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Most people around me do
not travel with their parents. But
the reason is often that older
people don't want to go beyond
their comfort zones, their health
may not support them, and most
importantly they do not realise
what travel can do for them. I
don't believe it's a budget issue,
it's a mindset issue. Because if
people wish to, even in families
with lesser disposable income, a
trip with a parent can be planned
somewhere close

SHYJU VARKY
Wellness and life coach



Shyju Varky's mum in Almaty, Kazakhstan.



Silver goals (Clockwise from left) Divya Rolla with her father in Kolkata; G. Kashinath at Borobudur Temple in Indonesia; Rick Roy with his mum; and Khadija Masood with her father. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)



PARENTING YOUR PARENT ON HOLIDAY

Temple visits and short wedding trips aren't enough — people are now solo travelling with an ageing parent to reconnect and create memories. It is an elite trend that needs more takers, across the board

Shunali Khullar Shroff

I took my first mother-daughter vacation in 2014 to Edinburgh, a year after my father passed away. In the years that followed, my mother, who lives alone in a different city from both her children, would occasionally join us on family holidays. I was content that I was doing my bit, but after spending two years by herself during the pandemic, she reluctantly expressed a desire to travel with just me. She fondly recalled our holiday in the English countryside, where we found ourselves stranded and had to steal apples from someone's orchard. "I have the best time when I'm alone with you," she said.

I belong to the original 'bucket list generation'. Coined in 1999, the phrase is derived from the jovially morbid 'kicking the bucket'. And so it is that we find ourselves living in an era when exploring the planet has become almost essential to our existence. Everybody we know is fervently planning trips — with partners, children, family and friends. But what about ageing parents who want to take a vacation with their children, to get quality time with them to reconnect? Or the parent left on their own? Who do they plan exciting

holidays with, especially if they don't want to be squeezed into a busy family itinerary?

For the past two years, I've made it a point to travel with my 75-year-old mother as often as I can. I do it for her, but also for me. Even as I mother her myself at times, I love being just her daughter, without the demands of motherhood or marriage. Our relationship, I have found during our travels, constantly shifts, alternating between parent and child. Four months ago in Landour, while staying at Devdar Woods, a heritage property, she was the protective one, worrying that a panther might carry me away from the living room of the lodge late at night. Two weeks ago, in Ranthambore, the roles reversed however, when she fell ill, and I found myself mothering her much to her annoyance.

Knowing her love for animals, I'd booked us at Aman-i-Khás, a luxurious tented camp on the edges of the forest, excited for a mother-daughter safari. But on the very first day, she fell ill. And even though she encouraged me to go out alone, it wasn't what I had planned. Instead of the mother-daughter safari I had envisioned, she spent most of the trip at the resort attended to by Bijai, the butler assigned to our tent while I went on a tiger trail.

When I returned from my exciting excursions, I found her content on the veranda, listening to birdsong. There was not a trace of disappointment — she was eager to hear about my experience. I realised then that the real gift of these trips wasn't the activities or destinations, but giving all of myself to her. It was our never-ending conversations, she told me later, that sustained her for months.

Discovering unexpected facets

Usha Babur, a Kathak artist who recently relocated from Bengaluru to Dubai, had a similar experience when she took her mother, 74, who lives in Mumbai, on a sightseeing trip to Agra. She'd picked the Holiday Inn for their stay and much of their trip was spent resting at the hotel. "It wasn't what I expected it to be. Mum's energy levels had decreased, and comfort became the priority," she says. Babur hired a wheelchair to help her mother avoid standing in long queues at the Taj Mahal, but even then, her mother felt easily exhausted. "Looking back, a laid-back resort holiday would have suited us better than all the sightseeing," Babur reflects.

It isn't just challenges; when you spend time alone with that one parent, you discover so many new qualities in them you hadn't fully appreciated

before. In my mother's case, I noticed she retains her childlike curiosity, quiet optimism, and a remarkable ability to adapt to change with grace. Babur says, "I realised for the first time how strong my mother had become after my father's passing."

Rick Roy, a costume designer from Kolkata, discovered unexpected facets of his mother's independence on a trip to Mussoorie. She'd just recovered from a prolonged illness and, wanting to take her away from the responsibility of looking after his father and their home in Kolkata, Roy treated her to a stay at the charming Rokeby Manor. "She surprised me by walking out of the hotel alone, saying she wanted to explore. It made me realise how self-sufficient she still is," he shares. His mother, a painter, had abandoned her art for years, but on this trip, she opened up about it again, sparking something dormant within her.

"I don't want my parents to feel dependent, and letting them plan their travel can empower them. On that holiday, I let my mother decide how she wanted to spend her day," he says. She came back from the holiday more confident, a glimpse of her old self returning.

'Witness to their vulnerabilities'

Yet, not every experience has such idyllic outcomes. Charmaine Saluja, a marketing consultant from Mumbai, found her patience tested on a month-long trip to Australia with her mother, 64. "She isn't digitally savvy and needed help with everything, from Uber to using her credit card," Saluja admits. "I felt too responsible to relax." While she appreciated the time together, the trip was a reminder of her mother's limitations — and of her own boundaries. "In the future, I'd only do it again if all my siblings came along!" she laughs.

Booking their stay at familiar places such as the Hilton or Marriott gave Saluja some respite because she knew her mother was secure and comfortable even while she was away for brief solo excursions during the day. Boundaries and personal space are especially important for parents and their adult children.

"Nothing prepares you for being a witness to one's parent's

vulnerabilities," Khadija Masood, a homemaker who lives between Saharanpur and Delhi tells me, as she describes her trip with her father, 72, who lives in Lucknow. They had visited Lakhimpur, a small Uttar Pradesh town where he spent his childhood. "There were no fancy hotels, scrumptious lunches or exotic sunsets, just me and papa treading back to the place where all of it started," she says. Masood's father, a cancer survivor, struggled with the long journey however, making her realise how the roles had reversed.

This seems to be a common experience for most people of our generation, a once-confident parent who knew how to take charge now seems shaky at airports and train stations. Yet, watching him entertaining his old friends made her see him in a new light. "The trip changed my outlook overnight," Masood says. "The safety net that a parent provides is incomparable. But [now I realise] we both need each other, though in a capacity that we have to learn to navigate as we grow."

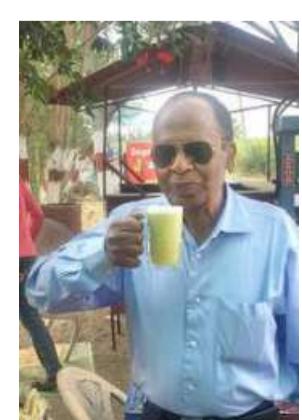
Travel writer Jyoti Kumari's chance trip with her father, 79, to Mahabaleshwar, after her mother backed out last minute, mended their fraught relationship. "I realised how much calmer and more forgiving papa had become," she says. A temple tour across India followed, and it revealed more facets of his personality. "He went about riling up the priests on purpose," she laughs. "In Mount Abu, he irritated the Brahma Kumaris with his questions; in Rameswaram, the head priest was ready to curse our entire clan." Diagnosed with Parkinson's since, her father no longer takes the lead on trips, but now, even a quiet tea together holds meaning.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 4



Travelling with your elderly parents beyond a pilgrimage isn't common. It is a fairly elite trend as it does come at an extra cost to the family, especially when visiting a new destination and booking hotels. But I hope in time more families will find ways to make these experiences possible — whether by choosing closer destinations, planning simpler trips, or travelling off-season

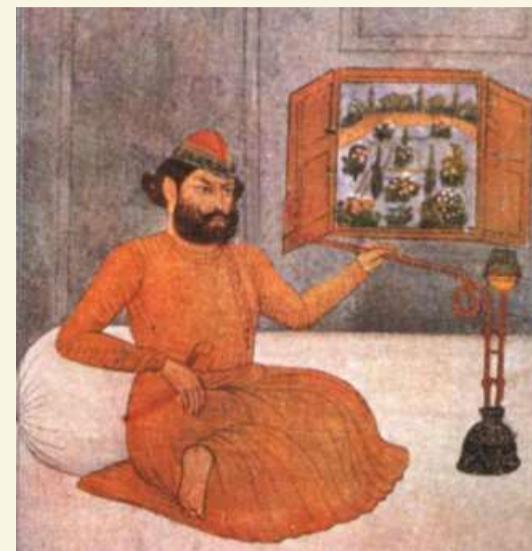
JYOTI KUMARI
Travel writer



Jyoti Kumari's father is a fan of road trips.

Mir in a modern idiom

Highlighting the nuances of Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir's couplets, Ranjit Hoskote renders them relevant to a new generation



Life's work Mir's work subtly critiques the social order and power dynamics of his time. (WIKI COMMONS)

Abdullah Khan

The Homeland's an Ocean presents a meticulously curated selection of 150 couplets from Mir Taqi Mir, one of Urdu's most revered poets. Translated by Ranjit Hoskote, this collection, enriched by a beautifully written introduction that reads like a mini-biography of Mir, illuminates the life and times of an 18th-century poet who lived through one of the most turbulent periods in Indian history.

As a teenager, I saw Mir primarily as a poet of love and passion. However, as I delved deeper into his work in my college years, I discovered that his poetry extends far beyond romance. His verses are deeply philosophical, subtly political, and spiritually rich, all while upholding a secular ethos. Mir's brilliance is evident throughout his work, justifying his title as the 'god of poetry' (*Khuda-e-Sukhan*).

An intriguing aspect of this book is how it reveals the undercurrents in Mir's poetry. Although not overtly political, Mir's work subtly critiques the social order and power dynamics of his time, reflecting the dislocation and alienation caused by the decline of the Mughal empire and brutal foreign invasions. The detailed introduction by Hoskote offers insights into Mir's life, the evolution of Urdu, and the socio-political landscape of the period, thereby enriching readers' understanding of his poetry by placing it within its historical context.

Between 2018 and 2022, Hoskote shared Mir's poetry on Twitter, each post featuring a *sher* (couplet) in Roman script alongside its English translation. In interviews, Hoskote says that these translations laid the groundwork for his book, which offers both literary depth and historical insight into the world Mir inhabited.

'Don't be silent'
The translation is both faithful to the original text and accessible to contemporary readers. Hoskote preserves the nuanced meanings of Mir's verses while rendering them in a modern idiom that resonates with today's audience, allowing a new generation to engage meaningfully with Mir's work. The emotional depth and intellectual rigour of Mir's

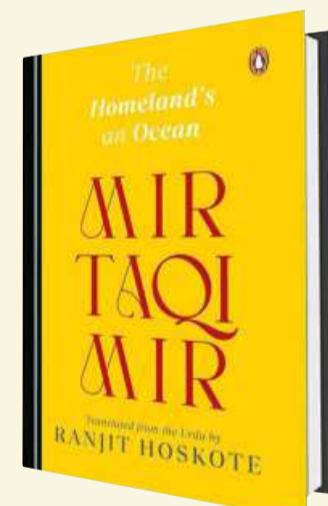
poetry are effectively captured in this English version. Here are a couple of examples:

shā'ir ho mat chupke raho ab chup meñ jāneñ jaati hāñ baat karo abyāt paDho kuchh baiteñ ham ko batāte raho
(You're a poet; don't be silent, lives are lost under the cover of silence.)

Speak up, read a couple of lines, read us verses, keep talking to us.)

And:
us ke faroqñ-e-husn se jhamke hai sab meñ nuur sham-e-harām ho yā ki diyā somnāt kā
(Its splendid beauty sets all things simmering with light, Whether it's the lantern of Kaaba or the lamp of Somnath.)

The Homeland's an Ocean is a valuable contribution to the understanding and appreciation of Mir's poetry. This book is not merely a collection of beautiful verses; it is a profound exploration of the human condition, offering insights into issues of identity, belonging, and displacement that remain relevant today.



The Homeland's an Ocean
Mir Taqi Mir, trs Ranjit Hoskote
Penguin
₹399

It also serves as a commentary on contemporary socio-political situations. However, it would have been an added benefit if the translator had included the Urdu texts of the couplets for readers familiar with these scripts. Even those unfamiliar with Urdu could have appreciated the aesthetic beauty of the Nastaliq script, serving as an ornamental addition.

The reviewer is a Mumbai-based screenwriter and author, most recently of A Man from Motihari.



2024 BOOKER PRIZE-SHORTLISTED

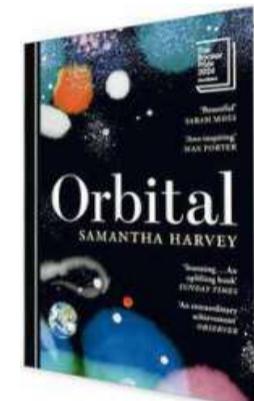
BEYOND THE BLUE ORB

Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*, set in outer space, takes the fantasy out of the genre but the resulting narrative is no less striking or apocalyptic

Nandini Bhatia

When one thinks of space, it is hard not to be enamoured by its endless vastness. We continue to romanticise earth's celestial existence and view the moon with a lover's eye. English novelist Samantha Harvey's Booker Prize-shortlisted *Orbital*, set in raw space that is "a panther, feral and primal", reclaims the lesser-known side of this orbital romance, by taking out the fantasy from the genre.

Harvey writes of the ins and outs of an otherwise uneventful day spent at the International Space Station, where the "latest six of many" astronauts/ cosmonauts witness 16 sunrises and 16 sunsets, and a tropical storm emerges out of the Pacific.



Orbital
Samantha Harvey
Vintage
₹550

During the course of the 16 rounds they take of the 'blue marble' beyond them – each orbit lasts 90 minutes



Author Samantha Harvey
(GETTY IMAGES)

– memories of their childhood, of their families left behind, keep them centred in this looping and weightless existence. "Space shreds time to pieces," writes Harvey. Their time, or whatever twisted sense of time remains, is spent adjusting to the near-vacuum setup amplified by "the very floors which are walls and the walls which are ceilings and the ceilings which are floors". They exercise excessively to prevent muscle atrophy; keenly monitor all their bodily signs; conduct experiments on lab rats or cultured heart cells; and observe the "almost endlessly connected" surface of their planet – where the only boundaries that exist are natural and not political.

Zooming in on humanity

At a time when scientists across the world are trying to draw maps of the universe and when the doomsday clock has been set at 90 seconds to midnight, humankind continues to exist between seamless progress and the proverbial apocalypse. Harvey offers some perspective in her novel, which concludes with a panoramic view

of the "beautiful velvety poverty of man on earth that tips into the void".

There is something melancholic, or perhaps even anticlimactic, when one puts Harvey's astronauts and cosmonauts – from Japan, Russia, the United States, Britain and Italy – into the real-world context. Harvey enables it too. Roman, a cosmonaut, travels with a ham radio and idolises Sergei Krikalev, who was stuck in space in 1991 as his country disintegrated back on Earth; reminding us of the astronauts of the Boeing Starliner, currently stuck in space for months on end.

In another instance, an astronaut is asked for his inputs on a vital question: "with this new era of space travel, how are we writing the future of humanity?" "We're not writing anything, it's writing us. We're windblown leaves. We think we're the wind, but we're just the leaf," he wonders. "With the gilded pens of billionaires," another astronaut replies, is how we are writing the future; and he is not entirely incorrect.

Harvey's prose takes a pass at "man's neurotic assault on the planet". It asserts that in our relentless need to assert territorial authority and superiority, we do not spare space. We "must never forget the price humanity pays for its moments of glory, because humanity doesn't know when to stop, it doesn't know when to call it a day", as Harvey puts it.

It is not surprising then that from space, earth is a "lonely planet" and human life is a fraction of a second of its billions-of-years-old history as the cosmic calendar goes, which, when it eventually ceases to exist in the coming billion-or-so years, would be nothing but a "local scene; a minor scuffle, a mini-drama".

The reviewer is a books and culture writer. Instagram @read.dream.repeat

Drawn to the depths

Life on earth is the focus of Richard Powers's Booker-longlisted novel, told through observations from the vast ocean

Mini Kapoor

Richard Powers's readers know they come to his novels at the risk of being haunted by the endless possibilities the stories present. It was so, for instance, with his 2022 novel, *Bewilderment*, about grief, neuroscience, ecological decay and the search for life beyond earth. The sense of endless possibilities also suffuses his new Booker-longlisted novel, *Playground*, about artificial intelligence and the oceans, about regret and hope. Here it is foregrounded in the discovery of the ancient game of Go, by two of the book's four main characters.

It's nearing the end of the 20th century. The two men, Rafi and Tod, young students in Chicago, are smitten from the word, well, go: Rafi, the bibliophile who will give up everything for a simpler life, tells Todd, the coding whiz who'll become an AI pioneer: "If every atom in the universe was a little universe that itself had as many atoms as the entire universe had, the total number of atoms would

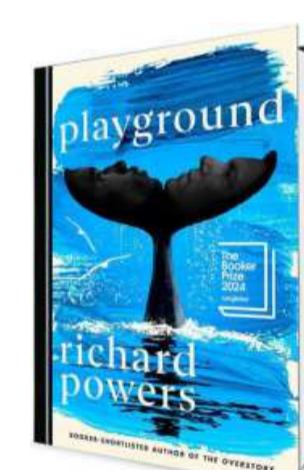
still be smaller than the number of possible Go game states."

Into their lives comes Ina, part Tahitian and new to living on a continent. She falls in love with Rafi, who ultimately leaves the professional possibilities of Chicago for the island of Makatea in French Polynesia. She says: "What you call the ocean is nothing but the coast... your ocean is just the continental shelf, a little bit of spill over the rim of the cup... The real ocean... the deep one... the one that doesn't end."

Interlinked stories

Ina, whose life work is to sculpt with the odds and ends that wash up on the Makatean shore, thrives amidst the vast ocean. The book's fourth main character, Evelyne Beaulieu, all of 92 years old to the trio's 50s when the final acts of the novel play out circa 2027, is drawn to the depths of the ocean. She dives for a living, and once wrote a bestselling book called *Clearly It Is Ocean*, that had Todd riveted. Everything and everyone are connected.

To make short a long story spread across vast geographies and



Playground
Richard Powers
Hutchinson Heinemann
₹799

narrated in 2027 and in flashbacks, all four find themselves finally in Makatea, which is experiencing a simpler, sparser phase after years of boom based on its phosphate wealth. AI is now a formidable force, and by the time "AI [comes] to the island", the temperature is "two degrees too warm", and the island

people are being wooed to sign on to a project to build floating cities.

In a moving debate on who can participate in the vote, a "tiny voice" asks, "If the creatures of the reef are going to be harmed, shouldn't they get to vote?"

This is a novel of surprise twists and creepy moments. Nobody will accept this, Rafi had told his lawyers back in the day when they showed him a user agreement for his website by which they would get access to users' data and also plant cookies on their hard drives. "They just smiled... The one just two years out of law school explained things to me, 'They'll click on ACCEPT without a second glance if it means being able to use the site for free. There's no other choice, except not to play.'"

Now, as Makatea in our near future contemplates whether to play or not, the drama plays out amidst very human emotions: friendship, betrayal, love, revenge, redemption. Like *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey, a favourite for the Booker Prize to be announced this week, *Playground* invites us to examine our lives and life choices on planet earth. *Orbital* offers a compelling nudge through the experiences of astronauts on a space station, *Playground* through the observations from the depths and expanses of the ocean.

The reviewer is a Delhi-based journalist and critic.

BROWSER

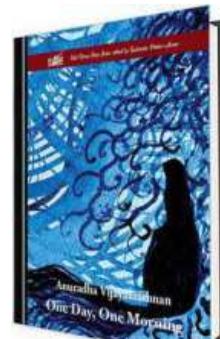
One Day, One Morning

Anuradha Vijayakrishnan

Red River

₹299

This novella by the Man Asian Literary Prize-longlisted author is as much an exploration of the human psyche as it is a heartfelt tale of women and their precarious lives. Vijayakrishnan, who considers herself a poet first, credits the late Kamala Das with awaking the storyteller in her.



Interstellar Megachef

Lavanya Lakshminarayanan

HarperCollins

₹599

From the award-winning author of *The Ten Percent Thief* comes a new novel set on a faraway planet with flying cabs, floating bars and an interstellar cooking show. Will sci-fi redefine our still-primitive understanding of food and cooking?



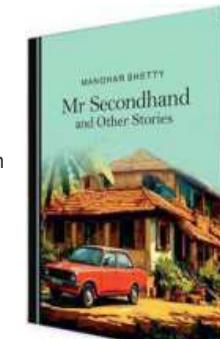
Mr. Secondhand and Other Stories

Manohar Shetty

Copper Coin

₹450

The poet and author is well-known for his stories set in Goa that offer a peek into a forgotten way of life whilst also holding up a mirror to society. This new collection seeks to add to Shetty's oeuvre with a cast of unforgettable and quintessentially Goan characters.



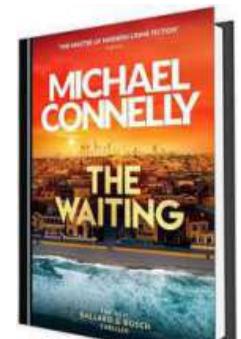
The Waiting

Michael Connelly

Orion

₹799

Connelly's sixth book featuring Los Angeles detective Renée Ballard also sees the return of his most famous character, detective Harry Bosch, the hero of a hugely popular Amazon TV series and several spin-offs. *The Lincoln Lawyer* (Netflix), in its third season now, is also based on Connelly's works.



Life on tour

Journeys with the Indian cricket team during World Cup 2023

N. Sudarshan

sudarshan.narayanan@thehindu.co.in

Travelogues that have cricket as their centrepiece serve twin purposes. They not only help remember the game itself, but also – when written well – sweep the readers off their feet and carry them on a jolly good ride around the landscapes that helped shape the sport.

Aditya Iyer's *Gully Gully* is one such book. It chronicles the journey of one of the greatest Indian white-ball sides ever built, that went on a nine-city pilgrimage around the country mesmerising supporters through the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

India ended up losing to Australia in the final, agonisingly. But in the years to come, the quality of the cricket is sure to supplant the disappointment in fans' memories, and Iyer's work will go a considerable way in facilitating that.

A story per match

The story is told in 11 chapters, one for each match. And it is done through myriad characters who fill the cities they dwell in with colour and paint a glorious – and sometimes not-so-glorious – picture of the prevalent cricketing culture, both past and present.

Cricket in India is said to have been embraced first by the royals and then mastered by the masses. Iyer spins his yarn through an eclectic mix of people that covers the full arc.

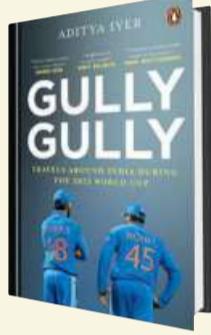
There are interviews with Chennai Super Kings superfan Saravanan Hari, Virat Kohli's childhood coach Rajkumar Sharma in West Delhi, and cricketers Kedar Jadhav and Rishi Dhawan who have brought name and fame to Pune and Himachal Pradesh.

Ravikant Shukla's tale in Lucknow is the story of many a cricketing subaltern, while the musings of advocate Fredun DeVitre and television anchor Mayanti Langer in relatively urbane settings throw light on the changing face of commentary and broadcasting.

Through the book, Iyer has displayed a reporter's eye for detail. There are rich accounts of what transpires at routine media briefings that precede and succeed matches, and vivid descriptions of shots played, wickets taken and catches held.

Equally, the author has showcased a feature writer's flair. The fact that he is not always boxed in a media enclosure at stadiums and confined to claustrophobic word limits seems to have liberated him. He slips into the stands, speaks to the crowd, soaks in everything that the atmosphere has to offer and allows this to drip feed his writing.

Cricket occupies the centre of his canvas. But with first-rate embellishments, Iyer has left his mark.



Gully Gully
Aditya Iyer
Penguin Play
₹499



Connected themes From COVID-19 to women's rugby to TV shows, Malcolm Gladwell describes how cities change people. (GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK)

(which are interesting in themselves), and not in the connections between them. Not how genetic uniformity among cheetahs is connected to the monocultural nature of an affluent community, but the dangers of monoculture itself; not why Harvard decided to field a women's rugby team but how social engineering is possibly an activity of the establishment.

The Tipping Point, for all its flaws had a freshness and an element of fun. *Tipping Point 2.0* is the same mixture as before, but with the freshness gone. The forced associations don't stand up quite as well, or maybe we have become inured to them by their recurring use in other such books. The cherry picking can get irritating for those who are familiar with the technique. Perhaps the message is: given enough time, a persuasive style and lack of doubt, we can connect any two events.

There is a famous story in the earlier book about the fall in New York City's crime rate in the 1990s because of the way lesser crimes like public graffiti were handled alongside the fixing of broken windows. The so-called 'broken windows' theory was clearly an exaggeration, as subsequent events proved. Gladwell himself confessed in a newspaper interview that the chapter on crime, "is almost embarrassing to read now."

We might have to wait another 25 years to see what stories from *Revenge of the Tipping Point* Gladwell repudiates or is embarrassed by.

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

A REHASHING

Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*, for all its flaws, had a freshness and an element of fun, which is lacking in his new book

Suresh Menon

A quarter century ago, *The Tipping Point* changed the life of one person, the journalist Malcolm Gladwell, who became a best-selling author and inspired a spate of similar popular books based on glib writing and finding connections in other people's research. It was the tipping point in his life.

The Tipping Point told us how epidemiology best explained social phenomena that spread like viruses, from footwear fashions to crime waves, and even hinted at the predictability of human behaviour.

Gladwell is a fine storyteller with a gift for using a vivid phrase (remember the 10,000-hour rule to master a skill?) that quickly becomes part of the lexicon. He has given us not so much an update as a retelling of the earlier book written in similar seductive style.

Troubling connections

The same things are touted under different names and disparate anecdotes are yoked together. It might be fun to link bank robberies, forgotten television shows, women's rugby in Harvard, COVID-19, and how cities can change people. But the mathematical certainty that accompanies the linkages admits of no alternative explanations, and that is troubling.

What might be possible explanations are treated as established facts.

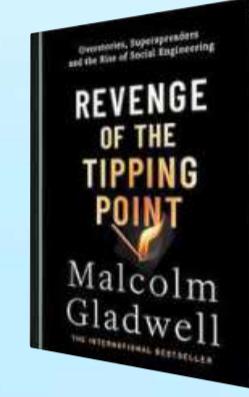
Anders Ericsson, the researcher who gave us the 10,000-hour rule that Gladwell promoted (in his *Outliers*), later admitted the figure was an oversimplification, and an incorrect interpretation of his research. It is catchy (rather like the 10,000 steps we are urged to walk daily), but its foundations aren't scientific.

"A provocative generalization," Ericsson called it, and wrote a rebuttal titled *The Danger of Delegating Education to Journalists*.

In his author's note to *Revenge of the Tipping Point*, Gladwell writes, "Over the years I would sometimes look back on what I had written in *The Tipping Point* and wonder how I ever came to write the things I did." Those expecting Gladwell, now 25 years older (and presumably wiser) to recant or at least introduce an element of doubt will be disappointed.

Gladwell's technique is to 'discover' order and design in arbitrariness. He takes two (or more) dissimilar stories and builds a bridge across them with the surface brilliance of his writing.

If something reaches a critical mass, he tells us here with a straight face, it will cross a tipping point, and is guaranteed to spread. This is not such a startling idea. We learnt this in school, calling it 'turning point' (how the



Revenge of the Tipping Point
Malcolm Gladwell
Hachette India
₹799

murder of Archduke Ferdinand, for instance, was the immediate cause of World War I). And anyway, Gladwell had already told us this in his first book.

Another technique is converting a random number from an anecdote to a 'universal law' by repetition. One-third of a group forms a critical mass, he says; it takes that number of women on a corporate board to ensure they get heard. This is a version of the Law of a Few from his earlier book.

Superspreaders is a label from COVID-19,

but there is 'Overstory' (borrowed from botany) which, in its previous avatar was

the story a place believed about itself.

Cherry picking
The strength of the book lies in the individual stories

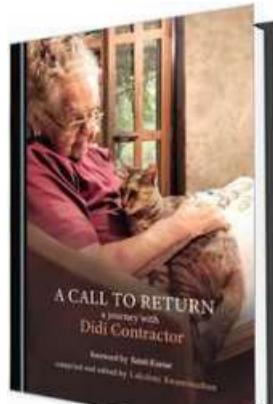


Red earth and pouring light

Lakshmi Swaminathan on how legendary architect Didi Contractor imagined spaces

Chintan Girish Modi

Three years after legendary architect Didi Contractor passed away, her student Lakshmi Swaminathan offers *guru dakshina* in the form of *A Call to Return*, a book celebrating her mentor who built with mud, stone, bamboo, slate, rice husk, cow dung and wood from dead trees. Didi, who was raised as Delia by a German father and an American mother, had no formal training in architecture but she studied art and worked in theatre. She lived in Nashik and Mumbai with her Indian husband Narayan until they separated but her most iconic work was done in Kangra, her



A Call to Return: A Journey with Didi Contractor
Compiled and edited by Lakshmi Swaminathan
Banyan Tree
₹350



In tandem (Left)
Didi Contractor;
and (below)
Lakshmi
Swaminathan.
(THOMAS SHOR AND
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

adopted home in Himachal Pradesh. Tiruvannamalai-based Lakshmi, who first met Didi in 2017, lived with her for four years and assisted her on several projects. In an interview, Lakshmi provides insights into Didi's philosophy and practice. Edited excerpts:

Question: In your book, you mention that you felt

a "welcoming energy" in all the spaces that Didi designed. How did her training in theatre inform her work as an architect? **Answer:** It gave her insights and skills about how light could be welcomed and be used to welcome the user into the building. Didi once said, "We should think of water and light and all these gifts from nature as divine and use them, intelligently. In metaphysics, I see the divine as light." In some of her buildings, light pours in through skylights offering us a sense of wonder and upliftment. In some spaces, light is brought in a way that could guide or lead the user. The quality of light is different during different seasons and this has informed Didi's choice of inviting light into the space. The way light interacts with the mud wall offers great warmth. The feeling of warmth and welcome go hand in hand thus allowing the user to feel a sense of belonging: at home.

Q: You learnt from Didi while living and working with her. How did this enrich your practice?

A: Didi was a strong proponent of hands-on

work and learning by doing. I was sent to sites to work alongside masons, carpenters and brick makers. This gave me immense insights and understanding about materials and techniques, which is the basis for the work that I continue to do now. In terms of aesthetics and functional understanding of spaces, I gained a lot by listening to the way she imagined spaces. She evocatively narrated her designs as stories as she drew. By living her ideals in day-to-day life, Didi introduced me to an elegantly simple lifestyle. She reminded me that it is important to be conscious and responsible in our simple actions in order to be conscious and responsible as architects. Even while cooking, gardening, decorating the house during festivals, sorting waste, during a stroll we took together, watching documentaries or even while cutting bread, I learnt a lot about principles of design, skills of observation, becoming more responsible and attentive which are all keys to being a good designer. I am not a good designer yet, but I try.

Q: Once Didi committed to a design project, what kind of process did she follow?

A: Her process of design was unique. She would spend a lot of time with the clients, sometimes even stay with them to understand their day-to-day life. The process reflected her immense respect for environments, traditions and cultures. During the first site visit she would analyse the soil to finalise the primary building material. Then, she observed the site and surroundings through sketches and made a mental picture. Most of her designs emerged as a result of the deep understanding of the clients and the context. Later she developed them to actual drawings and closely supervised the work at site. When she felt stuck, she would take creative breaks – read books, cook, arrange flowers or go for a walk which would eventually allow ideas to emerge.

The writer is a Mumbai-based journalist and educator.



Joshua Muyiwa

History isn't comprehensive; in fact, it has often forgotten to record more than a few noteworthy names along the way. And it is the arts that are often tasked with balancing out the many oversights.

A couple of months ago, watching *Project Darling* directed by Bengaluru-based Sharanya Ramprakash, I was fascinated by her refusal to pin down the subject, Khanavali Chenni, an iconic female comic from the Kannada Company Theatre tradition (1960s-80s), by simply using the scant information available about her. Instead, Ramprakash structures the play as a collection of the echoes and effects this powerful performer had on the lives of other women in the theatre company.

Through charming interviews with older female actors, clips of bawdy scenes, songs from old Kannada films, and clowning, she and her actors piece together a fully-formed person who comes across as clever, charming and defiant even if there doesn't exist a single photo of her except for a chest X-ray. Ramprakash's *Project Darling* is a wonderful reminder that the gender of the person driving the storytelling has the power to reshape the world, too.

In piecing together the script, Ramprakash found that she had to approach her research from a new angle. "When you are a person without a history, one has got to do the work of building the story for one's self," she says. "Because



sticking to the existing evidence to tell women's stories is deeply depressing." Sidestepping the traditional storytelling techniques of Kannada language theatre, she looked to German postdramatic theatre "where the play isn't compartmentalised into a clear beginning, middle or end just like life" – and used this format to "propose an alternative imagination for the life and times of Chennai."

These fresh and investigative takes on gender form "the consistent theme that emerges" from the curation of the second edition of Hyderabad's Manam Theatre Festival. They go from "turning mythology on its head to slapstick comedy to physical theatre" to bring together "different perspectives and narratives" of gender, sexuality and the body.

A shift in the gaze

While putting together the selection, Harika Vedula,

founder-director of the festival, watched and read a lot of contemporary Indian theatre works. "Lately, there have been so many good choices that programming the festival was challenging," she says.

Shiva Pathak, co-founder and artistic director of Sandbox Collective, the Bengaluru-based art collective, echoes this conundrum choice. "Compared to a decade ago, there are a lot more practitioners experimenting with ideas and taking risks to try out new means of talking about the body," she says. In her own experience of looking through applications for their annual festival, Gender Bender – now, in its 10th year – she has noticed that these interventions aren't just happening within urban contexts, but also in



THEATRE OF GENDER AND IDENTITY

The stage is changing, as more women and queer folk take the helm and practitioners experiment with new stories

smaller towns. "The ideas around gender, sexuality and the body are becoming more integral to the arts, with more spaces and festivals looking to programme these kinds of projects. There are more women making plays about women, so the gaze has changed, too," she explains.

Kirtana Kumar, a Bengaluru-based theatre and film director, who curated the recently-concluded inaugural edition of the KNMA Theatre Festival (by Delhi-based Kiran Nadar Museum of Art), notes another shift in contemporary theatre: "the increase in small, experimental, mobile works that can travel". The more agile contemporary theatre "challenges intersectional issues, asking different questions of caste, of gender and of

sexuality". Like *Project Darling*, which is travelling to the Manam Theatre Festival. While Kumar is excited by this notable change in the theatre scene, she warns "that there's also the danger of something becoming too trendy and therefore not going too deep".

Laughter is stronger than anger
In her practice, Nimmy Raphael, co-artistic director of Adishakti, the Pondicherry-based theatre arts laboratory, focuses on marginalised characters from our myths. At the theatre festival in Hyderabad, her plays *Nidravathwam* and *Urmila* fill out the lives of Kumbhakarna and Urmila from *The Ramayana* with care and complexity. "I have a problem with thinking about them

as 'minor characters,'" she clarifies. "Rather, I like to approach them as characters that play a part that's major in their own lives, and moves the overarching story forward too."

In *Urmila*, like most good jokes that sharpen the truth, Raphael "uses laughter as a mode of protest". She says, "When one laughs, it becomes the most threatening of emotions. It is the most powerful tool of political protest. For me, Urmila laughs a lot. She laughs at things around her, at herself, at her situation. And being witness to someone



The author is a Bengaluru-based poet and writer.

heart ruff. On this lie of the cards, it pays an added dividend. Partner will take two heart tricks with declarer making another good effort by dropping the king of hearts under the ace. Partner, however, has nothing else to do but continue hearts. You will ruff and finally lead a diamond for partner to ruff and you will defeat the contract by two tricks. Nice defence!

GOREN BRIDGE

Bob Jones

What next?

North-South vulnerable, South deals

We are grateful to New York expert Augie Boehm for bringing today's deal to our attention.

East won the opening diamond lead with his ace as South smoothly followed suit with the queen. South's false card was a good effort, but East should always recognise it

as a false card. The only missing diamond is the seven, and partner would not have led the four from seven-four doubleton. The immediate thought is to give partner a diamond ruff, but what will partner do next? The spades are splitting favourably for declarer, the diamonds are set up for discards, and partner cannot have the ace-king of hearts or he would have led the ace to get a look at dummy. A

NORTH
♠ Q 10 5 2
♥ J 10 7 5
♦ K J 10 9 3
♣ Void

WEST
♠ 7 6
♥ A Q 9 3
♦ 4
♣ 10 9 7 6 4 3

EAST
♠ 9 8
♥ 6 2
♦ A 8 6 5 2
♣ K Q 8 2

SOUTH
♠ A K J 4 3
♥ K 8 4
♦ Q 7
♣ A J 5

The bidding:
SOUTH 1♣
WEST Pass
NORTH 3♦
EAST Pass
4♣ All pass

Opening lead: Four of ♦

defender in a matchpoint competition might take the diamond ruff while he has the chance, but that leaves almost no chance to defeat the contract.

The correct defence at

rubber bridge, or in a team game, is to shift to a heart at trick two. That might defeat the contract if the partner has the king of hearts and the ace of spades, as he can eventually give you a

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

Error, not found!

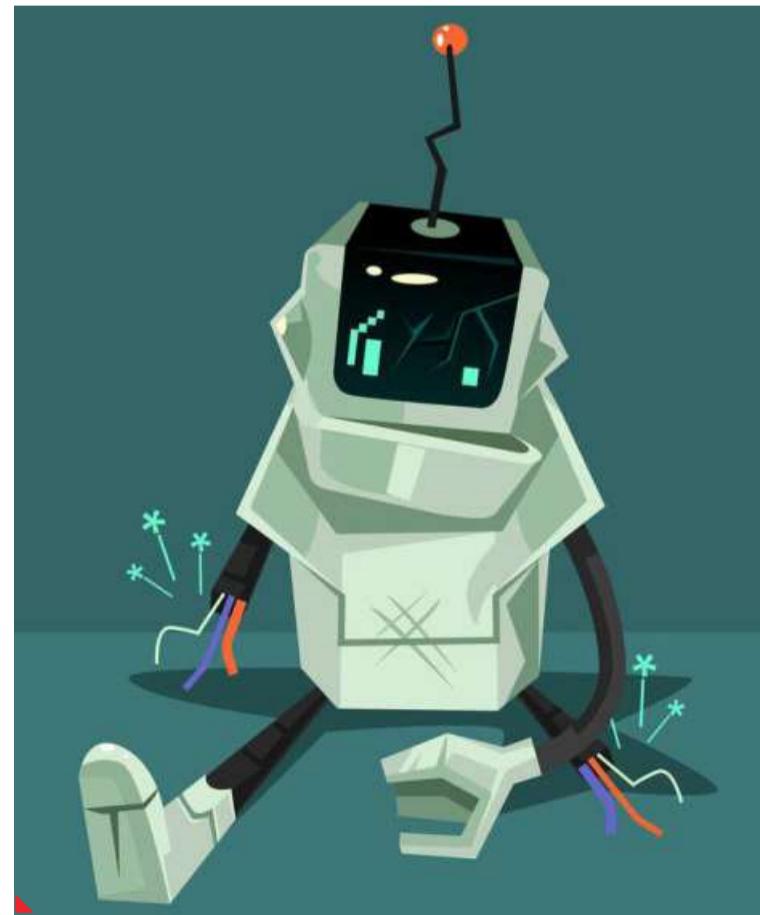
Berty Ashley

1 In computer network communications, a Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) response code is one that a user would come across when a server responds to a client's request. Consisting of three numbers, they represent different responses. The most famous one on the internet is interestingly an error message. What is the number (which is also the edition of this quiz) and the error message?

2 The 'page not found' for this government's website is a reference to the fact that in many world maps, this country gets either left out or cut out. With a land mass greater than the United Kingdom and frequently voted 'best travel destination', it is quite a popular tourist spot. Which country's website pokes fun at their own omission?

3 This website has a picture of a vinyl record on a turntable on its error page. If people are on this site, then they are definitely not searching for an analogue music player. Which website is this that has now become the biggest music player in modern times?

4 Kualo is a website host page, and their error page is a playable version of the arcade video game 'Space Invaders'. The user has three lives and can rack up points. A hidden Easter egg is that, if a user can score 1000 points, a special page gets unlocked. What do you earn that might motivate you to use their services?



Technical origins Tim Berners-Lee wanted to make the error message apologetic and had initially considered '400 Bad Request' (GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK)

5 The error page on this website says 'Oh Bricks! We can't find this page. We'll try not to lose our head over this, but if we do... we'll put it back on'. Which company is this, that is responsible for making the most number of bricks in the world?

6 This website is the home of a fictional fantasy universe. Its error page has a scene from the second movie in the series and the line 'Oh dear. Are you lost?'. This is a reference to the fact that the

central character mispronounces the name of his destination while using 'Floo Powder'. What website is this, which is also the name of the lost character?

7 Investor's Business Daily has an error page which is a reference to a popular expression that usually means a 'poorly fabricated excuse used at school'. The page shows a cute animal and the excuse with its last word changed. What is the error message?

8 The error page of Feldman Studio has a big '404' followed by a dot and a line underneath. In three seconds, the line starts moving, and 404 dots appear. Using your keyboard, you can manipulate the now moving line. This is a reference to which classic mobile game?

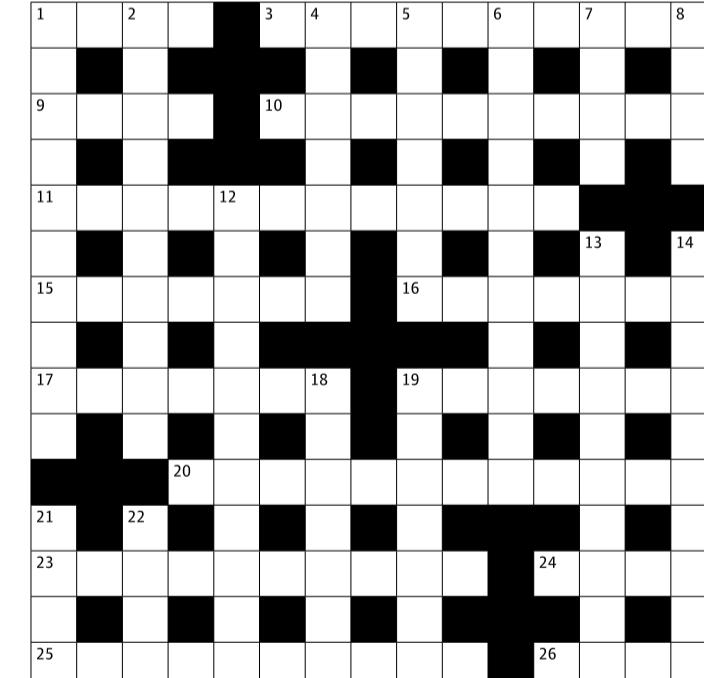
9 Myriad is an American video production company whose error page has thick vertical, coloured stripes of white, yellow, blue, green, pink, red, and dark blue. In the middle in old digital font are the words 'OOPS NO SIGNAL!'. This is a reference to something older readers might be used to as an error screen. Where would one have seen this?

10 DashThis specialises in marketing reporting software, and their error page says 'One does not simply walk into a 404... Because, you know, a ring of fire, or whatever'. It also has a data graph that looks like a volcano and a tower. This is a reference to which iconic movie's scene?

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

10. The Lord of the Rings
11. 8, Shakes, bagg, 7, Sorry, the dog ate our
12. 9, TV Broadcasts when
there is a signal loss
13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26.

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3331



Across

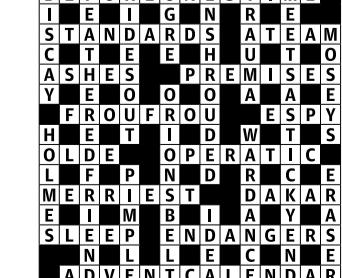
- 1. Jazz genre's providing hits (4)
- 3. In France, thousands mobbing idiot in city on the Med (10)
- 9. Woodwind member regularly going for broke (4)
- 10. Bring together, in the morning, bits of seaweed, pal (10)
- 11. Omit one of the Soup Dragon's friends: goof! (4,1,7)
- 15. Kill 27? With tongs - that's cold (3,4)
- 16. Dined and jeered (7)
- 17. Extremely vicious, insidious look expressing your enmity, primarily? (4,3)
- 19. Some yetis dies, tragically, being extremely trim (7)
- 20. Ghastly Double German? (12)
- 23. Drunk romances eminent lawyers (4,6)
- 24. Star in river's reflection (4)
- 25. Indeed, strayed wildly in times gone by (10)
- 26. Demands chores when temperature's dropped (4)

Down

- 1. Attacks putting Belgium on edge, son (10)
- 2. Camera-loving, goofy pooch: get in! (10)
- 4. Having lost front of tote, fussy laminate one on bookshelves (1,1,5)
- 5. Medical supports after run's undergone change of direction (7)
- 6. Ivanhoe, novel: almost perfect?

Beats me! (1,4,2,4)
7. In report, vegetable that's prepared by whistleblower (4)
8. Second time Everyman's shown up: stop! (4)
12. An inspiration? Bold old university radical getting dainty snack (5-6)
13. Puddings, good and bad consumed: nice feelings later (10)
14. Misguided idealist embracing 'alternative' leaders (10)
18. Lengthily describe one-time currency (7)
19. Novelist to clasp - but regularly dropping - chihuahua? (7)
21. Dairy product with drug additive: for what reason? (4)
22. Herb cycling for a long time (4)

SOLUTION NO. 3330



Rewriting the rules (Clockwise from left)
A scene from *Project Darling*; Kirtana Kumar, and Sharanya Ramprakash.

overcoming their circumstances with laughter might allow everyone to see the Urmila in themselves."

Sparking conversations

Meanwhile, Mumbai-based Patchworks Ensemble's *The Gentlemen's Club* employs the form of drag kings – women performatively presenting as men – to explore contemporary conceptions of masculinity. "As performers, when we get into the gear, it becomes this wonderful mask to play with," explains co-director Puja Sarup. In her onstage persona as Shammi Kapoor, the Bollywood star of yesteryears, she channels "his electrifying screen presence, his swagger".

This ability, concludes Sarup, to tell stories of gender by bringing forgotten characters to the forefront or playing with the presentation "allows for dialogue on these

seemingly difficult topics to take place within and among families and friends. These productions might be a good starting point for these conversations".

Manam Theatre Festival runs from November 15 to December 15 in Hyderabad.



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

The Ramayana within us

The core characteristics of the main characters of the epic manifest within all, depending on the situation

N. Anand Venkatesh
anaustram44@gmail.com

The Ramayana serves as a profound exploration of human nature, virtues, and vices – qualities that resonate deeply within us. As a judge of a High Court, my professional life demands an unwavering commitment to justice and integrity. Yet, I am also an ordinary human, navigating complex emotions and relationships. As I pondered the invitation to inaugurate a talk show about the Ramayana, I found myself reflecting on how the core characteristics of its main characters manifest within me. This duality prompts a reflection in me on how it influences my decisions on the Bench and beyond.

Rama epitomises dharma – righteousness and moral duty. Kambar depicts him as "Maryada Purushottama", the ideal man who upholds truth even in adversity. In my role as a judge, I strive to embody Rama's commitment to righteousness by ensuring that my judgments are fair and grounded in ethical principles. However, the weight of expectations can sometimes lead me to question my decisions. Just as Rama faced trials that tested his resolve, I too encounter challenges that compel me to reflect deeply on what it means to act justly.

In justice's name, I stand so tall, with truth as my guide through rise and fall. Like Rama's bow, steadfast and true, I seek the right path in all that I

do. Sita represents unwavering devotion and resilience. Kambar illustrates her as a paragon of virtue who endures suffering yet remains steadfast in her love for Rama. In my personal life, Sita's resilience inspires me to maintain loyalty and support for those I care about.

The demands of my profession often require sacrifices – time away from loved ones or emotional labour in dealing with difficult cases. Through trials fierce and shadows deep, her heart remains where love does keep. In every storm, her spirit shines, a beacon bright where hope aligns.

Lakshmana embodies loyalty and bravery, standing by Rama's side through thick and thin. My role as a judge often requires me to advocate for justice within my community. I resonate with Lakshmana's loyalty when supporting initiatives that promote fairness. However, this loyalty can sometimes lead to conflicts when balancing professional obligations with personal relationships. In loyalty's name, I take my stand, with courage firm – a steady hand. Like Lakshmana by Rama's side, I face each challenge with strength and pride.

Hanuman is celebrated for his immense devotion and courage. His unwavering loyalty to Rama makes him a beloved figure. Courage is essential in my role as a judge – whether making difficult rulings or addressing systemic injustices. Hanuman's bravery inspires me during moments when I must confront uncomfortable truths or advocate for marginalised

voices. With heart ablaze and spirit free, I face each trial resolutely. Like Hanuman strong with faith so bright, I rise above with inner light.

Ravana represents ego and unchecked desire, driven by ambition that ultimately leads to his downfall. As a judge, I am acutely aware of the dangers of ego – both in myself and others within the legal system. There are moments when ambition clouds judgment or leads to decisions based on personal interests rather than justice. Recognising these traits encourages introspection about my motivations. In shadows cast by prideful might, a lesson learned from Ravana's plight. For ego blinds where wisdom should reign, a cautionary tale etched deep in pain. Bharata exemplifies selflessness and sacrifice, prioritising family over personal ambition. Bharata's selflessness resonates with me as I strive to balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments. There are times when I prioritise my duties over personal desires yet this selflessness can lead to neglecting my own well-being. Like Bharata true with heart so grand, I seek to serve with open hand.

As we navigate our paths within this noble profession, let us strive to emulate the virtues exemplified by Rama's righteousness and Sita's resilience. Each decision we make contributes to the larger tapestry of justice. This reflection leads us all to ponder: which character do we want to emulate more? This inquiry invites us to explore our inner landscapes while considering how we can embody virtues we admire while learning from our flaws.

(The writer is a Judge of the Madras High Court)

A diary as a constant companion

Shankar Gopalkrishnan
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A month or two before the year ended, somehow, a diary made its way home. A diary was irresistible as it compelled you to write. A pleasant aroma wafted in the air, the moment you picked it up. The pages were fresh and silken smooth, the kind you wanted to caress repeatedly and rest your cheek against.

Sitting at the desk, with the diary in front and a fountain pen in hand, you felt like an artist pondering over his fresh canvas, about to embark on his masterpiece. The million-dollar question was what to write.

One section in the diary had to be dedicated to "maths sums". The "interminable transactions between Ram and Shyam" went into this section. Ram had 16 mangoes. If he had to divide them equally between himself and Shyam, how many mangoes will each get? Strangely, copying these "maths sums" in a diary, made even maths look engaging.

From time to time, some advice came your way: "How will you improve your English? You should diligently write down the meanings of all the words that you don't know, in a diary!" "Gloat", "Grin", "stealing a furtive glance", "wearing a pensive look" – random words and expressions, filled the diary.

Off and on, you required the diary "to vent out your feelings". On the first day, you wrote, "Today, I am feeling angry." Once this sentence was written, you hit a writer's block. What more can you write when you are angry? The next day, you felt the same, but some modification had to be made to avoid repetition. "Today, I am feeling very angry!" Soon, this section resembled the "degrees of comparison" topic in Wren and Martin – angry, angrier, angriest followed by a bout of happy, happier, happiest before slipping again to sad, sadder, saddest.

The most interesting section in the diary was dedicated to cricket. "S.M. Gavaskar caught Rixon bowled Thomson." At the end of the series in Australia, I planned to have a complete analysis on Gavaskar ready – how many runs he scored, where his weakness lay, and how he could improve himself. Sadly, this research stayed in my diary and did not reach the Little Master in time.

Ko Sesa
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In 1924 in the Madras Province, Kothandarama Iyengar and Seshammal welcomed their firstborn, P.K. Srinivasan, whose gift for teaching showed early, as he tutored classmates in Panagal Park, while still a school student himself.

After graduating with a degree in mathematics from Loyola College in 1947, inspired by Gandhiji's call to "Go Back to the villages", he traded his father's hopes of a "bureaucrat life" for an uncertain path as a village teacher. His father had sacrificed property to fund his children's education. Yet at the age of 23, Srinivasan chose to pack two trunks – one filled with khadi clothes, the other with his beloved books – and left the comforts of Madras for the unknown hardships of rural life, and reached Lakshmi Naickenpalayam, a small village in Coimbatore district.

In his five-year village sojourn, Srinivasan undertook a self-appointed mission to offer intellectual freedom to young rural minds. Recognising the widespread fear of mathematics, he set out to change it with creative, hands-on learning methods and small maths exhibitions. After moving across villages, he served as the first headmaster of Gandhi Kala Nilayam School at Karattumadam, before deciding to return to Madras.

In 1952, Srinivasan returned to Madras and joined the Muthialpet high school near the harbour as a mathematics teacher. His students, many from underprivileged families and fishing communities, saw in him a teacher who not only guided them academically but also personally visited their homes, when needed, to ensure they stayed in school.

He believed "there are no dull students, but only

The rebellious maths teacher

Maths teacher P.K. Srinivasan took his ideals across the world, from Indian village classrooms to American lecture halls and African colleges



P.K. Srinivasan in New York with American maths teachers.
(SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

dulled students", and challenged the colonial "Macaulay mindset" that promoted rote learning over creativity. One of his students, R.G. Chandramogan, founder of Hatsun Foods, recalled Srinivasan's message: "My teaching is not to make clerks out of you, but leaders and change-makers."

Chandramogan took this message to heart, eventually becoming a Forbes-listed billionaire. Srinivasan was deeply inspired by, and intrigued about, Srinivasan Ramanujan, whom he called "a genius among geniuses". When the Indian government announced a stamp commemorating Ramanujan's 75th birth anniversary in 1962, Srinivasan saw an opportunity. He formed a group of "old boys" and embarked on a successful mission to unearth personal letters, accounts, and memorabilia, portraying Ramanujan as an inspiring figure and a champion of the underdogs. On the day of the stamp release, Srinivasan led a 300-strong procession of students and teachers to

Mount Road Post Office to purchase first-day covers. This tribute effort gained international attention, with Robert Kanigel recounting it in his book *The Man Who Knew Infinity*.

In 1965, a Fulbright Fellowship took Srinivasan to the U.S., where he showcased his innovative teaching methods. Invited to address the National Council of Teachers in New York, he presented Ramanujan as a "model student" of mathematics. The U.S. welcomed Srinivasan, and was ready to celebrate his means, methods and maverick brilliance as a teacher. He was offered a permanent job, and the opportunity to bring his family to the U.S. But Srinivasan chose to return to India, believing his own country needed him more.

Back in India, he resumed his role at the Muthialpet school and completed the first-ever biography of Ramanujan. In a grand ceremony, statesman C.

Rajagopalachari released the volumes, presenting the first copies to Janakiammal, Ramanujan's widow.

In 1975, Srinivasan

embarked on a new adventure, this time in Africa for seven years as a Senior Federal Education Officer in Nigeria, training teachers who often lacked even a basic understanding of mathematics. He earned their respect and admiration by transforming their presumptions about themselves, proving to the African community that race played no role in the prowess of the intellect.

Back in India, he launched "Operation Taking Ramanujan To School" through the Association of Math Teachers of India. He pioneered the concepts of "Math Expos" and "Math Labs" to make learning more accessible. With support from Chandramogan, educator A.T.B. Bose and N. Ravi, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, Srinivasan opened the Ramanujan Museum in Royapuram in 1993.

For eight years, Srinivasan lived all by himself in a small room in Royapuram, busy organising workshops across the country, creating maths kits, and low-cost no-cost teaching aids. In 1999, he traded his khadi attire, for the first time in life, for a green Ramanujan T-shirt gifted by Bruce Berndt, an American mathematician. By his final years, Srinivasan had published 30 books in English and Tamil on maths education. On June 20, 2005, after a brief illness, he passed away.

His birth centenary was celebrated on November 4 in Chennai, which was attended by former ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan, who said, "It would be a fitting thing to declare November 4, the birth anniversary of P.K. Srinivasan, Maths Teachers' Day."

(The author, the grandson of P.K. Srinivasan, is a Tamil film lyricist, screenwriter, and a thought-leader)



THE HINDU
magazine

Charles Govea and lessons for Gen Z
What makes India tick
Thinking of India



FEEDBACK

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

Cover story

It is appreciable that Indian Americans are enthusiastically participating in the U.S. elections and their sizeable strength has become so consequential that the presidential candidates are making special efforts to woo them. ('Hanging on to the American dream'; Nov. 3)

Their aspirations, emotions, fears, and insecurities are quite different from the average American's, and so will be their choice. **Kosaraju Chandramouli**

Politicians of the U.S. are no different from politicians of India — or anywhere else. To waste your time and energy in promoting one candidate or another is the most unproductive and futile exercise on this planet.

The Indian American community seems to be overestimating its role in deciding the outcome of the elections. Both candidates lack extraordinary credentials to make significant positive difference on future of humanity. **Sri Vinda N.**

We need more words like this to capture the nuanced, often tricky situations we encounter in everyday life. Many people likely have friends who mask their jealousy with sweet words, and yet, in most languages, there's no precise term for this kind of behaviour. Sidin's effort to coin such a term is commendable. **Haneefa Putuparamb**

Already, most of our children are poor in spelling English words. Added to this, one finds words such as 'skool', 'koffee', etc. on name boards and billboards all over. Let us not be logophiles of such gibberish. **K. Pradeep**

Worldly words

The opening episode of Sidin Vadukut's new column was a hilarious take on 'doublepeak' with punchlines strewn all over. ('Invent a word'; Nov. 3) The hypocrisy of smiling with clenched teeth was eloquent in the newly-minted word 'jelwisher'. **Ayyaseri Raveendranath**

Books that inform

Suhasini Haider has succeeded in informing readers about the functioning of the United States' president by referring to recent books on the subject. ('Insider'

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 or the views contained therein.

Violence against women
Victim blaming and misunderstandings about consent perpetuate harmful stereotypes
Vivek Kurmi

Dispatches from the field

How communication between soldiers and their families have changed over the years
Aditya Madan

Reading through time

There was a certain beauty in the way people engaged with literature back then
Ram Prakash T.

The lasting impression

In relationships, business meetings and family functions, the last impression is very important
Rishi Kanna

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A personalised approach, sold out showcases, and an intersection of fashion and films made the first edition a success, raising hopes for the fair this week

WHY IS ART MUMBAI SPECIAL?

Lesley Simeon

Art isn't for everyone – some are clueless about it, others find it uninteresting, and a few even feel intimidated. These are some of the notions that Art Mumbai attempted to challenge with its maiden edition last year, alongside the mission of bringing the first-ever art fair to the city. "We'd been talking about organising an art fair in Mumbai for years," recalls Minal Vazirani, one of the co-founders. "We wanted to put out a fair that is about art, but equally about Mumbai." Why? Because "Mumbai is a gateway to the rest of India – literally and figuratively". Not only did the fair have a strong and distinct curation, but it also tapped into what the city is best known for: Bollywood and fashion.

With the event returning for a second outing later this week, *Magazine* spoke to Vazirani,



alongside some of the participating galleries and artists, to understand what 2024 has in store.

Bringing art to the Bay

Art Mumbai 2024 is bigger, at least when it comes to the number of galleries taking part – an impressive 71 (up from last year's 53). These include names such as KNMA, Vadhera, TARQ and Emami, and international galleries such as Galleria Continua, Ben Brown Fine



and Rossi & Rossi. "One of the things that came through last year was how personalised the art fair was," says Vazirani, adding that although the

event was certainly smaller than other fairs of its nature, it was very focused in its approach.

Ushmita Sahu, director at Kolkata-based Emami Art, agrees, adding that "the fair had a great result financially as well". In fact, a lot of the participating galleries reportedly stated being completely sold out last year. And it's not surprising. "Probably about 70% of the entire India art market transactions are linked to Mumbai," says Vazirani, leaning into data from auction house Saffronart, which she co-founded with her husband Dinesh.

Meanwhile, for Delhi-based artist Manish Pushkare – who returns to the fair this year – the event bridges an evident geographical gap. "We have one major art fair in Delhi in the extreme north of the country, and another, the Kochi Biennale, in the extreme south. Moreover,



everything was centralised to Delhi in the past three decades," he says.

For many, it also means making inroads into a new market. "Coming from Bengaluru, we were able to make our presence felt and bring exposure to artists based in the South by connecting their practices to newer audiences," says Premilla Baid, director at Gallery Sumukha, of their 2023 outing. Sahu is of a similar bent of mind. "It's very important for us to be seen in other important centres of art and commerce. In that way, Mumbai is well located."

More of a festival than a fair

While art forms the core of the fair, the agenda has always been to go beyond. So, Art Mumbai 2024 will see fashion designer Tarun Tahiliani return with showcase; filmmaker



One of the things that

came through last year was how personalised the art fair was. We invite clients and collectors that we have a personal connect with, and we encourage younger galleries and emerging artists to engage with new buyers

MINAL VAZIRANI
Co-founder, Art Mumbai



Immersive (Clockwise from left) Vivek Vilasini's *Study after the Entombment of Christ* by Juan Rodriguez Juarez; art by Debashish Paul; Rekha Rodwittiya's *I Am Woman - Do Not Whisper It*; a work by K.G. Subramanyan; an F.N. Souza still life; Siddhartha Kararwal's *Mona aur Lisa*; and Lancelot Ribeiro's *Stricken Monk*. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

Karan Johar, the event's cultural ambassador, will lead a panel discussion on 'The creative confluence of art, culture and the city'; and there will also be ancillary events such as dance and theatre performances. "I believe Art Mumbai attracts a glamorous Bollywood crowd," says Harry Hutchison, director, Aicon New York. "Now, it is our job as gallerists to convert them into art lovers and collectors."

One of the central attractions, Sculpture Work, is back too, but with an expanded version featuring over 20 curated sculptures. "Art fairs are critical as platforms where a very large number of people can interact with a very large number of works of art [and some artists as well] in one of the most interesting interactions one can enjoy," points out Ashish Anand, CEO and managing director of DAG, one of India's powerhouse art companies.

Room for more?
Speaking of Delhi, the OG art fair will be making its way to Mumbai next year. "I'm just wondering how India Art Fair hadn't done it earlier!" laughs Gayatri Gangachari Shah, a journalist and art aficionado.

"Mumbai is an important market with a massive collector base. It'll be fun and games to see how things unfold next year!" she says, adding that irrespective of the event, focussing on an educational component is also critical.

"This is our legacy – the art that's being created is what generations down the line will be studying. That kind of understanding of contemporary art, with an educational component is what I'd like to see in such events." For Sahu, the more the merrier. "It's always better to boost the reach of art. For instance, I wish Kolkata had as many galleries as Mumbai, and perhaps organise a Kolkata Art Weekend."

Art Mumbai is on from November 14-17 at Mahalaxmi Racecourse.

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

Chintan Girish Modi

It's not often that you walk into an art exhibition and are greeted with tasting stations of *ker ka achaar*, *rabodi* and *mangodi* – instead of the usual wine and cheese. *Ker*, guests found out, is a desert berry, the *papad*-like *rabodi* is made with maize flour, yoghurt and spices (often cooked as a *sabzi* when fresh vegetables are in short supply), and *mangodi* is a condiment made of sun-dried ground lentils.

Researcher Dipali Khandelwal's pop-up museum at the Jodhpur Arts Week was immersive. "We document Rajasthan's disappearing food cultures from the lens of climate, nature, agriculture, communities, art and culture," the founder of The Kindness Meal shared. "We celebrate the art of foraging, food preservation techniques, culinary practices of our ancestors, and family recipes."

Jodhpur Arts Week, which debuted between October 15 and 21, stood out for its efforts to give public and community-based art the sort of dignity and visibility they deserve but rarely get. Rajasthani artisans practising generational crafts, and children from government schools – who participated in an immersive creative arts education programme – showcased their work alongside international artists.

Jodhpur as inspiration and canvas

Art galleries, which tend to present themselves as exclusive spaces because of the social capital required to enter them, were ditched in favour of more welcoming public locations in the



Stories in blue (L-R) Khel Khel Mein, part of the PATI x LAND programme; Ujwal Agarwal's *Timelines* at Ghanta Ghar; and Deborah Fischer's *The Whisperers*. (PUBLIC ARTS TRUST OF INDIA)

arise from the interaction of modern technology with traditional architecture. West's *Tiered Reflections*, for instance, took inspiration from the architecture of Toorji Ka Jhalra, especially its dramatic geometric steps, and colours that blend in with the vibrant atmosphere of the surrounding bazaar. Agarwal turned the ancient clock tower into a living canvas, with a responsive clock at its centre. His *Timelines* was an exploration of art, time, and technology.

Elsewhere, London-based artist Hetain Patel's video works, *Do Not Look at the Finger and Mussalmans*, dealt with identities built around gender and race through ritual,

body painting, and choreography. And interdisciplinary artist Kiran Kumar – who worked with students at the Indian Institute of Technology in Jodhpur – put together a multi-sensory exploration of the city's architecture, combining his interest in algebraic polynomials with a range of materials, including paper, fabric, metal, clay, and wood.

'Creation, conservation and cooperation'

The arts week was an initiative by Public Arts Trust of India (PATI), a two-year-old platform set up by Sana Rezwan, its founding chairwoman, to democratise access to arts and culture. "Jodhpur's rich cultural heritage, architecture, and vibrant handicraft industry make it a significant creative destination. It's the centre of India's \$200 million

handicraft industry," says Rezwan. "Expanding to Jodhpur allowed us to build on PATI's work in Jaipur, where Jaipur Art Week has grown into an incubator for early-career artists."

Her chief accomplice is Emma Sumner, director of PATI, who has worked with the U.K.-based arts organisation Grizedale Arts, conducted research with Somaaya Kala Vidya in Kutch, and developed projects with female artisans in Ahmedabad. "Creation, conservation and cooperation are the three most important pillars of our work," says Sumner. "It is important for us to build relationships that are strong and meaningful so that engagement with the arts is not limited to one week but happens all through the year." They conduct residencies and bring arts education to children who, previously, had no access to the arts.

For example, PATI collaborated with educator Kriti Sood's pedagogical research lab, Learning through Arts Narrative and Discourse (LAND), to help teaching fellows develop and pilot an arts curriculum in five government schools. An experiment that came out of it involved children at one of the schools ideating and designing card and board games based on the principles of biomimicry (the practice of learning from nature's design processes to solve problems faced by humans). This gave them an opportunity to reflect on challenges such as extreme heat, water scarcity and food shortages in Rajasthan, and to exhibit their creations at the arts week.

The writer is a Mumbai-based journalist and educator.

Opening up the walled city

At the debut edition of Jodhpur Arts Week, a clock tower turned into a living canvas and children showcased alongside renowned artists

heart of the walled city: Ghanta Ghar (a clock tower built by Maharaja Sardar Singh), the heritage premises of Shree Sumer School, and Toorji Ka Jhalra. The last destination – an 18th century stepwell commissioned by Maharani Tanwar Ji (wife of Maharaja Abhai Singh, who brought Jodhpur back under the direct rule of the Rathores after the death of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb) to provide water in the harsh summers – has become a vibrant gathering place for people across socio-economic groups to play, swim, read, socialise, and make Instagram reels.

During the week, Mimansa Charan, a Jodhpur-based writer and researcher specialising in

local history, led curated walks to develop appreciation for "the historical and cultural significance of these venues", and acquaint attendees with *charpai* weavers, lac bangle makers, bamboo weavers, and silver jewellery makers. "They are not only custodians of traditional skills, but also entrepreneurs who run workshops that double up as outlets," she said. Some of them were also invited to conduct workshops at Jodhpur Arts Week.

The event featured both established and emerging artists. Site-specific installations by British visual artist Liz West and generative artist Ujwal Agarwal invited guests to look at familiar landmarks in a new light, witnessing the possibilities that

arose from the interaction of modern technology with traditional architecture. West's *Tiered Reflections*, for instance, took inspiration from the architecture of Toorji Ka Jhalra, especially its dramatic geometric steps, and colours that blend in with the vibrant atmosphere of the surrounding bazaar. Agarwal turned the ancient clock tower into a living canvas, with a responsive clock at its centre. His *Timelines* was an exploration of art, time, and technology.

EMMA SUMNER
Director, PATI

Our goal is to embed art into everyday life.

Education plays a vital role. [With it] we're not only cultivating new audiences but also empowering the community to contribute directly to Jodhpur Arts Week

THE HINDU
magazine