THE HINDU
Sunday, June 8, 2025

magazine

backpage

Anavila Misra's home line taps into her agrarian roots

GO TO » PAGE 8

INSIDE

Why galleries are shifting focus to older artists

GO TO » PAGE 5

LITERARY REVIEW

A chronicle of 150 years of Test cricket

GO TO » PAGE 3

Track the latest stories via #ThMagazine on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) Get connected » www.thehindu.com

ANATOMY OF AN IPL FAN

For a few weeks every summer, the Indian Premier League transforms the nation into a battleground where tears are shed and loyalty means everything. Cricketers, experts and fans examine why the game matters to them

Takshi Mehta

In the beginning of May, the Indian Premier League (IPL) juggernaut, with more than two-thirds of the fixtures completed, came to an abrupt halt. Stadium lights dimmed. Commentary boxes fell silent. With military tensions mounting between India and Pakistan, the fate of the 18th edition of the franchise-based cricket league hung in the balance.

Then a few days later, just as suddenly, the switch was flipped back on. Players flew out, others flew in. Some teams rose. Others faltered. But the pulse of the IPL? Steady. Loud. Unrelenting. Last week, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) clinched their first-ever IPL title. With tears in his eyes, Virat Kohli lifted the elusive trophy, in a culmination of years of relentless pursuit, near misses, and unyielding passion. With that, an electrifying season came to an emotional close.

According to Ormax Media's 2024 sports report, cricket commands 612 million viewers in India. Of these, 86 million are urban IPL franchise loyalists. Google Trends show IPL-related searches topping charts for eight consecutive weeks, barring the brief pause mid-May. In the final week alone, 'PBKS vs RCB' clocked over 10 million searches; 'MI vs GT' had a search volume of 5 million. This isn't just consumption, it's commitment. This is what it means when a game becomes something more than just a game.

The gulf between domestic cricket and the IPL isn't as wide as it seems. The skill, the level of competition, even the pressure, it's all there. What changes is the spotlight. "There's not much of a difference in the game itself," says Abhishek Desai of the Gujarat Cricket Association. "It's all about the exposure – playing alongside the world's best. And the IPL is louder, flashier, and that makes everything feel bigger."

In India, where even silence can be political, the noise around cricket matters. And the IPL, more than any other format of cricket, understands how to dial it up.

Sport as story

"The IPL is a McDonaldisation of sport, which is a concept frequently spoken of by sports sociologists," says Aman Misra, a Ph.D candidate at the University of Tennessee. He studies sports communication and the sociology of sports, particularly public memory and media perception of disability. "It's tightly packaged, highly produced, and modelled on western templates. To make it work, they have to start creating rivalries, they have to manufacture narratives around wins and losses."

There is a conscious effort to build parasocial relationships, thinks Misra. "The best way to understand it is that even if the league is 'constructed', the emotions it sparks are real. Sports reflects society," he says.

This emotional mirroring touches fans and players alike. Gujarat Titans' spinner Sai Kishore understands it. "It's not bizarre to me. It means the team is theirs, too. They feel the wins, and they feel the losses," he says.

For comedian Danish Sait, who plays RCB's irreverent mascot Mr. Nags, defeat feels personal. "You travel with the team, spend time with the players. When they lose, it hurts. But the business side still rolls on, so you keep the performance on. Even my valet tells me, 'Sir, please come back with the trophy'. I don't even play! But that's the magic of sport. It makes you one of them," he says.

RCB remained among the league's great enigmas – hugely popular despite never winning the title until this season. The 2024 Ormax report pegs it at 13.3 million fans, just behind five-time winners Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians.

"Everybody loves an underdog," says screenwriter Navjot Gulati. "RCB's arc is full of drama, chaos, and heartbreak," he adds. For years, they came agonisingly close – losing the final in 2009, 2011 and 2016, and pulling off a dramatic comeback in 2024 only to stumble in the playoffs. One of the most consistent teams, RCB made the playoffs five times in the last six seasons.

It's a cruel irony. A team that boasted T20 swashbucklers such as Chris Gayle and AB de Villiers somehow never managed to translate their talent into silverware. Having won nearly every other cricketing honour, Kohli bore the weight of this one for years. Which is why, Gulati says, "It won't just be their core fans who'll celebrate. I think a lot of people will celebrate just because there's a story there."

For Mumbai Indians fan Dhruv Shah, co-founder of Funcho Entertainment, a comedy content channel, the appeal lies in sport as an outlet. "Most of us have aggressive, competitive sides, but life gets in the way. The IPL lets us win by proxy. Cricket allows us to win."

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 4

ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

When India beat England for the first time – whether at home in 1952 or away in 1971 – it felt like getting our own back on the colonisers. Cricket can mean many things: a way to assert nationhood, to express identity. During the Depression, Don Bradman became a towering figure in Australian cricket, someone the nation could rally around, just like we did with Tendulkar. He didn't just play for us; he stood in for us. That kind of identification with a sporting hero runs deep. And then there's the thrill, the unpredictability, the drama, the not knowing how it will end. That's what pulls fans in, even those who don't follow every match

SURESH MENON
Editor and columnist

When I got the opportunity 11 years ago to be the bridge between fans and cricketers, the goal was to humanise the players – to bring them closer. Back then, cricket was all about hero worship, the constant David vs. Goliath narrative. But no one was showing them as real people, just like us, who love the game and have a sense of humour. I really enjoyed speaking the language fans speak and creating something they could connect with

DANISH SAIT
Comedian and RCB mascot

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who passed away on May 28 at the age of 87, has left behind a rich, and sometimes complex, legacy. (GETTY IMAGES)

TRIBUTE [1938-2025]

NGŨGĨ WA THIONG'O: A LIFE OF DEFIANCE

The Kenyan author's views on language and colonialism were not without controversy but he soldiered on and inspired generations of African writers

Gautam Bhatia

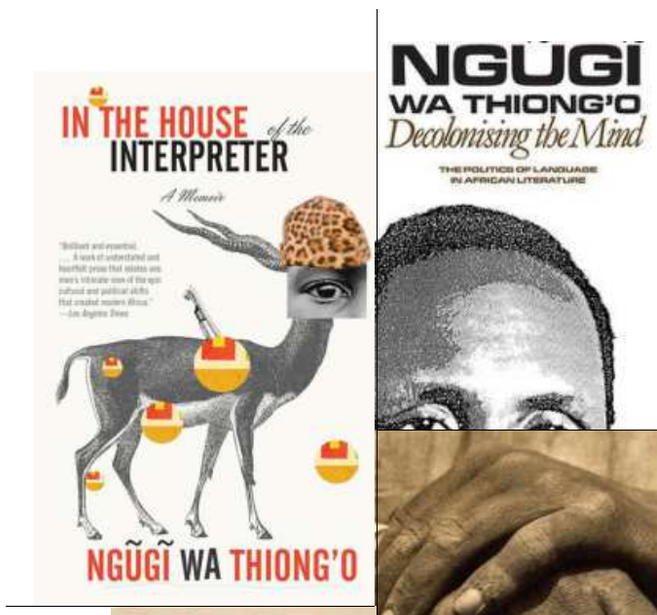
In 1962, a group of young men and women met at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, at the Conference of African Writers of English Expression. Decolonisation was in the air. Nigeria, represented by Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, had gained independence two years earlier. Uganda, the host country, would become independent just a few months later. And Kenya, represented, among others, by Rebecca Njau and one James Ngugi, was one year away from its own transfer of power.

The debates at Makerere included, among other things, the question of what constituted African literature, and whether literature in non-African languages (including English) could ever be truly African. The controversy exerted a formative influence over the youthful James Ngugi, who'd used the occasion of the conference to hand over to Achebe manuscripts of his first two novels, *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*. The novels were published in 1964 and 1965, respectively, but Ngugi would keep neither his name, nor the language in which he wrote.

By 1970, convinced that the English language was a tool of colonisation, and that real decolonisation was impossible without decolonising the mind (including the language), James Ngugi had changed his name to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Henceforth, he would write in the language of his birth, Gikuyu.

Ngũgĩ, who passed away on May 28 at the age of 87, has left behind a rich, varied, and sometimes complex legacy. Taught at the jewel of Kenya Colony's educational system, the Alliance High School, he was trained to become either a member of the colonial elite, or of the neo-colonial comprador bourgeoisie that would take over Kenya after the transfer of power.

Neither of these two things happened. Ngũgĩ was jerked out of his comfortable boarding school education when, at the height of the Mau Mau war for independence, his village was depopulated by the British as a form of collective punishment, his brother sent to a concentration camp, and Ngũgĩ himself briefly imprisoned before a fortuitous set of circumstances saw him freed. In his memoir, *In the House of the Interpreter* (2012), Ngũgĩ would paint a memorable – and at times, tragic – portrait of the English-speaking Kenyan intellectual elite, caught between two worlds, as the struggle for freedom intensified.



Argument against English

In the initial years after independence, this internal struggle continued, as Ngũgĩ achieved prominence as an African writer, writing in English, about distinctively African themes. *The River Between*, for example, examined the impact of colonialism on so-called "traditional" practices, and the social havoc that that wreaks – in the mould of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

However, after 1970, when Ngũgĩ resolved this struggle in his own mind, he faced a different – external – struggle. Writing in his native language, and with his explicitly left-wing and anti-colonial attitude, he soon drew the attention of President Jomo Kenyatta and his authoritarian regime. When Ngũgĩ staged a play called *I Will Marry When I Want* in 1977, he was arrested and imprisoned. In prison – in an act that has since become a part of legend – Ngũgĩ wrote his next novel, *Devil on the Cross*, in Gikuyu, and on toilet paper.

Upon his release, he went into exile, eventually settling into a teaching career in the United States. It was there that he developed his philosophy in greater detail, through books such as *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). Building upon arguments that had first been made in Makerere more than two-and-a-half decades ago, *Decolonising the Mind* made the case for abandoning English in order to achieve true decolonisation. Three decades later, in *Secure the Base* (2016), Ngũgĩ would develop this argument further, noting that "each language, no matter how small, carries its memory of the world". Suppressing language, thus, meant suppressing memory.

However, in this, Ngũgĩ's views were not without controversy. His Kenyan compatriot, Binyavanga Wainaina, made gentle fun of Ngũgĩ's puritanism in his own memoir, *One Day I Will Write About This Place* (2011). The Zimbabwean writer, Dambudzo Marechera, whose own decision to write was inspired by Ngũgĩ, clashed bitterly with him over the question of writing in English. Ngũgĩ's views about decolonisation were powerful – but they were never uncontested.

Troubled legacy

Ngũgĩ's suffering at the hands of both the colonial and the post-colonial Kenyan regimes came together in what many people (including this writer) believe to be his masterpiece, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). Set in an unnamed African country, the novel takes an unsparing, sarcastic, and darkly humorous scalpel to the cruelties, banalities, and venalities of the "Independence" government, which masks its own failures and justifies its repression by blaming both colonialism and neo-colonialism – even as that same government is economically and militarily propped up by western powers as a front against communism. To read *Wizard of the Crow* is to rage, to laugh, and to weep, all at the same time – a testament not just to Ngũgĩ's mastery as a writer, but to the life he lived and which informed his work, a life of defiance.

In the twilight of his life, Ngũgĩ's legacy was marred by allegations of domestic abuse. In a context in which towering literary figures are often treated as moral authorities – and Ngũgĩ certainly was – an obituary would be incomplete without acknowledging this, and noting the culture of silence that surrounds debates on literary legacy. For an honest assessment, we must hold these contradictions in balance, even as we celebrate the rich corpus of work that Ngũgĩ has left to us.

The writer and reviewer is an author, most recently of The Sentence.

IN CONVERSATION

'I was determined to write something funny'

Nussaibah Younis, whose dark comedy about Islamic State brides has been shortlisted for the Women's Prize, says nuance is more achieveable through fiction

Saurabh Sharma

For a decade, Nussaibah Younis was a peacebuilding professional in Iraq. When she was asked to design a programme to deradicalise Islamic State (IS) brides, it triggered a memory from her teenage years. When she was 17, she went to a summer camp taught by the "articulate and charming" Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki, who later joined al-Qaeda and was killed in a drone strike in 2011 in Yemen. It made her realise how easily she could have been on the other side.

Leveraging her academic and personal experiences as a British-Iraqi Muslim, Younis has penned a supremely funny novel, *Fundamentally* (published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson), a satire on international aid bodies trying to play saviour in the face of crises. The book has been shortlisted for the 2025 Women's Prize for Fiction, the winner of which will be announced on June 12. Younis takes on racism, workplace politics, religious belief, and queerness in this confident debut work. Edited excerpts from an interview:

Question: *What made you fictionalise your experiences instead of writing nonfiction?*
Answer: I wanted to write a story that would connect with a broad readership rather than be a dry academic tome. My goal was to write something with sparky characters, witty repartee, and an intense and compelling plot. A page-turner.

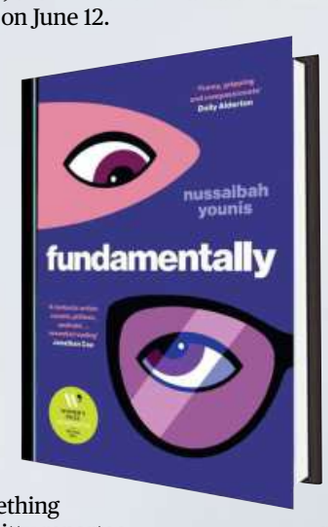
Fiction also puts readers in an empathetic position – they can listen to the thoughts of the protagonist, imagine themselves in her position, wonder what they would do given the same circumstances. Because the topic of IS brides is so divisive, and is often reduced to incendiary headlines in newspapers, it felt critical to me to create as much nuance as possible, which felt more achievable through fiction.

I also love to write about how the personal informs the political. Often the humour, the eroticism, and the dysfunction of real, human interactions are difficult to include in an academic work without undermining one's authority as an expert. I believe writing fiction to be more honest; it gives space for characters to be entirely human.

Q: *In what ways do you think* Fundamentally *reflects your connection with the literary figures who impacted your writing?*
A: I loved studying Virginia Woolf as a part of my English literature degree at Oxford University. She was the first author I read who was considered a serious writer and a respected part of the British literary canon. She wrote accessible and enjoyable prose that combined details of the domestic life of women with insights and critiques of the broader social and political dynamics of the society in which she lived. It felt like an important counterweight to the male-dominated literary establishment. Woolf gave me the courage to see a woman's inner life as worthy of inclusion in literary work.

I enjoyed the wit, humour, and scathing self-deprecation of many of Philip Roth's characters, but often felt troubled by the latent misogyny that ran through much of his work. I wanted to write in a similar style but with a respect for the humanity of the women at the centre.

Q: *Could you share your observations on the saviour complex of international aid bodies?*
A: I thought to parse through this novel the challenging questions that I faced as an aid worker. What role can foreigners play in trying to 'save' countries to which they do not belong? What is the moral way to interact with countries and with people in need, and to what extent can you – or should you – impose value systems on aid recipients? What motivates us to seek to 'do good', and do our personal histories and experiences inevitably colour the work we end up doing, for good or ill? However, I don't seek to impose clear-cut answers on these questions. I wanted to provoke a thoughtful conversation about the benefits and limitations of our approach to aid. The novel also seeks to prompt nuanced reflections on the motivations of women who join extremist groups, pathways for them to leave violence behind, and the possibilities and limits of rehabilitation.



Q: *Tell us more about the standup comedy class you took for this novel.*
A: I fall in love with novels that make me laugh out loud; I wish there were more of them. So, I was determined to write something funny. I didn't want to elicit a mere wry smile; I wanted laughter. The best way to figure out if my material was funny was to simply tell my jokes on stage at a standup comedy course. That helped me to centre the comedy in my storytelling, and to ensure that I included moments of verified hilarity.

The interviewer is a Delhi-based queer writer and cultural critic. Instagram/X: @writerly_life

Author Nussaibah Younis. (GETTY IMAGES)

BROWSER

How to Forget
Meera Ganapathi
HarperCollins
₹599
Through poems, vignettes, and photographs covering 55 walks across cities and timelines, the author paints a portrait of love, loss and longing. Djinns in Byculla, elephants from the Nilgiris, a stalker from Chennai, all find their way into the book.

The Fantastic Affair of Despair
Doorva Devarshi
Picador India
₹499
Is the co-existence of nature and human beings an impossible myth? This debut novel set in a Himalayan *dharamshala* explores themes of gendered violence and the impact of human encroachment on the environment.

Tiger Lessons
Sannapureddy Venkatarami Reddy, trs Narasimha Kumar
Bloomsbury
₹599
This translation from the Telugu original, *Kondapolam*, tells the story of a young man's coming to terms with his life and identity as he spends days in the forest herding his family's sheep.

Atmosphere
Taylor Jenkins Reid
Penguin
₹899
The author of the bestselling *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* is back with a novel set in 1980s NASA when a woman joins the hallowed space programme. Reid spent several months in Houston, the site of NASA's Mission Control Centre, while researching the book.

The book also examines the chucking controversy that demonised Sri Lankan cricketer Muthiah Muralitharan. (GETTY IMAGES)

TESTED AT 150

In March 2026, Test cricket will hit a landmark. Tim Wigmore chronicles the journey of a capricious sporting form, rough patches and all

Sharda Ugra

In his introduction to *Test Cricket A History,* author Tim Wigmore says the book is "meant to be read sequentially, as narrative history." It is helpful advice for taking on 539-pages of a timeline which covers almost 150 years. Test cricket nuts could read it in any manner they like. Back to front, sideways or a languorous cherry-pick of themes, events, personalities through 35 chapters and once again fall head over heels with this capricious, alluring sporting form. Which may appear archaic and out-of-step but has been, as Wigmore shows and tells, adaptive and reflective of its time.

It is cricket that held the first officially recognised international sporting contest. Ever. USA vs Canada, Manhattan 1844. Everything – world cups, continental championships, globalised sporting hoo-ha, Olympic medals tables, bitter national rivalries – only sprang into life later.

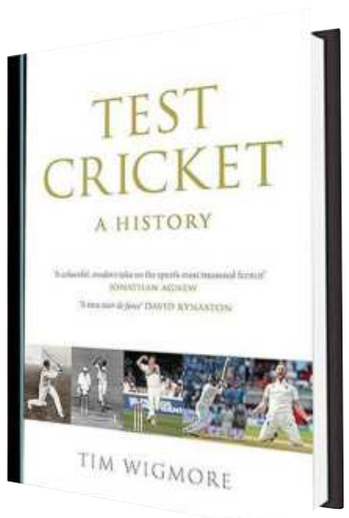
Enough preening. That Manhattan match over three days was not considered a Test – that came only 33 years later – but that factoid needed an airing. The duration of Tests has gone from three to four to five days to timeless (on till 1945 in Australia). Today they look like three-day high-speed confrontations with much mulling over returning to a four-day format. Again.

Falling allure?

In March 2026 when it will hit 150, Test cricket faces perhaps its roughest tide. Earlier this year, the World Cricketers Association released its annual report and player survey findings interviewing 328 players, male and female, mostly international. Forty-nine per cent of them believed that Test cricket is the most important format to play in. The bracket that followed was this: the 49% was "down from 86% in 2019."

Over the last six years, the relevance of Test cricket has fallen to just below half amongst its very practitioners. The format may have often been suspected of dying every decade but we are perhaps at its most critical moment and not merely because it is up against a shorter format. That has happened before – with 50-over cricket and one-day internationals. Today, it is Twenty20 franchise cricket that has burgeoning commercial value and popular appeal amongst players and its audience. The prospect of T20 eating into the international calendar, replacing bilateral with franchise competition and hoovering up young talent is very real. Cricket hinges its global ambitions on T20 as it returns to the Olympics in Los Angeles 2028. We have been here before and Wigmore has proof that we – aka administrators – stuffed it.

At the turn of the century, the United States was "almost certainly among the four strongest cricket nations" (plus Australia, England and Canada) even as the game grew in Argentina. "Through the mixture of neglect and deliberate exclusion, the chance to develop a bigger and more geographically diverse game was lost." The inclusive, expansive world view of the book needs to be the lens through which Test cricket can tackle the decade ahead. Not the Big Three cling-wrapping themselves and Tests into tinier and tinier cliques.



Test Cricket A History
Tim Wigmore
Hachette India
₹899

Fresh eyes

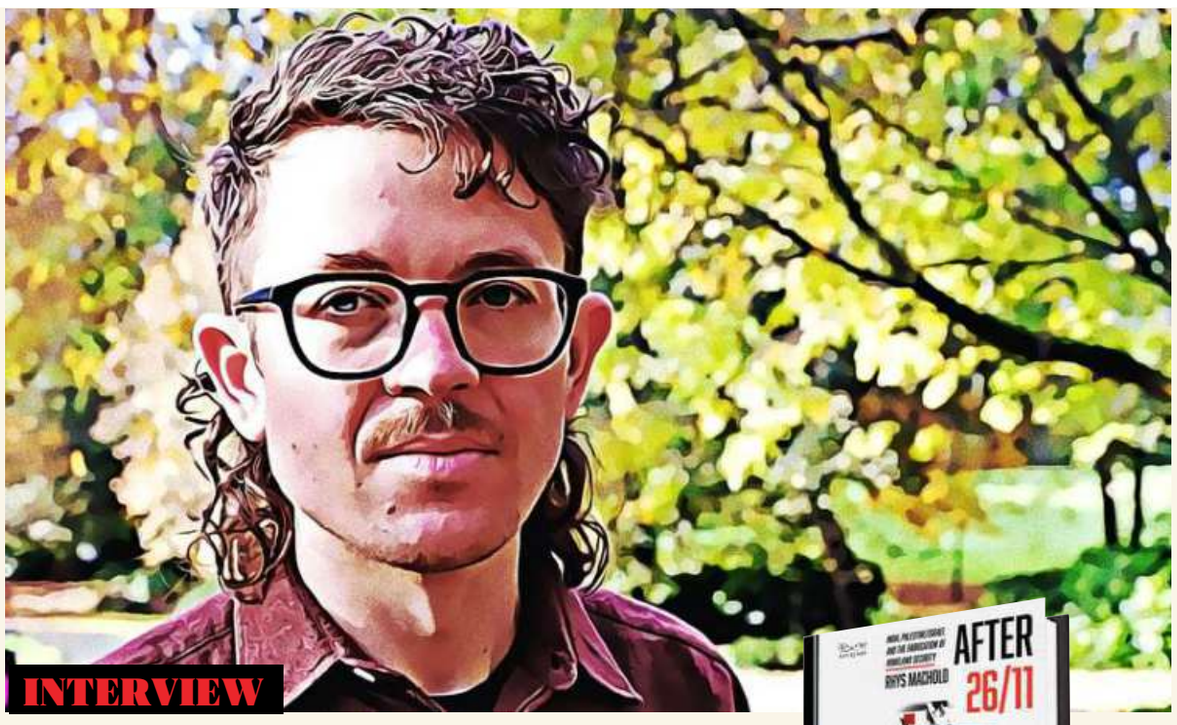
The book's biggest asset is that it is a 150-year-old story told through a young voice. Wigmore, 34, has grown up with 21st century cricket and is free of the love and loathings of the previous century. Little is considered 'holy' and therefore, even less is deemed tainted. This frees the book of many tired first-world readings of issues that have divided the game and the refusal to look objectively at T20.

Take one random example: there are enough references of how poor umpiring affected outcomes and careers and therefore neither neutral umpiring nor DRS (decision review system) is anathema. Wigmore tells of a Royal Statistical Society paper which analysed Tests between 1986 to 2012: with two home umpires, visiting teams were 16% more likely to be given out lbw. With one home and one neutral the figure fell to 10% and with two neutrals 1%. The book is full of such gems. Like how scientists have proved that swing bowling has very little to do with cloud cover.

Reverse swing, with or without bestial ball tampering, "has aided one of the most beguiling sights in Test cricket." Then there's the chucking controversy that demonised Muthiah Muralitharan at top volume. Only for sports labs to discover that bowlers with even the most 'pure' actions were also 'bent' which then led to a change in the law. The commonly-bandied false-ism is that this was done 'to accommodate Murali'. The fact is that the law was discovered to be outmoded and needed a fresh benchmark.

These are only some slices of the feast offered by this vibrant, global history of the oldest form of cricket. Told across decades and vast spans of geography, using history, memoir, stats, science and the voices of greats living and gone, it is destined to be a classic. *Test Cricket* is in a word, monumental. If you're looking for two, add terrific.

The reviewer spent three decades reporting sport for various organisations, but now follows and writes about sport on her own terms.



INTERVIEW

'Homeland security, a global mission'

Rhys Machold on how the U.S., Israel/Palestine and India have responded to terror attacks

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
vinaya.deshpande@thehindu.co.in

The concept of "homeland security" came to the fore after the 9/11 attacks in New York. Rhys Machold, a senior lecturer with the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow, has been studying a government's response to terrorism for a decade, including India's after the terror attacks of 26/11 in Mumbai in 2008. He travelled across countries and met arms manufacturers, dealers, police trainers, politicians for his new book, *After 26/11: India, Palestine/Israel, and the Fabrication of Homeland Security* (published by Navayana). Edited excerpts from an interview.

Question: *From 26/11 to Pahalgam, how has homeland security evolved in India as a response to terror attacks? How has the public perception about the importance of homeland security as a priority area changed?*
Answer: As I detail at length in the book, in 26/11's aftermath, the term 'homeland security' and institutions and practices associated with it, not least of all the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, went from the peripheries of public and strategic debates in India to centre-stage. In the weeks and months that followed 26/11, a new kind of common sense emerged, namely that India lacked homeland security and needed to urgently replicate the alleged successes of other states in developing a modern and robust homeland security approach, with the U.S. and Israel being cited as some of the most notable examples.

In the years thereafter this apparent new consensus did produce some tangible developments, including new institutions and reforms to internal security and policing in many parts of India, often styled in a language of police and security modernisation.

Overall, I would say that in the aftermath of terror attacks in India, the public tend to make demands for greater domestic security preparedness, and since 26/11 these are often styled in a language of homeland security. Yet, some attacks provoke such demands in quite uneven or inconsistent ways. For instance, the 2011 bombings at Dadar West, Zaveri Bazaar, and the Opera House in Mumbai killed 26 people and wounded another 130, but produced limited public outcry and political responses in terms of improving domestic security infrastructure.

The recent attacks on Pahalgam have provoked broad public outcry over various security lapses or failures of the Indian state and unleashed a media-driven jingoistic fervour, which has in turn been used to rationalise the Indian state's subsequent mass arrests of individuals in Jammu and Kashmir as well as housing demolitions there and most recently military attacks against Pakistan.

Q: *Though your book elaborates on the homeland security journey of India till 2014, several terror attacks have taken place thereafter as well. How do you perceive India's response to them?*
A: The general trend is that although such events are most commonly blamed by state officials and media outlets on Muslims and Islamist groups and sometimes on Pakistan-based authorities or the Pakistani state itself, the tendency in state responses to terror attacks across India is to treat them as relatively exceptional breakdowns of social order rather than routine events. Long-term and systematic planning, both at the State-level in places like Maharashtra but also at the Union-level, has been more difficult to sustain after the occasional political backlash in the wake of terror attacks wanes.

For instance, while 26/11 gave rise to discussions about the need for basic reforms of general policing across India, this imperative never really materialised. At the same time, it is important to stress that the jingoistic fervour that events like 26/11 and the Pahalgam attack produces, particularly against Muslims in India and in Kashmir as well as in relation to Pakistan, have been steadily building since 2014 and I see no sign of this abating anytime soon.

Q: *You have disrupted the conventional idea of homeland security. Could you elaborate on why you say that homeland security is not a universal concept?*
A: What I mean by this is to say that although 'homeland security' claims to be a new way of organising domestic policing and security that can in principle be put into practice anywhere and work in a similar fashion across different parts of the world, the post-26/11 experience belies this claim substantially. Despite the considerable and ongoing efforts to reproduce the American and Israeli homeland security states in the Indian context, the ways in which institutions of internal security continue to operate in India are in certain respects radically unlike those in the U.S. or Palestine/Israel.

Indeed, my book helps to elaborate the ways in which efforts to reproduce the homeland security state in India since 2008 have been centrally concerned with mediating and attempting to overcome various forms of difference, whether historical, cultural, institutional or political. But as I show, these efforts aimed at overcoming difference have generally come up short.

That being said, I also emphasise in different ways that the mission of homeland security as a governing regime and political project has never been contained within national borders. Instead, it has always been understood by its architects as a global mission that seeks to remake much of the world in its image. Thus, homeland security is universalist even though not being universal in the sense of being the same everywhere.

ANATOMY OF AN IPL FAN

CONTINUED FROM » PAGE 1

Fandom and identity

The emotion isn't superficial. It cuts deep. Therapist Meghna Singhal, a Ph.D in clinical psychology, maps fan grief to the DABDA model: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. "Fans genuinely grieve. At first, it's 'We didn't deserve to lose'; then, 'The umpiring was biased'; followed by 'If only we bowled that guy'; then comes a week of sadness; and finally, 'It was still a great season'."

Cricket is a life marker for actor Nakuul Mehta. His fandom is a dream deferred. "Like most children in India, I once dreamt of playing for the country. But at some point, you realise your ambition outweighs your talent. So you live that dream through your heroes. When they win, you soar. When they lose, it stings, it feels personal."

Team spirit Fan moments from IPL 2025. (AP, GETTY IMAGES)

He credits the IPL management with building a fandom few saw coming. "When my team loses, it hurts because I lose the right to defend them. But when they win, it feels worth it, like all those years of standing by them finally paid off."

Singhal adds that team loyalty anchors personal identity. "Sports fandom taps into a deeply human need to belong. When we support a Mumbai or Gujarat, we're anchoring ourselves to a shared identity," she says. Psychology calls this the social identity theory, according to Singhal. "Our sense of self is shaped by the group we belong to."

Meanwhile, veteran sports editor Suresh Menon believes fans are outsourcing emotion. "You look at Kohli and think, 'Thank God I don't have to do all that.' You've nominated him to win on your behalf." He calls it coquette psychology. "Sport is fundamentally meaningless. So we impose meaning, glory, sacrifice, heartbreak. It's got a story. It's got memories."

Media arms of franchises are happy to add to the storybuilding. "International cricket doesn't need to build characters," Menon notes. "But IPL franchises have private players. So you get social media teams building emotional hooks. Personalities are amped up. Narratives are fed."

Misra agrees. "Sport has always been likened to war to a certain extent. Journalists love conflicts, rivalries, storylines. We're not telling Indian audiences what to think, we're telling them how to think. We are creating meaning through media logic. So even if you're not playing, you start to carry this conflict emotionally, as though it's yours."

That is the aim with which comedian Sait began donning the role of RCB's mascot. "When I got the opportunity 11 years ago to be the bridge between fans and cricketers, the goal was to humanise the players. Back then, cricket was all about hero worship. I really enjoyed speaking the language fans speak and creating something they could connect with," he says.

Winning by proxy

That effort to humanise players, to bridge the gap between icon and individual, is echoed by players, too. Says Sai Kishore of the Gujarat Titans, "People in Gujarat feel deeply connected to the Titans. Most of us players aren't even from here. But fans get that local flavour, just like Chennaiites do with Dhoni. That's love."

Kishore now calls Ahmedabad his second home. "The connection is real. The IPL is emotionally intense. When we lose, it's not just about 'moving on to the next one'. We feel it."

In the end, only one team gets to lift the trophy. But millions more will feel like they lifted it, too. Because when the IPL rolls into town, the country doesn't just watch. It plays along, and for a little while, all they are going to be saying is, "*Ee Saala Cup Namdu*" (this year, the trophy is ours).

The writer is a culture, lifestyle and entertainment journalist.

Test vs. T20

Tim Wigmore's *Test Cricket: A History* (see page 3) offers a sweeping chronicle of a format long seen as cricket's ultimate test — of skill, temperament, and endurance. But while Wigmore looks back at the grandeur and grit of the red-ball format, the sport has surged ahead. If Test cricket is its pinnacle, then T20, especially in its most commercial, glamorous avatar as the Indian Premier League, has redefined its base. T20 has reshaped cricket's priorities, drawing new audiences with its three-hour bursts of action. The IPL, as an extension of this format, has amplified that shift, injecting staggering money, youthful energy, and mass entertainment into the game's bloodstream. Wigmore portrays Test cricket as both archaic and alluring. He raises a pressing question: can this demanding, five-day format coexist with the electric thrill of T20, especially in its glossy franchise form?

The IPL hasn't killed Test cricket, it has, in fact, made its survival more urgent. In challenging Test cricket to prove its worth, the IPL has become an unlikely mirror: a rival that paradoxically keeps the older format alive. Today's aggressive, fast-paced batsmen may light up the IPL, but it's Test cricket that teaches them the true grammar of the game. The IPL may be where they shine, but Test cricket is where they are forged, say experts.

Easy entry points

To explain the recent interest in senior artists, some art experts point to the growing fatigue with the approaches of contemporary and younger artists, where the focus is on making their work concept-laden. Senior artists also have a huge inventory to offer because a lot of work has not been in circulation. Price points for their works range from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh for smaller paper works or editions, to ₹50 lakh for mid-sized paintings. Some of the more significant and larger-scale works, such as that of Manu Parekh, could be priced at over ₹1 crore.

Rahul Kumar

Late last year, Amitava Das held a solo show in New Delhi, *In Another Time That Is Now*, featuring a wide range of works spanning his career – from early pieces dating back to the 1960s to more recent works created in 2015. The show was held in collaboration with Shrine Empire Gallery and Art Exposure Gallery. This March, Subcontinent, an art gallery in Mumbai's Fort district, opened its doors with a show of the late Haku Shah's work, highlighting seven decades of his artistic journey. "Frequently told stories form the mainstream narrative. Our focus is on overlooked art histories," says Keshav Mahendru, co-founder of the gallery.

While the last decade has seen an unprecedented focus on emerging and early-career visual artists – with the launch of opportunities such as residencies and scholarships, new awards and grants, and even galleries looking to induct fresh talent to their respective rosters – there has been a recent shift across institutions and the commercial gallery ecosystem. There is now an active interest in exhibiting established and late-career artists. From retrospectives to large exhibitions, galleries are celebrating senior artists, whether they are retired, still in practice or even deceased. What is driving this departure? We speak to leading museums and galleries.

An intergenerational approach

"Many late-career artists were pioneers. By revisiting their practices, we acknowledge their contributions," says Isheta Salgaocar, advisor and patron of Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts. "For instance, the Cholamandal Artist Village is a seminal part of our modern art history, and we recognise the importance of such collectives in shaping alternative art discourses."

Some galleries, such as Bengaluru-based Museum for Art and Photography (MAP), are taking an intergenerational approach. "Our curatorial approach is to connect historical practices with the present," says founder Abhishek Poddar. MAP showcased the work of Meera Mukherjee and Jaidev Baghel, two significant figures of India's modern art history, complementing it with a photo essay by contemporary photographer Jaisingh Nageswaran. "This created an added layer for audiences to connect with one or the other," says Poddar.

Latitude 28, New Delhi, exhibits work of senior practitioners alongside younger artists to trace interconnections in the evolution of artistic languages. They also hold solo shows, like that of Jyoti Bhatt. "He has been a defining element in art historical narratives and continues to influence the artistic and cultural milieu," says Bhavna Kakar, founder of the gallery.

Early supporters

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi, is committed to showcasing diverse voices and perspectives in its exhibitions. "We were among the first to present retrospective exhibitions of artists such as Himmat Shah, Jeram Patel, Rameshwar Broota, and Arpita Singh. Their artistic practices have been under-represented in the larger artistic discourse," says Roobina Karode, director and chief curator, KNMA. Many of these voices illuminate seminal moments that have shaped subsequent creative practices. For instance, Patel used a blowtorch to burn wood in his art works, while Shah explored ideas and concepts through terracotta sculptures.

Nature Morte in New Delhi has been identified with young and emerging artists since its inception in 1997. "But, from 1997-2003, we included works of F.N. Souza, Bhupen Khakhar, Himmat Shah, Zarina Hashmi, Krishna Reddy, and Nasreen Mohammedi in group shows. We started working with Mona Rai and Mrinalini Mukherjee in 2004," says Peter Nagy, co-founder of the gallery.

Continued relevance in current times

Poddar says they exhibit works, which serve as entry points into larger conversations about identity, society, and change. "Even when artists explore themes rooted in the past, the questions they raise remain relevant today," he shares. Practices like those of Haku Shah deal with the timeless questions of life, such as love, and humanity.

Nagy says that Manu Parekh's recent solo show was inspired by sacred rituals, primarily Hindu, which take place even today. Parekh gained prominence in 2022 through a collaboration with the House of Dior. A series of 22 artworks, featuring imagery from paintings by Manu and his wife Madhvi, served as a floor-to-ceiling backdrop for Dior's spring/summer runway show at Paris Haute Couture Week.

These artistic practices are not relics of history, but persistent within our contemporary social and cultural fabric, adds Salgaocar. "Such works invite reflection on how the past continues to inform our current social and political realities," she says.

Similarly, Dakoji's practice offers a lens through which to view the past as a living, breathing influence on the present. Kajaria feels that his works explore memory and migration, which remain relevant today. "Dakoji's practice is rooted in history yet alive with inquiry that complements the experimental spirit we value," says Kajaria.

The culture writer is based in Delhi.

Age matters (Clockwise from left) Art by Manu Parekh at Nature Morte; Himmat Shah at KNMA; Anahita Taneja; Roobina Karode; Peter Nagy; Rasika Kajaria; and art by Jyoti Bhatt at Latitude 28. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

WHERE SENIORITY WINS

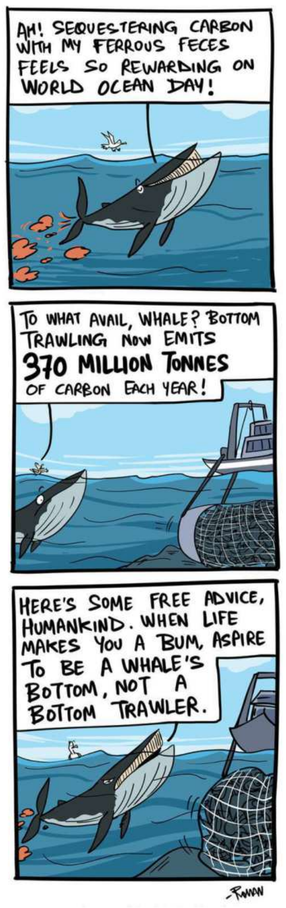
From Haku Singh to Meera Mukherjee, many older and late-career artists were pioneers. And recently, galleries have been increasingly focusing on them

Amitava's visual language is philosophical, poetic, and introspective, like that of many artists we work with, especially those whose practices reflect memory, perception, and the human condition

ANAHITA TANEJA
Co-founder, Shrine Empire Gallery. Das is the first artist of his generation to be represented by them.

GREEN HUMOUR

Rohan Chakravarty



IN CONVERSATION

STAND-UP MOM

Comedian Zarna Garg on her memoir, her next book written from a mother's POV, and why she thinks India hasn't changed all that much

Simar Bhasin

Not takes Zarna Garg; (left) with actor Harish Patel in a still from the film *A Nice Indian Boy*. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

I'm now so American, I not only have opinions, I monetise them!" proclaims comedian Zarna Garg on a recent episode of the talk show, *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. Garg's unique brand of observational comedy about Indian immigrant life in the U.S. has been setting social media ablaze. From dishing out hilarious Indian mother-in-law jokes to delivering parenting hot takes, donned in her statement functional outfit comprising a *kurta* paired with a belt and matching *salwar*, Garg, 50, never misses a beat.

"When I'm on stage, people call me the machine gun of jokes," she tells me over a Zoom call. It is close to midnight in the U.S. but Garg is firing away, about her Hollywood debut last year, her upcoming shows, and most notably, her recent memoir, *This American Woman* (published by Penguin Random House).

The title, she says, is both a nod to a running joke in her family, where she was often labelled 'American' for speaking her mind, as well as a bid to be relatable to an international audience. Also, she quips, "I don't really connect with the titles that a lot of Indian authors write," adding that there is no beloved mango tree or courtyard from her childhood she could have referred to in the title. "I never saw a guava tree [growing up]. I have no idea if guavas grow on a tree."

Dating tips and marriage

The book mirrors Garg's personality; it is an easy read packed with anecdotes from the author's life and is narrated in a conversational tone. Garg says she meant for the book "to feel like you're having a conversation with a friend".

Each chapter takes up a part of Garg's journey – from growing up in an affluent household in India to leaving home at 14 when faced with the prospect of marriage after her mother's untimely death, to moving to the U.S. at 17 to start life afresh. After getting married and being a stay-at-home mother of three, Garg strikes gold as a standup comic at the age of 44. "Every chapter had to have a full story arc. The way this book is written, any one chapter could be a TV show, could be a movie itself," says Garg, who also hosts a family-run podcast, where she is joined by her husband and three children as they discuss everything from health to god to fame and its pitfalls.

There is a portion of the memoir that has gone viral where Garg shares how she posted an ad online (when the Internet was just beginning to rule our lives) to find a life partner. And how her request to potential suitors to include "their most recent tax returns and medical records", caught the eye of her now husband of 27 years, Shalabh.

Ask her what advice she would give single people in the age of dating apps, and Garg is quick to say that they should have a list of three core beliefs and no more. In her own case, Garg adds, "If things don't work out with my husband... I'm going to be looking for a billionaire with a heart disease."

Is India stuck in the past?

On the work front, Garg's second comedy special, *Practical People Win*, will be out on Hulu and JioHotstar in July. Her first, *One in a Billion*, is available on Amazon Prime and has rave reviews, although a section of viewers complains that her comedy dissects an India "that has moved on". Garg begs to differ. "I think the modern Indians have moved on. But India is a much bigger country than the 5-10% of urban India." She adds, "In my estimation, no country has changed that much. It's not just India, even America, if anything, might have even regressed a little bit in the last few years."

Last year, she played the role of the mother in an Indian immigrant family in director Roshan Sethi's romantic comedy *A Nice Indian Boy*, which premiered at the South by Southwest film festival in Austin, Texas. The film drew appreciation for its leads' heartfelt performances, with reviews calling Garg "a delight". Up next is a sitcom based on her life, produced by Mindy Kaling and Kevin Hart.

But Garg, who says she grew up on a steady literary diet of Enid Blyton, Jeffrey Archer and Sidney Sheldon, is also in the process of putting together her second book – a motivational title with a mom twist, "because a lot of motivation books in the bookstores are very businessy... And I feel like moms do so much motivating all day". There's no arguing with that logic, whether in India or the U.S.

The way my book is written, any one chapter could be a TV show, could be a movie itself

ZARNA GARG

The writer is a Delhi-based literary critic and research scholar.

INTERVIEW

Theatre as an antidote to loneliness

And why Jehan Manekshaw of Drama Schools Foundation Mumbai wants to turn South Mumbai into a cultural hub like Broadway or West End

Chintan Girish Modi

From studying theatre at Wesleyan University in Connecticut and Birkbeck College in London to working as an associate executive producer with Zarina Mehta and Ronnie Screwvala at UTV, to becoming the Director (Strategy and Vision) at Drama Schools Foundation Mumbai (DSFM), Jehan Manekshaw has come a long way. DSFM is the parent organisation under which thrives a drama school, an e-learning initiative for aspiring theatre makers, a theatre education initiative in schools, a corporate training initiative and more.

Having been an integral part of Mumbai's theatre ecosystem for over 25 years, Manekshaw is now channelising his energy towards building 'Mumbai Theatre District' – a dream project to "revitalise South Mumbai as a cultural hub for theatre", like Broadway in New York or London's West End. "Corporates need to understand the role of art and culture in societal well-being," he says. "And the government needs to get behind the enabling of spaces where art and culture can be supported." Edited excerpts from an interview:

Question: *How is theatre reinventing itself in the age of Instagram, when audiences seem to have short attention spans?*
Answer: Storytelling has changed from the listenership side or the viewership side because we have to accept the reality of mobile phones. We cannot do a three-hour play anymore. On the other hand, live entertainment does have its place now because people are looking for ways to reinfuse their senses that have become captive to digital devices. Theatre is allowing people to connect deeply. It is the root form or medium of storytelling. It came much before cinema arrived.

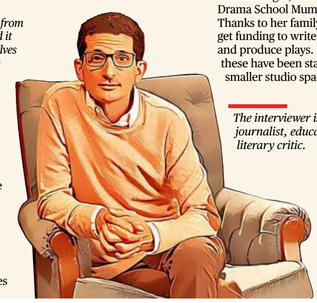
Think of how much smarter and more enabled a content creator would be if they had a theatre background with strong foundations in the fundamentals of scene, emotion, acting, and performance. I have been thinking of bringing some really good theatre makers and content creators to jam and see what comes out of it. People have been saying that theatre is dead, but it just won't die. It could take on a new avatar, but it won't die.

Q: *People who do not come from wealthy families usually find it very hard to sustain themselves doing theatre. How does the Drama School Mumbai, of which you are the co-founder, equip students to be financially secure? What kind of opportunities open up after they graduate?*
A: I'll be honest. It's not easy paying for the course itself. It costs around ₹6 lakh per student. We try and find as many benefactors as possible to give student scholarships. Additionally, the drama school itself gives bursaries and discounts to help students bridge the gap. It is not an MBA programme, so there is no immediate campus placement at the end. They have to go out and freelance, so it is a struggle. But, in Mumbai, they find all kinds of jobs alongside pursuing theatre. They do ad films, they become assistant directors on movie sets. Some take up writing gigs and digital assignments. We have alumni leading corporate training workshops using theatre. We also have alumni who become poets, storytellers and spoken word artists. Many go back to their hometowns and launch their own initiatives. One of our students has become a theatre godfather in Mysuru. Another has started an evening drama school in Ahmedabad. The ripple effect is lovely. We hope these students enrich society in their own way.

Q: *Psychologists often speak of urban loneliness as an epidemic where people feel disconnected from themselves and each other. What role can theatre play in this scenario?*
A: Theatre is about connection, about not feeling alone. The theatre-making and rehearsal process is about holding space and allowing people to be themselves. In this, there is safety and healing. Theatre is also used in arts-based therapy. The work of Brazilian theatreperson Augusto Boal, in particular, has been quite powerful. His theatre is the kind where people get to express what they feel and think, and share why they are making certain decisions. They feel both seen and heard.

Training as a theatre-maker also teaches you to be resilient, to go with the flow, and to adapt to change. For example, if you are on stage, and something doesn't go quite as planned, you have to carry on with the show. I feel these life skills are much more important than making a play.

Q: *What are the new directions that theatre is taking in India, in terms of spaces where audiences can come and watch a play?*
A: Theatre-makers are saying that I want to tell a story and I want a bunch of people to watch. You are getting to experience theatre in small studio spaces in the suburbs. That's where these stories can be told. Instead of telling makers what kind of stories to tell, we help them discover what they really care about so that they can tell their own stories in an authentic way. We teach them craft. We also have a production grant for alumni in the name of the late Niloufer Sagar, who taught at Drama School Mumbai. Thanks to her family, alumni get funding to write, direct and produce plays. Many of these have been staged in smaller studio spaces.



Making connections A rehearsal session at Drama Schools Foundation Mumbai; and (below) Jehan Manekshaw. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

The interviewer is a journalist, educator and literary critic.

PERSON OF INTEREST

MANJULA PRADEEP'S CIRCLE OF CARE

The Dalit rights activist and lawyer sees herself as a community healer

Role model Manjula Pradeep has been at the heart of the feminist and Dalit rights movement in Gujarat for 30 years. (VIJAY SONEJI)

It was 1993 and Manjula Pradeep's fingers were flying over an electronic typewriter as she tried to make sense of the evidence, testimony and haunting postmortem report of a young Dalit man who had died of custodial torture. The victim's mother had brought the case to Navsarjan Trust, Gujarat's leading anti-caste grassroots organisation where Pradeep was a freshly minted postgraduate in social work. She had just joined as the NGO's first female employee.

"I couldn't understand some terms in the postmortem report and somebody asked me to read a medical jurisprudence textbook," she says. "That was when I realised I needed to become a lawyer."

For 30 years, Pradeep has been at the heart of the feminist and Dalit rights movement in Gujarat. As a lawyer and activist, she has been involved in many key legal cases that have shaped India's modern history, playing a role in the battles for dignity and justice fought by Dalit men and women against an oppressive state. Pradeep, 55, never looks away, instead she holds survivors in a supportive embrace.

Another case that impacted her deeply occurred in 2008, when a teenager was raped repeatedly by six professors in a college. "The case was very important in my life," she says. "We got a conviction in one year." Fifty-six girls testified in court, and the public prosecutor, the judge and the investigating officer were all women. "After that, at Navsarjan, we handled many cases of sexual violence involving marginalised girls," she says.

When members of a Dalit family who were skinning dead cattle were flogged by Hindus in Una, Gujarat, in 2016, it pushed Pradeep to become the first in her family to convert to Buddhism. The survivors later converted, too. Her deep involvement in the case was the last straw for a government that was allergic to anyone shining a spotlight on caste crimes. Pradeep, by then executive director at Navsarjan, had to leave the organisation after the backlash from the state, among other things.

Lonely work

Nine years later, she remains in close contact with the Una survivors – Vashram, Ramesh, Ashok and Bechar – all with the last name Sarvaiya. "If you make a commitment, you have to help the family until the end," she says. She tracks their health issues, shows up in court to support them, and helps raise money for them. "Vashram wants something meaningful to be built at the place where he was beaten," she says. "He's put together a small troupe of children who sing songs of Ambedkar and dance during Navaratri festival." Vashram has the support of Lalji Sarvaiya, whose brother Piyush was burnt alive by an upper caste mob. Six years later, in 2018, the 11 accused received a sentence of imprisonment until death. Pradeep was the social worker on this case, too.

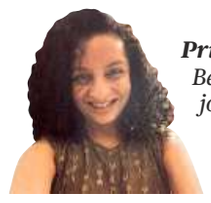
Despite all her years of deep community involvement, she says it can feel very lonely sometimes. "*Akeli hoon* [I'm alone]. I feel bad sometimes, looking for resources, wondering how to change people's understanding of movement-based work," she says, adding that though the anti-caste movement has more resources now, the community connect hasn't grown deeper. "We still have to organise ourselves, build more solidarities. Many are divided based on regional identity/sub-castes and that is not good for the movement."

She understands the importance of networks and has been involved in setting up two key initiatives. As co-founder of Dalit Human Rights Defenders Network (DHRDNet) and director of campaigns from 2018 to 2023, her work has involved everything from reports on caste crimes during COVID-19 and gender violence to advocating for a national Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe budget modelled along the lines of the one in Telangana. Post Hathras in 2020, when a 19-year-old Dalit woman was gang-raped by upper caste men and died from her injuries, Pradeep was inspired to start the National Council of Women Leaders, a network of women leaders from marginalised communities. Members include lawyers, journalists, academics and grassroots activists. Most of them run their own organisations, she says.

Overcoming hurdles

Pradeep has also expanded her circle of care to include Muslim and tribal women through the Wayve Foundation, an organisation she set up in 2018. "In four years, I've trained 120 women in 12 states," she says. 'Trained', in this context, also means Pradeep held their hand as they embarked on journeys of self-confidence and assertion. "I'm trying to see these women write their own stories," she says. They learn skills such as documentation, reporting, effective representation of their issues, public speaking, laws and the constitution, organising, advocacy and leadership. "They also learn how to reduce fear and heal pain," says Pradeep. She sees herself as an observer who doesn't impose her ideas. "I do a lot of community healing," she adds.

She asks participants to draw their 'river of life', a representation of their journey that highlights the blocks they faced and the milestones. Sharing stories is a cathartic experience, and many cry during this process. Pradeep understands their pain, she's had her share of it. "When somebody needs you, you have to be with that person. You don't have to judge," she says. "This is what you call movement-building."



***Priya Ramani** is a Bengaluru-based journalist and the co-founder of India Love Project on Instagram.*

GOREN BRIDGE

The best

East-West vulnerable, South deals

Bob Jones

Today's deal is from a team match played recently in Toronto, Canada. North did not want to jump in no trump at his first turn with two unstopped suits and good support for partner, so he bided his time with a one diamond response. South's rebid showed a balanced minimum and did not deny a four-card major. North simply raised to game.

At the other table, West chose to lead a spade and declarer had an easy time taking nine tricks. He actually made an overtrick when East had trouble discarding. At this table, West was Michal Klukowski, originally from Poland but currently living in Switzerland. Still in his 20's, Klukowski has a fist full of World Championships to his name. A case can be made that he is the best player in the world at this time.

Klukowski led a heart and East captured dummy's queen with his king. East shifted to the jack of diamonds, ducked by declarer, and continued with a low diamond to Klukowski's queen when declarer ducked this also. Had Klukowski continued diamonds the contact would have succeeded, but he accurately reverted to hearts. Declarer had to accept down one when the spade finesse failed. Very nice defense! Declarer could have made his contract by playing dummy's ace of hearts at trick one and then taking the spade finesse. Would you have found that play?

NORTH
♠ 6 5 4
♡ A Q 7
◇ 8 7 4
♣ A Q J 8

WEST
♠ K 10 8
♡ 8 5 4 3
◇ Q 9 3
♣ 10 7 5

EAST
♠ 7 3 2
♡ K J 10
◇ K J 10 2
♣ 6 4 3

SOUTH
♠ A Q J 9
♡ 9 6 2
◇ A 6 5
♣ K 9 2

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	Pass	1◇	Pass
1NT	Pass	3NT	All pass

Opening lead: Five of ♡

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

June 8 is celebrated as World Oceans Day

Berty Ashley

1 In 1520, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was sailing around the world when he encountered a very rough passage in Chile. The strait was later named after him. On the other hand, the calm conditions led him to name it the 'Peaceful Sea'. Translated from Latin, how do we know this huge body of water now?

2 The last ocean to be officially named was this one in 1999. It is the only ocean to surround a continent. Its name references the fact that it is exactly opposite to the place from which one could see the 'Great Bear' constellation. Which ocean is this?

3 This entire area was completely dry 5 million years ago. One small strait opened up, and it allowed the Atlantic Ocean to come pouring in at a rate 1,000 times that of the Amazon. It got completely filled in two years and became the vital water body linking Africa, Asia and Europe. Which waterbody is this?

4 The mountain with the highest dry prominence (total height) is Mauna Kea with 30,610 ft. as opposed to Mt. Everest's 20,032 ft. It is usually missing from lists because only 13,803 ft. of it rises out of the depths of the Pacific Ocean. Over which tourist destination does it loom?

5 Ancient map makers, when drawing up uncharted areas, used to inscribe in Latin 'his suit dracones'. This referred to the fact that these areas were unexplored and hence potential dangers could await. Almost all oceans had the inscription on them, which led to the sailors' myths of cryptids in these areas. What did sailors believe were in these waters?

Paul William Walker was passionate about marine biology, but he was more famous as a Hollywood star. (GETTY IMAGES)

6 The Somniosidae are 'sleeper sharks'. The slow-moving cartilaginous fish can reach over 20 feet and live up to 400 years. They achieve this longevity because of their slow metabolism, swimming in the frigid waters of the Arctic Ocean. What is their name, a reference to the largest island in the world where they are found?

7 In 1992, a Cargo container on the way to the U.S. from China overturned in the North Pacific and dumped its contents. This was 28,000 toys known as 'Friendly Floatees', which over the years have washed ashore in Hawaii, Alaska and Japan. What item is this that oceanographers are tracking to learn about ocean currents?

8 Paul William Walker was passionate about marine biology. He was a part of the National Geographic's *Expedition Great White* to tag and track great white sharks in the Pacific Ocean. Walker was, however, more famous for acting in a series of movies about street racing. Where would one have seen him onscreen?

9 There are more than 3 trillion trees in the world, and people usually think they are responsible for producing most of the oxygen on Earth. The fact is that more than half comes from the ocean. What are the tiny organisms that produce it, which are eaten by everything from shrimp to whales?

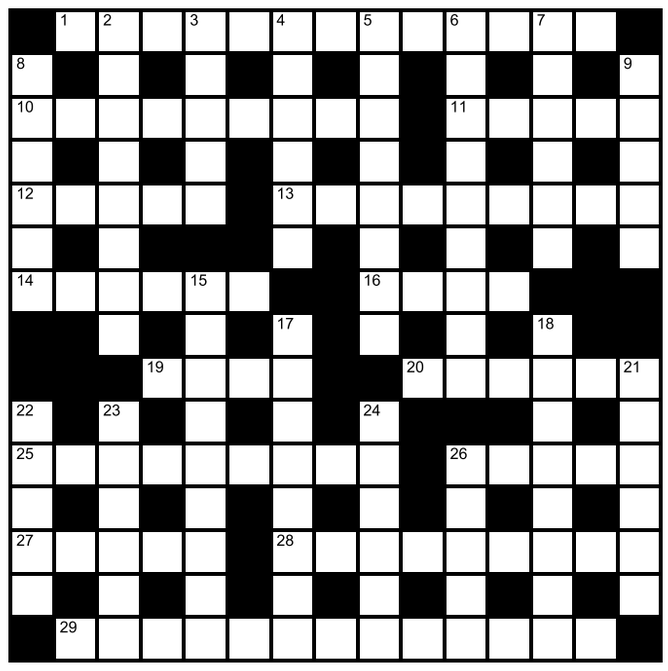
10 The Deepsea Challenger is a submersible which, on March 26, 2012, reached the bottom of the deepest point on Earth. Located in the Pacific Ocean, the point 'Challenger Deep' is 11 km deep. Who was the pilot, a film director known for water-themed movies?

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

Answers

1. The Pacific Ocean
2. The Antarctic (Southern) Ocean
3. The Mediterranean Sea
4. Hawaii
5. Sea monsters
6. Greenland shark
7. Rubber ducks
8. *Fast & Furious*
9. Algae
10. James Cameron

THE HINDU SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO.7 (Set by Afterdark)



Across

1 Hector determines VAT for commercial (13)
10 Promote tutor taking over emergency response team (9)
11 Established American University hires a lecturer (5)
12 Interpol arrived to arrest Siberian (5)
13 Extends short game after rest (break) and some tea (9)
14 Issues at peak, first person cheats heartlessly (6)
16 Even if the first character is replaced, it is always kiss (4)
19 Single son's game lacks power (4)
20 Appreciating a cathedra in Germany (6)
25 Short race arranged for group (9)
26 Climbed with dad falling off at location (5)
27 Having tea outside home in country (5)
28 Surprise; team name is misspelt outside zone (9)
29 Record mark, not top though suggested not having a presentation (13)

Down

2 Engineering learner cracks Devops and advances (8)
3 Herr Orel hides mistake (5)
4 After taking 5th wicket, hitters smack long (6)
5 Controlling young ox in ground at the front (8)
6 Ouch, mate's cut facial hair (9)
7 Purchased note for boy for nothing (6)
8 Floor-covering of vehicle has uneven pleats (6)
9 Blue? Almost used green (5)
15 Work together for a performance inside cottage (9)
17 Shrink in study with pamphlet (8)
18 Back at home to clear, even take out some vessels — becomes one less than a score (8)
21 Visitors at Germany by New York time in the U.S. (6)
22 As per sources, velocity of inter city express is express (5)
23 Party leader evicted by force (6)
24 State that husband and wife are in India from the beginning (6)
26 A male gamete cut out of spectrum (5)

SOLUTION NO. 6

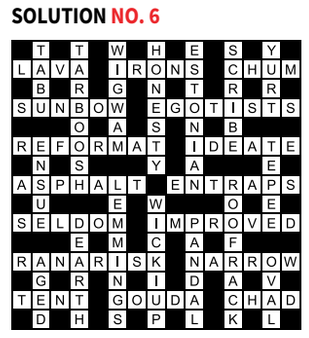


ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Tyranny of soaps

In a bid to pump up viewership, TV serials even show abuse and harassment of women

Viney Kirpal
vineykirpal@gmail.com

It's 2025, and yet prime-time Indian television continues to glorify cruelty against women under the garb of "traditional values". There is a deeply disturbing serial currently airing on a Hindi general entertainment channel, centred on the character of a kind, talented, and good-hearted young woman who is relentlessly humiliated because of her weight.

From the very beginning, she is taunted by her mother and grandmother for not being slim – despite their knowledge that a pregnancy-related medicine made weight loss impossible for her. Then follows not just casual body shaming, but sustained psychological torment, emotional degradation, and outright abuse by her in-laws – presented as a woman's duty to "adjust" and "win hearts".

A wealthy businessman arranges her marriage to his son, praising her *sanskaars*. But the groom, diabetic and secretly in love with the bride's model cousin, refuses to accept her. He avoids her, sleeps on the sofa, while his mother and aunt connive to frame her as clumsy and incompetent. They engineer her every mistake, then punish her for it – all the while she tries to prove her worth like the archetypal docile *bahu*, with a bowed head and a constant stream of apologies.

In a recent and deeply disturbing episode, she is forced to pose as a servant when a domineering relative visits. She is insulted, spanked with a rod, and nearly trapped into spending the night with a hired actor posing as her husband – all in a calculated scheme to drive her out. Yet, she endures this cruelty in silence, convinced that suffering is the road to love.

A new episode reached a new low. It humiliated not one, but two women, turning their pain into a farce for viewer amusement. A village girl chosen by the visiting grandaunt to marry the hero (unaware he's married) is pitted against the wife. The episode ends without justice or consequence – only the image of a woman broken by public mockery. One feels sick watching it.

Evil message

What are we teaching viewers – especially young women – through such shows? That if you are overweight or from a rural background, you must grovel for love and acceptance? That abuse by in-laws must be endured in the name of *parampara*? That silence, shame, and submission are signs of virtue? And what message are we sending to in-laws – that cruelty is permissible as long as it's cloaked in tradition?

This is not entertainment. This is emotional abuse disguised as morality. The show doesn't challenge oppression, but romanticises it. It rewards toxic behaviour, even painting abusers as concerned, well-meaning elders.

Worse, it normalises violence. Every humiliation the young woman suffers is presented as a test of character. But acceptance by whom? A mother-in-law who hires a man to seduce her daughter-in-law? A grandaunt who hits her with a rod for minor mistakes? These aren't "family trials" – they are criminal acts.

In the real world, any woman subjected to this level of abuse would suffer long-lasting psychological damage. But on TV, these acts are framed as character-building, as if pain is the price of acceptance.

If the show truly intended to critique social cruelty, it could have shown the young woman resisting, reclaiming her dignity, or getting in-laws who value her. The message could have been one of strength, not submission.

This show is a regressive, damaging portrayal of Indian womanhood. We cannot let mainstream media glorify abuse in the name of *sanskaars*.

As viewers and citizens, all should strongly protest the normalisation of familial abuse, and call for a boycott of such content.

Channels must rethink their programming. They cannot promote humiliation, cruelty, and misogyny as tradition.

The show must be stopped before it harms.

FEEDBACK

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

Cover story

The cover story was informative. ('What did you do this weekend?'; June 1) Often, we plan to do more over the weekends but end up doing nothing. That's the simple truth today.
Sravana Ramachandran

The cover story perfectly cued two sociocultural practices that have recently taken root: the corporatisation of everyday life and the social media-fication of personal lives. Through these dual lenses, everything we do now, including leisure, has to be measurable and performative. Wish we could go back to simpler times.
Irfan Syed

Magician of words

Only an extraordinary person such as Gulzar can win both the Dadasaheb Phalke award and the Jnanpith. ('Gulzar, unique and a paradox'; June 1) It looks like a paradox for ordinary people who dismiss even the possibility of such an achievement as an absurd and impossible proposition. To be talented is a blessing.
M.V. Nagavender Rao

The article captures the true spirit of Gulzar's poetic genius. It would not be wrong to call him a magician of words. Gulzar has been able to not only carve a niche for himself but has also transformed the cultural landscape of India. Even a layman could not go unimpressed from his literary output, and that is what sets him apart.
Vijay Singh Adhikari

Documenting history

To term India's Independence movement as non-violent is a grave injustice to the thousands of people who have died while migrating from Pakistan to India and vice-versa. ('Mahatma's pain'; June 1) Eminent historians have a duty to perform in recording all the facts of those days.
N. Sri Vrinda

MORE ON THE WEB

www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page

Agroforestry can transform rural futures
It presents a significant opportunity to protect biodiversity, but several challenges persist
Khushi Tivary

The organic imperative
Chemical fertilizers and pesticides leach into groundwater, streams, lakes and rivers
Gopakumar Menon

Spying on little birds
Tracking the lives of feathery bundles
Shiny Babu

Forgetting the formula
The labour of studying maths and science in college
Devika Lal

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.

Walking out of WhatsApp maze

Respond less, live more; peace of mind is worth more than a meme

Advitya Madan
advityanidhi14@gmail.com

ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

Having spent my formative years as a boarder and then a lifetime in uniform, I found myself brimming with social energy upon superannuation. Naturally, I was drawn into the sprawling, chaotic world of what is colloquially known as "WhatsApp University".

In no time, I was added to a plethora of groups: my class group, the school alumni forum, NDA squadron, course mates, battalion groups – the list grew longer than a soldier's kit list. I soon realised that hours of my day were vanishing into the black hole of endless messages, emojis, forwarded *gyaan*, and the predictable avalanche of good mornings.

Frustrated, I decided to seek help from an old comrade and dear friend, now settled in Patiala. His life post-retirement was a masterclass in balance. His office bore a blunt sign: "Mobiles Not Permitted Inside." He divided the 24 hours of the day into hours of physical fitness, work, and quality time with family. Over a well-earned Patiala peg, I asked him the pressing question: "How do you handle this WhatsApp madness?"

He smiled and shared what I now call the "Patiala Protocol" – his operating manual for staying sane in the age of digital deluge.

"It's not rocket science," he began. "I've confined all WhatsApp activity to a single hour – between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. – while I enjoy my tea with the family. That's it. No pressure, no guilt, and certainly no notifications pinging all day. I don't do ritualistic greetings – no 'good mornings', 'happy birthdays', or 'happy anniversaries' unless it's personal." He went on: "All group notifications are silenced. I never post or forward anything. I scroll quickly, pick what's useful, and move on. I avoid debates on politics, religion, or gender topics. I don't get offended by posts I disagree with. Why should I? My peace of mind is worth more than a meme." I left his home lighter in spirit and grateful for the clarity he offered. In navigating WhatsApp University, it turns out, the trick isn't to respond faster – it's to respond less, but live more.

The stamp of an age before digital pinged

The postal artefacts are miniature artworks and national symbols

Sajna Hameed
sajnahmd@gmail.com

Before instant messaging and emails, letters were carefully written, folded and sealed in envelopes, and often carried the scent of a familiar perfume or pressed flower. The humble postage stamp, though small, acted as a passport for these messages, marking their journeys.

Today, as digital communication prevails, stamps remind us of a slower, more meaningful time when sending a letter felt almost ceremonial.

Stamps are more than proof of payment; they are miniature artworks and national symbols. Each design tells a story, showcasing leaders, cultural heritage, or historical events. For collectors, stamps are treasures, while for senders, they serve as tokens of connection. In India, stamps often feature Mahatma Gandhi, rare birds, or vibrant festivals, offering a glimpse into the country's essence. Holding a stamp is like possessing a piece of history.

ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

Children from earlier generations may remember waiting in line at post offices, choosing stamps, and carefully affixing them to envelopes. Sending a letter took planning and patience. When the letter arrived, recipients often admired the stamp as much as the message, with some even preserving envelopes for their decorative stamps.

There was also something deeply democratic about stamps. Whether the sender was a schoolchild writing to a pen pal, a soldier sending a note home, or a lover pouring emotions onto paper, the stamp made every message equal in its journey. It bore witness to joy, grief, love, and longing – silently sticking to its duty without fail. The wear and tear it endured mirrored the emotions it accompanied, its edges often frayed by distance and time.

With the rise of digital communication, the use of stamps has sharply declined. Letters have given way to texts, emojis, and voice messages. The joy of receiving handwritten letters and collecting stamps is slowly fading from our collective memory.

(Clockwise from below) People of the Forest collectibles; the *khatwa* wall panel; Anavila store at Maison Isa; designs from the 'Sarmast' collection; a napkin from the home line; and designer Anavila Misra. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

MEMORIES FROM THE SUGARCANE FIELDS

Even as Anavila Misra's brand grows, most recently with a home line and an outpost in Hyderabad, her objective remains singular — co-existence with the homegrown

Aparna Roddam

A chance encounter with a small, raw rendering of a *khatwa* appliqué, a traditional art form from Bihar and Jharkhand, at a Crafts Council exhibition in New Delhi drew designer Anavila Misra to Dumka in Jharkhand, and a group of young girls who had trained in the embroidery. Bringing them into her fold and refining their craft over the last few years, Misra was keen to provide a peek into their world.

At the launch of her new collection, 'Sarmast', in Hyderabad, which also coincided with her brand's new outpost at Maison Isa, a boutique housed within The Leela hotel, a delightful *khatwa* wall panel of a forest stood as testimony to their collaboration. These were no textbook renditions or botanical illustrations. This was folklore, innocent and whimsical, with lush trees – identifiable by the way a branch curves, a leaf bends – sparrows pecking grains, a mother hen leading her chicks, and sheep and sprightly deer engaging with squirrels and peacocks. It was nature the way their forefathers saw it and rendered as art.

It is these stories of co-existence – the traditions of craft and culture, the lives built around it – that is the foundation of not just Misra's work, but her DNA. Her late father, born into a humble farming community, chose to study and not pursue agriculture, she shares. He went on to become an accoladed dairy scientist. "But as much as he left behind his village, the village never left him," she recalls. "We spent every vacation there playing in the sugarcane fields and stepwells. Morning walks with my father were slow and leisurely. He'd pick leaves and flowers, and delight in studying them."

Those walks now find permanent expression as a tattoo – a vividly inked image of Misra and her father Jagveer, strolling through sugarcane fields – on her forearm.

Unhurried, mindful, exploratory, it is a moment in time that she aims for in everything she does.

With curiosity leading the way

Misra is often referred to as a textile explorer, but that would be to minimise the time and thought spent on the process of innovating and reinterpreting what exists, in her own language. Her recasting of the linen sari is one for the annals. "In 2011, I set out to create a textile that was new. I had loved linen from the time I worked in menswear design, but it was not conducive to the flow and ease a sari required," she reminisces. "No one wove with linen yarn then, and my search took me to a weaver in West Bengal who wove linen stoles. So began my first collaboration."

Since then, linen has met *zari*, *jamdani* and more in its couture format, and been a staple in the boardroom for women leaders and CEOs. Fourteen years on, Misra has expanded her range from saris to occasion wear, contemporary, children's wear, and now home linen – all while staying committed to responsible creation and collaborative initiatives with artisanal communities.

Her curiosity to learn has also taken her across geographical locations, from Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Rajasthan, to her more recent sojourns in the Chettinad and Puducherry regions. And her travels have often informed her collections, including the 2024 'Payanam', which drew inspiration from southern architecture and textile, and 'ÉTÉ' that reflected the French and Tamil influence found in Puducherry.

People of the Forest

This season, Misra's love of collectibles (remember the dolls, Busa & friends, which came about as an attempt to make saris more relatable to children who are seeing less of the garment in their daily lives?) takes the form of hand-carved neem statues. They are a tribute to the Birhor, a nomadic tribe in Jharkhand. "The Birhor hold a repository of ancient knowledge of the forests. Although efforts have been made to bring them into the mainstream, they prefer their natural home," says Misra, who has been working with artisans from Jharkhand since the inception of her brand. British documentarian Michael York's work is another resource. Draped in sustainable textiles, the statues are a memory of a time that was slower, considerate and graceful.

In the city of Nizams

Hyderabad is Misra's next stop in her growth story. The new Anavila boutique opened with a showcase of 'Sarmast' (meaning "poetically intoxicated" in Persian). The hotel lobby was reimagined as a Nizam's salon with tables draped in luxurious velvet, and chandeliers, including one sprawled on the floor in casual irreverence, spilling light over fruits and models alike. "My research led me to the Basheerbagh Palace and two invitations made of textile and lace from [prime minister of hyderabad] Sir Asman Jahan Bahadur, for a dress-up party," she says. "Celebration and hospitality are integral to Hyderabad's culture, and from there came the theme for the show."

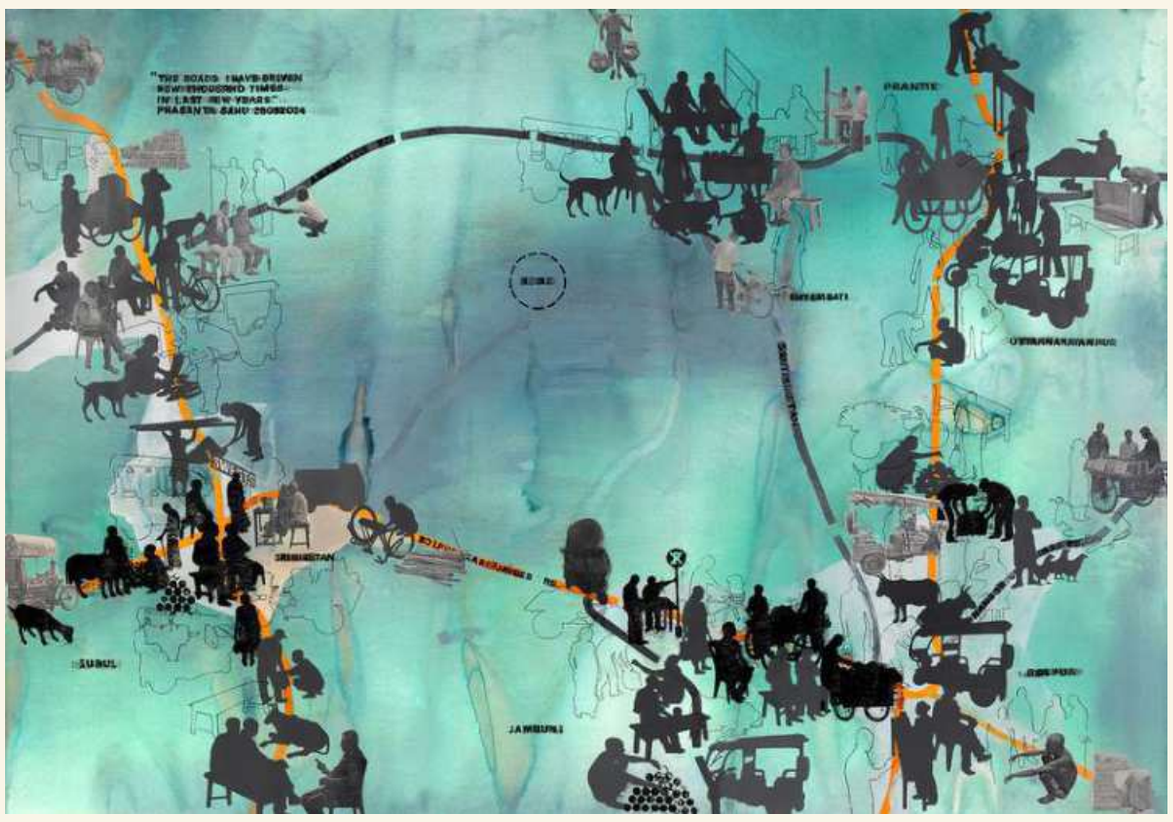
Her metallic drapes and dresses reflected a cross pollination of cultures, too. "Our research came from images of Nilufer Hanimsultan and Durrusehvar Sultan, Ottoman princesses who married into Hyderabad royalty," explains Misra, adding that floral motifs were borrowed from Rococo cornices and ceiling ornamentation of palaces such as the Falaknuma, while metallic *zari* linens and jewel toned silks were a nod to Baroque tapestries and brocades that furnished the spaces.

For a minimalist home

With the launch of her home line, Misra widens the body of her work while the soul stays aligned with her philosophy. Using *kala* cotton, linen, wool, and khadi, nature continues to play a central theme in the creations. "Spaces are a part of our self-expression," she believes. "We had been exploring our home line for a few years, but were unsure if Indian homes were ready for our minimalistic aesthetic. Post COVID-19, we found that had changed, and customers were looking for a quieter ethos." Her quilts, cushion covers, table runners, and napkins that sport *kathwa*, *sujini*, and prints echo this.

As she continues to travel and innovate, her goal is to introduce local culture, textile and craft into all her work. "What I've learnt is that one can integrate external influences without losing one's history and identity," she says. It will be interesting to see the Deccan and southern textiles and craft integrate further into her language.

The freelance writer is a professional in the design space.



(Clockwise from left) One of Sahu's artworks; *Tea Table Talk* installation; and the artist at work. (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

Prasanta Sahu's subaltern focus

Using shattered tea cups to line drawings, the artist's ongoing exhibition is an inquiry into ordinary lives and their extraordinary generational knowledge

Deepthi Sasidharan

A cherished time of the day in many parts of India is the convivial gathering around a cup of tea. In tea stalls, the chatter ranges from the raucous to the intimate and from the political to the personal, so when one beholds artist Prasanta Sahu's installation *Tea Table Talk*, it makes one pause.

Three-thousand commissioned terracotta cups, shattered, have been piled atop a table – familiar shards because a mud cup is what one discards when one is done with tea. Sahu, an ardent tea stall visitor, inscribes each terracotta piece with handwritten snippets of overheard conversations: "...but do not know he will...", "play a cricket match in the school field...", "... I love to gossip...". Miraculously, these confessions bring a single table alive with a thousand discarded conversations and sets the pace for Sahu's latest solo exhibition *The Geometry of Ordinary Lives*, which presents an artist's exploration presented through sculptural installations, paintings, video and sketches.

Cartographic approach

Sahu's penchant for art intersects firmly between research, inquiry and the human lived experience. And this new exhibition is hard-hitting and powerful not only because it sees an artist at his peak form with nearly four decades of practice, but also because it's a wonderful interaction with generational knowledge and its transmission. In our world that constanty seeks technological bridges, his art is a throwback to the beauty of what the human body and memory alone can create and transmit.

With a firm artistic expression shaped by his early career experience as a technical draftsman and a surveyor, his methodical, cartographic approach is deeply embedded in his work. It is also informed by his decade-long interactions with communities in his native, rural Odisha, and current place of residence, Santiniketan – from blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, and craftsmen to farmers and other "ordinary" people who he sees as dynamic repositories of knowledge. For example, in a quartet of line drawing sketches in the exhibition that traces tradesman work motions, the artist overlays his observations with a painting of a primary tool. Even as a trowel or screwdriver holds your attention, the tactile intimacy of a worker and his surroundings, and the taught skills in a tradesman's hands, are brought into sharp focus through Sahu's astute observations in drawings beneath.

Reframing artisanal labour

This exhibition presents a lens that is deeply familiar and yet is a refreshingly new spatial take on life studies and traditions. As the curatorial note puts it simply: in "understanding the fluidity of knowledge as it is practised, adapted, and transferred".

It is evident that Sahu constantly sketches, listens, photographs and videographs, and is always mapping an idea, a thought, a terrain or a landscape. One can't help but wonder what his archive looks like. A repository of the rural and suburban peoples and geographies of our times and perhaps also of a thinking artist of our times?

For those interested, Sahu presents here an engaging interplay between archival inquiry and ways of seeing 'ordinary lives'. It's an artist's silent tribute too, to a world of people who work with their hands, with skills taught from one pair of hands to the other, between generations, and a world that is threatened by the future of mechanisation and artificial intelligence.

The show is on till June 21 at Emami Art in Kolkata.

The writer is the founder-director of Eka Archiving Services.