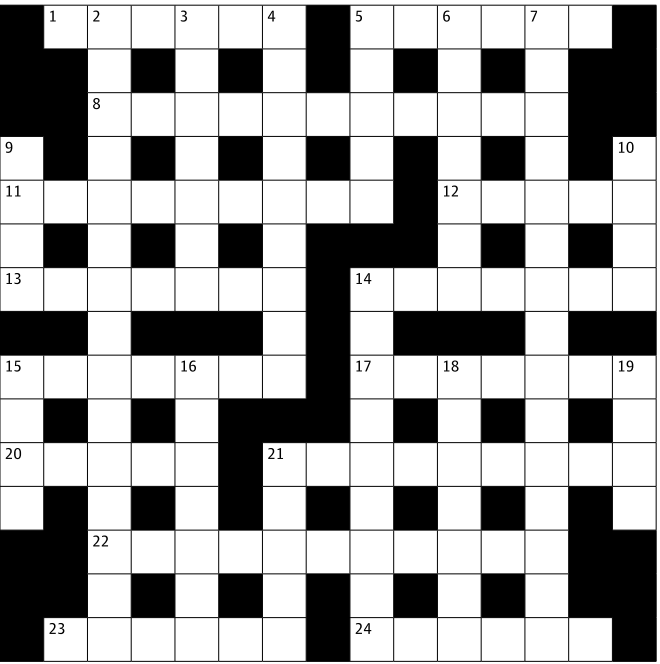
9 This 1990 science fiction novel is a cautionary story about the dangers of genetic engineering. It follows the results of a science experiment where they use ancient DNA found in a mosquito that was trapped in amber to bring extinct creatures to life. What novel is this that started a multibillion dollar franchise?

10 This epic high fantasy novel follows the journey of a piece of jewellery and the many owners it has in its 4,867 years of existence. What novel is this, which gave us the line – “The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater”?

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called ‘Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion’.
@bertyashley

1. Robinson Crusoe
2. The Jungle Book
3. Treasure Island
4. Moby Dick
5. Gulliver's Travels
6. End Blتون
7. The Three Musketeers
8. Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea
9. Jurassic Park
10. The Lord of the Rings

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3343



Across
1 No trace of husband or nephew in Hibernia or lands further south (6)
5 Six slices of tripe set alongside old Spanish bread (6)
8 Spooner tells us one seasoning food's approaching being delightful (2,4,2,3)
11 Scarlet towers over not-so-bright stars (3,6)
12 Overly loud American, looking back, going on (5)
13 Philippine city's enthralling student paper (7)
14 They split — to do the reverse! (7)
15 Called out: Starter's cooking — taste? (7)
17 Earl, scoundrel, overcome by booze, making misstep (7)
20 Morning deity rejected doctrine (5)
21 Quack, then maraud wildly in a kind of story (9)
22 Creating three of M*A*S*H's characters? (11)
23 Bride's delirious, in bits (6)
24 In southeast, Dutch to leave S African grassland thin (6)

Down
2 Solve this clue to beget grand urban construction! (11,4)
3 Second life for polystyrene wall filling (7)
4 Verify eccentric Cartesian (9)
5 Fruit and asparagus tip falling to the floor (5)

6 See opera — ENO — never seeing energy in its star? (7)
7 Sherlock's defining characteristic heard in final moments (3,4,8)
9 School leavers' event in which patriotic songs belted out at last? (4)
10 Occupying this inventor? Safety, principally! (4)
14 Troubles, including yoga, tai chi etc (9)
15 Does the groundwork for gits? (4)
16 He makes little effort, braggart downgraded at first (7)
18 About to eat, having swallowed whiskey and claret (3,4)
19 Everyman getting fourth of rounds, suppressing touch of angst, reluctant to pay (4)
21 Reads about faces (5)

SOLUTION NO. 3342

R	E	P	A	I	N	T	I	N	G	T	H	A	I					
O	E	N	A	O	E	M												
O	P	E	N	S	E	S	A	M	E									
T	K	P	S	I	B	R												
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“In life as in chess, forethought wins,” said Charles Buxton, British politician and philanthropist in the 19th century. Chess is a metaphor for the trials and tribulations of life. The structural evolution of humanity is depicted in the three parts of the game: opening, middle game, and endgame. A pawn once moved cannot be taken back. Sacrifices are needed to gain advantages. Decisions should be intuitive, not impulsive. One must wait for the right time to strike. Risks must be calculated. Keeping the king safe first and then attacking is essential. The ultimate goal is checkmating the opponent’s king. This board of intellect, infused with the creativity of the human mind, has woven in its rich tapestry the various interpretations of human behaviour. Marcel Duchamp once remarked, “While all artists are not chess players, all chess players are artists.” A common thread runs through chess and creativity. The romantic period of chess in the mid-1800s is testament to this statement. Adolf Anderson and Lionel Kieseritzky were compared to the maestros Brahms and Tchaikovsky. The dramatic symphony that they created by synchronising their pieces in a perfect melody resulted in the “Immortal Game” in 1851 London. Throughout history, every human has attempted to perceive chess through his or her own lens. G.H. Hardy, a mathematician, said, “Chess problems are pure mathematics. They are the hymn tunes of mathematics.” The rigorous calculations undertaken by players reflect their commonality. In fact, the ornate lifelike pieces of the earlier times acquired an abstract form

Life in black and white

Chess has functioned as a mirror reflecting the various dimensions of society and as a handbook for life’s lessons

in ancient Persia. This was due to the Koranic prohibition of depicting images, but probably also because the Persians were the pioneers of abstract algebra. al-Masudi, an Arab mathematician, urged commoners to adopt chess instead of backgammon, for it was an expression of man’s liberated mind. Chess, an articulation of human ingenuity, has its roots in Persian courts. Chess allegory was often used to portray statecraft, society and intense emotions. Rumi said, “Love is not a game of chess, where you plan your next move, but a game of backgammon, where you trust and throw the dice.” *A Game of Chess* by Thomas Middleton is a satire on the state under James I. Shakespeare in the *Tempest* ended the play with a conversation between Ferdinand and Miranda over the chess board. Chess, however, has been mostly understood as a game depicting military strategy. “Chess is war over

the board. The objective is to crush the opponent’s mind,” said Bobby Fischer. *Chaturanga*, the ancient chess game in India, depicted the four arms of the army. The Prussians used a game named Kriegsspiel (German meaning war game), to test aspiring military officers. Chess, therefore, is a reflection of the popular history and a prism to judge the people’s psyche. For instance, the Arab elephant being replaced with the Bishop highlighted the growing power of the Church in feudal Europe. Similarly, the Queen replacing the adviser or the commander of the medieval times reflects the rise of powerful queens all over Europe. Further, the commoners’ quest for liberty – not just political or economic but also intellectual – is evident in the popularity of the French salons where new ideas came to be shaped. Chess had now gone down from the lords to the masses, ending the elites’ monopoly on the mental plane. When philosophers like Rousseau and Voltaire sat over the board, there was an intellectual stimulus. The idea that a pawn could become powerful too was probably an idea that fuelled the French Revolution.

Bobby Fischer’s win over Soviet Boris Spassky amid the Cold War was seen as a symbol of American prowess. Today, Gukesh’s defeat of Ding heralds the emergence of a rising young India. Thus, chess has, time and again, functioned as a yardstick for judging mental calibre, a muse for poetic fantasy, a device for military strategy, an abacus for mathematical calculation, a canvas for artistic expression, a mirror reflecting the various dimensions of society and a handbook for life’s lessons. These 64 squares are a world itself in microcosm. Life, however, is not in black and white but in shades of grey. Efficiently navigating through these squares is a life “well played”.

The warmth of winter

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Winter is here and there is something soothing and comforting about this season. The cosy atmosphere makes one laze around, forgetting the busy schedules. Things move slowly and the most preferred place becomes the home with its comfort and warmth drawing one as a magnet. Time spent with near and dear ones takes precedence over other necessities. Skiing, snowboarding and ice skating can present a great opportunity for sports lovers during the season. Indoor games can be fun too, and travelling can be a great pleasure. Morning walks will be a great experience. Every season is needed for the survival of humankind. The rains provide and ensure water supply. The summer brings with it life and much-needed energy for all species on earth. Flowers blossom in the spring. While nature strikes a perfect balance through its even distribution, winter brings the much-needed respite from rain before the scorching heat sets in. We often feel that winter is shorter than other seasons, which may be incorrect as the four important seasons are almost evenly balanced. It is an illusion that winter is short, for we enjoy the season the most. We relish hot food in winter. Fresh vegetables and fruits flood the market, and the greens are more greener. Hot snacks are preferred in the winter evenings. Pakoras, bhajjis and samosas are relished as appetite builds up. Hot beverages add to the enjoyment. Sweaters, jackets, caps, shawls, woollen blankets and quilts, not to forget socks and shoes, are in full use. Wearing them can give a happy feeling. People can be in the pink of health during winter. With good hot food and rest, one can rejuvenate in the season. With freshness all around, the general health improves. The season is healthy and extremely enjoyable, and tired faces can look fresh. There could be few who do not relish the lovely weather.

Stars and separations

A high-profile divorce can influence others to introspect about their own situation, prompting similar decisions

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Suddenly, there is a deluge of celebrity couples announcing their separations, providing much-needed fodder for the ever-hungry social media. As a society, the nation is slowly adapting to these new norms. There is undoubtedly a palpable societal shift occurring in this part of the world, where marriages have traditionally been considered sacrosanct and are expected to endure for a lifetime. Though divorces have been common among the upper middle and upper classes over the past few decades, they had not

made headlines until the recent celebrity splits. What is particularly surprising is the occurrence of marital dissolution in long-established relationships. It apparently has caused what is known as a “domino effect”. In other words, a high-profile divorce can influence others in marital relationships to introspect about their own situation and may prompt them to make difficult decisions. Divorce is a deeply personal and often painful process that rightfully deserves its share of privacy, free from public and media scrutiny. It’s important to recognise that the rising incidence of divorce reflects the



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psychosocial and economic shifts within a society evolving toward a more liberal perspective. Divorces are no longer stigmatised, and collective attitudes toward marriage and relationships have changed. This trend signals a form of women’s liberation, as the willingness to openly address the decision to leave a constraining relationship or environment is a positive sign of progress. It signifies women’s emancipation. Last, women are becoming psychologically

empowered to propose and finalise such decisions without worrying about societal judgments or gossip. This represents a substantial shift in the self-perception of women in the current generation. Previous generations often bore their burdens in silence and suffered through deep incompatibilities in their marital relationships. However, there is also a concerning side to this story: the institution of marriage is under considerable strain. The essential elements of love, patience, understanding, and tolerance that form the foundation of enduring marital relationships may be at risk of being lost in future generations. There is also the collateral damage often overlooked in any divorce: the children of estranged couples. The lifelong psychological and emotional trauma they may endure is arguably the most undesirable outcome.

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Professional careers are important, be it for livelihood, status or fulfilment of ambitions. However, bogged down by the pace and competition, many of us start believing that career accomplishments are the ultimate marker of rise in life. Higher compensations, promotions, awards, and new roles are recognised as pivotal, and celebrated. Yet, there are wonderful moments of human interactions, many beyond professional realm, that are so glorious and enriching. They present themselves as a powerful, uplifting and often game-changing experience. The value of the moments lies in building new perspectives



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and world-view, imparting valuable lessons and helping find a meaning and purpose in life. These human interactions may be brief

The multi-faceted journey of life

Keep an open mind to enjoy the full spectrum of human experiences

initially, but we are left with the feeling that we want to stay and know more about the person we met. Such people exude an indescribable and unique charm and influence, to the extent that we do not want to part from them. These moments turn out to be defining and transformative ones. Imbued with a spirit of enquiry in his mind, Narendranath Datta thought of having a brief meeting with Ramakrishna Paramhansa. But the interaction

between them was something that not only changed young Narendra’s life forever, but also gave the world an extraordinary messenger on the harmony of religions, divinity of the soul, self-perfection, and serving humanity as God. Many a time, the wonderful human equation and bond get developed as mentor-mentee relationships. Characterised by mutual respect, learning and growth, such relationships depict a powerful story of trust, humanity, and leadership, for future generations to emulate. Life is a multifaceted journey encompassing a myriad of human interactions and relationships. Keeping an open mind, and a sense of wonder and gratitude, we can embrace, value and enjoy the full spectrum of human experiences.



FEEDBACK

Letters to the *Magazine* can be e-mailed separately to mag.letters@thehindu.co.in by Tuesday 3 p.m.

▼ Cover story

With increasing screen time leading to decreasing psychological well-being, promoting community libraries and ensuring the efficient utilisation of existing public libraries is the need of the hour. (‘Inside India’s rural reading rooms’; Jan. 26) As Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “Libraries are the great symbols of freedom of the mind.” **Ranjith Kumar R.**

▼ Kerala, India’s first fully literate state, is perhaps at the forefront of reading, with a population remarkably interested in newspapers and magazines. Almost everyone visits local libraries and reading rooms to stay up to date. **T.N. Venugopalan**

▼ In our village Pili Mandori (Haryana), we have a community library conceived and funded by the legendary classical singer Pandit Jasraj, who hailed from the village. The library is very popular with the youth who come here even from surrounding villages to prepare for various exams. **R.D. Singh**

▼ Good books are like a powerful lens that helps us to focus on life and become the architects of our future. Voltaire’s said: “Writing is the painting of the voice.” Just like an artist demonstrates her ever-brimming thoughts with a river of colours, a writer expresses her ideas through the river of ink. **Sajana Hameed**

▼ **Interesting stories** Neither author Jenny Erpenbeck, nor translator Michael Hofmann, was



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▼ **When humans mimic AI** Devoid of compassion, people are not only building a bot but blathering and behaving like one too **Saumya Dwivedi**

The many lives of a city Architecture, history, culture intertwine with people to define the underlying attitude of a place **Shristy Singh**

Tales from a compound wall Away from the bustle of the city, birds come calling to peck at small helpings **Vidya Vasudevan**

Being a doctor The profession can satisfy multiple social, emotional, intellectual, artistic and philosophical needs of a human **Rishi Kanna**

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Ranvir Shah

Malvika Singh's *Saris of Memory* is, as she calls it, a "fragments of my life" memoir – a compilation of her involvement with textiles and the stories connected with them.

Born in 1949 in Bombay, and belonging to a generation that saw the many stages of India post independence, the cultural doyenne was at the curbside of events taking place across the country. "My saris and I have conversations, recalling encounters, sometimes secrets, about people and places, travel and exploration, reliving happy and sometimes painful events that have peppered my life across a span of over 70 years," she says, reminiscing about Chowpatty beach, the city's vibrant Ganapati puja, glass bangles, and delicious meals on banana leaves. "Memories are nudged every so often by my saris, reminding me of the men and women who influenced me and impacted my journey."

Like Sumant and Leela Moolgaokar, who lived in their building, and who were a big influence on a young Singh. Sumant, a scientist, initiated TELCO (now Tata Motors) for the Tata Group. His wife Leela, who was involved with textiles, gave Singh her first sari. Years later, after Singh moved to Delhi (but continued her interest in all things cultural), their paths intersected again when she and her friends were involved with Sally and Richard Holkar at the non-profit REHWA to revive and revitalise the Maheshwari sari. Leela, who sat on the government board for handloom revival, released a grant.

Learning from extraordinary people
Her personal journey, Singh says, has been "bookended with extraordinary people and intellectual privilege". In Delhi,

'MY SARIS AND I HAVE CONVERSATIONS'

Malvika Singh's new book is a personal account of her lifelong relationship with the six yards, its weavers and collaborators

she came in contact with cultural activist and writer Pupul Jayakar, and was mentored by her at the Handicrafts and Handloom Export Corporation of India. During a famine in Bihar, instead of handing out dole to the women in Madhubani, she observed how Padma Shri award winner and artist Sita Devi encouraged them to paint large sheets of brown paper the corporation sold. Singh would take these, and the baskets the men wove, every morning and sell them at different markets, ensuring the money flowed back to the villages. Indira Gandhi was close to her parents and through her, Singh saw many aspects of the revival of Indian handlooms through programmes initiated by the late prime minister. And through Jayakar, she met Martand Singh in the late 60s – one of

India's great handloom aesthetes who organised the Vishwakarma series of exhibitions from 1981-1991. Together, they worked on several international exhibitions, and on reviving many weaving skills with the Weavers Service Centres. Over time, this knowledge subtly absorbed into her aesthetic repository.



The book also brings to the fore pioneering women who were part of India's handloom revival, such as Jasleen Dhamija, Fori Nehru, Shanta Guhan, Rukmini Devi Arundale, Mrinalini Sarabhai, and Padmaja Naidu. It is from them that Singh inherited a legacy of intangible knowledge on the different weaving traditions across the country.

Inspiring collaborations
Cut to the present, and Singh is as involved with the sari as ever. During the pandemic, she started a project to keep

weavers employed. She recalls how she called a weaver in Varanasi whom she had known for many years and asked him if he could make a sari with the colours of the sunset on the Ganga that evening. He sent it to her in a few weeks. Singh and her friends collected the various pieces, allowing the weavers to be busy during this difficult time. Singh also engages and inspires people working in the field through collaborations. In 2022, with Ahalya Matthan of Bengaluru-based The Registry of Sarees and its retail wing Yali, she worked on reviving the Venkatagiri sari by sharing her memories, resources and connections. With Sanjay Garg of Raw Mango, she and her daughter-in-law – who is invested in tiger conservation – worked on integrating new

designs into his Sherbagh collection. And she continues to inspire Ashdeen Lilaowala, who has revived Parsi gara embroidery, in not just creating new saris but also an entire range of menswear and accessories. *Saris of Memory* is but a sliver of Singh's life, and like a sliver of a mirror that sometimes dazzles as it reflects, and at other times shows the truth, it is honest in its telling.

Saris of Memory will be launched tomorrow at the Jaipur Literature Festival.

The writer is a cultural activist, philanthropist, and founder of Prakriti Foundation.



(Clockwise from far left) A selection of saris from the book; a motif and sari from Raw Mango's Sherbagh collection; the book cover; Sanjay Garg and Singh's daughter-in-law at work; and Malvika Singh. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)



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