



magazine

backpage

Inside Dayanita Singh’s ‘placeless places’

GO TO » PAGE 8

INSIDE

Filmmaker Pan Nalin on the Academy Award campaign

GO TO » PAGE 5

LITERARY REVIEW

Researching the Tamil people | Nirmala Lakshman

GO TO » PAGE 3

Track the latest stories via #ThMagazine on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter)

Get connected » www.thehindu.com



Oscar rush (Clockwise from left) Stills from Gandhi; All We Imagine as Light; Laapataa Ladies; Lagaan; RRR; and AWIAL.

Mahanagar and Aranyer Din Ratri.

This followed screenings at the top three fall season festivals in North America: Telluride, Toronto and New York. There were more awards, including from several American critics' associations. And even though India did not submit All We Imagine as Light for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, the buzz about it remained strong.

According to filmmaker and film preservationist Shivendra Singh Dungarpur the reason for the success of All We Imagine as Light is the new film language that Kapadia has developed. "She blends fiction with documentary style of filmmaking giving her narrative an almost hypnotic quality," he says. "You can't tell where the fiction begins and when it is pure documentary." Mumbai-based Kapadia worked as an assistant with Dungarpur before she joined the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). Her journey since has been one of resilience – overcoming wrongful charges of rioting at FTII (where her scholarship was suspended), to persisting with her vision even when her films never found a local audience. Until now.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGES 4-5

PAYAL KAPADIA'S SEAT AT THE BIG TABLE

A lack of budget certainly didn't stop the filmmaker. Her big win at Cannes, along with rave reviews, special screenings and strong distributors with festival know-how have given her an edge



Aseem Chhabra

In the spring of 2022, S.S. Rajamouli's historical action drama RRR was a huge hit in India and in the global Indian diaspora market when two American distributors floated the idea of releasing it once again – to reach an audience not usually drawn to Indian films.

With great word of mouth and reviews, the film pulled more American audiences. It was quite unlike anything Americans had seen. RRR ended up winning a few critics' association awards and a Golden Globe for the song 'Nattu Nattu'. One day before the final Oscars voting began, the distributors, Variance Films and Potentate Films, organised a sold-out screening in the 1,647-seat Ace Hotel Theatre in Los Angeles. A couple of weeks later, 'Nattu Nattu' won an Oscar for Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures.



Being selected at Cannes helped a lot. Many critics wrote positively about the film. Because of it, we met distributors from all over the world who picked up the movie

PAYAL KAPADIA
Filmmaker

Indian films rarely make such an impact in the U.S. during the awards seasons. I have been observing this for over four decades, first as a journalism student, then an entertainment writer and the festival director of the oldest Indian film festival in North America. Unless it is a work of the magnitude of Richard Attenborough's Gandhi – a British-Indian co-production that won eight Oscars in 1983, beating Steven Spielberg's most loved film E.T., the Extra-Terrestrial.

Danny Boyle's Slumdog Millionaire also won eight Oscars, but unlike Gandhi it was a British production with no Indian producer attached to it.

Grand Prix sets the ball rolling Marketing, promotion, and celebrity endorsements are often a big part of the awards campaign. In the fall of 2001, British filmmaker Roland Joffé (The Killing Fields) called a few of his friends in Hollywood – all members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Joffé had seen Ashutosh Gowariker's Lagaan, which was India's entry for the Best Foreign Language Film. He had liked the film – about a farmer during the British Raj who challenges its officers to a game of cricket to get tax exemption – and wanted to make sure his friends would attend the Academy's screening.

But in all these years I had not seen an Indian film reach American shores with a stamp of having won an award at a major film festival – not until May 2024, when Payal Kapadia's second feature All We Imagine as Light won the Grand Prix at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. It was the first Indian film in 30 years to play in the main competition section of the festival.

Suddenly, it seemed everyone was talking about All We Imagine

ONEPLUS
IIT MADRAS
SAARANG '25
FRAMES & FABLES
THE HINDU
Coca-Cola

NAMMA OORU NAMMA FEST!

SAARANG '25

IIT MADRAS

9TH TO 13TH JAN

SCAN TO GRAB OUR
EXCITING COMBOS!

Made Of
Chennai
THE HINDU



A portrait of a woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a green sari and a pearl necklace. She has her arms crossed.

Well deserved Kani Kusruti, Chhaya Kadam, Payal Kapadia and Divya Prabha pose with the Grand Prix Award in Cannes; and (right) Kapadia with Mira Nair at the post-screening Q&A. (AFP and IAN SCHULTZ)



CONTINUED FROM
» PAGE 1

Under a Golden spotlight
One of the advantages *All We Imagine as Light* could have had is its European producers. "I don't know [if there's a specific] benefit in having a producer from a different part of the world... but if you are keen to premiere at a film festival in Europe, then European producers know the process," says Kapadia. "Now, many Indian producers are learning about it, along with the American festival system."
Late last year, several critics and major publications – from *The New York Times* to *Sight and Sound* magazine ranked *All We Imagine as Light* as the number one film of the year. In its recent Instagram post, *Sight and Sound* described the film as "a delicate, dreamlike tale of loneliness and fellowship" and added that the film recalled works of Ray and Wong Kar-wai. One day after Christmas, *Variety* named Kapadia as one of the international breakouts of the year.
So, no one seemed surprised

when *All We Imagine as Light* received two Golden Globes nominations, including one in the Best Director category. *Variety* wrote this reflected "Kapadia's growing influence in world cinema". This was the first such nomination for an Indian filmmaker for a film made in India. In 1999, Shekhar Kapur received a Best Director nomination for *Elizabeth*, but that was a British production.
All We Imagine as Light also received a Golden Globes nomination for Best Motion Picture – Non-English Language. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences only accepts one international film submitted by each individual country, but the Hollywood Foreign Press Association – the body that awards the Golden Globes – accepts submissions by producers of foreign language films. And so the film could compete.
For a while now, commentators have said that the Golden Globes have lost their significance. But one cannot deny that Academy members and studios seriously follow the Globes – the



PAYAL KAPADIA'S SEAT AT THE BIG TABLE

nominations and the awards. (And since any film that runs for a week in any of the U.S.'s six metropolitan areas is eligible to be nominated for the Oscars, *All We Imagine as Light* is a contender.)
Kapadia attended the Globes dressed in a black silk outfit designed by Payal Khandwala and she wore earnings gifted to her by her mother, the painter Nalini Malani. She was accompanied by her two French producers, Thomas Hakim and Julien Graff, and cinematographer Ranabir Das.
"It was such a huge honour to be nominated," Kapadia shares the day after the Golden Globes

ceremony. "The nominations really put our film back in people's attention. And of course, talking to stars you have admired is always a thrill. I met Jodie Foster as well as director Walter Salles who had both seen our movie, and they liked it!"
Kapadia's chance of winning a Globe was never definite, given the competitive field she was in, but her name has already registered in the minds of many Academy members. Meanwhile, last week, the film was longlisted in three categories for the British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA), including best director.

Celebrity support
The torch of *All We Imagine as Light* has been kept burning by the film's two distributors, Janus Films and Sideshow. The former had two other foreign language films nominated for the Golden Globes: *Vermiglio* (Italy), a drama set during World War II, and *Flow* (Lithuania), a fantasy adventure about a solitary cat's survival. *Flow* won the Globe for the Best Motion Picture, Animated.
"We are lucky to work with Janus and Sideshow who really take care of the films they distribute," Kapadia says. "They understand this system well and

make sure that the campaign effort is streamlined and specific. We don't have a major studio funding backing this effort so it's sheer hard work from everyone involved." A stark contrast to money-backed films such as *RRR* or even a *Gandhi*, which had the support of a big studio for its Oscar campaign.
But in a crowded field with Hollywood and foreign language films competing for the short attention span of Academy members, celebrity support for films can be really helpful. Late last year before the Oscar shortlists were announced, Mexican filmmaker Alfonso Cuarón hosted a screening of Kiran Rao's *Laapataa Ladies* in London. British film director of Indian origin Gurinder Chadha, who is a member of the Academy along with Cuarón, also attended the screening.
In mid-November, Indian-American filmmaker Mira Nair moderated a post-screening Q&A of *All We Imagine as Light* with Kapadia at NeueHouse, a small theatre in Manhattan with just 86 seats. The screening was

organised by Janus Films and Sideshow to generate interest before the limited release of the film on November 15 in New York City. But it was also intended to start the buzz among Academy members based in the city. The NeueHouse screening was attended by a few Indian-American Academy members, including publicist Gitesh Pandya and producer Shrihari Sathe. Nair is also an influential member of the Academy.
The same evening, Netflix hosted a screening of *Laapataa Ladies* in New York City. At the time, the film was in consideration for the Best International Feature Film award. Kiran Rao and Anir Khan were present as was Nair, who did a Q&A with the director and producer. Nair then rushed to moderate the NeueHouse Q&A of *All We Imagine as Light*. She had seen Kapadia's film earlier.

Is another nomination likely?
These special screenings by well-known filmmakers are held throughout the awards seasons. In December, Kapadia was interviewed by director Shuchi Kiran Rao and Anir Khan after the film's screening at Film Forum, a prime art-house theatre in New York City. Again, the Q&A was meant to create a buzz about *All We Imagine as Light* as the Academy members were getting set to watch the films in consideration. The film is now in its eighth week of theatrical run at Film Forum.
And earlier at the end of October, Kapadia was in Japan for the Tokyo International Film Festival when she had an in-depth conversation with the Japanese master Hirokazu Kore-eda. (Kore-eda received a Palm d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2018

for *Shoplifters*. The next year *Shoplifters* received an Academy Award nomination for the Best Foreign Language Film.)
During the conversation, Kore-eda asked Kapadia her thoughts on *All We Imagine as Light* not being sent to the Academy Awards. Her response was measured and diplomatic. "I think with this film, it got a lot already. I'm very satisfied with how the journey of the film has gone. And it's been really more than I expected. So everything that comes its way, it's like a bonus for me."
All We Imagine as Light has had a huge success in finding distribution deals in 85 countries. And according to Zico Maitra, one of the film's producers, it has already opened in 43 countries, including just recently in the U.K., Germany and Spain. After a limited release in India, the film is also streaming on Disney+Hotstar. Kapadia wanted her film to be seen by people across the country. Hence, the screenings took place in major cities, but also those that could be described as Tier-II cities: Guwahati, Chandigarh and Kampur. The OTT release is a part of the extra bonus Kapadia mentioned.
Voting for the Academy Awards ends today, and the nominations will be announced on January 17. While no one can predict whether *All We Imagine as Light* will receive any nominations, this much is clear: Kapadia and her film already have a seat at the main dinner table. She will be there even after the award season has ended.

The writer is a film festival programmer and author.



'AWIAL HAS A CHANCE AS BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY'

The filmmaker, whose Gujarati film *Chhello Show* was India's entry for the Oscars in 2023, breaks down the Academy Awards campaign

Pan Nalin

Everything starts with a good movie. If your movie is good and original, it can travel. But that is just not enough.
When *Last Film Show* (the coming-of-age drama also known as *Chhello Show*) became India's official entry to the 2023 Oscars, I realised that being on the other side was a completely new experience.
The Academy Awards are voted on by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which is a group of industry professionals and I am a member. But there is a very organised ecosystem when it comes to Oscar campaigns, and your film has to be supported by three key elements according to me. The first is the studio that is going to distribute your film, which could be an OTT platform like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney, etc. Those studios get the second most important element right, the publicist.
Oscar campaign publicists have become extremely powerful in the last five years, as they design a whole strategy according to your movie, and that will cost you a bomb. So, money is the third element. My analysis is that, at a minimum, to run a good Oscar campaign, you need \$1.7

million. You have to factor press screenings for Academy members, conferences, minimum advertisements in publications such as *LA Times*, *Variety* and others. So, while you may have a good movie, what is important is how many Academy members have watched it. And that is the biggest battle. During the Oscar season, they have 300-400 movies to watch, and the industry (which constitutes the voters) is extremely busy working. So if they watch the movie and it is good, it will stay with them.

Behind the scenes

When we were there in 2022 with *Last Film Show*, we were competing directly with movies from Netflix and Amazon Prime. They had a budget of \$11-\$12 million for this Oscar campaign. Take for instance, *Emilia Pérez*: this year, directed by Jacques Audiard. I believe its campaign budget would be in the range of \$10-\$15 million. In L.A., there are places where one screening can cost you \$80,000. Now that I know how the campaign works, I am surprised that we were even shortlisted.

For any of the movies shortlisted, time and money are the two most important factors. It's like any other political campaign. In my opinion, Hollywood has legalised corruption, and that is both good and bad. This means they will officially tell you, if you want a cover story, this is what it

will cost you. Or do you want to be on a roundtable of directors – and who wouldn't want to sit next to director Alejandro G. Iñárritu? But then we were presented a bill of \$32,000 and I had to walk out.
There were only eight directors on that roundtable finally, as seven of us didn't have the budget. You need to be present everywhere and everything costs money.
Also, in my opinion, India should decide on their official entry by July end or early August. Then films like Reema Das' *Village Rockstar* (India's official entry to Oscars 2019), which do not have the money, can at least make use of the time to build storytelling. Also, many countries such as Italy, Ireland, South Korea, France, Germany and Denmark sanction huge amounts of money for Oscar campaigns. For them it's like sending their athlete to the Olympics!

Betting on Kapadia

So, how do films stand out in the final round? I feel it is author driven and if there is out of the box thinking, or if you have gone against the mainstream you are noticed. That is likely to happen again this year, with movies like *The Brutalist*. And what are the chances for Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine as Light*, as it already comes with the Cannes tag? I feel they have a chance with Best Original Screenplay and the Best Picture categories, especially if the Academy decides to have more nominations in this category this time. And perhaps Best Director.

In December 2022, documentary and feature filmmaker Pan Nalin's *Last Film Show* became the fourth film in Indian cinema history to be shortlisted for the Academy Awards

— As told to Rosella Stephen



In the race (Clockwise from far left) Stills from *Putul*; *Kanguva*; *Girls Will Be Girls*; *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar*; and *Aadujeevitham*.

BEHIND OSCAR'S BEST PICTURE

With the Academy's list of 207 eligible contenders out, here's a look at what it takes to make the cut

Ayaan Paul Chowdhury
ayaan.paul@thehindu.co.in

Six Indian films are eligible for the 2025 Oscars' Best Picture race, including *Kanguva*, the Tamil epic fantasy; Shuchi Talati's coming-of-age drama *Girls Will Be Girls*; the U.K.'s official submission *Santosh*; *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar*, the polarising historical biopic; *Putul*, the experimental Bengali film; National Award-winning Blessy's *Aadujeevitham*; *The Goat Life*, and Payal Kapadia's Cannes-lauded *All We Imagine as Light*.
Conspicuous by its absence (yet again) is Kiran Rao's *Laapataa Ladies* – India's official Oscar submission this year that only recently missed out on being a contender for Best International Feature.
According to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' evolving rulebook, for a feature film to be considered for the general entry categories at the Oscars, it must meet a basic theatrical criterion. This includes a minimum seven-day

commercial run in at least one of the six major U.S. metropolitan areas – Los Angeles, New York, the Bay Area, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, or Atlanta – within the calendar year.

Steep climb for contenders
For Best Picture, however, the requirements don't stop there. The Academy's Representation and Inclusion Standards (RAISE), implemented last year, mandates that films must meet at least two of four diversity benchmarks. These include on-screen representation, where the subject matter or cast reflects underrepresented groups; diversity in key creative leadership roles or crew positions; industry access opportunities, such as internships or apprenticeships for marginalised groups; and inclusive marketing or publicity strategies.

Best Picture hopefuls must also complete an expanded theatrical run in at least 10 of the top 50 U.S. markets within 45 days of their initial release.

Now in their second year, the RAISE standards have unsurprisingly spurred significant debate. Some view them as overdue; others, as performative



by the dual burden of theatrical expansion and RAISE compliance.

FFI's fumble
The glaring absence of Kiran Rao's *Laapataa Ladies* from the shortlist for Best International Feature, let alone for Best Picture, continues the Film Federation of India's (FFI) frustrating tradition of fumbling the ball. The omission had earlier reignited perennial debates over the FFI's selection process, which has long faced criticism for its opaque decision-making.

Meanwhile, the six Indian films that have moved one step closer for Best Picture consideration offer a fairly diverse slate. Of the lot, *All We Imagine as Light*'s inclusion is a no-brainer. In contrast, *Kanguva*'s eligibility feels emblematic of the Academy's occasional infatuation with the over-the-top spectacle, a la *RRR*. Now, as the countdown to the nominations begins, the question is: will any manage to secure the coveted Best Picture nod?



GREEN HUMOUR

Rohan Chakravarty



Gautam Bhatia

Some years ago, in the U.S., I remember attending a charity auction organised by the Philadelphia Arts League. Local artists were invited to display and sell their works by placing them on a conveyor belt that moved slowly towards a shredder. If a piece was picked by a buyer, the proceeds went to the children's hospital; if not, it was shredded into the garbage bin. The artist merely watched helplessly.

London-based street artist Banksy similarly sold a painting at a Sotheby's auction for £1 million. As soon as the bid was accepted and the hammer came down, the artwork slipped out of its frame and shredded onto the floor. The self-destruction ironically increased the artistic value of the painting which was renamed *Love is in the Bin*.

Whether the shredding was an artistic act done to add theatrical value to the painting, it is hard to say, but in all likelihood it was part of Banksy's plan to ensure that art is not taken too seriously.

His bigger works are altogether different. In 2017, in West Bank, Banksy established the Walled Off Hotel, a temporary art exhibit on the tragedy of Palestine. A play on New York's Waldorf chain, the hotel looks

IS IT TIME FOR AN INDIAN BANKSY?

The list of issues in need of public scrutiny is growing by the day but Indian street art continues to play it safe

right into Israel's West Barrier and proudly boasts the worst view in the world. Part art, part politics, part satire, the artwork has to date attracted over 140,000 visitors.

Essential public vandalism
Without a doubt, Banksy is today one of the most important and prolific street artists of our time. In August 2024, nine animal-related artworks

appeared in quick succession on London walls. A gorilla at the entrance to the local zoo, two elephants stretching trunks out of building windows, pigeons on an imaginary wire – the graphic simplicity of much of the work is often undercut by scathing satire. Two surveillance cameras strut about like pigeons on the sidewalk; on a wall in Ukraine, a young boy wrestles a bully to the

Making a point (Clockwise from left) Banksy's *Armoured Dove* in Bethlehem; a Palestine solidarity graffiti by students in Kochi; and a painting depicting the unsung heroes of the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai. (GETTY IMAGES, THULASI KAKKAT & PPT)



ground; another is seen painting a sign 'Graffiti is a Crime'. It is hard to qualify Banksy's work – site-specific and done at night – as art or vandalism; but as a critic noted, it is the most essential form of public vandalism.

Sadly, such vandalism falls entirely out of the framework of art in India. How well would Banksy do in a country where the primary showcase for public art is a triptych of the *Mahabharata* in a metro station, or a bronze statue of Shivaji at a roundabout? Would he be allowed to run his painterly fingers on the walls surrounding Churchgate Station in Mumbai, or to deface Delhi's India Gate? Could he in fact write a cryptic message about Indian democracy on the dome of Rashtrapati Bhavan, or

wrap the new Parliament building in plastic. Unlikely.

Evocative messaging

For the past decade, despite increasing popularity and visibility, Indian street art has been a reluctant commentator in the public sphere, even though it originally evolved from the political graffiti of Kolkata. Since then it has progressed to three-dimensional wall paintings, quotations, and many forms of caricature and large-scale imagery, visible in many cities. In Delhi's Lodhi Colony, high-walled arched colonial compounds are filled with a bright colour palette that skillfully disguises the fraying neutrality of the old colonial architecture. At Kala Ghoda in Mumbai, and annual street art

festivals in Bengaluru, Kochi and Pune, portraits of famous personalities cut across building facades, trees spread their painted branches around corner walls; murals even appear on private properties that abut the road. Talented local artists display their work on many varied themes with an unusually rich style of pictorial representation.

Banksy's work, by contrast is remarkably spare – relying on the directness of its evocative message. It is unusual in content, display and execution as much as it is a product of its surprising location. As always, the artist remains hidden in plain sight. Everyone knows him, but publicly, he remains invisible, going about his nightly production without fill or fuss. A pandemic poster, 'Do not wash your hands' – is it social comment or satire?; *Girl with Balloon* – graphic art or cultural artefact?; surveillance cameras posing as street pigeons – public protest or political comment? The calculated absurdity of the artist's position is baffling, clever, disturbing, always surprising, but rarely self-conscious. When will it appear next, where, and in what medium...? As the Indian art season reopens, our own ill-tempered cities – desolate, bereft of landscape, and falling apart – cry out for such expression. Religion, separatism, censorship, communal rage, growing illiteracy, bureaucratic apathy, political arrogance, business bluster, media manipulation, the list of Indian issues in need of public scrutiny grows day by day. But an Indian Banksy refuses to step out of the shadows.

The writer is an architect.



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Dear reader, first of all let me take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy new year. If 2024 was a good year for you then I hope 2025 is even better. And if perchance 2024 was a regrettable experience, then I hope 2025 will more than compensate for that shortfall. Onwards and upwards et cetera.

Reader, if there is one thing we know about the great country that is India, it is this: religion is a Sachin, and god is cricket. Wait. Sorry. Sachin is a cricket and god is a religion. No wait. Sacket is a... okay look, you know what I mean. Do I have to explain everything? What is this? IAS exam?

Back in the good old days, cricket was a simple religion. In fact, let me tell you a true story. Sometime in the late 1960s, this writer's father went on a college tour from St. Thomas College, Thrissur, to some prestigious college in Thiruvananthapuram.

There at this prestigious college, he saw a sight he had never seen before: some dozens of young men wearing white clothing, wearing hats, and just standing around a football

TRICKTIONARY EPISODE 5

ABSOLUTE CRICKET SHENANIGANS

Some people hijack every conversation with inane gossip... about Kohli's wife, Ashwin's Instagram, Chahal's sunglasses

field doing absolutely nothing.

"What are these fellows doing?" my father asked his friend.

"I don't know. Maybe some type of agriculture?" his friend replied after some reflection.

So my father went and asked the nearest man in white. Who explained that he was, in fact, indulging in Test cricket.

But then in the 80s, the average Indian person's knowledge of cricket changed radically after India won the World Cup in England. Suddenly we knew the name of most of the players in the Indian team: Kapil Dev, Sunil Gavaskar, Roger Bannister, Feroz Shah Kotla et cetera.

This information was already too much.

Then in the 90s, things started spiralling out of control. By this point, the average Indian schoolchild not only knew the name of every Indian cricketer, she also knew the name of every player in every other

Inningstigator
/ɪnɪŋzstɪɡətə/
noun
Plural: inningstigators
Definition: A person who has evolved beyond following cricket as a sport and is now pathologically obsessed with the personal lives, social media activity, and interpersonal relationships of cricketers, their families, and associated personalities.

irritating minutiae.

"Did you enjoy the India-Sri Lanka match?" they will ask.

"Oh, it was good. Nice innings by V.V.S. Laxman," you will reply, totally unprepared for the absolute shenanigans that will follow.

"I thought there was too much grass leading to variable bounce, thankfully the dew factor played in our favour, otherwise things could have gotten very tricky given the number of left-handers."

At this point what option do you have but to clutch at your chest, and fall over pretending to have a heart attack, so that this idiot will go and harass someone else.

Until very recently, I thought that the virus that is the Indian cricket-obsessive had reached its ultimate form.

Dear readers, I was deeply mistaken. Things have gone from bad to even worse.

According to my calculations, somewhere around the year 2020, the virus mutated into something even worse. In fact, the Indian cricket-obsessive is no longer obsessed with cricket, they are obsessed with cricketers.

Friends, the new Indian cricket-obsessive is deeply concerned not with cricket, but with Virat Kohli's wife, Rohit Sharma's girlfriend, Ravichandran Ashwin's Instagram, Yuzvendra Chahal's sunglasses, and so on and so forth.

If you try and discuss some cricket match, these rapsccallions will immediately hijack the conversation with inane gossip nonsense.

"Machaan, what a cracking session after tea, no?"

"Nobody cares. Did you see what Harbhajan tweeted about Dhruv Jurel when Washington Sundar got run out across the Delaware? Dude it was fire!!!"

Dude, please. Just die. The shame cherry on this sadness cake is that this cancer has metastasised into the sports media as well.

And the garbage glitter on the above mentioned shame cherry on the sadness cake is that it is January 2025, and the English language still does not have a word to describe ruffians like this.

That travesty ends today.

Henceforth, these fellows will be known as inningstigators.

Example sentence: "I tried discussing Bumrah's brilliant spell with Nitin Sundar, but the inningstigator immediately launched into a 20-minute analysis of why the third slip wasn't invited to the fourth slip's daughter's wedding."

Are there any readers with political connections? Can we please pass some law in the Lok Sabha to ban inningstigation?



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

GOREN BRIDGE

The illusion

East-West vulnerable.
South deals

Bob Jones

South's five-club bid is perfectly reasonable. He did not know whether or not four spades was making – it wasn't – but five clubs might also make and it could not be a very expensive sacrifice. In the right hands, it turned out to be quite a good contract.

West found the most effective lead of a trump, preventing any real chance of ruffing two hearts in dummy. South's first thought was

that he would need a successful diamond finesse to make his contract. After a bit more thought, he realised that the diamond queen was just an illusion. A low diamond would have done as well. He won the opening trump lead in hand with the ace, cashed the ace of diamonds, and led the queen of diamonds. West won with the king and led another club, won in dummy with the queen.

South now ruffed a diamond, crossed back to dummy with the ace of hearts, and ruffed another

NORTH
♠ K 10 3
♥ A 8
♦ 10 8 7 5 2
♣ Q 6 3

WEST
♠ A J 8 7 6
♥ K 10 7 5
♦ K 3
♣ 10 9

SOUTH
♠ Void
♥ J 9 6 2
♦ A Q
♣ A K 8 7 5 4 2

The bidding:

| SOUTH | WEST | NORTH | EAST |
|-------|----------|-------|------|
| 1♣ | 1♠ | 1NT | 4♠ |
| 5♣ | All pass | | |

Opening lead: 10 of ♣

diamond. This felled the jack and established dummy's 10 as a winner. He conceded a heart to the defence, ruffed the spade shift in hand, and ruffed a heart in dummy. He discarded his remaining heart on dummy's 10 of diamonds and claimed his contract. Nicely played!

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

Practical inventions

Berty Ashley

1 Born on January 12, 1879, Ray Harroun was an American race car driver who at the inaugural Indianapolis 500 in 1911 controversially declined to take along a mechanic as other drivers did. Ray replaced one of the jobs the mechanic did with a small device he mounted on the top of his windshield. What had he invented which helped him win the race, and is now found on all automobiles?

2 René Laennec was a French doctor, who was also a flautist. In 1816, he had difficulty diagnosing a young woman, who had a heart problem due to her obesity. Using his knowledge of flute making, what did he invent to help that is now a staple of the profession?

3 Johann Döbereiner was a German chemist, who invented the Döbereiner's lamp. It was a portable device inside which zinc reacts with diluted sulphuric acid to produce hydrogen. On opening a valve, the gas reaches a platinum sponge that on reaction with oxygen ignites the hydrogen. This was one of the earliest examples of what device?

4 Charles Goodyear was an American chemist, who is credited with inventing the chemical process that made rubber pliable and waterproof. He discovered by accident that adding sulphur under heat gave rubber all the required



Pioneering research The locality of Lawes in Queensland, Australia, is named after English agriculturist Sir John Bennet Lawes. (GETTY IMAGES)

characteristics. He named the process after the Roman god of fire. What is the process known as?

5 Sir John Herschel invented the cyanotype process, which is a slow-reacting photographic printing formulation that is sensitive to light near the ultraviolet spectrum. The resultant print had a characteristic colour. By what name were they known, which is still in use today?

6 Sir John Bennet Lawes was an English entrepreneur, who founded an experimental farm. In 1842, he obtained a patent for a

process to treat phosphates with sulphuric acid, which resulted in 'superphosphates'. This was the beginning of which industry that revolutionised agriculture?

7 Walter Hunt was an American mechanical engineer, who invented the modern version of an item that had been used by the ancient Greeks. They used a 'fibula' to help secure their tunics. Hunt included a clasp that covered the point, and a circular twist to act as a spring. What did he invent in 1849, which now makes millions?

8 John J. Loud obtained his patent in 1888 for something

he invented so that he could write on leather and wood products. The fountain pen that people normally used was useless in both cases. But it could not be used for letter-writing and the patent eventually lapsed. What had he invented which we now know in another format?

9 Robert Gair was a Scottish paper bag maker. One day, by accident, the metal ruler he used to crease the bags cut it. He realised that by cutting and creasing thick paper boards he could make a prefabricated item, which was easy to store. What did he invent, which revolutionised the packaging industry?

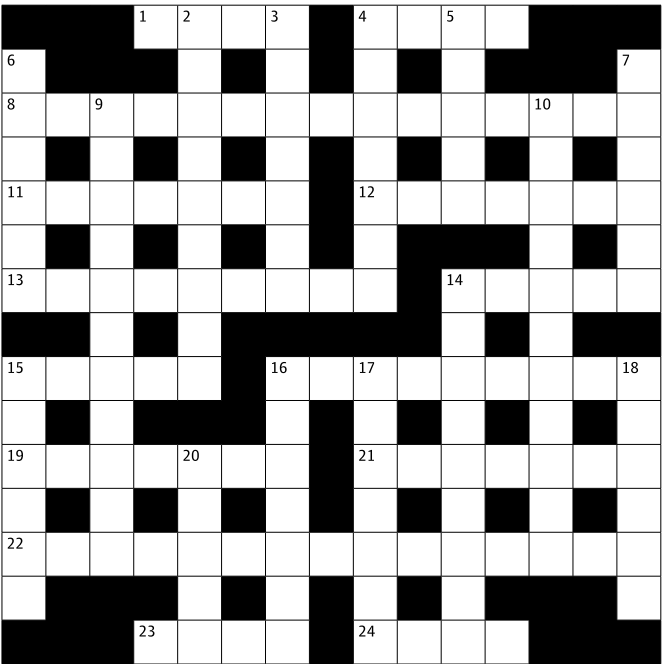
10 William Halsted was an American surgeon, who came to know of a scrub nurse in his surgery called Caroline Hampton. She complained of being painfully allergic to the antiseptic used on patients. Halsted reached out to Goodyear Rubber company to make something for her. What did he introduce to the field that drastically improved overall sterility of the industry?

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

- 1. The rearview mirror
- 2. Stethoscope
- 3. Lighter
- 4. Vulcanization
- 5. Blueprint
- 6. Fibillizer
- 7. Safety pin
- 8. Ballpoint pen
- 9. Folding cardboard cartons
- 10. Surgical gloves

Answers

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3340



- Across**
- 1** Old Testament prophet seen in tamo'-shanter (4)
 - 4** Intensity regularly dropped in avian protection (4)
 - 8** 'How eerie!' 'Why, sure!' Uneasy sentiment when abroad (4,3,4,4)
 - 11** Chose, after imbibing drop of Laphroaig, to become drunk (7)
 - 12** Moves heavily wanting sleep after cycling (7)
 - 13** With buff back muscles, doing a flip, they're resolute (9)
 - 14** Tax channel (5)
 - 15** Wristwatch, say: not so exciting but a becoming one (5)
 - 16** Like a competition involving multiple setters? (3-3-3)
 - 19** Ghostly duck penetrating — we need camouflage! (7)
 - 21** Erstwhile capital offence: *agent provocateur* finally taken, 7 beheaded (7)
 - 22** Liberally salt the roast, say? Who does that any more? (5,2,4,4)
 - 23** Everyman gripped by American science fiction? Hardly (2,2)
 - 24** What pothead may get from — or do to — his habit (4)
- Down**
- 2** Historic ship showing might on river (9)
 - 3** Quiet location for milk... shake (7)
 - 4** Annoys the French (a primary

- requirement)? (7)
- 5** Energy shown by Second XI? (5)
- 6** Pinches small tissues (6)
- 7** Shaking tail end, watch a lad fall in Vermont, for example? (6)
- 9** TikTok etc, therefore claim idea is deranged (6,5)
- 10** On the phone, Ms Raducanu will call Ireland (7,4)
- 14** Using reason, conciliated freely? That's not on! (9)
- 15** Turncoats abandoning HMS inhabited this island, primarily? (6)
- 16** Scribble, leave hurriedly (4,3)
- 17** Understand second Beatles hit (3,4)
- 18** They're beyond help? King George succeeded in the protection of one (6)
- 20** Where to get dates and a drink for '90s rockers (5)

SOLUTION NO.3339





ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Naveen Khajanchi

leadersnkh@gmail.com

You have reached many of your goals, yet the desire for more lingers. But for whom? For what? Perhaps, there is a belief that happiness lies just beyond your next achievement or acquisition. This relentless chase can become an obsession with “I” and “me”. In reality, you may be missing out on genuine fulfilment that comes from restful sleep, meaningful relationships, and true contentment. Take a moment to reflect. Those who genuinely smile, forgive, forget, and love – both themselves and others – often experience the deepest happiness. You may recall a time when you prioritised quality time over material gain, but somewhere along the way, the balance tipped, and the rat race took over. Initially money is a critical need, but once a reasonable sum is there, the returns start diminishing from a happiness perspective unless we have the wisdom to use it for the wellbeing of society.

My way or highway

It's time to step back from the relentless pursuit of more. Slow down and let go – whether it's unnecessary lifestyle gadgets, constant mobile connectivity, or daily indulgences such as alcohol and smoking. The ego tied to success can push a “my way or the highway” approach, damaging relationships despite your best intentions. When was the last time you spent an evening with your spouse with no expensive gifts needed. Recognise that you have the means to break free from this cycle – before it's too late.

The happiest people are often those who give and

Step back, rediscover happiness

Slow down and let go, the happiest people are those who give and receive care, creating meaningful connections

receive care, creating meaningful connections. Simple acts such as exercise, time in nature, reading, writing, or enjoying music can enrich life's tapestry. Strive to make happiness a conscious part of your daily life, giving it the depth it deserves. Professional achievements alone can leave a void that no wealth can fill. Embrace the past, shed unnecessary burdens, and take control of the present to shape a better tomorrow. While you may have amassed wealth, power, and possessions – society's symbols of success – relationships built solely around money and status often become hollow. Despite luxurious brands, a hefty bank balance, a beautiful home, and a sleek

car, life can feel incomplete. At life's end, branded possessions will not matter. You will long for the warmth of loved ones. Distance often grows within families, conversations dwindle, and unstructured time disappears. Even a family dog might offer more genuine companionship. Retiring rich but disconnected is no victory. It's time to rebuild relationships with unconditional love, shedding masks and embracing self-acceptance. Happiness is within your reach. Start giving it out to others unconditionally and it will come back to you too. Midlife distractions may surface – an affair, substance use, or loss of interest in simple pleasures. Health issues such as high blood pressure can follow. The mobile phone may become a stand-in for genuine connection, and nights pass with the aid of sleeping pills. Loneliness creeps in, but you are not alone. Many reach a point where their relationship with themselves feels hollow – obsessed with “me” yet disconnected from deeper meaning. Wealth can't shield you from health declines, weakening family ties, or fading friendships. For married couples, this period tests the strength of their bond. Often, homemakers' sacrifices go unnoticed, and partners live in silos. Rekindle love and affection; return home to your best friend. Slow down and rediscover life's simple joys. Start with a half-day weekly detox from work and mobile to be with yourself or your loved one's only. Reflect on wisdom's role in your journey. Success grounded in humility and restrained ego is essential. Wealth, if it becomes the sole focus, can erode your peace of mind. The pursuit of “more” creates illusions of happiness and fosters ego-driven decisions and shallow friendships. True fulfilment lies in meaningful contributions and sharing. Balance in mind, body, and soul is crucial.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Compassion and understanding

Priyanka P. Venugopal

drpriyanka.ayu@gmail.com

Comfort zones are often misunderstood. While some people may view it as laziness, it's not always the case. For those who have been through traumatic experiences, physically, mentally, or emotionally, their comfort zone may be a necessary refuge. At the beginning of their healing journey, they may feel a sense of calm and stillness, like the calm after a storm. They may not be ready to face the world again, and that's not due to laziness, but rather exhaustion.

These individuals have often lost faith in the possibility of a better future and may procrastinate, feeling overwhelmed by the demands of the world. As a result, they may fall behind and begin to accept themselves as failures. However, it's essential to recognise that they are not failures, but rather, they are healing.

I want to assure them that it's okay to not be okay, and it's okay to take time to heal. They don't need advice or criticism; they need someone to believe in them. It may take time for them to trust, but with compassion and understanding, they can begin to heal.

I sympathise with those who advise others to simply “forget and move on”. If it were that easy, they would have done so already. Instead, this advice can strengthen their belief in being a failure and prevent them from acknowledging their pain.

Acknowledging their pain, even if it's frightening, is crucial to their healing. It gives them the power to accept their mistakes and build self-acceptance. Only through acceptance can they face their wounds again and begin to heal.

Your belief in them can become their strength to believe in hope again. We need to remember that the world is not a race, and all we need is compassion. Let's live and let live.

Hoping for the best from 2025

Last year was a breath of fresh air after the travails of COVID-19

Tiny Nair

tinynair@gmail.com

Our first encounter was during a late-night dinner in December 2023, and she immediately caught my attention. She was not glamorous but exuded the feel of fresh fragrant air, more soothing than exciting, comforting than dazzling, but it was love at first sight. She was new, while I had the shadow of 60 winding years behind me. Let me confess that this was a strictly platonic relationship. Despite

occasional rough patches and road bumps, I enjoyed her company thoroughly. We shared gifts and promises, mostly unmet, our accomplishments and failures equally. We cheered together for India when the Men-in-Blue lifted the T20 cup, we hugged when Manu Bhaker stood on the podium at the Paris Olympics. As we cried at the heartbreaking scenes of the Wayanad landslide, I silently blamed her for the bad times. One reason for such an emotional relationship with 2024 was that it was



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

just a year after the COVID-19 pandemic, and we were slowly learning to enjoy breathing without an N95, and not crouching at the faint sound of cough. The vaccine certificate was deleted from the favourite album, and gone. It was a beautiful time together. Vacations were back, flights were full. Just two weeks back my phone rang. “Hey, how are you,” I asked. Instead of her sweet rustling voice, there was a gruff. “You are a cheat. Four years back

you promised 25 by 25, didn't you?” My roller-coaster mind was at a transient pause, anticipating the sharp drop. I remember that back in 2021, we doctors proudly announced that our aim would be to reduce cardiac risk factors by 25% by 2025. The campaign was called 25 by 25. This included stopping smoking, reducing alcohol consumption, controlling diabetes and hypertension, cutting down on salt, and encouraging exercise. I kept quiet. “Do you care to know the statistics now?” She sounded furious. “Today, 26% of Indians continue to smoke, the per capita alcohol consumption is up to 4.9 litres, and 9.6% of the Indian population is diabetic. Don't you feel ashamed?” I was speechless.

Cross connections

The hilarity brought about by Army's old communication devices



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

field telephone to raise his own exchange and ask to be connected with another user. According to established procedure, the Leh and Partapur exchange operators always identified themselves with “Lima” and “Papa”, the phonetic letters for ‘L’ and ‘P’, respectively. When the operator responded to a call from a commander, he would say, “Good

morning, Lima.” Partapur was cut off from Leh during the winter months, and depended on IAF transport. Indeed, Leh itself was in similar conditions, physically cut off from Srinagar and Chandigarh. Contact with home was only through mail. During my first posting to Leh, Partapur was referred to as “Papa” on the telephone. But after about a year, the Partapur operator suddenly began to say “Parta”. Curious to know the reason, I asked several officers, but they either did not know or were unwilling to say why. One evening, after a few drinks with the Partapur commander's staff officer, the following amusing story was revealed. The commander was a well-liked and respected

senior officer. But he was long overdue for a posting out from the physically and mentally challenging conditions of commanding an active formation in Partapur. And that made him a trifle crotchety in the mornings. One morning, when the commander cranked the telephone handle to raise his Partapur exchange, as usual the operator politely responded, “Good morning, Papa”. But this was not a usual morning for the commander, who had had a sleepless night thinking of his family. And it certainly wasn't good, because he exploded, “Don't [expletive] well call me Papa!! I am not your [expletive] Papa!” The operator reported the commander's wish to the signals staff officer, who was faced with the quandary of deviating from standard procedure. After some thought, he instructed the exchange operators to say, “Good morning, Parta”. And Papa became Parta in daily parlance in Ladakh.



FEEDBACK

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

Cover story

The ‘habitat compression’ experienced by Goans reminds one of the predicament of the merchant who gave shelter to his camel in the scorching sun. (‘Butter chicken in Goa’; Jan. 5) The nose-in-the-air arrogance of wealthy migrants and the unhealthy impact on Goa's culture and ways of life have contributed to the strong reservation against the boom in migration.

Ayyasseri Raveendranath

Goans should be encouraged to welcome people from other states with an open attitude. Socio-cultural changes make people wiser and more knowledgeable. Consider it a blessing instead of a threat.

Sajna Hameed

Art of the craft

Author and physician Abraham Verghese was very candid and forthcoming in his view that “all writing is artifice”. (‘Geography matters to Abraham Verghese’; Jan. 5) Few authors would have the courage to make such an admission. His ability to project ordinary happenings on to a larger canvas and weave a compelling narrative is remarkable.

Kosaraju Chandramouli

Cultural icon

Though he won the National Award, M.T. Vasudevan Nair's comment that he is not competent enough to talk about films reflects his self-restraint. (‘Voice of the lone swimmer’; Jan. 5) His cordial ties with his contemporaries across Malayalam literature and cinema were also noteworthy. He will



MORE ON THE WEB

www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page

A trip down chocolate lane

For a true chocoholic, the longing is a daily temptation

C.S. Krishnamurthy

Monkey matters

In a temple town, a human-simian nexus pulls a fast one on a visitor

Radha Prathi

Hullabaloo for a green patch

Getting the hands dirty and making a big mess

S. Bhashyam

The interview

How a nursery rhyme did the trick in a one-on-one

Gomathi Mohan

Contributions of up to a length of 700 words may be e-mailed to: openpage@thehindu.co.in Please provide the postal address and a brief background of the writer. The mail must certify that it is original writing, exclusive to this page. The Hindu views plagiarism as a serious offence. Given the large volume of submissions, we regret that we are unable to acknowledge receipt or entertain queries about submissions. If a piece is not published for eight weeks please consider that it is not being used. The publication of a piece on this page is not to be considered an endorsement by The Hindu of the views contained therein.

Recontextualise her work

(Clockwise from right) *Photo Lies*; Dayanita Singh standing in front of *Time Measures* at the Jaipur Centre for Art; and her architectural montages.



DAYANITA SINGH: ALWAYS DISMANTLING AND DISSEMINATING

Six exhibitions in five cities — the photo-artist shares the story behind her travelling museums and how she began creating her ‘placeless places’

Georgina Maddox

I reach Dayanita Singh’s home and studio on a chilly December evening, and I am immediately greeted by hugs, coffee, and captivating prints of the veteran photographer’s works. Scattered around are miniature versions of the structures for her mobile museums.

Singh is in the midst of creating one of her biggest travelling exhibitions — six showcases in five cities — but she is calm and focused as we sip coffee. She talks about how, over the years, she has taken on the role of curator, archivist, and more recently, a photo architect, who is “collapsing time and geography” through her analogue montages mounted on compact, portable wooden installations. These have freed her of walls, and allows her to change the order of the display, defining how the works are laid out and observed.

“I am engaged with what it means to disseminate an exhibition. Especially one that is as large as *Dancing with my Camera* [curated by Stephanie Rosenthal, it started its journey in 2022 in Gropius Bau,

Berlin, and ended in May 2024 at the Museum Serralves in Porto, Portugal],” she says. The touring retrospective “was displayed in 11 galleries, which is why it made sense to have a series of exhibitions back home, spread across India”.

Singh is so engaged that she draws a diagram to show her complex plan: *Museums of Tanpura* at the just concluded Bengal Biennale; *Museums on Tour* at Kolkata’s Indian Museum, till March 31; *Photo Lies* at Mumbai’s Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, till February 23; *Time Measures* at the Jaipur Centre for Art, till March 16; *Photo Architecture* at Ahmedabad’s Kanoria Centre for Arts, from March 1 to April 27; and *Mona and Myself* at Vadodara’s Gallery White, from March 6 to April 30.

The vast dissemination seems overwhelming, but Singh isn’t fazed. “This is what I do. My work must be taken beyond galleries where some people come just to take selfies and not really look at the work,” she says.

Pushing the ‘photone-ness of photography’
Singh has never been one to settle for a single style, be it in her

photography or the way she displays her work. From building sculptural installations to using her images to make books, she is constantly innovating. The thread that unites her multi-venue project now is her idea of photo architecture.

Mining her large repository that dates back to the 1980s, she is showing different configurations of an exhibition in different cities, and adding something new and specific with each iteration. “My ‘museums’ are able to change, both in their form as well as the images they hold,” she says, pointing to a model of the teak frame in her drawing room. She switches the order and images as we speak, thus changing the viewing experience instantly.

This fluidity is also evident in her architectural montages, the highlight of her exhibition *Photo Lies*. She picks out a display on her wall, and as I look closely I realise the beautiful black-and-white image of a well-lit interior space is actually three different locations montaged together, each angle meeting in such a manner that it creates a new location. “The first image was shot in Japan, the other in India, and the third in Sri Lanka,” she says, adding how they are a way for her to go



beyond the “photone-ness of photography”. They are not digitally manufactured, she emphasises. “I brought all three photos together, physically cutting and pasting them myself, to create something more than what I started with.”

In an interview with *Architectural Digest*, she threw light on the “early epiphany” that set her on this path. While staying at the Heritance Kandalama hotel, designed by architect Geoffrey Bawa, she says she started “feeling a sense of déjà vu, though I had not been to Sri Lanka before”. She later discovered that Bawa had been inspired by the Padmanabhapuram Palace in Tamil Nadu, a place she had photographed for one of her books. This put her on the path to creating these “placeless places”.

Forever chasing new forms
In the coming months, Singh’s exhibitions will morph even more. *Museums of Tanpura*, which disseminates her work documenting classical musicians — including Kishori tai (vocalist Kishori Amonkar) and Singh’s accordion-fold book of the icon, and the Zakir Hussain Maquette, a facsimile of the book she made as a student — will get bigger as Singh adds more works (*Pillar of Pandals*, *Sari Museum* and *Indian Museum Pillar*) and moves the show into the Indian Museum’s corridors.

Photo Lies, meanwhile, will split into two. One half will head to Ahmedabad, and the other to Vadodara. And on its journey there, it will transform from an ode to architecture into an ode to friendship — the celebration of Mona Ahmed (confined to montages and an installation of her desk in Mumbai) will expand into *Mona and Myself*, chronicling Singh’s decades-long relationship with her friend.

Even as the project and the processes impress, there is criticism too. Some say Singh has not created any new work, and is merely disseminating existing work. “It does not matter when I shot something. When I make a work and display it, I recontextualise it,” Singh responds, expressing disappointment that the critics have not understood her process. “Whether it is architectural montages, constructed contacts, and painted photos [painted over with enamel paint so they become ghost images of themselves], these are all new work. It is not just new images, but new forms that have not existed before.” Indeed. Excavating, constructing, de-constructing and re-constructing have always been at the heart of Singh’s work.

The writer is a critic-curator by day, and a visual artist by night.

Shweta Shiware

The lines between craft, art, and design are blurring now more than ever before.

Artisanal techniques, once seen as the antithesis of “cool”, are gaining ground in art and design circles. Last year saw several narratives around textile, helping transform them into powerful tools of inquiry into cultural identity and sustainability. Exhibitions such as *When Indian Flowers Bloomed in Distant Lands* (on view in Ahmedabad until March) highlighted the political and economic importance of textiles in India’s global trade, while *From Folk to Fibre* — featured at the ‘Journeying Across the Himalayas’ festival in December under the Royal Enfield Social Mission — celebrated the myths, stories, and social bonds woven into textiles from nine Himalayan regions.

Reimagined by a new wave of artisans, designers, and craftspeople, these showcases challenged traditional biases in textile storytelling, offering unique perspectives on social, environmental and cultural concerns.

Themes of community and empathy
Sense and Sensibility, a showcase by Bengaluru-based research and study centre The Registry of Sarees (TRS) at last month’s Raw Collaborative exhibition in Gandhinagar, invited viewers to see textiles not just as objects, but as extensions of identity. Ahalya Matthan, founder of TRS, describes it as “an exploration of human interactions”.

She adds, “There is a diviseness [between art and craft], though it isn’t always acknowledged. Exhibitions like this place the onus



Breaking silos

In a year that saw several narratives around textiles, *Sense and Sensibility* attempted to blur the lines between artists, craftspeople, and designers

on us to tell the story inclusively, highlighting not just craft, art, and design, but the people behind them — their processes, materiality, and skill.”

Curated by textile designers and researchers Aayushi Jain, Vishwesh Surve, and Radha Parulekar, the exhibition breaks from academic rigour to explore themes of community, empathy, and collective identity. Textile history is often shaped by academicians and experts, while the vernacular voices, particularly those of contemporary stakeholders such as weavers and designers, remain largely sidelined.

Nearly 100 works from 36 designers, artists, darners, collectors and community-led initiatives participated, the works on display tracing a continuum of influences: from industrialisation and Art Deco to Bauhaus, minimalism, sustainability, and technology. Be it monochrome *ikat*, brocade and *jamdani* artworks by designer duo David Abraham and Rakesh Thakore, Kutchi *torans* from collector Salim Wazir’s private collection, heirloom Banarasi brocades showcased at the Festival of India exhibitions in the 1980s and 90s, or Toda embroidery from the pastoral people of Nilgiris.

Textiles in focus (Clockwise from left) Wall hangings and lamps from furniture brand This and That; Toda embroidery; and *Naye Mein Purana*.



Set to travel the country

Sense and Sensibility is part of an extensive study on the ‘History of Design in India through Textiles’, tracing its evolution from the 19th century to the present. The research, which delves into the materials, skills, and processes of diverse textile stakeholders, will continue at The Registry of Sarees until 2026, with a publication to follow. As the exhibition travels across India and internationally, it will evolve, incorporating fresh voices and perspectives, ensuring the project remains a living testament to India’s ever-changing textile design history.

Breaking conventional divisions
The emotional resonance of textiles was seen in the juxtaposition of two works. *Naye Mein Purana* by Vankar Vishram Valji and *Between Indigo and Light* by textile designer Chinara Farooqui’s brand Injiri. The former, “an intricate piece woven from handspun cotton, *kala* cotton, tussar silk, *desi oon*, merino wool, and acrylic yarn, reflects the Valji family’s deep-rooted weaving

tradition in Kutch”, says Dinesh, one of the four sons of the National Award-winning craftsman, and who dedicated 25 days to weaving the piece. On the adjacent wall, Farooqui combined art and architecture through indigo, sheer *jamdani* panels, and a contemporary take on the *mehrab* motif, traditionally found on the walls of mosques. The two installations — one by a

craftsperson, the other by a designer — represented distinct social and creative experiences. And the proximity of the works, particularly given that Farooqui has collaborated with the Valji family to develop textiles for her brand, broke down the conventional divisions between designer and craftspeople. “Design and craft must merge — we can’t do without each other,” Farooqui says.

A cultural exchange
Rather than framing India’s crafts as relics of colonial plunder, the narrative is evolving into a dynamic, ongoing cultural exchange between rural and urban practitioners, craft and commerce, and the past and the present.

“I question how much we should revere craft or freeze it in time,” states Mala Pradeep Sinha of Vadodara-based Bodhi design studio. “For craftspeople, it’s about responding to the market. If change is needed, so be it. So why are we, the so-called experts, trying to impose a narrative that suits us?” This thinking translated into Sinha’s *QR Code Quilt*, a striking black-and-white wall hanging made from upcycled block-printed scraps. Textiles and fibre-based art are more complex than people often think. As Aratrik Dev Varman, the founder-designer of Tilla studio, puts it, they are about “intent and exploring personal expression”, and not just creating for the market. “Exhibitions like *Sense and Sensibility* are crucial for mapping India’s evolving textiles and crafts before they’re lost,” he concludes, stressing the designer’s role in influencing and recording change.

The writer is a columnist and critic, with a keen focus on fashion, textiles, and culture.