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Dube vs. Aziz, and what it says about the Indian art world

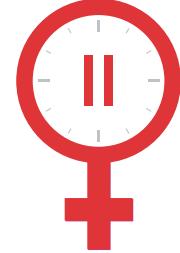
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LITERARY REVIEW

A former Meta director on Facebook's reckless ways

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(L to R) Shanti Kurupati of Intuit; Mini Mathur, TV presenter and actor; Chaitra Vedullapalli, president of Women In Cloud; and Juilee Dandekar, menopause coach.



Global take

- In the U.K., the Labour Party has pledged that, if elected, it will mandate large companies to publish menopause action plans.
- In Europe, the fashion industry has begun to address menopause-related challenges, with companies such as Asos and Burberry implementing supportive measures.
- The Indian government acknowledges the absence of a menopause policy for women employees. The Ministry of Women and Child Development says that strong research is needed to draft such a policy.



Reshma Chakraborty

It was a scenario television presenter and actor Mini Mathur had never imagined. A few years ago, she was facing an audience of almost 5,000 people, narrating a 10-minute unscripted story on stage, at the Spoken Fest in Mumbai. "About 40 seconds in, I completely blanked out. I had no idea what I was going to say next. I lost my train of thought and couldn't remember the point of my story – nothing."

Mathur, then 50, was appalled. She was one of India's most seasoned, experienced television presenters with a three-decade-long career. "It gave me so much anxiety, not knowing what was coming next. I blanked out for just five to seven seconds, but on stage that felt like five hours," she recounts.

The moment hit her hard. She started hesitating before taking on live, unscripted events for almost six months. "I was so unsure about my memory. I would write my entire script down and have it put on to a teleprompter or use cue cards. For about a year, I couldn't function on stage without one," says Mathur. She had never needed one earlier. "As a television presenter, you could wake me up in the middle of the night, hand me a mic, and I'd be ready to go. But when perimenopausal brain fog started interfering with my work – it really hit me hard."

Menopause is having a moment, says a recent headline in *The New Yorker*. If you are a 45-plus woman in India, your Instagram feed is most likely flooded with ads of mid-life fitness and menopause tips our mothers never discussed but we now happily share (ditch the coffee; get the tofu; stock up on magnesium; sign up for strength training; and so on, depending on your algorithm). Celebrities, from Gwyneth Paltrow to Oprah Winfrey, former news anchor Tamara Fadal, and actor Naomi Watts, have all written books or spoken extensively about it.

Menopause care is now a booming business. According to Grand View Research, the menopause market in India is expected to reach a projected revenue of \$1,632.2 million by 2030.

Actor, author and supermodel Lisa Ray, who went into a medically induced menopause at 37 after a treatment for multiple myeloma, is vocal about her experience. While it took her time to confront the changes menopause brought, like Mathur, she has become a strong menopause advocate, using her social media to do explainers on midlife, women's health, emotions and self-love.

Ray noticed a change in her

BREAKING THE SILENCE AROUND MENOPAUSE

150 million women in India will enter menopause in 2025. In the absence of policy or institutional support, many are writing books, doing podcasts and creating platforms to talk about the transition, especially at the workplace



Stages of change

Perimenopause is the phase where periods haven't completely stopped, but hormonal changes have begun. It typically lasts two to four years before menopause – marked by 12 consecutive months without a period. During perimenopause, oestrogen levels gradually decline, causing hot flashes – sudden spells of intense heat in the face, neck, and upper body – as the brain's temperature regulation gets affected. Irregular periods and a slowing metabolism are other early signs of approaching menopause, says Dr. Nina Mansukhani.

appearance (thinning hair, lack of energy and focus) after a cancer relapse in 2013. "I wanted to normalise this new version of myself, but I didn't have the knowledge or tools to do so. One day, I finally stopped and said, 'I've conquered cancer; now let me conquer menopause!' Being in denial was getting me nowhere. Now that I have embraced this stage, I have uncovered valuable insights about myself and I have never felt better."

Workplace support
With over one billion women globally – including nearly 150

million in India – experiencing menopause in 2025, workplace support is crucial. The transition begins even earlier for Indian women, around the age of 46, possibly due to factors such as geography, socio-economic status and lifestyle, among others, says a study by the Indian Menopause Society. Even a casual chat reveals struggles with concentration, anxiety, brain fog and irritability among women who often have a full plate, with a demanding job, teenaged children, caregiving responsibilities and their own bodily changes.

Despite the scale of this demographic change, most Indian workplaces lack formal mechanisms to support women during this transition. Some companies have initiated wellness programmes and medical support, but stigma and lack of awareness remain barriers to an equitable workplace.

Ray saw the changes impacting her work. "I do different sorts of work – not just in front of the camera. I give public talks, I wrote a book, I read and research a lot, and my inability to focus impacted all that. I even found myself forgetting common words. Even when I would drop menopause in casual conversations at work – in a humorous way, to gauge the room – it would be met with awkward silence," she says.

A March 2025 Stanford study called 'The Menopause Penalty', conducted among Swedish and Norwegian women, found that those with menopause-related symptoms earned 10% less because they cut back on their hours or quit work. In India, a survey by healthcare firm Abbott in partnership with research and data company Ipsos, among 1,200 women, revealed that 81% women felt

menopause affected their work life. Bengaluru's Chaitra Vedullapalli, 52, entrepreneur and president of Women In Cloud – a community-led \$1 billion economic access initiative for women innovators in technology – knows first-hand the challenges women face balancing leadership, well-being, and career. After years battling perimenopause symptoms, she openly shares her journey of managing executive functioning –



I wanted to normalise this new version of myself but I didn't have the knowledge or tools to do so. One day, I finally stopped and said, I've conquered cancer, now let me conquer menopause! Being in denial was getting me nowhere

LISA RAY
Actor, author and supermodel



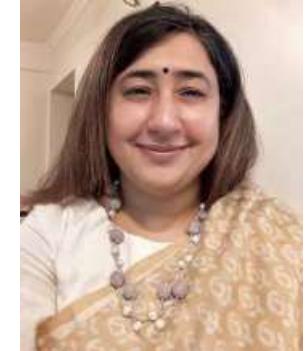
what she describes as the ability to manage oneself and one's resources effectively to achieve personal and professional goals. Vedullapalli faced stress, burnout, brain fog, and memory challenges, all of which impacted her ability to lead and parent at her usual high level. "I would forget things, so I started documenting everything because I felt like I was losing my mind," she recalls. These struggles, compounded by chronic fatigue and cognitive shifts, forced her to rethink how she prioritised self-care, leadership responsibilities, and personal health.

Challenging transition

Cheryl S., 48, vice-president at a multinational technology company in Pune, has been struggling with sleepless nights. "I'm on the run from the moment I'm up – packing off children to school, instructing the house help, sorting my day – and all I can think of is how little I've slept. I struggle to focus during morning work calls that I often lead. I'm also getting irritable very quickly, and it's something I need to consciously watch with my team. I'm often tempted to leave it all and sit at home if I could," she says.

Obstetrician and gynaecologist Nina Mansukhani has come across such challenges often. The template is often similar. "This period coincides with women holding senior positions in the workplace and making important decisions. As a result, the transition can become mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausting. Women may find that their tolerance for mistakes diminishes, and their capacity to handle errors decreases."

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Finding the right work-life balance during this time is crucial:

- It often starts with lifestyle changes such as diet, exercise, and building small, consistent routines.
- Seeking support through therapy – whether with a life coach or cognitive behavioural therapist – helps.
- Taking short holidays, or attending healing courses can also offer much-needed relief.
- If menopause symptoms significantly strain daily life, menopause hormone therapy (MHT) might be recommended. When carefully selected and used for a short period (after medical consultation), MHT is extremely safe and can dramatically improve relationships, work dynamics, and overall quality of life.

NINA MANSUKHANI
Obstetrician and gynaecologist

IN ADICHE-LAND

The Nigerian author's latest, *Dream Count*, may not be perfect, but the storyteller in her nevertheless dazzles

Radhika Santhanam

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* is an extraordinary, expansive novel; a reminder of why she is a literary star. Through the interlocking stories of four women in the U.S. – Chiamaka, a Nigerian travel writer; Zikora, her lawyer-friend; Kadiatou, her Guinean housekeeper; and Omelogor, her acerbic banker-cousin – Adichie writes about middle-age experiences, womanhood, class, and immigration.

It is the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and Chiamaka or Chia begins to do what many of us did when our lives came to a forced standstill: overthink endlessly and count her many regrets. She starts to wonder: "Where have all the years gone, and have I made the most of life?"

Chia begins to scrutinise her past relationships with the wisdom of hindsight, which brings with it both remorse and reassurance wrapped in humour. She recounts her relationship with a pretentious man, introduced to her as "the Denzel Washington of academia", who loved to say things like, "It's a structural erasure, a symbolic genocide, because if you're not seen, then you don't exist", over lunch.

She thinks of the Igbo man who was perfect but boring and left her with an "exquisite ache". And then of a married Englishman – an ill-advised relationship doomed from the start. Chia's musings are made riveting by Adichie's assured and clever writing. And though there is no real plot line, Chia propels the novel forward.

Story of grief

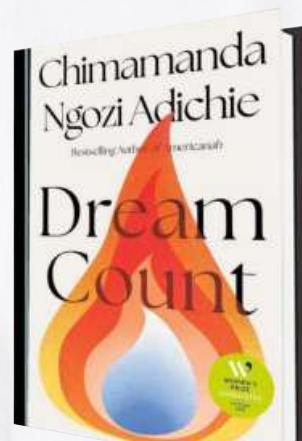
While there is a lightness in Chia's reminiscing, there is

a deep pain in Zikora's account. Compared to Chia's story, which spans years, Zikora's is more pointed. She, too, analyses the men in her life, calling them the "thieves of time", but there is one particular thief she dwells on, who steals more than just her time and leaves her bewildered, angry, and distressed. Even as she navigates both the gift and tragedy in her life, Zikora's circumstances provide her an opportunity to reboot her relationship with her mother.

Motherhood, in fact, is a strong theme in this novel, emerging once again in Kadiatou and Omelogor's stories. As Adichie writes in the author's note, *Dream Count* "is really about losing my mother". It is a grief that is "still stubbornly in infancy", she says; the grief lingers in all the stories.

Long before #MeToo

The centrepiece of the novel is the account of the long-suffering Kadiatou; it is riven by grief and evokes outrage. Kadiatou hurtles from one tragedy to another,



Dream Count
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Fourth Estate
₹599

but remains marvellously determined to make something of her life until an incident in a hotel room shoves her into the public eye.

Her character is based on Nafissatou Diallo, a West African woman working as a maid in a New York hotel, who accused

Dominique Strauss-Kahn, then head of the International Monetary Fund, of sexual assault in 2011. Adichie's writing here is exquisite: the pages simmer with

anger and also throb with a deep empathy and tenderness.

Diallo's portrait in the media, sketched with cold facts and documents, stripped her of dignity and provided an "ungenerous, undignified representation, incomplete and flattening", writes Adichie in the author's note. By humanising Kadiatou instead of victimising her, Adichie more than succeeds in returning Diallo's dignity.

The last section belongs to Omelogor, Chia's closest cousin. She siphons funds from the corrupt bank where she works in Nigeria, into women's business ventures, calling the operation 'Robyn Hood'. In Adichie's world, even moral bankruptcy comes wrapped in some sort of strange feminism. The premise is catchy, and Omelogor the most grey character of them all, but her motivations for abruptly giving up everything and moving to the U.S. remain unconvincing.

Lens on American society
While *Dream Count* is primarily about the bonds of sisterhood and female desires, it carries many sharp – though sometimes reductive – observations on immigration. The women move to the U.S. in the hope of fulfilling their American Dream, but often find themselves perplexed by the ways of Americans and their language. Kadiatou observes that the U.S. is "where the police shoot more than they run". When Zikora is in labour, the nurse dictates, "Bring your feet up and let your legs fall apart", while her mother tells her, "Hold yourself together".

Adichie is also a staunch critic of cancel culture and takes on pugilistic progressives. One character dismisses Omelogor's success saying, "Banking is inherently flawed"; elsewhere, Chia says, "For Daniell's friends, everything was 'problematic', even the things of which they approved".

Dream Count is not a perfect novel – the feminism is so old-school that men are boring at best and abusers at worst. It also fizzles out towards the end. But Adichie is a master storyteller who simply dazzles and hypnotises with her satire, wit, and prose. And for that reason alone, this novel that was 10 years in the making is well worth the wait.

(Left) Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (GETTY IMAGES)



One of the characters in the book is based on Nafissatou Diallo, a West African woman working as a maid in a New York hotel, who accused Dominique Strauss-Kahn, then head of the International Monetary Fund, of sexual assault in 2011

Kinshuk Gupta

Much has been said about illness and disease. To be diseased is to look the precarity and tenacity of life in the eye. Though there are clear moments of wisdom and wonder, they are few and far between, and often blunted by treacherous spells of lassitude, melancholy, and disillusionment. To create art in such moments is not easy, and as American poet Anne Boyer points out in her 2019 memoir *The Undying*, it is often marred by a pervasive sense of exhaustion.

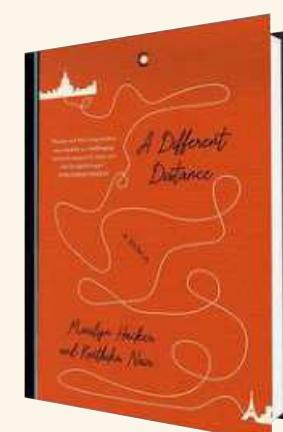
For poet, fabulist, and librettist Karthika Nair, this misery was two-pronged: a rare cancer treatment had made her body susceptible to the painful pricks and vertiginous effects of medication, while the global COVID-19 scourge had brought the world to a screeching halt. She writes in her short introduction to *A Different Distance*, "the subsequent pain and exhaustion made me doubt my ability to write again".

In this seemingly distraught and deserted world, Nair was offered a warm, welcoming hand by another

poet and survivor, Marilyn Hacker, to write *renga*, a collaborative Japanese poetry form with linked sequences consisting of 5-7-5 or 7-7 morae (sounds, not syllables). Thus began a correspondence – which Nair calls an activity of 'quiet solidarity' – where two poets came together to create a shared sense of movement, belonging, and community.

Beauty as an antidote
These poems bring the banal existence of pandemic days into sharp focus. There is a gradual, albeit resentful, acceptance of the rhythms of everyday life (*sameness of spring days that/ lengthen, out of reach*): chopping shallots and dicing aubergines, long queues outside bakeries, the 'public privacy' of cafés, plucking notes from Abida Parveen's

**A Different Distance:
A Renga**
Marilyn Hacker and
Karthika Nair
Context
₹499



Poets Karthika Nair; and (top) Marilyn Hacker. (GETTY IMAGES, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)



Games people play

Through the ruminations of an actor, as he goes from boy to man, Adam Ross spotlights a ruthless society

Saikat Majumdar

The very opening of Adam Ross's novel *Playworld* seduces you fatefully: "In the fall of 1980, when I was fourteen, a friend of my parents named Naomi Shah fell in love with me. She was thirty-six, a mother of two, and married to a wealthy man. Like so many things that happened to me that year, it didn't seem strange at the time."

Just as biting is the mother's response that comes after 20 years: "Two decades later, when I finally told my mother – we were on Long Island, taking a walk on the beach – she stopped, stunned, and said, 'But she was such an ugly woman.'" The narrator is unruffled: "The remark wasn't as petty as it sounds. If I was aware of it then, it neither repulsed me nor affected my feelings for Naomi. It was just a thing that I took for granted, like the color of her hair."

But the body that is laid bare and put to auction through the novel is not that of Naomi, but of the actor as a figure of precarity. It is the male actor, boy to man, who vends his ware, voice or smile or role, to get bread, school, and sex. That sounds more brutally vulgar than the complex narratives that make up this 500-page novel, but somewhere deep down, this is its truth.



Playworld
Adam Ross
Knopf
₹944 (ebook)

his sons, who are mortified by the games played by their father.

The vulnerability of the actor, at once comic and tragic, animates this novel and hits me hard because of dark reasons of my own. Griffin's fate threatens to invoke my own childhood – my mother, who died young, was a theatre actress in a society that was suspicious of women who performed. But unlike Griffin in Broadway-loving New York, my line between art and life was both shape-shifting and dangerous in Calcutta, and the child-memory of the reality on and off-stage drove me to write my second novel, *The Firebird* (2015), from the wings and the greenrooms of theatre.

Damning reality

Griffin's vulnerability, shared with the farcical vulnerability of his father, binds me in primitive glue. But the actor's performance makes a gallery of society at large, and *Playworld* never lets us forget that. Much later in the novel, when Griffin is out for dinner with a girl he wants to date, along with her father, Dr. West, a pompous English teacher, and his much younger girlfriend, he suffers through West's lecture on Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, and on his abject failure to get "even a rudimentary grasp of the play's rhetorical architecture".

Is that lack of "understanding" a damning reality for the actor, or is it his great redemption? That it leaves this question unanswered is the generous enigma of Ross's beautiful novel. By performing his role, in his innocence of any critical understanding of the play, Griffin embodies the visceral internalisation of character that shapes the actor.

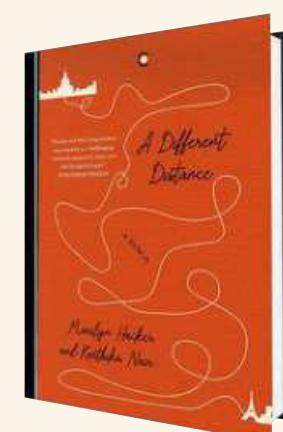
But it also keeps the figure of the actor – including Griffin who pays for school with his theatrical income, and his father whose career is forever defined by what he failed to become – in the margins of a ruthlessly oligarchic society where rich people like Sam Shah have the last laugh. Their triumphal moment is the delight they take in the anti-labour politics and tax cuts for the wealthy by an incumbent Republican government, which feels eerily resonant today.

*The reviewer is the author of five novels, most recently, *The Remains of the Body* (2024).*

Verse vulnerable

When two poets came together during the pandemic to lend a shoulder and write *renga*

**A Different Distance:
A Renga**
Marilyn Hacker and
Karthika Nair
Context
₹499



Hafez ghazal or 'Faiz's refrains'.

While the air seems resplendent with 'budding, lush, wilting, lilacs', 'ghazals of rain', and an 'unnaturally bright April sun', the incumbent spring becomes plague – or does the plague spring? – in one of the opening poems. Hacker's lines often allude to the 'capturing', 'grilling', and 'fencing' of this abundance of nature. This invocation of nature is the poet's way of imagining beauty as an antidote to doom. But as Dostoevsky reminds us, beauty is both mysterious and terrible – doesn't this blushing and blossoming beauty also stand in stark contrast to our impermanence?

Finding hope

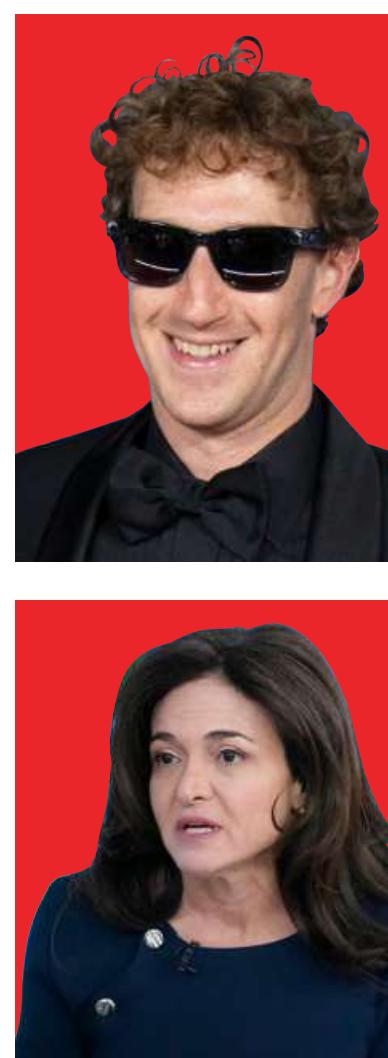
This contrast finds its most evocative, almost chilling, manifestation in one of Naïr's *renga*, which begins: *my horizon, each/ week: the poppy-printed, teal/ hair cap of Nurse Rose*. Notice the masterful line breaks, which not only create a sense of surprise – often called the *aha!* moment by Japanese haiku masters – but also mimic the act of looking, and the gradual revealing of a person. This slow and subtle realisation is contrasted with a stanza of rapt, cruel precision at the end: *she,*

of calm hands and raptor/ gaze, snags any tyrant vein.

Naïr's poems are full of this acute sense of distance – created by the lockdown and further accentuated by 'sabre-toothed daymares', 'blitzkrieg within the chest', and the four 'eyeless, shapeless, horseless words' of RDEB (recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa, a rare genetic condition).

And yet, the collection doesn't resort to solipsism, always chronicling, with teasing irony and deadpan humour, the migrant exodus, human rights breaches, and the eccentricities of both Macron and Modi. This may not be the most dazzling of Naïr's and Hacker's collections, but it is one to be cherished – for the quiet stirrings of hope it holds, for the tender struggle of two poets emerging from the shadows, and for the way beauty, art, and a shared sense of belonging ensconce us in our most vulnerable moments.

*The reviewer is the author of the Hindi short story collection *Yeh Dil Hai Ki Chor Darwaja*.*



John Xavier
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Sarah Wynn-Williams' *Careless People* is a revelatory exposé of Facebook (now Meta) and its meteoric rise to global dominance, penned by someone who was once in the inner circle. As a former Director of Global Public Policy, Wynn-Williams had a front-row seat to the corporate and political machinations that shaped Facebook into one of the world's most influential tools, and in many ways, its most reckless. Within a few chapters into the book, you will know why Meta has tried to block the book's sale and bar the author from further promoting it. What Wynn-Williams offers is a darkly funny, shocking, and ultimately devastating portrait of a company that has irreversibly transformed how people interact, communicate, and perceive the world – often for the worse.

Wynn-Williams' narrative is as much a personal memoir as it is a damning critique of Facebook's leadership, particularly Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg. She draws a clear parallel between these figures and the careless characters in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, quoting the novel's infamous line, "they smashed up things and creatures, and then retreated back into their money". It's an apt analogy for Zuckerberg and Sandberg, who, despite holding

UNFRIENDING FACEBOOK

A former director at Meta writes a devastating portrait of the company and its reckless ways

immense power, seem unaware – or unwilling to acknowledge – the havoc their decisions have caused.

Toxic culture

The memoir opens with Wynn-Williams' idealistic vision of Facebook when she first joined in 2011. Coming from a background in diplomacy, particularly in human rights and environmental issues, she initially, naively saw the platform as a force for good, capable of social change. However, subsequently, she discovers Facebook's corporate culture is less about social good and more about cultivating a toxic environment fuelled by ambition, indifference, and a thirst for power.

As the book progresses, Wynn-Williams' disillusionment deepens. She paints Zuckerberg as a man increasingly desperate for adoration, switching from an engineering focus to a more political one. The image of Zuckerberg at his first meeting with Russian Prime

Minister Dmitry Medvedev in 2012, "nervous and sweaty", is a stark contrast to the self-assured, power-hungry figure he would later become. His evolving ambitions, including a failed attempt at embedding himself in global political circles and even considering a presidential run, reflect his growing desire for influence and control over the global narrative, often at the expense of ethical decision-making.

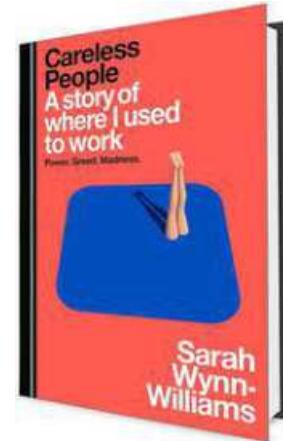
What Wynn-Williams offers is a darkly funny, shocking, and ultimately devastating portrait of a company that has irreversibly transformed how people interact, communicate, and perceive the world – often for the worse

Critique of Sandberg

Wynn-Williams also delivers a piercing critique of Sandberg, who, despite her feminist rhetoric, is depicted as manipulative and indifferent to the struggles of others. She is unflinching in portraying Sandberg's dual persona – one that appeals to women's empowerment through her 'Lean In' manifesto, but which, in Wynn-Williams' eyes, is a mask for deeply entrenched power dynamics and cruelty.

Perhaps the most chilling part of *Careless People* is Wynn-Williams' account of Facebook's role in global events, including the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the genocide of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. She reveals how Facebook's platform was exploited for disinformation campaigns, helping to elect Donald Trump and enable the spread of hate speech that incited violence against the Rohingya.

Despite being warned about these



**Careless People:
A Story of Where I Used
to Work**
Sarah Wynn-Williams
Pan Macmillan India
₹699

risks, the company failed to act swiftly, leaving millions vulnerable to the damage Facebook's algorithms allowed to flourish. Wynn-Williams' efforts to raise alarms about the crisis in Myanmar are particularly poignant, as she recounts the slow and inadequate response from the company, highlighting its complete disregard for the consequences of its global reach.

Ethical flexibility

The book also details Facebook's failed attempts to ingratiate itself with authoritarian regimes, such as its ill-fated plans to enter China. These efforts, code-named 'Aldrin' after the famed astronaut Buzz Aldrin who landed the first manned spacecraft on the moon, were designed to make Facebook compliant with the Chinese Communist Party's demands for censorship and surveillance. In a particularly damning passage, Wynn-Williams describes Zuckerberg's calculated deception when testifying before Congress, denying any complicity in China's suppression of free speech. This kind of ethical flexibility, coupled with a disregard for truth, is a recurring theme throughout the book.

Yet, as much as Wynn-Williams exposes the flaws and moral failings of Facebook's leadership, she also forces a reckoning with her own complicity. There are moments in the narrative where Wynn-Williams acknowledges her own role in perpetuating the company's problems, from supporting controversial initiatives like Internet.org to her failure to fully grasp the impact of the platform's exploitation until it was too late. As a policy leader within Facebook, she was aware of the risks but did little to stop them, instead choosing to follow the company's direction until her own position became untenable.

A face to the damage

Despite these shortcomings, *Careless People* is an important and brave book. It offers a rare, candid glimpse into the internal workings of Facebook at the highest levels, and provides readers with a nuanced perspective on the dangers of unchecked corporate power. It may not offer groundbreaking revelations – many of the issues Wynn-Williams discusses have already been covered in the media – but it puts a human face to the damage Facebook has caused and continues to cause.

For those who are new to these issues, it is an essential starting point to understand the way social media platforms can shape not only individual lives but entire nations and global movements.

Chintan Girish Modi

People who love Hanif Kureishi's work as a novelist and screenwriter were in for a rude shock as news of his fall and spinal cord injury in Rome made headlines in 2022. It was horrifying to imagine the enormity of his agony, as he was confined to a hospital bed and forced to take on the identity of a patient.

He could no longer "walk, write or wash himself", and struggled to accept this new reality that made him "entirely dependent on the goodwill of others", as recounted in his new book *Shattered* – a profound work of contemplative prose.

At the outset, the memoir compels the reader to think about what it means to write, not only as an outlet for creative expression or as a tool for socio-political change but as a physical act. The fall, we are told, resulted in neck hyperextension and immediate tetraplegia, which



Excruciating time Hanif Kureishi, novelist and screenwriter, had a spinal cord injury in 2022. (GETTY IMAGES)

rendered Kureishi unable to move his limbs, scratch his nose, feed himself or make a phone call. He wondered if he would ever manage to hold a pen, or walk on his own. It began as "a series of despatches" dictated to his partner, Isabella, and his sons Sachin, Carlo and Kier from hospital beds in Italy and in the U.K., where he now lives. These dictated drafts were revised, expanded and edited in the same collaborative manner with Carlo.

Honest look at care

The book offers an honest glimpse of how frustrating it can be to ask for and receive support. Kureishi admits, for instance, how impatient he gets with Isabella. "She is Italian and English is her second language, so she doesn't always get what I say," he notes. This slows down the process of his dictation and her note-taking. He acknowledges that his condition is a huge drain on her, and he is unsure if he would have been capable of offering the care she does. While this could be a fair evaluation of his own personality, it could be read as an admission of how patriarchy normalises the unequal distribution of care work in intimate relationships.

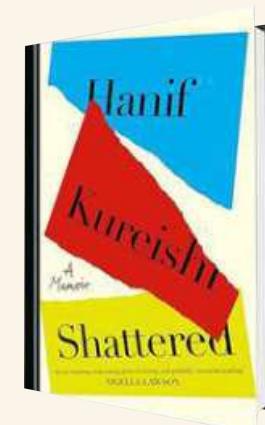
Shattered belongs to the genre of autopoeagy, which focuses on autobiographical narratives about the experience of illness. It captures the inner life of a person who has nowhere to go and must learn to keep his mind occupied, even distracted, to avoid succumbing to suicidal thoughts. He

thinks of himself as a "vegetable", feels jealous of people who have "fit bodies", and feels bad for himself because he cannot go back to the life he once enjoyed. In one of these moments, Kureishi writes, "Will I ever get out of this, will I die here? I think about killing myself by overdosing. It would be a relief."

Leaning on humour

Kureishi shows what it is like to feel imprisoned in a space that is meant to help him recover. He speaks on behalf of every person who has felt disempowered by the medical-industrial complex because it treats their body as an object to be inspected rather than respected.

Since the food tastes like cardboard, and it is boring to stare at empty walls for hours at a stretch, Kureishi entertains himself by writing about the quirks of nurses and physiotherapists at the hospital. He appreciates their cheerfulness and hard work and feels sorry that they are not paid adequately for their labour. On one occasion, after three physiotherapists walk into his room, he remarks, "I have become a big admirer of Italian men... Their skin



Shattered
Hanif
Kureishi
Hamish
Hamilton
₹999

is smooth and it glows. Their sharp dark body hair is inspiring. They are neither macho nor mummy's boys."

It is the author's sense of humour that seems to protect him from losing his bearings during this excruciating period. The humour is often dark and politically incorrect. Kureishi believes that psychiatrists are not good listeners; they are too eager to diagnose and prescribe anti-depressants.

About his own psychiatrist, Kureishi writes, "I've ended up analysing his dreams. Since he was struck by how often he dreams about Donald Trump, I had to inform him of how much he envies Trump's brutality and freedom to do or say whatever occurs to him."

This book makes the reader think about how people with disabilities are expected to be victims, heroes, or grateful beneficiaries of charity rather than complicated, imperfect beings who craft their own unique paths out of the hell they have been thrust into. Kureishi allows himself to whine and admit how "the sick can dominate a family, sucking out all the oxygen" even as he expresses appreciation for his loved ones.

This memoir is the story of his determination "to keep writing" and draw sustenance from words. In doing so, he has created a book that will give courage to the hopeless and evoke empathy in the cold-hearted.

(Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on these 24x7 helplines: KIRAN 1800-599-0019, Aasra 9820466726.)

The reviewer is a journalist, educator and literary critic.

The power of words

By writing about his fall and the aftermath, Hanif Kureishi has created a book that will give courage to the hopeless

ARE YOU THERE, GOD? IT'S ME, PERIMENOPAUSAL MENAKA

About night sweats and other confessions and solutions in books and on Instagram

Menaka Raman

Last week, I asked Google if itchy breasts were the result of wearing a poor quality bra, or perimenopause. Then I conducted an in-depth investigation into the ties between falling hair and falling oestrogen levels. On Reddit,

Honesty, it could be either or neither!" the chatbot responded. Very helpful.

I find myself asking the Internet a lot of questions about perimenopause. It started last year, while working on a project that touched upon menstrual and

menopausal health in the workplace. While the women on the team took great pleasure in schooling the men about menstruation, we quickly realised how woefully inadequate our own knowledge about menopause was.

And so, down a terrifying rabbit hole I went, reading about everything I could find that was menopause related: from brain fog and anxiety, to vaginal dryness and night sweats of biblical flood proportions. It seemed as if any and all horrific things a woman might experience with regards to her physical or mental health post the age of 35 might be because of menopause. Or, as the chatbot told me: it might not.

When All Fours
blew up group texts

It was around the same time that I read Miranda July's *All Fours*. Shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction this



Midlife Margaret

Perimenopause is clearly having its moment now, and long may it last. More and more women are talking about their symptoms, experiences, and how they're charting a way forward. And while there's a slew of recently published books on dealing with menopause, the one that I'd like to read, would be a sequel to Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. Just as dear Margaret helped a pre-teen find a safe space to grapple with topics such as periods and bras, I'm sure my body feels like it's on fire every now and then.

But since the likelihood of this is low, my Instagram feed is standing in as an often highly unreliable source of information. I do not recommend this unless you're willing to wade through Reels in which women dance, work out and chug protein shakes while offering up a certain kind of perimenopause-related content: seven top tips to stop night sweats, five supplements to ease perimenopause, the single exercise you need to do to lose weight and build muscle, why Japanese women have less pronounced perimenopausal symptoms and how you can copy them. Wait, is that cultural appropriation? Hang on a second while I ask Google.

The writer is a children's book author and columnist based in Bengaluru.

But it was the second half that stayed with me, where the protagonist's female friends share their own experiences around perimenopause.

These were lived experiences that July herself gathered while writing the

**CONTINUED FROM
» PAGE 1**

Dr. Mansukhani says sleep deprivation can shorten one's patience. "Essentially, the capacity to manage errors and mistakes, as well as responsibilities at the managerial level, becomes reduced. Many women tell me that they feel like they are losing control frequently, and this experience is something we all encounter at some point."

Taboos persist

Menopause discussions are now gaining traction in workplaces globally. Across the U.S., U.K., and Europe, legislative discussions, policy proposals, and corporate initiatives are addressing the issue. In India, a few forward-thinking companies are taking action.

Standard Chartered Bank is one of them. They partnered with the Financial Services Skills Commission in the U.K. five years ago to understand the impact of menopause on career and talent retention. "Learnings from this have been applied across countries, including India," says Shivshanker S.V., India and South Asia Head of Human Resources at Standard Chartered Bank.

A signatory to the 'Wellbeing of Women's Menopause Workplace Pledge' and a member of the 'Menopause Friendly Employer' organisation, the bank provides counselling and full medical coverage for menopause-related consultations for employees and their partners.

"We take a data-led approach to better understand the challenges. Specific initiatives include wellness resources, flexible work arrangements, awareness sessions with gynaecologists, manager training, and a closed-group 'Lean-In Circle' for open conversations," says Shivshanker.

Bengaluru-based Shanti Kurupati, treatment, largely due to gaps in healthcare system preparedness. Vedullapalli sees this as a call to action.

"If we want to empower women as innovators, executives, and changemakers, we must address the full ecosystem of support – skills development, economic access, health, and wellness readiness," she says.

Kurupati acknowledges this fear of losing out, across a woman's life phases – from childbirth to menopause. She thinks sharing experiences resonates with people and allyship between women is important. "Intuit's initiatives aren't just policies – they are born from the lived experiences of senior women who've gone through these life transitions."

A recent Women In Cloud survey (Feb-March 2025) of more than 1,000 respondents found that over 60% of women experience cognitive, mood, and stress management challenges – yet few receive targeted care. Only 25% of those seeking medical help for hormonal or stress-related concerns received an accurate diagnosis and

admitted not fully understanding what she was going through. "Nobody was sensitive enough to notice how women of her generation felt."

Even today, Vedullapalli points out, awareness and sensitivity around women's health challenges is lacking. Early on, many healthcare providers dismissed her symptoms, advising more exercise or stress management without addressing the underlying hormonal shifts. Some even suggested her challenges were psychological rather than physiological.

After finally receiving a clear diagnosis, Vedullapalli took a proactive approach: embracing a holistic lifestyle that included hormone therapy.

Most Indian workplaces lack formal mechanisms to support women through menopause; (below) Dr. A. Tamilselvi of Chennai Menopause Society. (GETTY IMAGES SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)



inflammation-reducing supplements, metabolic and hormonal tracking, and prioritising restorative habits. "I'm fanatic about my eight hours of sleep," she says.

Women's health is so under-served, Ray notes. "From the research to finding the best informed doctors, it's a journey." It's probably the reason women are coming together to create platforms, groups and resources that demystify menopause.

When Juilee Dandekar entered surgical menopause at the age of 37 after battling endometriosis, she felt information could be her rescue. Her Instagram page @liveleaflessocial documents her surgical menopause journey and is a platform to share experiences and insights. "Not too many people talk about menopause, and at 37, it was overwhelming," says Dandekar, India director for strategy and business development with a leading healthcare company. She got certified by the British Menopause School in 2021 to become a menopause coach. Dandekar

believes "education is the first step" and at the moment, offers free support.

The Chennai Menopause Society (CMS) conducts public awareness sessions to help women understand menopausal symptoms and advise them on simple measures. Even incorporating a few menopause-changes at the workplace can be useful, says urogynaecologist A. Tamilselvi, a member and former secretary of CMS. "Organising annual health check-ups with a gynaecologist consult is one. Employees should also be able to discuss their health issues, including mental health, without the fear of being labelled, losing their jobs or being passed up for promotions," she says.

Struggling to find the right information around her symptoms, Mathur, now a certified women's health coach from the National Board of Health and Wellness Coaches, took a one-and-a-half-year course in the U.S. to find credible information that could help her and other women figure out their bodies. Equipped with knowledge and certification, she is now curating a platform of resources for women over 45. She's writing a book, planning a podcast, and even working on a documentary, aiming to connect more women to credible resources around fitness, nutrition, hormone therapy and emotional well-being.

"Ours is the first generation of women that is asking questions, refusing to suffer endlessly without solutions behind hushed or subdued narratives around women's health and midlife," she says.

Instead, it's a generation determined to change the narrative – by talking, supporting each other, and refusing to stay invisible. At home and more importantly, at work.

The writer is a freelance journalist and the co-author of *Rethink Ageing*.



BREAKING THE SILENCE AROUND MENOPAUSE

Kurupati acknowledges this fear of losing out, across a woman's life phases – from childbirth to menopause. She thinks sharing experiences resonates with people and allyship between women is important. "Intuit's initiatives aren't just policies – they are born from the lived experiences of senior women who've gone through these life transitions."

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BINGE WATCH

Carry on, KimAppa

Jarrod Kimber and Robin Uthappa's new podcast takes apart IPL, and addresses tough subjects such as mental health

would this Saudi league look like, and what would that mean for the cricketing landscape in general? Does such a massive and time-consuming league signal the beginning of the end for international cricket's primacy on the calendar? The podcast offers insightful answers to questions like these.

For me, however, the most impressive segment so far is the one where Kimber and Uthappa talk about the mental health of pro cricketers, especially those thrust into the limelight in their teenage years. Uthappa won the World Cup while still 20, and as he puts it himself on the podcast, he was "lost" for a good four to five years. At one point, he whips out an old photograph and shows it to Kimber – an unrecognisable Uthappa is at least 30-40 pounds heavier than usual, with haunted eyes, trying his best to fake a smile.

Uthappa also speaks poignantly about rebounding from a suicide attempt. I think the episode should be required listening/watching for every young cricketer.

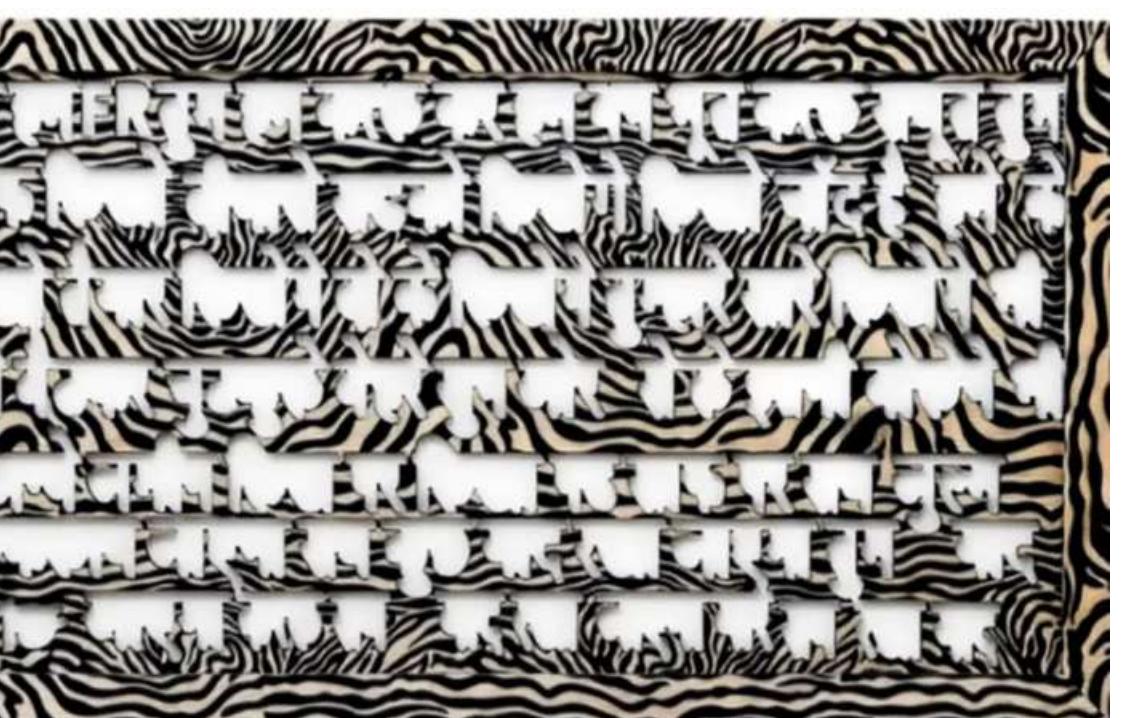
In a similar vein, Kimber and Uthappa also talk about the latter's ideas for a "finishing school" for young cricketers. "Table manners, how to talk to the press, how to handle investments, what skills to develop outside of cricket," says Uthappa, "all of this stuff should be taught to youngsters so that when they eventually stop playing professionally, they have something to move towards, something that will set them up for life after the game."

For diehard cricket fans, I cannot recommend *KimAppa* enough. And even if you're more of a casual fan and don't follow the game closely, I think you'll find plenty to interest you in this podcast.

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



(Clockwise from left) Anita Dube at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale; Aamir Aziz; and two works from the Three Storey House featuring Aziz's words. (THULASI KAKKAT, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, AND VADEHRAART.COM)

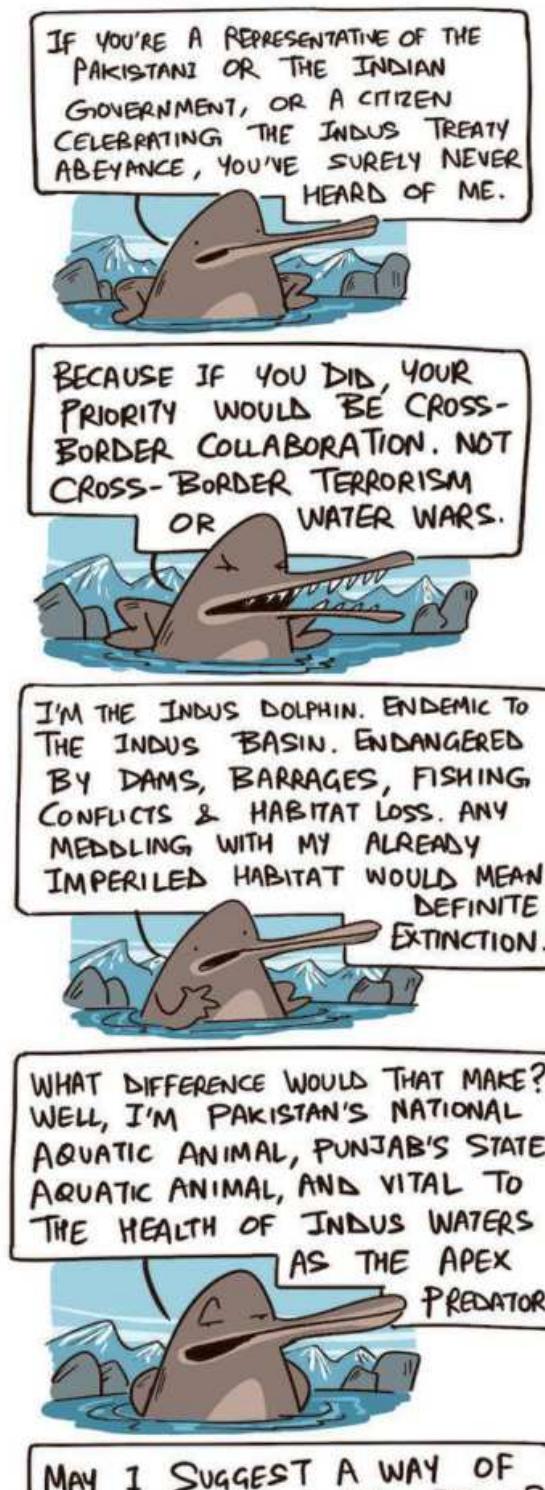


INSIDE THE THREE STOREY HOUSE

The controversy around the use of Aamir Aziz's *Sab Yaad Rakha Jayega* in Anita Dube's art goes beyond just credit or consent

GREEN HUMOUR

Rohan Chakravarty



Gautami Reddy

Last week, poet Aamir Aziz accused Anita Dube, one of India's leading contemporary artists, of using his words without permission in four artworks exhibited at Vadhera Art Gallery in New Delhi. The phrase in question, *Sab Yaad Rakha Jayega* (*Everything will be remembered*), became a rallying cry against the 2019-20 protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act legislation that excluded Muslims and challenged India's secular foundations. Aziz's poem captured the rage and hope of a generation. Dube's use of it – without credit or consent – raises larger questions

about solidarity, ownership, and the widening gap between the art world and the political realities it often claims to engage with.

Solidarity or extraction

"Let's be clear: If someone holds my words in a placard at a protest, a rally, a people's uprising, I stand with them. But this is not." Aziz wrote in an Instagram post addressed to what he called the "entitled section of the art world". This is not solidarity... This is outright cultural extraction and plunder, stripping authors of autonomy while profiting off their voices."

In response, Dube admitted to an "ethical lapse" – one that, legally, could amount to copyright infringement. In a Facebook post,

she invoked the ethos of the commons and copyleft, mourning the "lost old world where there were fellow traveller solidarities", when political art circulated freely as collective property in service of resistance.

But this was not activism. This was a commercial gallery show, where works may cumulatively have been priced between ₹30 lakh and ₹1 crore, according to a dealer source.

Dube's exhibition, *Three Storey House*, was conceived as a critique of authoritarianism, using protest poetry and symbolism to comment on India's current political climate. In intention, it aligned with Aziz's message. But as this controversy makes clear, solidarity is not built on shared ideas alone. It demands

consent, collaboration, and mutual respect.

As writer and activist Kavita Krishnan noted in response to Dube's post: "Aamir is a young poet with no resources at all compared to yours. Surely you should have respected him enough to speak to him first, get his consent, and make sure he was credited... The issue isn't monetization, or market, or even copyright. It's a question of respect. His visibility comes with dire risks because he is a Muslim, without wealth or privilege. Two artists can collaborate – but with mutual respect."

The lost commons

India's contemporary art scene emerged after the economic

liberalisation of the 1990s with minimal public infrastructure. It was shaped by collective ambition: artists formed collectives, collectors opened museums, and initiatives like the India Art Fair began charting a global footprint. Despite its private foundations, the scene carried a strong spirit of collaboration.

Dube was both a product – and a pioneer – of that spirit. As a former critic and member of the Marxist-influenced Indian Radical Painters and Sculptors Association in Vadodara, and later as a co-founder of the KHOJ International Artists' Association in 1997, she helped imagine a "co-operative, non-hierarchical" space for experimentation. In 2018, she became the first woman to curate the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, an artist-led

platform that began as a rejection of art's growing commercialisation. But today, that ethos feels increasingly hollow. Rather than uniting across caste, class, religious, and institutional lines to resist authoritarianism, the Indian art world often operates in silos. One world caters to elite collectors, galleries, and biennials. The other, often made up of artists outside the formal art world, speaks to the street. Their paths, increasingly, do not cross.

Responsibility amid rising markets

A counterpoint comes from artist Sameer Kulavoor, who also engaged with Aziz's poetry. His timelapse video *Malbe Ka Dher* (which depicted the basic shape of a human morphing from one uncomfortable form to another, questioning the sense of comfort and permanence associated with the space) borrowed its title from one of Aziz's poems. "I came across the poem on Instagram and it strangely aligned with the animation I had just finished making. So, I dropped Aamir a message to ask for permission... and he was genuinely pleased," Kulavoor says. "If we come from different worlds, the artwork and its sharing should be a way of making the two worlds meet – of giving audiences together."

The all-new *KimAppa* podcast

seeks to combine these two aspects and so far, has delivered the best of both worlds. The podcast features writer and cricket analyst Jarrod Kimber alongside former Team India batter Robin Uthappa, who was part of M.S. Dhoni's T20 World Cup-winning team from 2007, and represented India in one-day international cricket as well (the name of the podcast is, of course, a portmanteau of their names). *KimAppa* is hosted on Kimber's 'Good Areas' YouTube page as well as on Uthappa's own channel. There have been four episodes of about 70-80 minutes apiece so far, and new episodes are recorded live on the weekend, covering the entire week's IPL action.

This moment brings opportunity, but it also demands responsibility. As artists, curators, galleries, and institutions grow in ambition, they must grow in accountability, too. In the race to expand markets, they cannot lose sight of the voices that gave meaning to their work in the first place.

Sab yaad rakha jayega. What matters now is how we choose to move forward.

The culture writer and editor specialises in reporting on art, design and architecture.

Listen to the IN FOCUS podcast about this controversy and the copyright law.

CM YK

the mighty Bermuda team." To his credit, Uthappa laughs at the reference, arguably the most photogenic moment of his career, because his dismissal against Bermuda involved a spectacular one-handed catch by Dwayne "Sluggo" Leverock, a portly Bermudian policeman who somehow glided a ball easy to his right like a gazelle for this one.

Breaking down the power game

From the first episode itself, it is obvious that Kimber and Uthappa enjoy an easygoing rapport. They're both deep thinkers of the game, they've both worked with IPL teams and other franchises around the world. And they're good sports, generally speaking.

In the second episode, Kimber introduces himself by saying, "I'm Jarrod Kimber, a writer and podcaster and other things that no one cares about, and with me is Robin Uthappa, former Team India opener who in the 2007 ODI World Cup scored 3 against

associated with prolific six-hitters like Dhoni and Andre Russell is also alluded to in a tongue-in-cheek way, when Kimber asks Uthappa, "How does it make you feel as a man when you see M.S. Dhoni coming to bat as low as number 9?"

Mental health and finishing schools

If like me you enjoy looking at the bigger picture when it comes to sports and geopolitics, *KimAppa* has you covered. There's an excellent analysis of the recently-reversed plans by Saudi Arabia to make major investments in cricket. We learned last month that the kingdom is planning a multi-billion-dollar franchise tournament,

Dear reader, as always, I hope this fortnight's missive finds you healthy and prosperous. Your correspondent once again found himself on the road, travelling to meet family over the Easter holidays. This time, my travel took me to my homeland of Kerala.

April is not, let me be frank, the best time to visit Kerala. The weather outside is 36°C Celsius. But thanks to the wonders of modern architecture, ancient *vaastu* principles of ventilation, and powerful state-of-the-art air-conditioning, the weather indoors is a relaxing 42°C Celsius.

A few days ago, I proceeded, in the above-mentioned volcanic weather, to a shop in Thrissur to procure some diet cola. There, in the process of filling out some kind of loyalty membership form, a fellow customer recognised me.

Hello, he said, you write articles for *The Hindu* newspaper, yes?

Reader, in that moment, my heart swelled with pride faster than the reciprocal tariff rate on China.

We newspaper columnists ply our trade in order to bring wisdom, information and amusement to the life of our readers. And in return, we ask for nothing except moderate compensation from the newspaper, the satisfaction of seeing our names in print, and the off-chance of getting some kind of non-executive appointment to the board of a large company, with immoderate compensation, in exchange for positive references to such companies in our columns. I have never done such things myself. It would be unethical. And I invite representatives from BMW, Apple, Louis Vuitton or Rolex to try and convince me otherwise.

GETTY IMAGES



TRICKTIONARY EPISODE 10

UNCLE, PLEASE SPARE ME

When elderly relatives bring with them unbelievable enthusiasm and obsolete viral content

GOREN BRIDGE

Unusual 'double' squeeze

East-West vulnerable, South deals

Bob Jones

Today's deal features a rare situation where the defenders first squeeze declarer out of a needed trick, and the declarer later turns the tables on

the defense, squeezing them to get his trick back.

West led his fourth best club and followed with four more club tricks. South could safely discard a low spade on the fourth club, but what should he discard on the fifth club? A low heart, leaving himself with a

The bidding:
SOUTH 1NT **WEST** All pass **NORTH** EAST

Opening lead: Jack of ♣

singleton king, was a possible choice. It would leave him with seven winners if the defenders did not shift to hearts, but it was also dangerous. South decided to discard the eight of diamonds. West shifted to the 10 of diamonds, and South cashed diamonds, leaving this position (far right) with one diamond remaining. West had to discard a spade on the

jack of diamonds or South could lead a low heart to West's singleton ace and set up his king. Dummy shed a heart, but what could East do? East could not discard a spade also, so he parted with the jack of hearts. Declarer led a low spade to dummy's ace and a heart back to the queen, king, and ace. The nine of hearts was now his seventh trick. A nice deal.

NORTH
♦ A 9 5
♥ 10 7
♦ 6 5 3
♣ 7 6 4

WEST
♠ Q 4 2
♥ A 5 3
♦ 10 9
♣ A K Q J 3

EAST
♠ J 10 7 6
♥ Q J 8 4
♦ 7 4 2
♣ 8 5

SOUTH
♠ K 8 3
♥ K 9
♦ A K Q J 8
♣ 10 9 2

NORTH
♦ A 9 5
♥ 10 7
♦ Void
♣ Void

EAST
♠ J 10 7
♥ Q J
♦ Void
♣ Void

SOUTH
♠ K 8
♥ K 9
♦ J
♣ Void

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

May the 4th be with you



Bird of prey This spaceship was piloted by Han Solo in *Star Wars*. (GETTY IMAGES)

Berty Ashley

1 In 2008, SpaceX became the first private company to launch a rocket into space. Though public thought the rocket was named after a fast bird of prey, it was actually named after the spaceship piloted by Han Solo in *Star Wars*. What was the name of the rocket?

2 This is a small molecule that is named after a *Star Wars* character because it "uses the force" to open piezo ion channels in a class of animal proteins. The interesting name of this small molecule what is?

3 LICIACube is a deep space mission equipped with two

optical cameras for conducting asteroidal reconnaissance during flyby. They are the 'LICIACube Explorer Imaging for Asteroid' and the 'LICIACube Unit Key Explorer'. By what names are these known, which is a tribute to a pair of siblings the *Star Wars* universe revolves around?

4 Garthambrus darthvaderi is a type of millipede that has a shiny black head. It bears a striking resemblance to the most famous visual characteristic of Darth Vader. What part of Vader is the animal named after?

5 'Uravu' is Bengaluru-based company whose main product was inspired by a machine called 'Vaporator' on the planet Tatooine. The two suns in the sky

makes the planet hot but with high humidity, hence the machine. What do both these products do?

6 Sprocket Systems was started in 1975 as a company that made sound effects for movies. Their work on *Star Wars* earned them critical acclaim and 15 Oscar Awards. In 1987, they changed their name to honour the family around whom the movies revolve. What is the name?

7 In 2015, as a part of the decommunisation process in Ukraine, the government brought down a lot of statues. One particular one, however, was modified into a monument to Darth Vader, with his helmet giving free wi-fi. Vader replaced

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

10. Han solo
9. SFT
8. Afly
7. Walker Lenin
6. Shermi
5. Tum moisture in the air to drinking water

Answers
1. Work unofficially with Spooner's crackpot force (9)
2. Shape of cut has grown unevenly (7)
3. Thin box, susceptible at the edges (6)

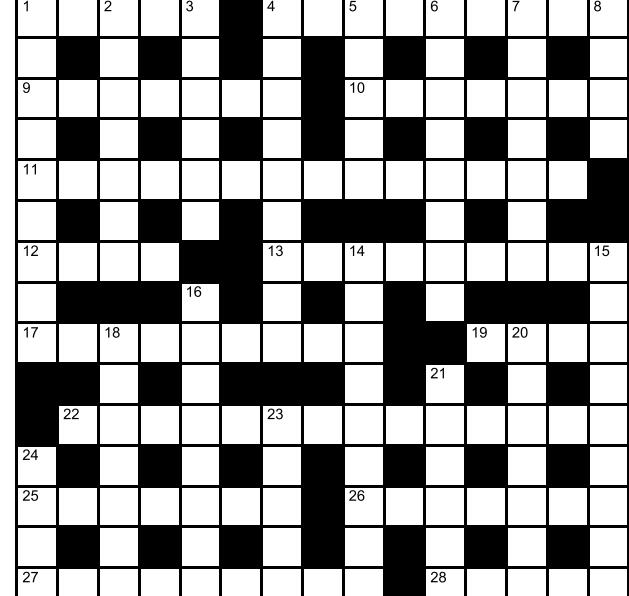
which figure who was the first head of government of Soviet Russia?

8 Meoneura artodetoo is a type of insect that is named after R2-D2, a small and inconspicuous android robot that saves the world. What animal is this apart from buzzing around plays an important role in recycling organic matter?

9 On July 1, 2017, Prime Minister Modi addressed the Institute of Chartered Accountants. He announced the implementation of a new rule and walked off stage as the 'Imperial March' was played. What announcement was followed by Darth Vader's theme?

10 In 2005, researchers discovered a trilobite fossil discovered in southern China. It was then named for the local Han Chinese people and for being the only member of its genus. What is the scientific name of this trilobite?

THE HINDU SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 2 (Set by Gussalufz)



Across

- Bits of matter, unstable, originating near space (5)
- Modify a robot, perhaps, eliminating erratic antics from organised terror campaigns (9)
- Going away from conflict after South shelled closer to neighbourhood (7)
- A loud, never-ending party with one stoned and green (7)
- Fancy glass heliport around one lawmaker's office (14)
- Green tea oddly a part of one's make-up? (4)
- Emergency worker's norm in the morning: dice bananas (9)
- Mysterious hit list includes initials of your parents? That's a serious problem (9)
- Chief's ECG monitor providing regular readings (4)
- You'll find out soon that W.C. is broken express disapproval and walk back and forth (5,4,5)
- Oregon's rolling by at last, mountains coming up (7)
- She eats very well, somewhat mocking our metabolism (7)
- Many orbit weirdly, showing deviation (9)
- Right, lock doesn't open, key's tip rough? (5)
- Upcoming sprinter inspires Germany, favoured to get VIP treatment (3,6)
- Possibly grand plan to turn Liberal into Independent? Fiasco, ultimately (5)
- Furry creatures in love largely pose problems (8)
- Prepared to examine makeshift bomb? (7)
- Movies struggle to get released, netting nothing in cattle calls (4)
- In a grating voice: "God alone holds power" (9)
- Find faults with item's woodwork (9) 16 Recycled phone gather, mostly, it's safe (3-5)
- Company policy restricts unreasonably (7)
- Rank Florida city around second, approximately (7)
- Publishing company is the plaintiff (6)
- Filthy minds filled with "glandular organs" (5)
- Final piece of fish was skinless (4)

SOLUTION NO. 1

E	A	D	R	N	E	W
S	P	U	E	R	O	N
I	M	L	I	N	I	N
I	C	E	A	P	N	V
H	H	I	O	M		
P	A	R	D	I		
S	U	N	R	E		
L	E	T	O	F		
A	M	N	I	F		
F	I	N	X	A		
N	D	S	O	I		

Down

- Work unofficially with Spooner's crackpot force (9)
- Shape of cut has grown unevenly (7)
- Thin box, susceptible at the edges (6)

originally recorded in Moscow in 2018.

Which is fine. We all frequently see the same content over and over again. Who hasn't seen the film *Mohra* once a month for the last 20 years? I have. You. We all have.

The problem is that when respected relatives ask you if you have seen something on their phones... they do it with unbelievable enthusiasm. You don't want to break their heart. What is more, you never want to tell them you have already seen something. They will immediately think you are being oversmart. Who knows what inheritance you have been deleted from.

Instead, you are supposed to appreciate whatever content they show you. And if 10 different relatives show you the same thing in the space of two hours, you are supposed to laugh at all of them with unmitigated enthusiasm.

Which is why I am hereby coining a term for this phenomenon: geriatrend.

Example sentence: "I was standing in the kitchen, unsuspectingly quartering a guava, when my uncle geriatrended me with the information that 'Sir U Made Lakhs' is an anagram of Suresh Kalmadi."

Have you detected any emerging geriatrends in your family circles? Early identification can help others like you. Do you have any special methods for dealing with geriatrends? Please leave comments urgently.

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



Naveen Khajanchi
leadersnk@gmail.com

In our pursuit of happiness, we often chase grand achievements – career success, financial security, or material comforts – allowing the outside world to define us. Remember, positions and acquisitions can give you a temporary dose of joy, but it's only family and friends who will be there at a time of crisis. Unhappiness thrives on our ability to keep visiting the past and keeping our mind out of control. However, happiness is an inside job, where you take charge of mind, body, soul and in today's era, mobile.

True happiness often lies in the smallest and simplest actions of giving and receiving love or kindness. My happiness sustainers – caring, sharing, listening, and speaking with pure intention – are about practising without expectation. When we cultivate these habits, we build deeper connections, strengthen resilience, and lead more fulfilling lives. The real joy comes when this practice becomes an intrinsic motivation rather than a transactional act. I have a daily ritual of helping someone in small ways, and over the years, this has become an effortless, intrinsic part of me. The pleasure of giving without expectation is truly transformative and time well spent.

How can we remain more united than divided in daily life with our fellow beings will define a lot of our happiness quotient in life.

Caring is one of the most effective happiness boosters because it shifts our focus from ourselves to others. Acts of kindness are on the rise as per the latest World Happiness report and much more is needed. Imagine a colleague who seems withdrawn or stressed. A simple check-in, "Hey, I noticed you've been quiet lately. Is everything okay?", can make her feel valued and heard. Research suggests that acts of kindness release oxytocin, often called the "love hormone", which enhances mood and helps foster social bonds.

Being helpful

Offer help without being asked. A small gesture, like making tea for a family member or a co-worker, can brighten their day. Support a cause – volunteer at an NGO or mentor

Sustaining happiness

How to be in the right frame of mind always

someone who needs guidance. My association with supporting education has taught me that the ground realities of each child and parent can be very different.

Show appreciation – acknowledge efforts by thanking people with clarity of what you really appreciate rather just a thank you. I really liked when you got me the tea at the time I wanted it most – that means so much over a thank you.

Happiness is amplified when it is shared. Whether it's sharing experiences, knowledge, or even material resources, the act of giving without expectations or ego creates a sense of abundance and fulfilment. An extended family tradition of having Sunday tea together has not only strengthened our bond but also created a safe space for meaningful conversations. Similarly, professionals who share their expertise through mentorship find immense satisfaction in helping others grow. Share meals, stories, or ideas – host a weekend gathering with friends and encourage open conversations.

Contribute resources – donate books, clothes, or your time to someone in need. Just visiting the patient and being there for the caregivers in the hospital or home is so relieving for them and even the patient.

Listening is often undervalued, yet it is one of the most powerful ways to show respect and care. In a world filled with distractions, truly listening to someone can be a rare gift. A



Communication is key to happiness. When we express our thoughts and emotions openly, we reduce stress, resolve conflicts, and build deeper relationships. However, how we speak matters just as much as what we say

leader who listens attentively to the team fosters an environment of trust and collaboration. Similarly, a parent who listens without judgment helps the child develop confidence and emotional security. I am still a work in progress here.

Active listening

Practise active listening – put away your phone and make eye contact when someone speaks. Listen without interrupting – pause before responding to truly process what the other person is saying. Show empathy – validate feelings instead of dismissing them. Instead of saying, "It's not a big deal", try, "That sounds really tough. How can I support you?"

Communication is key to happiness. When we express our thoughts and emotions openly, we reduce stress, resolve conflicts, and build deeper relationships. However, how we speak matters just as much as what we say.

A workplace that encourages open, respectful communication has a healthier culture than one where employees bottle up concerns.

Often, we must be mindful of not letting our unconscious biases spring up in the present context. Similarly, a friend who expresses appreciation for another's support strengthens their bond.

Speak with kindness – compliment someone genuinely today or help someone needy. Here the tone of my voice needs to improve, says my wife as she doesn't feel it when I say nice things.

Have courageous conversations – address issues directly but respectfully rather than avoiding them. Just being good and polite is often the easier way out. Tough conversations in a safe space are needed more than ever before.

Happiness isn't something we chase – it's something we cultivate through daily actions.

So, here's your challenge: today, pick one of these boosters and apply it consciously. Show kindness to a stranger, truly listen to a loved one, or express gratitude to a colleague. Small and simple daily actions create big impacts with lifelong memories.

The attention we give to ourselves and our loved ones – and the attention we receive in return – shape our sense of belonging and fulfilment.



Cats in Bulgaria

Healthy felines of various sizes and colours roam the streets of Sofia

Arun Sahu

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GETTY IMAGES

Why do cats meow, yowl, and cry so much at night? I asked our Bulgarian driver. "It's love season," he replied in broken English with a smile.

"Don't the owners mind?" I continued.

"Not all cats are pets, sir. Many are street cats."

It was the end of January, my first month in Sofia, Bulgaria. As the snowfall diminished and the weather improved, I saw healthy cats of various sizes and colours roaming the streets freely.

Whenever I opened the door of my residence, I would spot a cat or two heading to a nearby house or the open field. At night, they don't merely meow; they whine and wail, piercing the silence of a solitary European winter evening. They lament, complain, and grieve. I spoke with a few locals. Some mentioned that they wail when they feel lonely, while others said they do so to attract attention. A few reiterated that it was the season for romance.

The history of cats living alongside humans remains unknown. However, they have been domesticated in Central Europe for 10,000 years. The Nubian cat from

North Africa, is considered their ancestor. The Nubian cat travelled to this region through Anatolia, Cyprus, and Greece, eventually reaching ancient Rome. It cross-bred and reproduced in 19th-century Poland, leading to the gradual emergence of smaller domestic cats. Over the centuries, cats have secured a significant place in human settlements, myths, legends, and creative endeavours.

As many other societies, Bulgarian folklore and legends associate cats with both good and evil.

As a child, I was fascinated by how a mother cat moves her kittens from one place to another. She gently lifts a kitten by the scruff of its neck and carries it to a cosy spot. I have been told that kittens are born in Bulgaria in May and June, and I await the opportunity to witness the Bulgarian version of this phenomenon.

Heads or tails?

As coins are becoming scarce, many vendors do not return small change

disappointment if you do not "tender the exact fare". The other day, I was intrigued seeing shops in a mall displaying price tags of ₹99 or ₹999 instead of ₹100 or ₹1,000. A co-customer said this is a marketing technique.

When I bought a shirt with the price tag of ₹499 and paid ₹500 in cash, the shopkeeper did not bother to give me back the one rupee.

When I asked for it, he apologetically grinned and said, "No change. Sorry, sir." Once, having purchased provisions for ₹1,528, I gave ₹1,550 at the counter. I got back a ₹20 note and a toffee in lieu of ₹2. When I demurred, the grocer coaxingly told me that he would adjust it in my next purchase.

Many shopkeepers could not return small change mainly due to a coin crunch. But there is liberal use of coins in

some other countries. While travelling to the airport in Singapore, I offered the taxi driver two \$\\$10 notes when the meter showed \$\\$19.5. He quietly took a 50¢ coin from a cluster of coins he had in the dashboard of his car, and smilingly offered it to me.

On principle, I am loath to losing money in cash transactions, however trivial it might be. Hence, I carry in my purse coins of all denominations. As banks in our area frequently run short of coins, I obtain them from a neighbouring eatery.

Asked how he manages to get small change, the restaurant owner pointed to a person sitting in a corner near his shop and said: "He is the leader of the beggars in this area. He willingly provides coins in exchange of currency notes for which he charges a commission."



FEEDBACK

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

Cover story

Al, the Internet and our job schedules have isolated us. ('How new India is making friends'; April 27) We have been forced to become introverted. Having friends in such a situation brings much-needed solace.

Devavna Ramachandran

Not everything can be achieved with success. Losing friends and family or leaving behind our beloved hometown to chase dreams in big cities is a sad reality for many of us.

Kirti Wadhawan

The loneliness epidemic among young urban Indians is a serious issue. It is appalling to know that the health impact of loneliness, as per the WHO, is similar to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Devadas K. Nair

As more individuals seek to prioritise their well-being, initiatives promoting community engagement and emotional openness are gaining traction. By creating spaces that encourage genuine connections, we have the opportunity to restore the feeling of belonging.

Sajna Hameed

Pope Francis is gone but long live his deeds as an apostle of peace and harmony in turbulent times. ('People's pontiff'; April 27) By reversing the course of conservatism set by his predecessors, the pontiff quickly came to be viewed as an agent of necessary change.

Vijay Singh Adhikari



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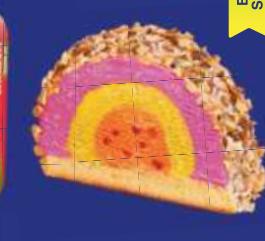
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