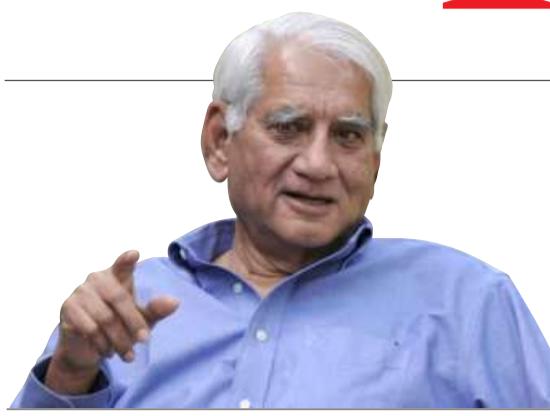


# magazine

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Pooja Garg

**O**n an unseasonably warm evening for the last week of October, Kamala Harris, along with former president Barack Obama and music legend Bruce Springsteen, rocked a stadium filled to capacity in an Atlanta suburb known as the most diverse square mile in America. The focus was on the majority population.

The Atlanta metro area is home to nearly 150,000 Indian Americans who have been rallying support for Harris. But if Indian Americans have been waiting for Kamala *chitti*, she has yet to make an appearance in the 2024 U.S. presidential campaign.

When Harris was running for vice president in 2020, her connection to the Indian American community was palpable. A video of her making *dosas* with actor-screenwriter Mindy Kaling went viral. Her sister and niece shared stories about her Chennai roots. Author and model Padma Lakshmi and YouTube star Lilly Singh endorsed her as one of their own, as the Indian heritage woman who had made it.

Once Harris emerged as the Democratic nominee earlier this year, they rallied, enthused by finding representation. The South Asian Women for Harris Zoom call, the first of her campaign, drew over 9,000 attendees – a turnout so vast that Zoom had to adjust its limits. Many of these women went on to host fundraisers, write postcards, change their social media profiles to ‘I support Kamala’, and share memes like, ‘India, Kamala means lotus. In America, Kamala means POTUS’. Harris’ now-famous quip, “You think you just fell out of a coconut tree?” drew chuckles with the intimacy of an inside joke that wove a cultural bond.

### Tokenistic gestures

But if the Indian American voters are looking for more, Harris is no longer wearing her heritage on her sleeve. She talked about her mother’s journey from Chennai to California at the Democratic National Convention, but has refused to be drawn into identity labels. A wise move for a candidate who vows to be a president for all Americans, but for many Indian Americans, it feels like she has drifted away from the representative figure they had embraced. As her engagement with the community has shifted, so has theirs with her. Many are now looking at her in the harsh light of real-life issues.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump’s engagement with Indian Americans has been a show of its own. In a recent viral video, he was seen handing fries to an Indian American couple at a McDonald’s drive-through. The man greeted him with a “namaste”, and the woman thanked him for “taking a bullet for them”. We now know that the scene was staged, but it managed to strike a chord. Trump has not shied away from playing up his ties with India. It also helps that Howdy Modi events are still fresh in the minds of those who see the Trump-Modi connection as a bridge to their own roots and religious identity. One of Trump’s moves was bringing the Indian-origin Usha Vance – wife of his running mate D.J. Vance – into the spotlight, even though there is no love lost between him and former presidential candidate Nikki Haley, also a daughter of Indian immigrants.

The tokenism, though, has not managed to sway many Indian

## U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

# HANGING ON TO THE AMERICAN DREAM

The Indian American community – with a voter turnout higher than the national average – is weighing its options to determine a course of action, come November 5

Americans who question Trump’s ability to be a leader and a president for all Americans with his criminal convictions, sexual misconduct, and anti-immigrant rhetoric. In contrast, Harris has served as public prosecutor and California’s attorney general. At a recent rally, former first lady Michelle Obama questioned the expectation from Harris to be “flawless” while Trump gets away with being “lawless”.

In the grand theatrics of choosing a candidate for the world’s most powerful position, the most candid political debates are still happening on Indian American WhatsApp groups. An example:

**A:** One should have the guts to support Trump.  
**B:** That’s why he committed 88 felonies.  
**A:** You keep changing the number of felonies by the hour. At least ask your AI tool the right questions before sharing information.

**B:** Trump’s felonies are countless. I am generous about the count.

**A:** Kamala cannot count on the negative votes for Trump. She needs to get her act together.

**B:** There is a reason why Republican leaders are endorsing Kamala! Trump couldn’t even keep his VP on his side!

**A:** Ignorance is bliss for Kamala. So, she makes promises which are of no use.

**B:** No taxes, no trade, no

immigration, no diversity, just build a beautiful wall, increase tariffs, and bomb the hell out of all enemies...impressive sales pitch!

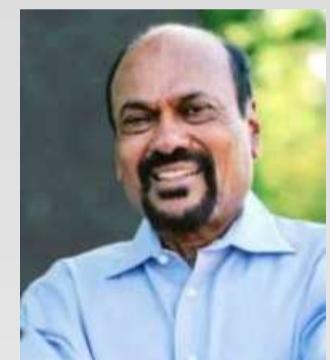
In true Indian fashion, most conversations typically end with calls to rise above the mundane and find peace in spiritual bliss.

**C:** Instead of wasting our time, let’s join an Art of Living session this weekend, friends. We do not know that there is a whole different side within us. We simply eat, reproduce, and die one day without ever tasting the core of our lives.

But meditation sessions are wasted right now on Indians who came to America chasing higher education, successful careers, and affluent lifestyles for their families. Economy and taxation are occupying their sleeping and waking – and meditating – hours.

**CONTINUED ON**  
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## THINKING ALOUD



Talk to our H1B visa holders, see what long and tough journeys they have made to get here. And then someone comes in illegally from the southern border. That’s not right.

**NARENDR REDDY**  
Running for State Representative in Georgia on a Republican ticket



I am not a proponent of identity politics, but it would feel really good to see a woman of colour, especially one who shares my heritage, take control of the White House. I want a president in the White House who unites us and has empathy. One who is calm and collected in crisis. One who represents the United States with dignity and class. That person is most definitely not Donald Trump.

**MONI BASU**  
Professor, University of Georgia

**READ MORE ON**  
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ILLUSTRATION:  
SOUMYADIP SINHA



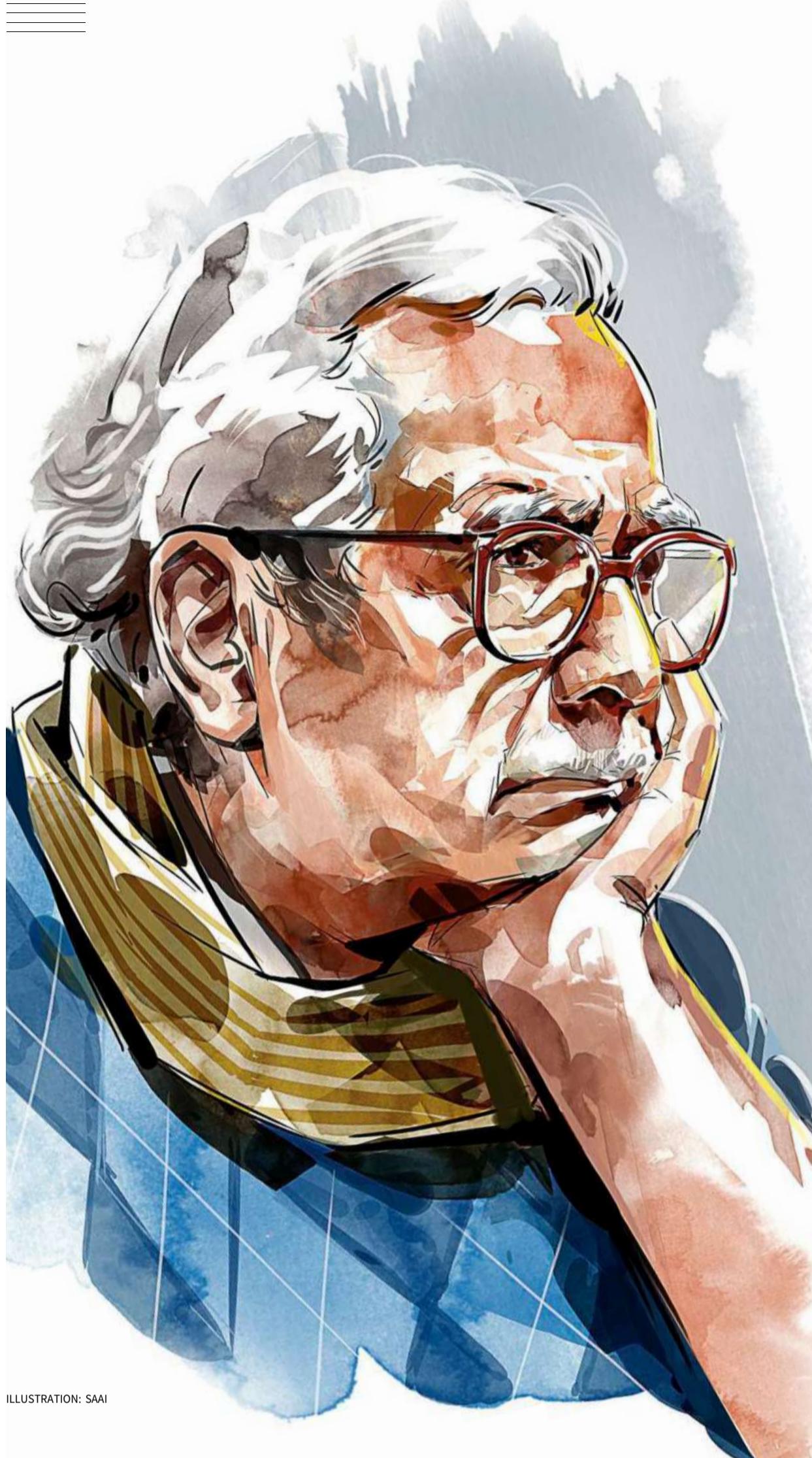


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## Rock and rollercoaster

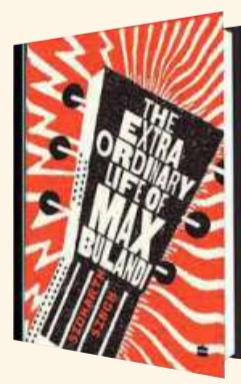
At the heart of this story about a 70s band is the message that there is life after sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll

### Sheila Kumar

**T**his book will hold instant appeal for those who grew up listening to Elvis, The Beatles, Santana, then graduated to The Doors, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin. Who read JS... except, in this book, it's not the iconic *Junior Statesman* but a popular magazine called the *Junior Standard*. Who were rebels with and without a cause.

The protagonist of Sidharth Singh's new novel, *The Extraordinary Life of Max Bulandi*, goes by the improbable name of Nirvana. He is a not-so-young, first-rate journalist working for a second-rate tabloid in Mumbai, wrestling with his internal demons, doing drugs, and riding a Royal Enfield (of course) named Sally for what else but Mustang Sally.

He's also in search of That Good Story and finds it in a back copy of the *Junior Standard*, in an account of a 70s rock



**The Extraordinary Life of Max Bulandi**  
Sidharth Singh  
HarperCollins  
₹399

the heart of the narrative is the message that there is life after sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

**Layered narrative**  
Singh adopts a straight-as-an-arrow style as counterpoint to the textured content. There are events regarding the quest unspooling in the foreground, and in the background there's the politics of the time. The latter tends to overpower the trajectory sometimes but it all comes good in the end. There's also the grim thread of hard drugs brought into India and sold freely, and many youngsters' descent into madness.

If you have come of age in the 70s and 80s, chances are that you have known or consorted with a Max Bulandi. Singh's Max Bulandi is one interesting character.

*The reviewer is a Bengaluru-based author, journalist and manuscript editor.*



GETTY IMAGES

In Turkish writer Aysegül Savas's new book the protagonist finds inspiration in the unremarkable grace of daily routine

## 'SLOW ROT OF A DAY'

### Joshua Muyiwa

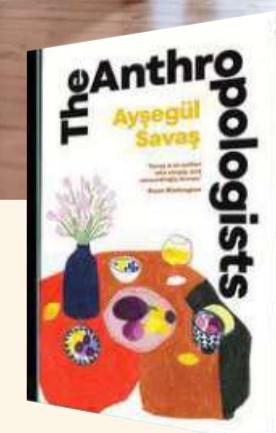
**I**f we believe columnists and podcasters, then the real struggle of modern romantic relationships is keeping it fun, exciting and spicy, constantly. There seems to be this insurmountable social pressure to never ever have a dull moment.

But the truth might be that our relationships in the world are simply a series of subtle logistical adjustments with the other person. While some days might be noteworthy, let's be honest, we're all mostly scrolling through our phones, waiting in supermarket checkout lines, sitting in noisy traffic jams and

browsing the Internet for longform essays we never actually read, or finding gossip to coax conversations with our friends over text.

Asya, the protagonist of Turkish writer Aysegül Savas's third novel, *The Anthropologists*, understands this routine of contemporary life. In fact, as a documentary filmmaker, she says, "For now, I knew little beyond the fact that I wanted to film daily life, and to praise its unremarkable grace." Savas sets out to do the same with her novel.

Asya is one half of a couple living abroad in an unspecified foreign city. Her husband, Manu, works at a non-profit. At the start of the novel, we find the couple



**The Anthropologists**  
Aysegül Savas  
Simon & Schuster  
₹599

trying to "make things a bit more solid" and looking for an apartment to buy. And we learn that for Asya's next documentary, she will film a local park. Both of these decisions are fuelled by Asya's anxieties that they "weren't living by the correct set of rules".

The novel follows Asya and Manu visiting a number of prospective homes, meeting

their few friends, Asya talking to her grandmother and mother over video-calls, and other little peeks into the couple's everydayness. This is the spine of the novel. But like with everything in life, it's the little cracks that give way to something more delicious.

### Outsider's view

*The Anthropologists* is peppered with observations of being an outsider looking in, and Asya allows us to see the weird ways the world still isn't open to difference. The ways that modern autonomy clashes with our ancient human need to be smothered, how annoying neighbours might simply be looking for attention and kindness, how grandmothers giving advice aren't always condescending but a call to construct as well, and that general civility to one another simply gives us all an illusory sense of harmony and permanence".

Another element of contemporary life that Savas's book nails is our fierce protection of being self-made. But, through Asya's observations of the older generations – her parents – we're shown this self-mythologising can be extremely isolating, and not the gift it has been made out to be. In accompanying Asya and Manu while they "make a life", we're invited to stroll through our own, stop and value the textures and tensions therein. *The Anthropologists* isn't cold, clinical notes on daily life in a contemporary world, instead, it manages to be a warm, wonderful take on how we come to be in the world at all.

*The reviewer is a poet and writer based in Bengaluru.*

# THE PLEASURE OF PUZZLES

A new anthology of Vinod Kumar Shukla's poems, translated by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, presents whimsical writings that leave the reader both bemused and baffled

### Harish Trivedi

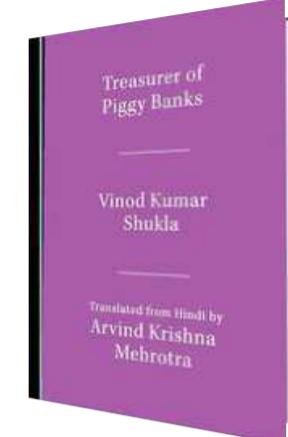
**T**he poet and novelist Vinod Kumar Shukla may well be called the sphinx of contemporary Hindi literature. Taciturn by temperament, soft and impassive in demeanour, inscrutable in intent and often obscure in meaning, he remains a riddle for many of his readers. Both as poet and novelist, he is highly admired by a band of fervent devotees, keeps winning prizes and awards, and leaves many of his readers bemused and mildly baffled.

This substantial anthology of Shukla's poems, translated into English by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, will give readers in English a fuller sample of Shukla's writings, supplementing a collection of his short stories titled *Blue* (2019), which Mehrotra had previously co-translated with Sara Rai. Earlier, Satti Khanna had translated into English a novel of his, *A Window Lived in the Wall*, and Mani Kaul had made a film on another novel, *Naukar ki Kameez* (The Servant's Shirt). A film by Achal Mishra is forthcoming on Shukla and his world.

The present volume contains Mehrotra's translations of about 75 poems selected from Shukla's poetry collections published between 1971 and 2013, and also some "new and uncollected" poems. (These have since been collected in Shukla's latest volume just out this year.)

### Hidden meanings

Obscurity in literature became a



**Treasurer of Piggy Banks**  
Vinod Kumar Shukla, trs Arvind Krishna Mehrotra  
Westland  
₹399

virtue, and in some circles even a desideratum, about a hundred years ago with the publication of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (both in 1922). Both these authors were found to be difficult to understand mostly for the density of multi-lingual classical allusions in them, their recondite vocabulary, and their non-sequential fragmentariness.

But Shukla's obscurity is quite home-grown, as befits someone who taught in a mofussil agricultural college for most of his working life. It derives from sudden turns of thought and phrasing which shoot forth surreally now and then from the even surface of his unadorned and unallusive style. It also derives from his indirections and ellipses, so that his meaning sometimes remains buried in the rich loam of his poetic imagination.

This was illustrated to stunning effect the very first time I met Shukla. This was in January 1990 at a fortnight-long translation workshop held at the Sahitya Akademi in Delhi in which 10 Hindi poets and 10

translators participated. The procedure adopted was for a poet to read out one of his poems and then for all of us together to discuss it into translation. After Shukla read out his first poem, there was not so much a hush as a long and embarrassed silence.

The most eminent poet present, Raghuvir Sahay, then broke the ice by saying amiably enough, "Vinod ji, so that's your poem, fine. But now, would you please tell us in the language of daily discourse what it's about?" In that short poem, a girl looks out of the window, whether at green trees or at tall buildings or even at a sparrow, but all she sees is the sky. Shukla did not look up, paused for a while, and then said with a diffident half-smile, "But this is a love poem." We all burst out laughing, as if to say, "Yes, of course – if you say so!"

**High modernism**  
Shukla's signature as a poet is not obliquity but oddity. He has a fanciful, almost whimsical, way of rendering a familiar act or event enigmatic. To cite some lines by which he is best known (as translated in this volume): *That man put on a new warm coat and went away like a thought; Everything to be done will remain to be done; After then comes now; I'll save my death for as long as I live*.

As Mehrotra says in his adulatory Introduction in which he compares him to Gertrude Stein: "Reading Shukla can be disorienting, even vertiginous."

The biggest wonder perhaps is that such haunting verbal magic is grounded in the meek lives of subaltern human beings, including urbanising adivasis, and amidst the low hills, trees and birds of Chhattisgarh. Shukla truly brings high modernism home.

*The reviewer taught English at Delhi University.*

# Displaced and forgotten

40 years later: Giving voice to invisible victims post the 1984 anti-Sikh riots



**Looking back**  
Remembering those killed in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, at 'The Wall of Truth' at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib, New Delhi. (SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA)

**Nandini Bhatia**

In 2018, the Delhi High Court quoted an Amrita Pritam poem that invokes the Heer-Ranji poet Waris Shah – both notable figures in Punjabi literature – to describe the unruly state of Punjab and Delhi in 1984, as it convicted Sajjan Kumar, a former Congress leader, for his role in the anti-Sikh riots: "Seeds of hatred have grown high, bloodshed is everywhere/ Poisoned breeze in forest turned bamboo flutes into snakes/ Their venom has turned the bright and rosy Punjab all blue".

But the 2018 judgment does not come close to the justice that the victims of the 1984 violence deserve, as human rights activist Sanam Sutirath Wazir highlights in his new book, *The Kauris of 1984: The Untold, Unheard Stories of Sikh Women*.

He traces the rise of militancy in Punjab of the 1970-1980s, the Khalistan movement, the government retaliation in the form of Operation Blue Star, Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards, and the violence against the Sikh community. But most importantly, he gives a voice to the invisible victims and survivors of the tragic event: its women – beaten, bereaved, displaced and silenced: the 'Kauris' of 1984.

## Feeling the pain

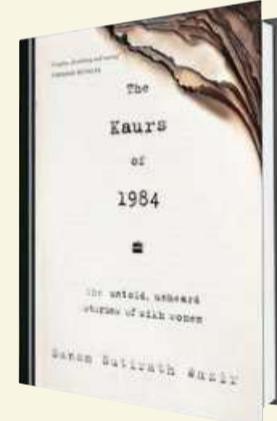
"I'm a man. Do you think I can justify their pain?" Wazir, disturbed by the graphic details of the stories he had recorded, asks his mother. The reply was sharp: "no one can," she says, but a voice must be given to the victims of vicious and gendered violence of the past. Thus, emerged the stories of women who witnessed the horrors that took place in the winter of 1984. Women who helplessly watched their homes, their gurdwaras, their men – fathers, brothers, husbands and sons – being burnt by mobs; women who were lined up, looted, assaulted and raped, irrespective of their physical state or age; women who were abandoned by the state, to grieve and fend for themselves. Many of the women would later either do odd jobs; some would pick up arms, become "Khalistani brides" and choose rebellion over submission, no matter how painful the consequences. These are the stories from Block-32 of Trilokpuri in Delhi, the 'widow colony' that emerged henceforth as the women were rehabilitated. These are the stories of the 'Kauris' - Darshan, Satwant, Nirpreet, Kulbir, and many more like them.

Police and state agents would emerge either indifferent or worse, complicit – both at the peak of the violence, and later, when dealing with possible suspects associated with the Khalistani cause. Leaders like H.K.L. Bhagat and Sajjan

Kumar would make appearances, not to offer respite, but to bask in the glory (and support) of the rioters, and further their political careers. Although Sajjan Kumar remains in jail after the 2018 conviction, he was acquitted in another case related to the 1984 violence, in 2023.

## Commissions and omissions

Numerous commissions and committees set up over the years to investigate the violence have fallen short in their commitments. Wazir is sympathetic to the Kauris' condition. "Forty years after the violence, the Kauris' lives remain profoundly unsettled. Despite the passage of time, they continue to grapple with deep grief and trauma, compounded by staggering delays in justice and ongoing impunity," he says. Conviction and later the life-sentencing of Sajjan Kumar by the Delhi High Court is a far cry from the justice the Kauris deserve; "[It] does little to ease their enduring suffering," notes Wazir. "Although they have sought



**The Kauris of 1984: The Untold, Unheard Stories of Sikh Women**  
Sanam Sutirath Wazir  
HarperCollins  
₹399

new purpose and healing, the scars of the violence persist as a constant presence in their lives... The Kauris navigate their lives amid this relentless grief, seeking what the state refers to as 'closure'."

The question raised by Sikhs in 1984 still hangs in the air: "Are we not Indian citizens?" An array of axioms applies to this deplorable chapter in the country's post-Independence history: from civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" to philosopher George Santayana's "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". In the 40th year of this tragedy, the wounds are yet to heal. Wazir writes an incredibly human story, which started as an Amnesty International report, in honour of these unreported, unrecorded, and unresolved tragedies.

*The reviewer is an independent feature writer. Instagram: @read.dream.repeat*

# INSIDER OUTSIDER

Reading the fineprint to understand what the future holds for America and the world after a deeply polarised presidential campaign

**Suhasini Haidar**  
suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in

**W**ith just days to go for the U.S. presidential elections on November 5, after what is arguably the most polarised campaign in recent history, it is time to start looking at what the future may hold. In the run-up to the polls, there were surprising turns, including the Joseph Biden-Kamala Harris switch as the Democrat candidate, and the assassination attempts on former President and Republican nominee Donald Trump.

A number of books on the upcoming elections makes it clear there are not two, but three likely outcomes: a Trump win, a Harris win, and a contested outcome that goes to the courts, and possibly the streets. "This is the strangest election cycle I've ever seen... I'm telling people, you're worried about November, I'm worried about tomorrow morning," says Trump loyalist and Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, according to an exchange in *War*, Bob Woodward's latest book, out just weeks before election day.

**Important conversations**  
To turn the covers of a Woodward book is to spend hours as a fly on the wall in the White House and other places where important conversations take place in the U.S. capital.

From his iconic start with reporting partner Carl Bernstein on the Watergate scandal that ended the Nixon Presidency, and their book *All the President's Men*, Woodward has honed his skill as the ultimate insider-outsider in Washington with more than a dozen books focused on different presidencies.

His trilogy on the Trump Presidency (2017-2021), *Fear: Trump in the White House*, *Rage*, and *Peril* (written with Robert Costa), brought out in granular detail the chaos, the unpredictability and the insecurity of the world's most powerful



**Poles apart** The live broadcast of the presidential debate between Vice-President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump. (GETTY IMAGES)

country, and how that period changed the world.

Woodward's latest, in that sense, takes off from previous books, *Bush at War* and *Obama's Wars*, to speak about how the Biden years have dealt with three global conflicts: the U.S. pullout from Afghanistan, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Israel's assault on Gaza and Lebanon after the October 7, 2023 attacks. The book is remarkably up to date, and provides an insight on the past few years in the Oval office and just outside it. Woodward takes note of Biden's dogged decision to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan, something he had failed to convince former President Barack Obama of doing.

He looks at Biden's unsuccessful attempt at deterring Russian President Vladimir Putin from going into Ukraine, even though the U.S. had remarkable intelligence far ahead of time that Russia would invade. Woodward also observes how the U.S. Presidency has tackled Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a leader that Biden has a long history of run-ins with, while supporting Israel to the hilt. Woodward's recording of the

profanity used by heads of state is sometimes jarring, but conveys the seriousness of the times: At one place, Woodward recounts Biden saying that Obama never took Putin seriously enough and "f\*\*\*ed it up" in 2014 with the Crimean invasion, about the same time that Trump says that Biden had "f\*\*\*ed us up" by not handling Putin better.

A lunch conversation Woodward reveals between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Biden, where Blinken convinces the President to step down from the campaign is proof of how close the author is to the principals.

## Where they stand

While the book is about the Biden Presidency, it is by far the best account of where both former

**A number of books on the upcoming elections make it clear there are not two, but three likely outcomes: a Trump win, a Harris win, and a contested outcome that goes to the courts, and possibly the streets**

President Trump and Vice-President Harris would likely stand on foreign policy and dealing with Russia and Israel if they come to power. Trump's obvious admiration for Putin, and easy understanding with Netanyahu comes through in a number of events described in *War*.

One of the most telling chapters deals with Harris's tough talk with Netanyahu in September this year, where she raises civilian killings in Gaza, and warns that the next generation of Americans may not share the sympathy for Israel's actions that hers does.

Unfortunately for readers here, *War* makes little mention of India, with the exception of the White House's outreach to India, China, Turkey and Israel to send messages to Putin cautioning against nuclear adventurism, and a reference to high levels of illegal immigration from India and China. Even the Indo-Pacific strategy bears scant notice or indication where the Presidential contenders will stand.

## What memoirs tell

For those seeking less policy and more personal stories about the candidates, there are several books like Kamala Harris' updated memoir, *The Truths We Hold: An American Journey*. This adds more to her worldview in the concluding chapter.

Trump put out a book after surviving the assassination attempt, *Save America*, which is prohibitively expensive and expectedly bombastic.

A more personable account comes from former First Lady Melania Trump's book *Melania*, that has, however, been panned as a "tell-nothing" sanitised version of events.

Interesting details of Trump's beginnings come from his nephew Fred Trump's *All in the Family: The Trumps and How We Got This Way*, out recently, and his niece, Mary Trump's *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man*, which is a profile in Trump psychology.

## BROWSER

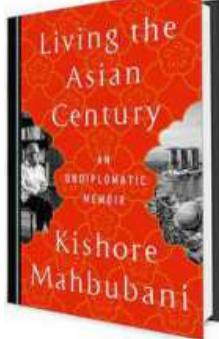
### Living the Asian Century

Kishore Mahubhani

Public Affairs/Hachette India

₹1,670

"The first stroke of good luck in my life was to be born in Singapore," writes diplomat and writer Mahubhani, who served as president of the United Nations Security Council. His 'undiplomatic memoir' traces a personal journey as well as the rise of Singapore as a rich Asian power.



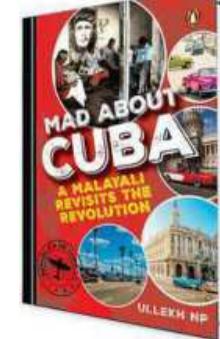
### Mad about Cuba

Ullekh N.P.

Penguin

₹399

Growing up in the Marxist stronghold of Kannur in Kerala, Ullekh N.P. had always been fascinated with Cuba and its leader Fidel Castro. The journalist and writer finally visited the island in 2023, capturing its vibrant history, resilient public institutions, and enduring political spirit.



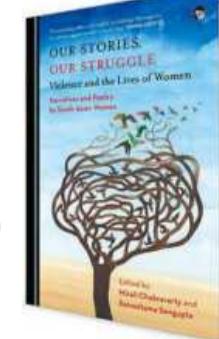
### Our Stories, Our Struggle

Edited by Mitali Chakravarty, Ratnottama Sengupta

Speaking Tiger Books

₹599

In the Introduction, Subhashini Ali writes that it is a book of heartbreaking narratives of the many griefs that beset a woman's life. Divided into three sections, it takes on many subjects, from sexual crimes and honour killings to the role of the state in curbing violence.



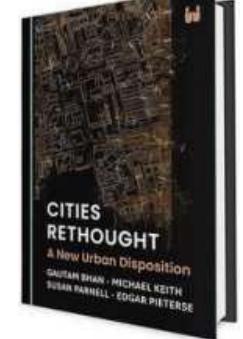
### Cities Rethought

Gautam Bhan & Others

Westland Books

₹399

Four "lucky urbanists", Bhan, Michael Keith, Suman Parnell and Edgar Pieterse, got together to reflect on cities across the global north and south, and explore ways how citizens can meaningfully intervene to make them better places to live in.



CONTINUED FROM  
» PAGE 1

**A case of survival**  
In their 50-odd years of presence in America, Indian voters have traditionally leaned Democrat, seeing themselves as a minority group that needs social justice, equality, and protection against discrimination. But as the community's affluence grows – along with its population – and as the focus shifts from surviving to thriving, a slow but steady drift towards the GOP has begun, driven by concerns over economic policy and taxes. High inflation and the cost of living, rising since the pandemic; are pushing them, especially business owners, to think of survival in stark terms.

Yet, for many others, survival is not just about economic growth. Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric is forcing them to reframe survival in a broader sense as their existence in this country feels at stake. While the majority of Indian Americans are acutely aware of their immigrant status and support immigration reform, others question illegal immigration which feels disrespectful to their journey of navigating the tough process of legal citizenship.

With the reversal of Roe v. Wade, reproductive rights have become a pressing issue this election cycle. The Harris camp's promise to restore reproductive autonomy resonates with women, including Indian Americans, creating a wide gender gap in voting. This gap has widened with more men, Indian Americans included, supporting Trump as they play into the masculine roles that Republicans typify.

**Social justice and Gaza crisis**  
Young Indian Americans, especially first-time voters, are focused on policies concerning

**Talking numbers**

One of the fastest-growing eligible voter populations, Indian Americans have been expanding by over 100% between 2000 and 2020 (according to the Pew Research Center)

**With a voter turnout rate of 71% in 2020 and an expected turnout rate of 90% in 2024 — much higher than the national average of 66% — Indian Americans are more politically engaged than any other immigrant group (AAPI Data)**

Indian Americans have the highest median household income of any ethnic group at around \$120,000 annually — far above the national average of \$70,000 (Pew, 2021)

**About 75% of Indian Americans have a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the national average of 33%** (Pew, 2021)

The number of Indian Americans identifying as Democrats has reduced from 56% in 2020 to 47% in 2024; while the number of those identifying as Republicans has increased from 15% in 2020 to 21% in 2024 (Indian American Attitudes Survey (IAAS), 2024)

**About 67% of Indian American women will be voting for Harris; and about 48% of under-40 Indian American males will be voting for Trump — a sharp contrast from the 70% who voted for Biden in 2020** (IAAS, 2024)

Harris is leading Trump by 12 points in women's vote. Trump is leading Harris by 14 points in men's vote (a recent poll by The New York Times)

# HANGING ON TO THE AMERICAN DREAM

social justice, LGBTQ+ rights, gun safety, women's rights, and climate action, and support Harris. These young adults, who have lived through school shootings and emergency drills, view gun safety as non-negotiable. Many have seen peers their age die have been victims of hate crimes, or live with the fear of violence hitting close to home.

A considerable number of these young voters, whose world view is increasingly interconnected, view the conflict in Gaza as more than distant suffering. For the unconvincing or the covetable 'persuadable voters' among them,

the candidates' stance on global conflicts has become central to their choice. And yet, as election day draws near with no policy change in sight, they are being forced to make a choice, neither of which feels right.

In these times of shifting voting loyalties, intergenerational divide within families has emerged, with younger members voting differently from their parents.

There are Democrat-leaning children with Republican-leaning parents and vice versa — an evolution that points to the growing political engagement with the country.

**The writer is deputy editor, Khabar magazine, and USC Annenberg Fellow for Writing and Community Storytelling.**

Today, Kamala Chitt feels distant for most Indian Americans. But caught between the pride of brown representation and the wariness of identity politics, and the binary of the lawless and the flawless, the answer for them lies in negotiating this contentious presidential race with the same focus on personal priorities that made them chase the American Dream.

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**Close ties** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the then U.S. President Donald Trump during the Howdy Modi event in Houston, 2019. (GETTY IMAGES)

# WHAT MATTERS TO THE INDIAN AMERICAN VOTER?

Members of this community from in and around Georgia talk about what is driving their vote in the US Presidential Election 2024

**Pooja Garg**

**W**hen I immigrated from India a decade ago, I couldn't find another Indian in my big neighbourhood in Georgia's Cobb County. Now, I have two on my street. One of them even has — what else — an Indian restaurant nearby. I see Indian mums in saris out for an evening stroll, their children participating in Easter and Halloween celebrations. Last year, I heard fireworks on Diwali for the first time. The growing population of Indian Americans is apparent even beyond my immediate neighbourhood.

Seeing how vital Indian Americans as a voting block in Georgia have become in this presidential race, I talked to a broad cross-section of voters from the community to put a finger on what is most important to them. Edited excerpts:



**My children go through life without their father. I live my life without my husband. We go to baptisms and celebrations without him. The legislators are funded by the gun lobby. We and our children are not important to them. So, what will it take for them to implement gun safety laws? Lincoln died, Kennedy died, Trump survived a bullet. What will it take?**

**DR. GULSHAN HARJEE**  
Lost her husband in a shooting 25 years ago



**This election is extremely consequential for the future of our country, and our goal is to make sure that anyone who goes to the ballot is equipped to make an informed decision. Electing Donald Trump will drastically change this country, and we must do what we can to stop him.**

**ROHAN SONI**  
Senior at Columbia University

**When Donald Trump calls all immigrants thieves and robbers, he is hating me and my family. We have unprecedented levels of hate and divisiveness in the country right now. We have lost that tone and tenor in this country where I can disagree about policy without making it personal.**

**MANISH**  
Sales consultant



**My children go through life without their father. I live my life without my husband. We go to baptisms and celebrations without him. The legislators are funded by the gun lobby. We and our children are not important to them. So, what will it take for them to implement gun safety laws? Lincoln died, Kennedy died, Trump survived a bullet. What will it take?**

**TARUN SURTI**  
Socialist entrepreneur from Tennessee (pictured here with his daughter)

**A version of this article first appeared in Khabar (khabar.com), an Atlanta-based print magazine for the Indian American community. Reprinted here with permission.**



**NARENDRA PATEL**  
Business owner

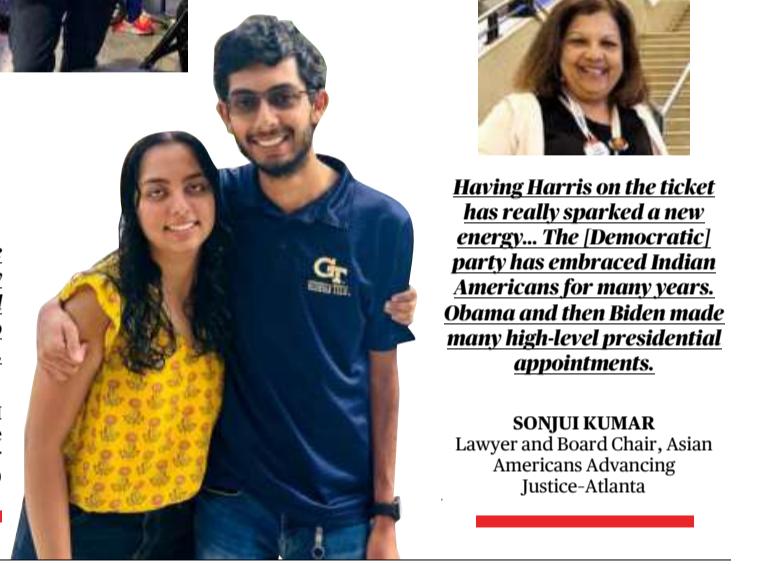
**After COVID, things have changed. On one hand, the business has not been back to the same levels, and on the other hand, the inflation is high. They [Democrats] are offering freebies and higher wages. They are not thinking of supporting the business community. Businesses are needed to create jobs.**

**SHREEYA PRAKASH**  
Student, Georgia Institute of Technology (pictured here with her brother)



**I had seven miscarriages. One of them happened in Georgia before the Heartbeat Bill went in. If I had a miscarriage today and needed medical care, I would not be able to have it. To turn away people and to police those who are experiencing some of the most heartbreaking moments is nothing short of cruel. This thinking that somehow women's bodies need to be controlled is regressive and misogynistic.**

**USREE BHATTACHARYA**  
Associate professor, University of Georgia



**Having Harris on the ticket has really sparked a new energy... The Democratic party has embraced Indian Americans for many years. Obama and then Biden made many high-level presidential appointments.**

**GREEN HUMOUR**

Rohan Chakravarty

**CONGRATULATIONS, RAJASTHAN FOREST DEPARTMENT, FOR SUCCESSFULLY HATCHING ME — THE FIRST IVF-BORN GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD!**



**CAN WE NOW USE IVF TO BREED ENVIRONMENTALLY AWARE POLITICIANS TO SAVE MY HABITAT?**



using the char bagh as a revenue generating wedding venue. Is there any possibility of reconciling these two extremes?

**The writer is an architect.**

# MONUMENTS AS CORPORATE STEPCHILDREN

While chances of Delhi's Red Fort being converted into a film city are remote, ASI's Adopt a Heritage programme needs a more enlightened approach



monuments in enlarging the civic and cultural life for its residents. In European cities, churches, cathedrals, aqueducts, old palaces, even cemeteries, have been successively absorbed into the townscape in an active productive manner. In fact, there are remarkable examples of how cities have conserved their heritage and made it more accessible to the public. In Rome, Italians attend

Sunday mass in the 16th century Renaissance church of San Clemente, built on the remains of a 12th century medieval building, which in turn sits on the foundation of a second century basilica. In Paris, the more recent insertion of the Louvre has increased the popularity of the 17th century museum four-fold, generating — through the unusual architectural juxtaposition

— a greater interest in the art collections. Would the authorities ever consider a similar intrusion into, say, Delhi's upcoming National Museum at South Block (see illustration) or the City Palace in Jaipur?

**Revolving restaurant at the Taj**  
How do Indian cities view their relationship with monuments? A new government initiative, Adopt a

Heritage, poses both interest and danger, given that conventional Indian attitudes to conservation are both rigidly preservationist or thoughtlessly liberal. One view wishes to retain the Taj Mahal in a way that Shah Jahan were to wake up, he would find himself in familiar surroundings. The other view would be perfectly content with the installation of a plexiglass revolving restaurant in the Taj dome, and

At Delhi's Humayun's Tomb, a

restaurant and a sound and light show have been proposed within the grounds of the mausoleum, including private dining and special events in the gardens.

**Threat of polarisation**  
With 3,700 monuments under the care of the Archaeological Survey of India, how many will now be under the charge of private companies and how much transformation will they be made to bear? Will temples in South India at Pattadakkal and Badami be freshly landscaped and surrounded by new boundary walls, or will they be closed because they are too delicate and precious to be opened to tourism? Will companies consider seasonal restrictions to their new charges, or keep them open to private functions, such as conferences and fashion shows? Moreover, will the current attitude of religious polarisation also spread to cultural and heritage sites?

Doubtless there is no better standard for restoration than the painstaking conservation of Delhi's Humayun's Tomb, undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust. There is little to fault in the government and local temple trusts restoring several Hindu shrines and monuments. However, would the government spend equivalent effort in the revitalisation of the Ajmer Dargah as it did on the Varanasi corridor project? Could the Aga Khan Trust consider the restoration of Hindu temples in Himachal Pradesh, currently in desperate need of repair? Beyond self-interest, heritage is of little concern to trusts, big corporations and governments. It will take great magnanimity to give culture and heritage the wider apolitical berth they deserve.

Of course, the chances of converting Keral's Padmanabhapuram Palace into a dental collage, or Delhi's Red Fort into a film city, are right now thankfully remote. If all citizens are to benefit from these buildings, a more enlightened policy on reuse needs careful consideration, something that takes into account local requirements and national ideals. The truly innovative feature of future conservation will be to bring together the rarefied frame of history and contemporary life in ways that make them easily compatible. Like the Indians, we may find that an experience of origins is as important as the appreciation of an ongoing process.

**Decline of liberal TV**  
Generally speaking, though, the influence of TV talk show hosts has waned in America, with younger audiences increasingly preferring podasters, YouTubers, and Twitch streamers. Two recent TV slots

proved this point in contrasting ways. First, Sacha Baron Cohen revisited his character Borat (a fictional Muslim reporter from Kazakhstan) on Jimmy Fallon's couch. He promptly unleashed an array of jokes that might have worked in the mid-2000s (when the Borat movies enjoyed a measure of commercial success), but come across as insanely racist to young people now. For instance, he said that Borat should never visit Kazakhstan because she is "a woman, a person of colour and married to a Jew".

Both Borat and Ocasio-Cortez's performances were excellent examples of how American presidential elections are fought on TV — and increasingly, over the internet. The hosts play their part, supplying their political guests with questions that will give them the maximum chance to respond with unadulterated campaign-speak. It's a battle of rhetoric, essentially, and a TV studio audience clapping at the end of the answer gives it a certain validation boost.

Ocasio-Cortez, while talking to Fallon, shared an anecdote about watching the TV show *Star Trek: Voyager* as a child. On cue, Fallon asked her why the show was close to her heart and she replied, "This was the first ship with a female captain, Captain Janeway," referring to Kate Mulgrew's iconic role. "It's not science fiction anymore," she continued. "We are going to have the first female president!"

Cohen followed it up with, "You already have made three of the four crimes punishable by death. Please do tell me you have made sex time with an underage bear!" Social media is currently overrun with condemnations of Cohen's act. The writer is an architect.

**BINGE WATCH**  
*Finding balance* (Clockwise from left) Kamala Harris; J.D. Vance; Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez; Tim Walz; Donald Trump. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)



The other noteworthy moment came when Jon Stewart made fun of Walz for boasting about an endorsement from Dick Cheney — who Stewart spent several years criticising over the Iraq War.

The disastrous episodes are signs of the seemingly terminal decline of liberal American TV journalists. Younger, progressive viewers are tired of them running defence for the Democrats, especially at a time when a Democratic administration is funding the ongoing annihilation of Palestine. On the other side of the aisle, young Republican voters do not trust the mainstream media because their candidate has repeatedly painted journalists as inherently corrupt and "crooked". This is one reason why both candidates (and their

proxies) have tried to bypass traditional media and reach out to Internet celebrities instead — YouTubers, podcasters and the like.

**When influencers sway elections**  
Harris made an appearance on the advice and comedy podcast *Call Her Daddy*, hosted by Alexandra Cooper and Sofia Franklyn. This is the most-listened-to podcast by women on Spotify and has over a million followers on YouTube. Trump recently sat down for a long interview with Joe Rogan, the most popular podcaster on Spotify among male listeners. Trump and his VP candidate J.D. Vance were interviewed this month by comedian The Von on his popular podcast *This Past Weekend w/The Von*. During Trump's conversation with Von, a fairly standard question about America's opioid crisis spiraled into a bizarre back-and-forth about the merits of cocaine vs other drugs; Trump claimed to have never consumed it while Von is a recovering addict.

Electrification is all about managing perception and reaching a wide catchment area of potential voters. On both these parameters, online content creators are one-upping their counterparts in traditional media outlets. The day may not be far away when a single YouTuber or TikToker might sway the election one way or another. In fact, the Trump campaign is discovering this in real time, thanks to comedian Tony Hinchcliffe, known mostly for his popular comedy podcast *Kill Tony*.

During a set he performed at a recent Trump rally in New York, Hinchcliffe made a joke about Puerto Rico being "a floating island of garbage". Since then, down-ballot Republicans facing re-election in states like Florida and Texas (where millions of Puerto Ricans live) have been trying to back-pedal his words, especially online where their party is getting absolutely cooked.

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

**T**he problem is simple: there aren't enough English words to adequately describe the things that happen in the lives of busy professionals in the 21st century, like you and me.

Everyday people like us achieve goals, set landmarks, and upset the status quo. Some of us, usually Malayalis, are even destroying stereotypes.

But the English language is lagging far behind, much like the lunch service on a flight where you're starving after a light breakfast. The cabin crew starts serving from the back of the aircraft, and now one passenger is arguing because he specifically requested South Indian non-veg but received Tandoori Chicken instead. Now even the pilot is involved, trying to explain that the chicken itself is actually from Chennai, so actually his request has been satisfied.

Wait, what was I saying? Oh yes – there aren't enough words in English.

The solution? Equally simple. This column. Each fortnight, this writer will make a convincing case for the addition of a new word to the English lexicon – a word that will capture the zeitgeist, encapsulate our modern reality, and enrich our contemporary conversation.

#### Early signs

I want to start by addressing one very common trend I have seen on platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Vadukut Extended Family.

The phenomenon I am referring to is a particular class of people who respond to you in a certain way when you tell them you've achieved something praiseworthy. Perhaps

#### TRICKTIONARY EPISODE 1

A new column from someone who doesn't let the dictionary define what's going on in his (or your) life

# INVENT A WORD

you've cleared an exam, got a promotion at work, started a new job, just returned from a foreign holiday, or completed a challenging physical activity.

The moment you post updates about this achievement online or on your family WhatsApp group, or your alumni WhatsApp group, or your apartment building WhatsApp group, many people will immediately respond with kudos.

The vast majority of these people are, of course, sincere. It is not these people that I refer to.

I am also not referring to those reprobates who reply nicely purely for self-serving purposes. Perhaps they are your employees trying to butter you up so you don't get upset and fling flaming scooters at them. Or they are potential employees seeking to fast-track their way into a job interview.

No, I am specifically referring to those well-wishers who are secretly

seething with jealousy at your achievements. Instead of ignoring your updates, they make it a point to reply. At first glance, their response might seem innocuous, even sincere.

But look closely, and you will see the real spots on the jealous well-wishing leopard.

For instance, imagine you've just completed a marathon. You post a photo of yourself standing by the finish line with a medal, a water bottle, an exasperated spouse, and other such items.

Suddenly, a guy from your secondary school, whom you last met when Yugoslavia was still a country, leaves a response: "Well done Sidin! Why did you run so much? Uber wasn't available? Ha ha ha. I am truly impressed. When you came last in the 100 meters on Sports Day, I never imagined you would complete a marathon! Super



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

proud! Please drop me a line if you're ever in Singapore or San Francisco!"

You will be tempted to laugh at his response, leave a small thank you note, maybe even add a jaunty emoji.

But look closely, my friend, and you will see layer upon layer upon layer of jealousy that together forms a thick, flaky *porotta* of chicanery.

**Quiet destruction**  
Your conniving correspondent has opened his message with a joke. It is a funny joke. But it is a blatant attempt to steal the thunder from your moment of glory. Secondly, for no reason whatsoever, he brings up a humiliating moment from your past but tries to make it sound like a casual comment. If that is a casual comment, then the Taj Mahal is a PWD project. This deceit is meant to

cut you down to size while telling everybody else how you once made a fool of yourself.

Finally, it ends with a masterstroke of jealousy. Your "friend" is now trying to tell you that he/she is better than you because they are some sort of NRI, OCI, PIO type who is settled overseas.

#### Jelwisher

/dʒəl'wɪʃər/ noun

**plural:** jelwishes  
**Definition:** A person who outwardly expresses well-wishes but whose underlying motivation is envy or jealousy, subtly undermining or belittling the person they're addressing.

Their whole response is absolute shenanigans.

How do we refer to people like this who seem well-meaning but are actually looking to undermine you?

Therefore, the first new word we will coin is 'jelwisher'.

Example sentence:  
"I am happy to announce myself as President Elect of the United States, surrounded by so many supporters, party workers, and jelwishes."

Have you spotted any jelwishes in your life? Please write to us immediately.

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

#### GOREN BRIDGE

## Curiouser and curiouser

North-South vulnerable,  
North deals

#### Bob Jones

**T**oday's deal is from a recent top-level competition held in Europe. North-South, respectively, were European stars Dennis Bilde and Martin Schatz.

North-South had plenty of values but no fit, and South's five-no-Trump bid asked North to pick the best slam. This is our kind of question, as Bilde could do no wrong! North South can

make a slam in all five strains, including spades and clubs, although those two would require careful play. Bilde chose to bid the slam in no trump and Schatz had to guess which red suit to play on after winning the opening spade lead. We can't see much of a reason for picking one suit over the other, but Schatz chose to play on hearts. He cashed his king of hearts, crossed to dummy with a spade, and cashed the ace of hearts. When the 10 fell from West, Schatz led the jack of hearts to knock out the queen

**NORTH**  
♠ A K 9  
♥ A J 9 8 7 3  
♦ 8  
♣ K J 3

**WEST**  
♠ 10 7 5 4  
♥ 10 2  
♦ Q 10 7  
♣ Q 9 5 2

**EAST**  
♠ 6 3 2  
♥ Q 6 5 4  
♦ 6 5 2  
♣ 10 8 7

**SOUTH**  
♠ Q J 8  
♥ K  
♦ A K J 9 4 3  
♣ A 6 4

The bidding:  
**NORTH** 1♥  
**EAST** Pass  
**SOUTH** 2♦\*  
**WEST** Pass

2♦  
3♦  
4NT All pass

\*Game forcing

Opening lead: Seven of ♠

and claimed 12 tricks.

An additional oddity in this deal is that while 12 tricks are available in any of them. We thank Povl Sommer, a bridge journalist from Denmark, for bringing this deal to our attention.

#### QUIZ

## Easy like Sunday morning

Until one has loved  
an animal, a part of  
one's soul remains  
unawakened:  
Anatole France

#### Berty Ashley

1 On November 3, 1957, a two-year-old mongrel from the streets of Moscow was chosen to be part of a historic mission. Named Laika, she was believed to be a husky-terrier. From 5.30 a.m. onwards for about six hours, what was she the first animal to do?

2 Bruce Ramer was a lawyer who worked with one of the most successful movie directors of all time. While working on an iconic movie, the main villain was named after him, and would go on to inspire countless pop culture tributes. Weighing 547 kg and 25 ft-long, where would you have seen his namesake?

3 Naruto, an endangered Celebes crested macaque from Indonesia, was part of an experiment by British nature photographer David Slater. In 2011, he released a series of pictures featuring Naruto, but was embroiled in a copyright issue of who owned the right to the photograph. What had Naruto done to cause this confusion?

4 Dolly was a female Finn-Dorset sheep born under historical circumstances on July 5, 1996, at the Roslin Institute, Scotland. She lived to the age of six and produced many lambs. Though she wasn't the first animal



to be born this way, she was the first mammal (human's cousin). What was Dolly the very first of?

5 El Jefe is a big cat that was first recorded on a camera in Arizona in 2011. This was very exciting as this species had ceased to exist in the wild for a long time. What type of cat is El Jefe, whose namesake is a popular car brand which is far more common?

6 American scientist Irene Pepperberg worked with Alex, which stood for 'Avian Language Experiment', at the University of Arizona. Over many

years Alex could not only identify 50 different objects, but could understand concepts of smaller, bigger, different, etc. With a vocabulary of over 100 words, what type of animal was Alex?

7 Jackie was a lion who was brought from Sudan to the United States in 1916. He was recorded roaring three times and then looking to his left. His roar was the first ever heard in which iconic context that exists till date?

8 Sharing a characteristic with Moby Dick, probably the most famous whale ever, Migaloo is a

humpback whale first spotted along the Australian coast in 1991. His iconic appearance and popularity was responsible for an increase in conservation efforts. What is unique about Migaloo?

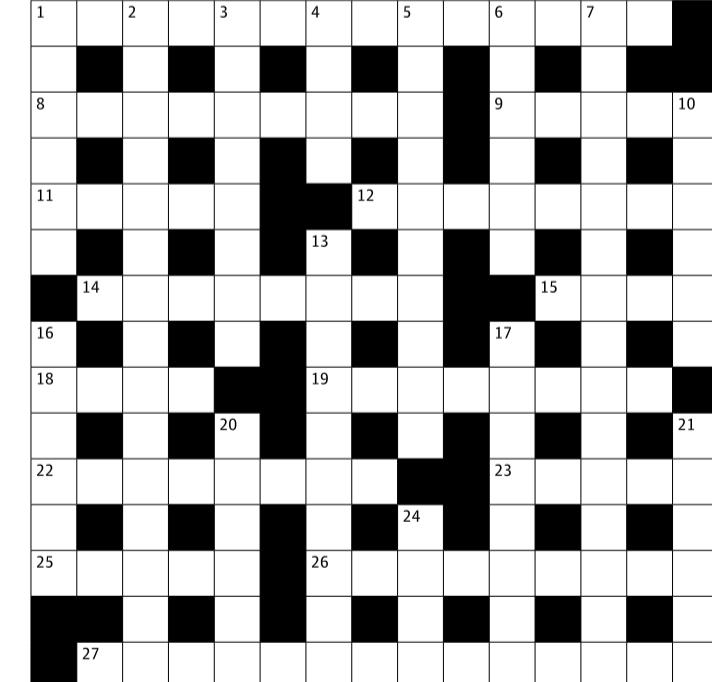
9 Meredith Grey, Olivia Benson and Benjamin Button are three cats who have their own fan pages, have appeared on Ryan Reynolds's t-shirt, and on the cover of *Time* magazine, in December 2023. They became an influential part of the recent American elections when their cat-mom took offence to what the Republican nominee for Vice-President said about women with cats. Whose cats are these that have a reputation for style and are known all too well by fans worldwide?

10 Arjuna was an Asian elephant who, since 1959, was a beloved regular feature during a certain festival in an ancient city in Karnataka. In 2012, he outdid all contenders in being able to carry a 750 kg *howdah* that housed an idol for 5 km. Unfortunately, he passed away last year while trying to capture a wild elephant. At which festival was Arjuna a centre of attraction for seven years?

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

11 The Mysore Dasara  
12 Full white whale  
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27  
1. A grey parrot  
2. First cloned mammal  
3. Took a photograph of itself off himself  
4. First animal to orbit the Earth  
5. A geyser erupts  
6. Full moon  
7. Full moon  
8. Full white whale  
9. Full moon  
10. The Mysore Dasara  
11. Full moon  
12. Full moon  
13. Full moon  
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26. Full moon  
27. Full moon

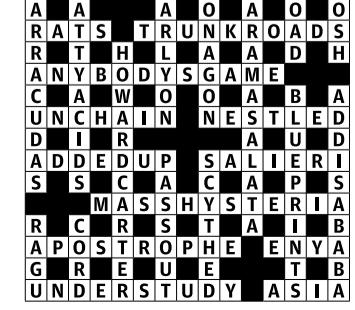
#### THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3330



#### Across

- 1 When the world's not ready for enemies to be trounced (6,4,4)
- 2 Old songs and flags (9)
- 3 Elite group had some food before noon (1-4)
- 4 Woods may hold such sporting prize (5)
- 5 Property of theses (8)
- 6 Runs to the west twice: fancy! (4-4)
- 7 Glimpse, with psychic powers, yet's head (4)
- 8 Twee 'antique', golden, uncased (4)
- 9 Primarily orotund, pronouncedly emotively roccoco; alternatively, that involves Carmen? (8)
- 10 Leisurely walks? Brief moments – engrossing, on reflection, I'd be glad to! (6)
- 11 It comes out at night offering support to a hunter (6,4)
- 12 Detective's addresses in the auditorium (6)
- 13 Protégée given to aunts announced preparation for hostilities (3,5)
- 14 Spot sharp implement taking some measure (6)
- 15 Historical periods ultimately come together (I'll correct writer's mistakes) (6)
- 16 Everyman had, at heart, dreary product of thought (4)

#### SOLUTION NO. 3329



#### Down

- 1 Bay that's included principally in Shipping forecasts—in the middle? (6)
- 2 Loudly punished faceless aficionado, suppressing resistance and getting bird (9,6)
- 3 Survives; leaves on horseback (5,3)
- 4 Monster, therefore recoiling! (4)
- 5 Hid rabid deerhounds (10)

# A bite of Ethiopia

Coffee and a predominantly plant-based cuisine of the African country make for a heart-healthy choice

Vijaya Bharat  
vijayacardio@gmail.com

**C**offee is just a drink, but *kaapi* is an emotion," proclaimed an advertisement. Having switched to mostly masala tea and occasionally instant coffee, I remembered the post-siesta afternoons in my hometown and hallucinated on the aroma of roasted coffee beans. The smell would soon be followed by a whirring sound of the beans getting ground. My mother would rotate the handle of a mechanical grinder fixed on a kitchen shelf. After a while, the comforting aroma of freshly brewed filter *kaapi* would waft in the air. Everyone in the house would go to the kitchen, search for *murukku* or banana chips to munch, and savour the delicious brew. The nostalgia made me agree that *kaapi* is indeed an emotion.

The entire childhood experience of roasted and freshly brewed coffee came alive in a recent trip to Ethiopia, high up in the horn of Africa. My husband and I were part of a medical mission. Ethiopia is one of the oldest countries from where *Homo sapiens* emerged. The country was never colonised, barring six years of Italian occupancy. Traditions are retained even as Ethiopia is emerging as a growing economy. In 1974, fossilised bones of a female hominid were excavated from a valley in Ethiopia. The assembled skeleton, estimated to be 3.2 million years old and named Lucy, gave a new direction to the understanding of human evolution.

Coffee has an Ethiopian connection. The story goes that way back in 800 CE, a young goat herder, Kaldi, found his usually somnolent goats jumping wildly after eating some berries from a bush. He too



**Delectable fare** A platter of *Injera* and sides. (GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK)

consumed the beans and felt alert. Kaldi took the "magic beans" to some monks who made a drink out of it. The monks could keep awake longer and chant hymns with enhanced energy. Ethiopians are naturally proud of coffee and celebrate coffee-making as a ritual.

When it was coffee time at the hospital, the host doctors took us to a nearby building. At one end of the hall, a middle-aged woman in traditional coarse cotton dress and turban was roasting coffee beans on an electric stove kept on the floor. As the heady aroma of coffee emanated, she brought the pan to us. Everyone waved their hands to inhale the smoke and thanked her. The coffee-maker went back to grind the beans in a small electric grinder. She put the powder in an earthenware pot, added boiling water and waited for a while. The powder rested at the bottom of the tilted pot and she poured the decoction in small painted ceramic cups without handle. While the local doctors drank black coffee, some of us preferred to add milk and sugar. Coffee, called *Buna* in the Amharic language, appeared to be more than an emotion. It was a ritual, a

celebration, a reverence. At lunch, we were served the traditional cuisine which was predominantly plant-based. The rolled-up dosa-like *Injera* was the main dish, equivalent to roti or rice in Indian meals. It was made from the batter of a millet-like grain called teff. The batter allowed to ferment and turn sour gets enriched with gut-friendly bacteria. It is poured on a large heated pan and covered, to cook in its own steam. The oil-free, gluten-free, spongy *Injera* with low glycaemic index explains the low prevalence of diabetes, less than 5%, in Ethiopia in contrast to more than 10% in India. Side dishes made of pulses, vegetables, salad and servings of fruit, instead of sweets, completed the ideal heart-healthy meal.

*Injera* or a sliced-up spicy version was served with every meal. The spongy texture and flavour of *Injera* took me down memory lane to *policha mavu dosai* (sour batter dosa) that my mother used to make.

A senior doctor loathed the habit of youngsters preferring unhealthy fast food of the West to the traditional Ethiopian food. Retaining healthy habits of the past, even while embracing modernity, is essential for healthy living, be it in Ethiopia or India.

## Up to speed with the snail mail

Muhsin Mutteh  
muhsinm.cmr@gmail.com

**H**andwritten mail was a lifeline even a few decades ago, though the new generation may wonder how communication happened in the analogue world. Being digital natives, they have no idea that it took days or even months to get a reply to a letter, but the bonds the missive forged were indescribable.

The letters had no boundaries. I had realised it as I belong to the Malabar region of Kerala, where a large section of the working population, especially from Muslim families, find a livelihood in West Asian countries. I had uncles, cousins and many others in my family in those countries and I used to write to them. As a routine, I would start the letter with the sentence "I'm fine. Hope you are doing well", but the rest of the content will be my childhood wishes.

The khaki-clad postman who used to visit home frequently was dear to us, carrying hopes and expectations. When we received a friend's letter, a New Year's greeting card, a love letter or any of these, it was an exhilarating feeling.

The postman's arrival left us with two kinds of emotions: pleasure and sadness.

The letters might be filled with family matters, current affairs and sometimes jokes that provided encouragement and awakening for the recipients.

### Breaking cover

The most vital question of the time was who would break the cover of the letter? Most probably, the eldest of the family would do it. But the great expectation each letter evoked was unparalleled.

Gone are the days of snail mail. Email and mobile phones have now become a part of life. At the same time, the postman's arrival has become a rare event. However, he still comes occasionally with a speed post or a registered post. But all these are devoid of the feelings that letters used to evoke in the past.

Reading the old letters in our collection brings so much sweetness to the mind.

As World Postal Day is celebrated on October 9 every year, it reflects a feeling of loss and nostalgia.

## Silence is a mystery in a self-isolating world

**When people do not respond to your messages or greetings, do not imagine the worst and spoil mental health**

**Billy Paul Ebenezer**  
sbillypaul@gmail.com

**A** world that is engrossed with its own self-esteem, self-care, self-portrait, self-respect, and selves cannot notice the people around it, let alone understand their motives. This, in turn, could create more stress and push people even further into the deep chasm of self-isolation and sometimes, self-harm.

One major reason for

self-isolation is the world outside has not always been warm and friendly. You send a resume to a reputable company, and you don't hear from them.

Understanding the reasons for why people fail to respond is important, particularly to our mental health. While most of the time the reasons could be a "forgetting" mind or being busy, sometimes the reasons could be uncharitable.

Some people pride themselves so much that they have assigned a



(GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK)

certain value to themselves. Unless you follow up with these people that many times, you are not going to get a response. There are as many biases as there are English letters. If someone is biased towards you, you aren't going to get a response no matter how hard you try.

Some people are so insecure that they prefer sleeping inside their bank lockers. They know your ideas and proposal are so rock solid that they prefer not to cede ground with

you. Just as a starfish doesn't have a brain, these folks absolutely don't have an iota of ethics. A courteous smile, a courtesy handshake, a simple WhatsApp emoticon, or even an (email) auto-responder is not part of their DNA.

Worst of this lot is the "trigger-happy" surface-level solution providers (SSPs). They seem to have solutions to every possible ill of this world. Follow up with this hollow people at your own peril. And then there are people who have been badly affected by the people listed above. Their mental health has taken such a beating that they have already retreated into a DND cave.

When people do not respond to your messages or greetings, do not imagine the worst and spoil your mental health. Now that you know the mystery behind the silence, it is time to move on.

## Captivating ink and paper

**A physical book provides a sensory experience that is way better than that offered by the electronic version**

**K.S. Venkatachalam**  
ksvenkat48@gmail.com

**I**n an age dominated by Kindles, iPads, and other digital devices, nothing can replace the simple pleasure of reading a printed book. While e-readers and tablets offer convenience, the unique joy of reading a physical book transcends mere functionality. For many avid readers, the experience of flipping through pages, the tactile sensation of paper



(GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK)

between fingers, and the unmistakable smell of a book create an unparalleled connection to the written word.

One of the most delightful aspects of reading a physical book is its sensory richness. The moment you open a book, you are greeted by a fragrance that is difficult to describe yet instantly recognisable. The scent of ink and paper evokes

nostalgia and a sense of history. This olfactory experience can trigger memories of childhood reading or cosy afternoons spent with a favorite story, reinforcing the emotional ties we form with books.

Each turn of a page offers a tactile satisfaction that screens simply cannot replicate. The weight of a book in your hands, the sound of paper crinkling, and the visual delight of printed text create a physicality that enhances the reading experience. There's a rhythm to reading a physical book: the pause as you turn a page, the anticipation of what comes next. This mindful interaction fosters a deeper engagement with the material.

I think many of you would have felt a void in your life after retirement. Embrace the smell of paper, the weight of the book in your hands, and the unique joy that comes from diving into a world crafted by ink and imagination. In doing so, you may rediscover the magic of reading that has captivated generations.

One of the biggest challenges I faced, after my retirement, was how to spend my time meaningfully. Morning exercises, listening to music, and spending time with friends brought me joy, but I found something missing in my life.

Moreover, I found the programmes on TV, especially the debates, uninformative. It was then I rediscovered reading the classics that I had once enjoyed during my school and college days.

So, the next time you find yourself contemplating a book, consider reaching for the printed page.

Embrace the smell of paper, the weight of the book in your hands, and the unique joy that comes from diving into a world crafted by ink and imagination. In doing so, you may rediscover the magic of reading that has captivated generations.



### FEEDBACK

Letters to the Magazine can be e-mailed separately to [mag.letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:mag.letters@thehindu.co.in) by Tuesday 3 p.m.

#### Cover story

Survival of huge

properties in the form of hotels is dependent on tourism. ('The grand Indian royal hotel'; Oct. 27) The costs attached to staying in such palaces makes them out of bounds for a majority of Indian tourists.

**Deepak Taak**

In the face of modernisation and changing tastes of travellers, heritage hotels often find themselves at a crossroads. Balancing the preservation of their historical significance with the demands of contemporary travellers is a challenge that must be met with innovation and foresight.

**K.M. Murthy**

Our country boasts of a large number of royal hotels, forts, and palaces. However, for middle-class families and senior citizens, visiting religious places and getting accommodation in many of our cities and towns such as Guruvayur, Mangaluru and Hyderabad is an uphill task. State tourism departments must spend liberally on constructing hotels that can be made available at a nominal rate with basic amenities.

**R.V. Baskaran**

Worst of this lot is the "trigger-happy" surface-level solution providers (SSPs). They seem to have solutions to every possible ill of this world.

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**Ranjit Hoskote**  
Poet and cultural theorist

"Charles, for me, was many things beyond an architect – a thinker, a curator, an urban designer – someone who had a much larger social vision and commitment, bringing in a new spirit of congregation. He continues to be relevant for architects today. He saw an architect as a part of the larger plan to build a new nation. It's important for young architects to not see themselves as specialists, who simply do what corporate clients ask of them," Hoskote emphasises. "Charles always stressed how a building is part of a precinct, which is part of a neighbourhood, which is part of a city, and those relationships need to be maintained through the detailing and scale."

**Of note:** "The Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur is responsive to the nature of the site. The Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics in Pune brings together things that were important to him as a student [erasing the distinction between the arts and the sciences]. He embodies that in his choices of materials and motifs."

**Ashiesh Shah**  
Architect

There's always something to take away from Correa's designs, believes Shah, whose first memory of the late architect was the awe he felt seeing the high-rise Kanchanjunga being built. "We'd never seen such a sculptural structure come up so quickly in South Bombay," he recalls. "Growing up in the '90s, we all studied his work. But that was a very different era; architecture was not the glamorous entity that it's become today. India was also in a different position: we were reeling from a recession. If you were building anything, it needed to have a strong purpose, and Charles had very strong thoughts on urban planning."

**Of note:** "Buildings like Kanchanjunga are a lesson in energy conservation today. There was no air conditioning back then, and Correa was building for the environment [with double-height spaces, terraces, and plenty of cross-ventilation]. So there's a lesson we can carry with us today."



**Rajnish Wattas**  
Former principal of Chandigarh College of Architecture

Wattas, who has penned a large number of writings on Correa, recalls inviting him for lectures at the university. "He was a star speaker, and we'd have a rush of students who'd come to hear him talk," he reminisces. "He triggered new ways of architectural thinking in the context of India, many parts of which were shaped after Independence by architects from overseas such as Le Corbusier for Chandigarh and Louis Kahn in Ahmedabad. Charles imbibed a lot from Corbusier, but not with blinkers – instead inventing and contextualising modernity to the Indian sensibility and climatic conditions. He emphasised on courtyards and open-to-sky dwellings instead of towering blocks."

Wattas bemoans the urban skyline in the country now, mere "C-grade versions of Hong Kong or the Middle East. There is no echo of our art and culture, or relevance to the topography". There's no identity. "It's not that Charles was against modern materials like glass – he thought it beautiful, bringing in light and helping blend the inside with the outdoors. The issue was the creativity of its usage."

**Of note:** "Jeevan Bharti, a two-wing pergola in Connaught Place in New Delhi, has a dizzying network of glass grids with an earthy Indian exposed brick form alongside it."



Charles Correa's work, his larger social vision, and his commitment to a modern India with housing is always relevant

## DESIGN LESSONS FOR GENERATION NOW

**Ela Das**

**I**t was a simple Hornby model train set that sparked Charles Correa's interest in architecture as a child. This is one of the first things we discover at 'Conversations with Charles Correa: A Critical Review on Six Decades of Practice', held last month in Mumbai, when author Mustansir Dalvi launched the first biography on the visionary modernist architect. The two-day conference had scholars and professionals discussing different facets of his work, ranging from his ideas on urbanism to his writings on cities. And, of course, his

buildings – from Gandhi Ashram, which visual artist Kaiwan Shaban once referred to as "one of the finest examples of humility in architecture", to the multiplicity of Jawahar Kala Kendra.

Correa didn't see architecture as just designing modern buildings. He wanted his work to bring about positive change. "He was very much a modernist, not just stylistically, but because he believed modernism helped one uncover what was actually required," recalls his daughter, architect Nondita Correa Mehrotra. "So, there was no style attached to it, but it allowed everyone to have a place in society."

Rural folk migrating to

metropolises, for instance, was a focus for Correa. "He always stressed how we can't turn them back, and one of his favourite examples was the BEST buses in Bombay being an equaliser – it brings together everyone from the upper castes to the Dalits under the same roof. This mode of public transport can very quickly undo centuries of caste thinking," says Mehrotra.

*Magazine* asked a few experts who spoke at the event, or have been admirers of his work, to share why Correa is relevant today, and what Generation Now can learn from him.

The writer and creative consultant is based in Mumbai.

**View from an LIC Colony**

*Lovely Villa*, a film by architect and filmmaker Rohan Shivkumar captures the intimacies of architecture and everyday life in the LIC Colony he grew up in. "In the 70s, my parents invested in an LIC 'Own Your Home' policy. They received a brochure for the opportunity to buy an apartment in Charles Correa's colony," he shares, recalling how, slowly, other family members moved there too, appreciating its design and spatial quality. He remembers how life in the colony introduced everyone to a value system of modern India. "It had everything from small-sized apartments to large four-bedroom houses, and were loosely designed together, not policed by any social boundaries."



**Shailaja Tripathi**

**F**urniture and collectibles from Evoke, the design store in London's chic Marylebone area, can be found in tony drawing rooms across the world. Run by Sridhar Poddar and his mum Vandana Poddar, it showcases crafts from across the world, but with a special focus on India and Africa. "All craft forms are interconnected. They have a universal language," says Vandana, who was born in South Africa to a Gujarati family. "Both India and Africa are rich in tribal communities whose craft traditions are inspired by nature and utility."

Some of Evoke's collectibles are on exhibit in Bengaluru, at Kaash, the studio-cum-residency that also has the mother and son's stamp. Shields from Cameroon, textile artworks from Ahmedabad, and sculptures from Zimbabwe dot the gallery space inside the 200-year-old villa in Langford Town. "The masks from Tanzania are similar to the *bhuta* masks of Kerala and Karnataka, and the beaded Yoruba chairs remind you of the beadwork practised in Kutch and Saurashtra in Gujarat," shares Vandana, underlining the commonalities between crafts.

### Pushing the craft collective

Yoruba crowns and beaded chairs from Nigeria are some of the highlights of the show. The cone-shaped blue-and-white beaded headpieces, worn by the Oba (king) to underline his role as a divine leader, are adorned with geometric forms and fauna. The Makonde body masks, representing a pregnant woman with a protruding stomach and rounded breasts, are another eye-catcher, harking to the tribe's matrilineal heritage.

"With this exhibition, we wanted to bring Evoke to [India and] Kaash. The store opened in 2021, and Kaash was born in 2022. And it all started with Yoruba chairs," says Sridhar. "My mother wanted a pair for our home in Bengaluru. So, I was tracking a collection of these, but instead of getting them for the house, we ended up deciding to open a store [with interior designer Leonora Stathakis]."

**At London store Evoke's pop-up in Bengaluru, curated collectibles underline the commonalities between the crafts of India and Africa**



## Yoruba crowns in Langford Town

overwhelming, he says, "with people calling from all over the country to acquire the Yoruba chairs and terracotta Zulu pots".

The show is curated by Sridhar and Stathakis. "This is a decor show, with crafts from a different geographical location. We wanted to highlight the continuity of tradition," says Sridhar, adding, "We want to build a commercial aspect around craft. It is an appreciating product. We call it craft collectible."

At Kaash, which is also a production platform, collaborations take place between designers and artisans –



identifying new forms and experimenting with new materials. But Vandana and Sridhar are clear that while they like to encourage traditional art forms, they don't work with antiques. The charpoy suspended from the wall, made with Kuba textile from Congo, is a good entry point into their curatorial premise – and what drew actor Sonam Kapoor Ahuja to them. An ode to the traditional woven bed, it gets a contemporary twist as a *ballam* bench [with legs inspired by *ballam*, the Indian exercise club]. The charpoy has pride of place in Ahuja's home office.



**Building bridges** (Clockwise from left) A blue Yoruba crown and a beaded chair; *ilala* palm fibre baskets from Zimbabwe; Manju Sara Rajan, Vandana, and Sridhar. (EVOKE)



Evoke is a popular stop with moneyed Indian travellers. British Indian artist Anish Kapoor was impressed by their Yoruba chairs, while interior designer Vinita Chaitanya, who designed Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's house in Mumbai, is a frequent visitor. "Social media fosters access to different cultures, inspiring people to have multi-cultural pieces at home," says Sridhar, who sources the pieces from fairs, craft communities and through his travels. Ironically, however, he says they "still don't have a Yoruba chair at home".

The exhibition is on till November 17. Also at Kaash, for the season, is Darshanam – showcasing silk sculptures by designer Jayshree Poddar.

The Bengaluru-based journalist writes on art, culture, health and social welfare.

### Three in focus

**SRIDHAR, VANDANA, AND MANJU SARA RAJAN, CO-FOUNDER OF KAASH FOUNDATION, CHOOSE THEIR FAVOURITE**

**Bamoun chief necklace:** The ancient bronze alloy necklace from Cameroon symbolises wealth and prestige among the Bamoun tribe. The slender design with buffalo motifs, representing strength and resilience, has been made using the lost wax technique. "I find it akin to a *prabhavali*, the brass arch that frames the deity in South Indian temples," says Vandana. "It gives the impression of a halo around the deity."



**Asami Nagashima Sarabhai's blue textile screen:** "The African objects in the room — from the beaded chair to the crown — have a strong presence, but this work softens the show," notes Rajan. Sarabhai, the founder of Rasai, a multidisciplinary textile-based label, made the textile work after seeing the blue Yoruba crown. Her textiles, made for the show, feature architectural elements of Kaash, African objects, and her own brand.

**Constellation vase:** Rendered in *bidri*, the silver inlay on zinc and copper alloy, oxidised with black clay, is a stunning piece that draws from the constellations in the night sky. "It's interesting that when people see it, they feel it's very African," says Sridhar. "I love how the craft of *bidri* has been contemporised. This piece speaks to the other objects in the room."

