

# tthaaastu

TRIDHAATU®

Volume 2 | Issue 2





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Dear Readers,

Thank you for your continued patronage and support as we welcome you to the sixth issue of Tathaastu. The magazine brings to you an interesting amalgamation of stories and we hope you will enjoy browsing through them.

We know buying a house is definitely one of the most complex and involved purchases in one's life and real estate market in India has grown by leaps and bounds. In order to make life little easier, we tell you how the internet is now offering people the ability to compare house prices hundreds of kilometres away and get benefits with ample choices along with lucrative offers.

This season take a dream trip to Dzongu, a town in north Sikkim that is inhabited by the Lepcha community. The sparsely populated place is a heaven for nature lovers with its beautiful mountains, dense forests, and pristine waterfalls. For food enthusiasts, we explore the Iranian cuisine that is vibrant, fragrant and rich in history. In our Skill section, we reveal how you can acquire management skills while learning the art of capturing life through the lens. For this issue's Special section, we celebrate former president A P J Abdul Kalam whose birthday was declared by the UN as the World Students' Day.

While the Art section in this edition showcases folk Madhubani painting, one of the oldest art forms from Mithila region of Bihar, in the Culture section we discover Chholiya, a dance form from Kumaon region, known as sword dance.

We have always been committed to support the efforts undertaken by various organisations to make this country a better place. Keeping that tradition alive, we bring to you Bombay Natural History Society – one of the leading organisations for nature conservation – that is serving as an inspiration to young nature lovers. In our Wellness section, we tell you how yoga combined with meditation can make you healthy and happy.

Lastly, get to know about the latest product launches, and DIY tips to make use of your vintage sarees by converting them into cushion covers for interesting home decor.

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions.



**TRIDHAATU CORE TEAM**

(From left) Yashodhan Sandu, Krishnan Muthukumar, Dhananjay Sandu and Pritam Chivukula

**In our Special section,  
we celebrate former  
president Abdul Kalam**  
whose birthday was  
declared by the UN as the  
World Students' Day



# LOST LAND OF THE LEPCHAS

Embark on a beautiful journey to Dzongu where you will be lured by the lores of the Lepchas, the original inhabitants of Sikkim

WORDS **RHUCHA KULKARNI**







Photo courtesy: Travel Gangtok

(Left) A view of Dzongu; (right) a bamboo bridge in Dzongu

A land of paradoxes welcomes you with warmth as you enter this humble hamlet, nestled without a care in a nook of north Sikkim, around 70 km from Gangtok. On one hand the richness of Mother Nature is on ample display – roaring rivers, snow-clad mountains and virgin air penetrates your conscience leaving you pining for more. On the other hand, the stark simplicity of the Lepcha tribes lures you into relishing the small joys of life, be it a warm sip of their customary millet drink called *Chee*, or an endearing song-and-dance celebration.

Dzongu is among the last preserved refuges of the indigenous folk of Sikkim, the Lepchas. Demarcated and designated for the community in the 1960s, this remote region is blessed with a burst of natural beauty unlike any other. The Mount Kanchenjunga or Khangchendzonga as it's called

#### INTERESTING FACTS

- The Lepcha customs and rituals exalt its local witch-doctors or 'boongthings', who are still seen practicing ancient animistic rituals
- A special permit is required to visit Dzongu as it is a reserved abode for the Lepcha community.

in local language, is revered as a holy deity by the Lepchas. This third largest peak in the world intimidates, yet calms you as its towering frame overlooks the surrounding mounts and plunging valleys. These dramatic landscapes are home to the Khangchendzonga National Park and Biosphere Reserve, a flourishing biodiversity hotspot.

The people of Lepcha community are a simple and hardworking folk with

agriculture being their major means of subsistence. Social structure is such that everyone, including children, is involved in household and on-field chores. Peculiar housing, made of stones piled upon one another and constructed without the use of metal dot the countryside. Truly, the Lepchas have mastered the art of living in harmony with nature.

Dzongu is a nature lover's paradise; the pristine climes, panoramic views and luscious greens tug at the chords of your heart and soul with aplomb. Let your voices drown in roars of falling waters at the Seven Sisters waterfalls, an half an hour drive from Dzongu. Or be carried away by the majestic plunges of froth at the Lingzya waterfall. Closer home is the Tingvong waterfall where a dip can refresh your mind and body. As the Lepchas are adept at





### HOW TO REACH

#### By Air

Fly to Bagdogra and hire a taxi to Dzongu via Singthem and Mangan (approx 5 hours)

#### By Train

Board a train to New Jalpaiguri railway station and then take a cab to Dzongu (approx 5.5 hours)

### BEST TIME TO VISIT

March to June



Photo courtesy: Travel Gangtok



(Top) A view of Kanchenjunga range; (above) A traditional Lepcha house; (right) A portrait of Lepchas

re-engineering nature's bounty, cane bamboo bridges of split bamboo welcome you at Passingdong, above the Tholung monastery.

For those awed by the varied way of living, a tour of the traditional Lepcha House Museum in Nampridkang is a must. This replicates the traditional housing architecture and customs of the Lepcha community through the artifacts on display.

Soak in the strong spiritual essence with a visit to the Tholung monastery, one of the oldest and most sacred monasteries of Sikkim. Identified as a holy site by the 4th Lhatsun, Kunzang Jigme Gyatso

around 1760 AD, it was the 5th Lhatsun named Pema Dechhen Gyatso who built it in 1789 A.D. The holy scriptures and ancient artifacts provide deep insights into the life of the age-old Lamas.

Have an insatiable craving for adventure? Head for a three-hour trek ahead of Passingdong through lush green meadows bounded with snow-capped mountains to arrive at the idyllic Lingthem village. Other blissful villages to roam around while soaking in the bucolic sights and sounds are Tingvong village and the twin villages of Sakyong and Pentong. Beliefs go that these twin hamlets hold the fabled sacred

**Soak in the strong spiritual essence with a visit to the Tholung monastery, one of the most sacred monasteries of Sikkim**

portal to Khangchendzonga. Indeed, as you gaze up at its golden slopes dazzling in the morning sun, the mountain seems to mock man's tiny, inconspicuous place in the larger scheme of things. ▲



# OF RICE, BREADS AND SPICES

Complex yet captivating, Iranian cuisine, even in its modern avatar, is a goldmine for a curious palate

WORDS **MADHULIKA DASH**



**W**hile travelling the world to find an alternate route to Asia for silk and peacock, the famous Herodotus went missing. Discovered years later by some travellers, the Greek historian confessed he was seduced by the lure of good Persian food. An investigation into the claim landed more Greeks to Persia, who eventually decided to settle there.

Such was the fame of Persian food (and cooks) that when Abbasid Caliphate came to power and ruled much of Middle East and parts of Spain, Portugal and North Africa, he only employed Persian chefs to cook for dignitaries and state guests. If historians are to be believed, the "good food" remained one of the secrets behind the dynasty's long rule.

It was during this time that Persia, which included modern day Iran, became a significant trade station on the Silk (Spice) Route for merchants and travellers, and developed a cuisine more evolved than rest of the world, albeit with one difference. Known for its unique culinary styles – even back then the Persian food market had dishes that were a mélange of sweet, spicy and the





(From left) Kabab Koobideh and Persian eggplant stew with beef

fragrant – it was a port that exported food inspiration to the rest of the world. For instance, the *kebab* and *pilaf* reached India with the Arab travellers, and the art of using milk in desserts led to the birth of Mexican Cajeta Flan and Tres Leche. Such has been their contribution to the world cuisine that today if you pick any dish from the world, the chances are the history will take you to Iran. The Iranian cuisine is a combination of several food cultures with vibrant flavour profiles and taste notes.

What you eat as part of the Iranian cuisine today has a distinctive stamp than others – and this isn't just in the flavours but also the way it is cooked, which is fascinatingly indigenous, with a history added to it.

Take the case of *nan-e sangak*. A traditional bread that's baked over hot pebbles lining the bottom of a wood-fired oven, leaving charred indentations on the loaf; it is a traditional accompaniment with stews and kebabs. While modern Iran has an affinity towards *lavash*, the bread made first by the Armenians, this coat-style oblong bread is often

served with *kabab koobideh*, minced lamb mixed with herbs as part of a communal meal. Another example of Iranian culinary ingenuity is the *pilaf*. Unlike the *pilaf* (*polov* or *palow*) that originates from India and rest of the world, the Iranian version is cooked and served differently. Like the *Shirin*

### Fesenjan is a sweet-savoury stew made of walnut, and pomegranate juice mixed with meat

*polow*, a festive dish studded with chicken, orange rind and pistachios. It is served with succulent ground beef kebabs seasoned with turmeric, cinnamon, and saffron. The softness of the rice is between the *kateh polo* and everyday favourite *Abkesh*, which has rice cooked similar to Italian pasta. In fact, *Tah Deeg*, a common rice preparation across Iran, uses a year-old parboiled rice cooked to the right degree of al dente texture so that it retains a hint of bite on

the inside. This rice is then cooked over a layer of *lavash* or potato slices placed in the bottom of the pan to form a crust.

Another Iranian delicacy is the *khoresh*. The word encompasses Iranian's love for stews. Often served alongside rice, kebab and breads, *khoresh* is a fine example of Iranian style of packing a range of flavours in one dish: from sweet to salty to aromatic. Some of the finer examples of *khoresh* are *Khoresh-e- Ghormeh-sabzi*, a stew of meat, vegetables and beans; *Khoresh-e-Gheimh*, a stew of meat, potato, tomato and split peas; *Ghormeh sabzi*, a rich casserole of lamb with herbs, dried limes and kidney beans; and the iconic *fesenjan* (*Khoresh-e-Fesenjan*). A specialty of northern Iran, *fesenjan* is a sweet-savory stew made of walnut, and pomegranate juice mixed with the meat of your choice. A vegetarian alternative to this is the *Mirza Ghasemi*. A Caspian region special, it is based on roasted skewered eggplant seasoned with garlic, tomato, turmeric, oil or butter, and salt – much like our *baigan bharta*, but includes eggs as a finishing garnish.





A cuisine built for every palate and culinary temperament, Iranian cuisine is high on dairy-free dishes as well. Two excellent examples of this are the *Kuku*, which is a bit like frittata, or a quiche, using chickpea flour in place of wheat; and the *âsh*, a rich, beany, vegan herb soup.

Known for its oldest street food culture, Iranian cuisine is packed with sweets and savoury dishes that give Iranian food the world connect and history too. Take the *Pashmak*, the traditional candy floss made with wheat flour and the *sholeh zard*, a saffron rice pudding made with water instead of milk. In fact, the Iranian ice cream – made of pistachios, fruit pulp and garnished with cream and nuts, is said to be the oldest in the world. The

*lavashak*, Persian-style fruit leather, is a farther cousin of *aam papad* in India, while the *Koloocheh*, soft bread stuffed with a filling of cinnamon, walnut and sugar, may have single-handedly laid the founding stone for puffs and *kulchas* across the globe.

Though a largely dry nation, Iran has over the time developed beverages that have more than made up for the lack of a good tippler; for instance, Iranian beer. This non-alcoholic malt beverage is a close cousin of the root beer – with the same fizz and punch of a real one. The other example is *Doogh*, a mint and herb garnished yogurt drink. And of course, there is the famous Irani *chai* – the black brew that led to the creation of tea houses and hookah bars in the Silk Route. ▲

## IRANI CHAI: THE RISE OF A NATIONAL DRINK

Coffee may have reached Iran first, but when it comes to the favourite all-day hot beverage today, it is tea that rules. The dark-than-merlot hue drink is a common sight through the streets of Iran, which is strewn with numerous *chaikhanehs*. A national drink today, tea during its first outing in Iran (then part of the Ottoman Empire) was seen more as a medicine. It became a people's drink in 1556 when intrigued by its balmy quality and ability to digest a good meal, the then mayor of Tehran in Qajar rule, Kashef Al Saltaneh travelled to India and worked there as a French labour to know the secrets of tea growing, and as a parting gift stole 3,000 samplings of Assam finest tea. Considered the father of Iranian *chai*, Kashef not only started the tea culture in Iran but also the ritual of enjoying an Irani *chai*. Tea in Iran is a dark, bitter liquor that is had with a sugar cube in the mouth. Brewed slowly in a samovar, the tea in fact is considered the real wine of Iran – that can be had anytime, even for a game of chess.

(Top) Vegetable pilaf; (below) grilled koobideh with vegetables and flat bread and fesenjan







# HOME CLICK HOME

How has the digital era affected the home-buying process? We find out

WORDS **KUNAL DOLEY**



One are the days when consumers would feel uncomfortable taking the online route to buy their dream homes. Traditionally used to working with local brokers, the internet is now offering people the ability to compare house prices hundreds of kilometres away, most of the times without even leaving home. This holds true for a vast country like India where the property market is estimated to be worth over \$121 billion, as per reports.

The logic for this change in perception seems to be simple. A single broker would have his own limited contacts, and he could have personal reasons for pushing a property. Online, you can get a holistic view.

Indian consumers are now not only researching properties online before buying, they are even making a further commitment by paying the booking amount. This seems to be the natural progression for buyers who are now younger, tech-

**A practical site visit and recce of the neighbourhood is a must while zeroing in on a home because seeing is believing**

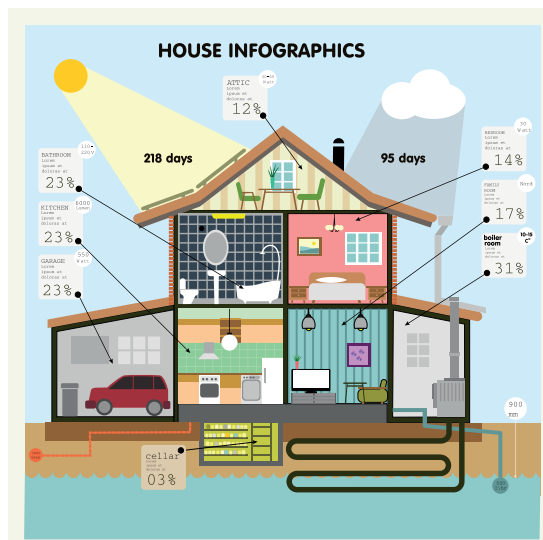
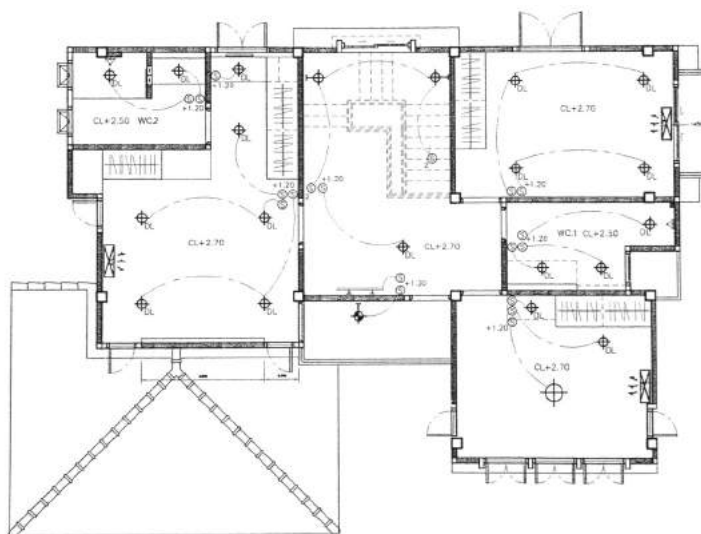
savvy and are seeking information and transparency when dealing with developers.

If we look at some data from Google, more than eight million people search for real estate information online in the country. Before zeroing in on a property, the internet-savvy consumer's in-depth research includes details of the developer, location, cost, and a lot more. The volume of real estate-related queries is growing at the rate of 35 per cent year-on-year, out of which about half the queries are made with the intent of a purchase.

Companies such as *Housing.com*, *CommonFloor.com* and *PropTiger.com* have been investing in technology and manpower to make house hunting easier. From virtual walkthroughs to 3D rendering of properties to facilitating site visits and handling documentation, these portals are making it easier for customers to choose property.

However, all said and done, a practical site visit and recce of the neighbourhood is a must while zeroing in on a home. This is because seeing is believing. Buying a home is probably one of the biggest financial commitments the buyer would ever make. Hence, nothing will beat a practical site visit and personal inspection.

While it may not be possible for a common man to comment on the quality of construction or materials used, deviations from the master plan can be spotted quite easily. The buyer should check that the brochure, blue print and the actual project are all in line.







Also, when a buyer regularly visits the site, it makes the builder feel responsible. Looking at the extra effort that the buyer is putting into the site, the builder will ensure that work is happening well and make an initiative to build effective conversations with you about the project.

Timely possession is often on the home buyer's priority list; regular visits to the site can help a buyer check the pace and progression of the construction. Along with the progress of construction, home buyers can look at a few other things such as the brands of materials used in the project.

The buyer can also inspect the amenities available at the project site. For instance, one can find out if there is a swimming pool or club house as mentioned in the layout plan.

Last but not the least, you should pay a visit to the project site for your own personal satisfaction, if not for anything else. After all, it is going to be a place you will call home, in the

### **Timely possession is often on the home buyer's priority list; regular visits to the site**

can help a buyer check the pace and progression of the construction

true sense of the term. When you visit the place often, you may also discover new ways to design and customise the space for yourself. You can also speak to the builder about any additional amenities that you might need like fixing an extra grill gate at the entrance for more safety or getting a wardrobe fitted on to the wall or changing the location of the bathroom wash basin.

The virtual space is making the dream of buying a home a reality for millions of urban Indians. ▲



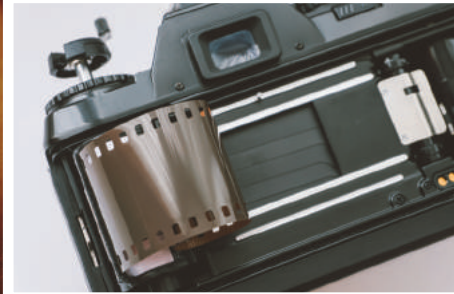




# FOCUS ON THE RIGHT GOALS

Acquire key management skills as you learn to master the art of capturing imagination





"I think a photography class should be a requirement in all educational programs because it makes you see the world rather than just look at it." This anonymous quote says a lot about this creative pursuit, one which can teach you some valuable lessons in management. The foremost being to observe situations in depth so that you get the grasp on the situation and take smart, informed decisions.

Besides, you also learn discipline, patience, resilience and creativity which will stand you in good stead in the professional sphere as well. Even if it's not your "talent", with hard work and a good guide, photography can be learned and mastered. It's not only about capturing images. Photography is about understanding the processes of light, aperture, shutter, focus, angle, subject, object, motion, direction and frame. This might sound easy, but it is only when these elements come together perfectly that you get a good photograph.

## DISCIPLINE

The most important skill photography teaches is discipline – to click at the right time. You may be able to capture one great picture after a thousand random clicks, but to make every click a great one requires effort. And with the advent of new

technologies in cameras, you need to constantly upgrade yourself. As a leader, you need to be in touch with the latest to be able to guide your subordinates well and work on fresh and effective strategies. Discipline also teaches us that there are no shortcuts in life and success can only





**Creativity comes gradually – once you get the hang of the camera and learn what kind of frame you need**

be achieved by learning the skill the right way. Remember, there are no free lunches in life.

### **CREATIVITY**

Just like in any profession, creativity comes gradually – once you get the hang of the camera and learn what kind of frame you need. The frame depends upon the subject of photography and you learn it as you keep experimenting. As you understand how your subject interacts with the surroundings, you start gauging the light required. The minute details that you wish to capture require practice, and clicking a lot of photographs helps you realise what all needs improvement.

### **PATIENCE**

This is one skill that actually helps you become a better photographer, and manager. You need to learn to frame your subjects, their backgrounds, the light, the angle, or the story you want to tell. Since all these things don't come automatically or at the same time, you need to imbibe the essential virtue of patience. While at it, trust your instinct even though you might not fully understand the reason behind



(Top) A young photographer taking photos at the sunset

it. Sometimes intuition can trump reasoning and you might end up clicking a masterpiece.

### **RESILIENCE**

Photography helps you learn resilience. Be it getting that perfect shot or achieving the business target, it takes a lot of effort and repeated labour, and that may leave one dejected on several occasions. But one has to keep trying.

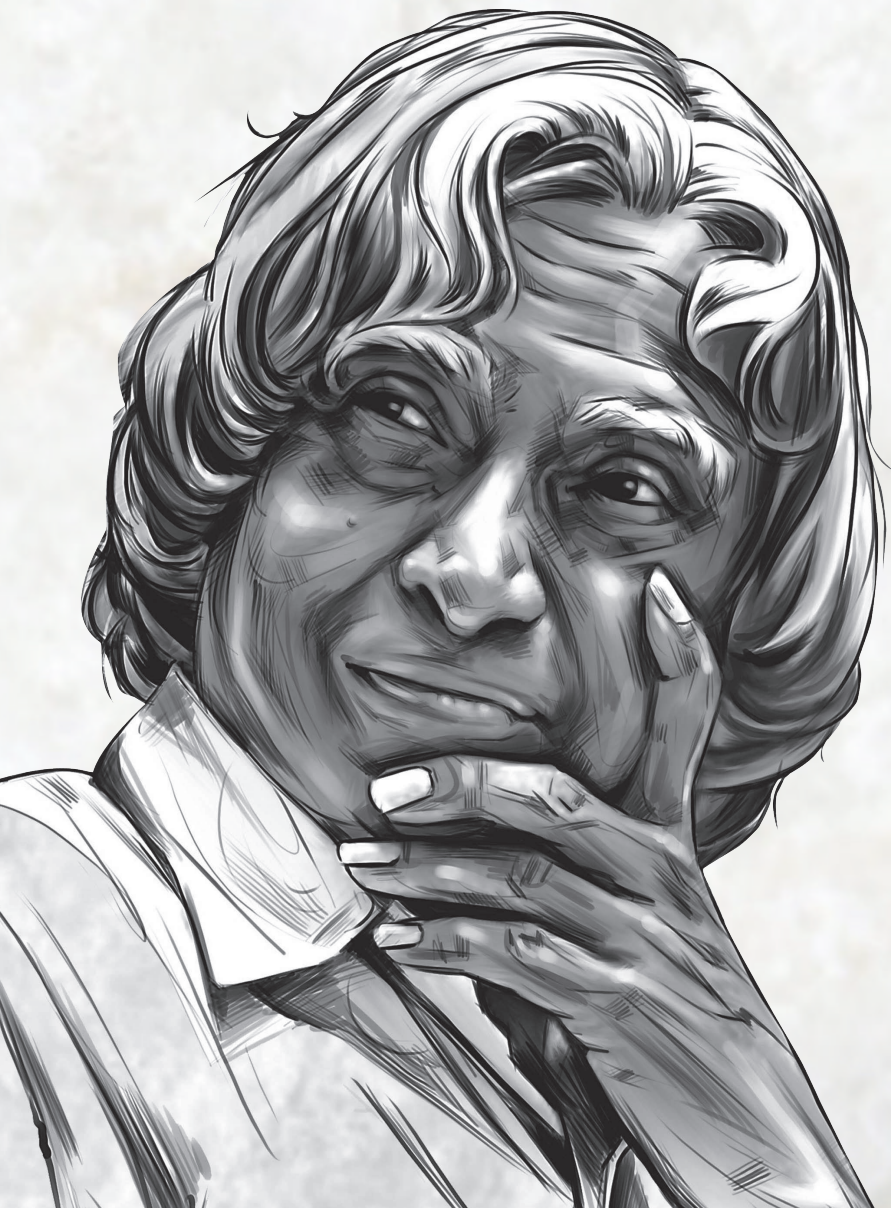
### **FOCUS**

Focusing on the subject for hours and patiently waiting to bring his concept on the paper is essential for a photographer. Managing a project requires similar commitment and a targeted, clear approach. Only then are the goals achieved – be it a photograph or the accomplishment of an important business target. And then, every endeavour seems worthwhile. ▲



# IN MEMORY OF THE NATION'S INSPIRATION

As a mark of honour to our 11th President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the UN declared his birthday on October 15 as "World Students' Day" in 2010. And recently, the ICSE board made his biography a part of their syllabus. Here's our tribute to the Missile Man of India who always wanted to be remembered as a teacher



**B**orn on October 15, 1931, Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam was raised in the small town of Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu. His father was a boat owner and imam at a local mosque; his mother a homemaker. Despite his humble origins, Dr Kalam went on to attend St. Joseph's College in Tiruchirappalli, affiliated to University of Madras, where he graduated in physics in 1954. After graduation from Madras Institute of Technology in 1960 in aerospace engineering, he joined the Aeronautical Development Establishment of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) as a scientist.

He earned many honours during his tenure here. Vikram Sarabhai, a renowned space scientist, headed a committee here called INCOSPAR (The Indian National Committee for Space Research) of which Dr Kalam was a part. He also visited NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia and Goddard Space Flight Center in





Green Belt, Maryland in 1963-64. In 1969, Dr Kalam was designated as project director of India's first Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III) at Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). This project helped in successfully deploying the Rohini satellite in near earth orbit in July 1980. He also worked on the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). He was intimately involved in India's civilian space programme and military missile development efforts.

He was the Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister and Secretary, Department of Defence Research & Development from July 1992 to December 1999. During this tenure, Dr Kalam spearheaded India's Pokhran-II nuclear test, in 1998. This was the first nuclear test since the original nuclear test India did in 1974. His role in developing missiles under the mission including Agni – an intermediate range of ballistic missiles, and Prithvi – the tactical surface-to-surface missile, and the development of Launch Vehicle Technology earned him the title of "Missile Man of India".



**Dr Kalam won many prestigious awards including Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour in India**

In November 2001, Dr Kalam took up his passion and became professor, Technology & Societal Transformation, at Anna University, Chennai. He went on to being elected as the 11th President of India on July



(Clockwise from top) Dr Kalam with students, a sand art in honour of the late president, Dr Kalam with former South African president Nelson Mandela

25, 2002, and due to his hard work and efforts, he came to be known as the "People's President". He was also the recipient of many prestigious awards including Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour in India.

On July 27, 2015, Dr Kalam died of a cardiac arrest while doing what he loved most – interacting with students and imparting his knowledge and experience to them. He was delivering a lecture in Shillong's Indian Institute of Management. His sudden demise left the nation in tears. But his teachings continue to live in the heart and mind of every Indian. ▲





# CONSERVING NATURE

One of India's leading non-government organisations, Bombay Natural History Society, has been promoting the cause of conservation for more than 130 years

WORDS **BILWADA KALE**

It was 1883 when eight men gathered to discuss a topic that bound them all – wildlife. Little did they know that their interest and meeting would give India one of its best and oldest organisations engaged in nature conservation activities, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), which was established on September 15 the same year. This group met regularly to discuss and exchange ideas as being hunters they took note of the diminishing wildlife. Their journey from hunters to conservationists is what made

BNHS one of the leading conservation organisations in the sub-continent.

As scientific study gained pace, BNHS became a hub for wildlife conservation activities with an increasing number of people joining the group. The members of the Society undertook field surveys, contributed to the collection and curating process, and analysed results to write scientific notes and papers.

BNHS collaborated with stakeholders like local government bodies and

*maharajas* to conduct surveys and scientific studies. People like Dr Salim Ali began conducting bird surveys – funded by *maharajas* – to document birds found in that particular region, thus beginning the process of bio-diversity documentation. Since then the Society has worked on the conservation of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and marine life too. BNHS expanded to establish field stations at Point Calimere in Tamil Nadu, Nagpur in central Maharashtra, and Ratnagiri, with its head office, Hornbill House, in Mumbai.

BNHS also conducted studies at 22 aerodromes to come up with solutions to reduce bird strikes as they can be a significant threat to the aircraft safety. The Society also conducted a study on bird migration as it is instrumental in understanding the route birds take while taking off from one place to arrive at another destination. This information is useful during health scares like bird flu. Recently, after the death of migratory birds at Delhi zoo due to bird flu, experts from BNHS along with the authorities sanitised the Sultanpur National Park near Delhi as a precautionary measure.

Nature conservation initiatives are incomplete without involving local communities who are the most affected. BNHS works closely with communities in diverse areas on different conservation arenas, like in Pench National Park and Tadoba Andhari Tiger Project for conserving tigers and generating alternate livelihood options for locals. Amur falcon, a migratory bird which halts in the northeast region during its long flight from Mongolia to Africa, was being killed in large numbers for its meat. BNHS joined hands with local communities and other non-governmental organisations to stop the mass killing of these birds in Nagaland and protect the specie.

Nature's best clean-up masters, the vultures, have also faced the threat

## **BNHS conducted studies at 22 aerodromes to come up with solutions to reduce bird strikes**

of extinction due to excessive use of a painkiller drug called diclofenac for cattle. Working closely with locals, the government and policy makers, BNHS succeeded in convincing the government to ban veterinary use of diclofenac, thus giving vultures a new lease of life. The trend to work with policy makers was set early in time with the declaration of Keoladeo National Park on the recommendation of BNHS. Additionally, BNHS played a major role in the drafting of Wildlife Protection Act and the Project Tiger.

BNHS has always engaged common people in various ways for the nature conservation activities. The Society reaches out to people through nature trails and camps, nature education, magazines and books, and conservation through community participation. The concept of nature trail – started in 1924 – aims to provide field experience to people while helping them understand nature. Such trails are now conducted at places around Mumbai while nature camps are organised across India and in countries like Thailand and

Sri Lanka. Education through nature started with the establishment of Conservation Education Centres in Mumbai, Delhi and Nagpur.

The Hornbill House in Mumbai is a hub of activities with members, researchers and students across age groups reaching out to BNHS for referencing in the library and collections department for their research. The priceless collection of old books, lithographs, photographs and specimens collected over the years make the library at BNHS one of the best resources available. The souvenirs and environment-friendly products designed by BNHS are also popular among nature lovers, the proceeds from which are used for nature conservation activities.

BNHS' 133 years of nature conservation and wildlife protection serve as an inspiration to young naturalists and nature lovers. The organisation still works on the support and motivation provided by members young and old. The road to conservation is a long one and we can never traverse it alone! ▲



Picture courtesy: Bilwada Kale





# MADHUBANI: THE ART OF PAINTING TREASURES

This folk art form showcases Mithila's rich visual culture and the talent of the artists

WORDS **AKANKSHA JAIN**

India is dotted with rich heritage and each region depicts a different culture and a tradition. Since time immemorial, traditions in India have been passed on from one generation to another, which carries the legacy forward with improvisation and great respect.

One such tradition that has been passed on from women to their daughters is folk painting, especially Madhubani painting, considered the language of womenfolk.

Madhubani paintings can be seen adorning the living rooms of several

houses, lobbies of some famous hotels and even draped around women on sarees.

Madhubani painting comes from the cow belt region of India, Bihar, where women and men are seen immersed in creating beautiful intricate patterns

on various surfaces with nibs, brushes, fingers and even match sticks.

As per the legend, Madhubani paintings, also known as Mithila art that has its origins in Nepal too, were used by King Janak to decorate his kingdom on the occasion of his daughter Sita's wedding. Madhubani, an important part of the Mithila culture and community, is also known as *likhiya* (writing).

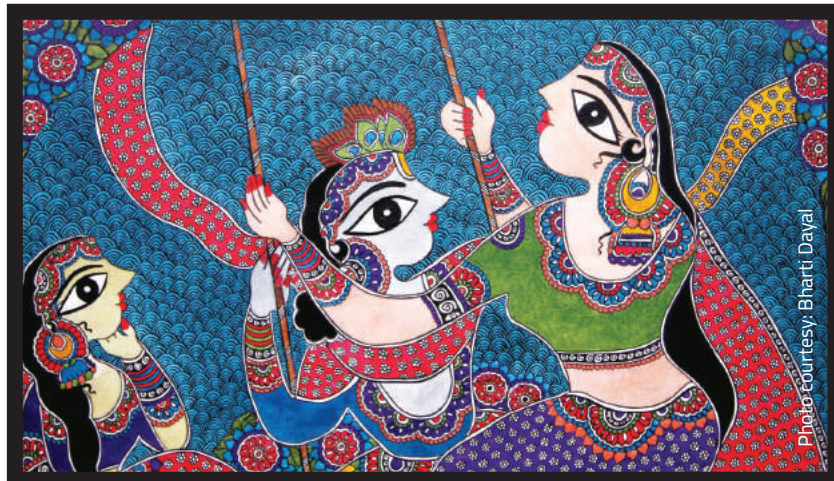
In the earlier days, Madhubani, which derives its name from 'honey' and 'wood', was used to draw different forms of gods, goddesses, flowers like lotus, fish, bamboo groves, birds, and snakes as well.

Once only painted on paper, mud houses or on bark of trees and wood, today Madhubani paintings can be seen on canvas, cushion covers, utensils and even bangles too.

One of the distinctive features in the Madhubani paintings is the use of sun and moon as it is believed they bring joy and prosperity to the lives of people. Hence, Madhubani art was carried out inside the houses as well.

Madhubani art can be divided into five styles – *Bharni*, *Katchni*, *Tantrik*, *Godna* and *Gobar*. In the 1960s, women from upper castes indulged only in the first three forms of the painting style. The colours that dominate the paintings are red, green, blue and black as they create beautiful patterns on light brownish surface.

The paintings became world famous when artefacts of these painting emerged during a massive earthquake in Bihar in 1934. Before that it was just a domestic activity, done by people for personal use. As the walls tumbled during the earthquake, the paintings were seen by the British and the



### Madhubani became world famous when artefacts of these painting emerged during an earthquake in Bihar in 1934

then in-charge William Archer was so impressed with the art form that he took the paintings to London. Today, you can spot the paintings at London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

Apart from Archer, a French novelist Yves Vequad also did extensive research and made a documentary on 'The Women Painters of Mithila'. Many other foreign-based artists have been involved in making these paintings famous and providing global recognition. Today, Madhubani art is known as the '*ratna* of Bihar'.

Madhubani style of painting has received international acclaim as well. The Ford Foundation has been associated with Madhubani painting for a long time. Japan has also shown a keen interest in Madhubani

paintings, because of the efforts of Tokio Hasegawa, who established the Mithila Museum in Tokamachi. Here, nearly 900 Madhubani paintings are exhibited on a regular basis.

Today, Madhubani painting is not only about depicting icons of Hindu mythology and nature, it has taken a contemporary twist with innovative icons and figures being painted on vases, scarves, dresses, bags and a lot more. ▲



A Madhubani painting of an Indian woman



# CLICKING IN THE WILD

Usha Harish, an Indian based in East Africa for the past 8 years, loves to capture the emotions of animals in their natural habitat. She talks about her love for wildlife photography and translating those images into a story

AS TOLD TO DISHA GANJOO

**T**his self-taught photographer is an avid traveller, and loves wildlife and nature. Beautiful colours, animal patterns and animal behaviour intrigue her most. Currently based in Kenya, she is working on bringing out the best from Africa's preserved wildlife and birdlife. Usha Harish has been an official photographer for the Indian High Commission in Uganda since August 2014, and was awarded the East African Wildlife Photographer of 2016 by the East African Wild Life Society.

**You are an accountant-turned-photographer. What inspired you to take up photography?**

I was born and raised in southern India, surrounded by greenery, nature and wilderness. However, back then the focus was to make a career in some good discipline and I chose accounting. Despite having great interest in photography, it was parked in the name of a 'hobby' to be dabbled with during holidays. But this changed when I moved to Kenya with my husband in 2008.

Something within me changed forever during my first trip to Masai Mara. I realised my passion for photography, nature and wildlife. I began to explore, first Kenya, and then Uganda. My relentless love for wildlife and photography grew as I ventured afield to Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, and India for several wildlife and photography safaris.

**How difficult is it to click animals in different moods?**

My experience of being in the wild





and various encounters with the animals have helped me understand their behaviour. I like to tell a story in every photograph, whether it's a grumpy elephant, an angry lion, a vulnerable impala, or a mischievous monkey. Capturing emotions in humans and animals are similar in some sense, except that in the wild, it is unpredictable. An understanding of the animal's behaviour and patience helps me get the right photograph.



### **Do you fear the unpredictability of animals?**

The wild will always remain wild. However, with time you begin to understand the behavioural cues of the birds and animals. There are instances when I begin the photoshoot with butterflies in my stomach. But I enjoy the thrill and adventure the experience brings and relish it when I am able to capture the moment the way I want. Once I encountered a full grown silverback gorilla at an arm's distance. It was intimidating but somehow I kept my calm and slowly clicked pictures. Another time a cheetah jumped right onto the top of my vehicle. I was only a couple of metres away. I was shaking initially but in a few seconds, I calmed down and started clicking the big cat.

### **Any photography preferences?**

I have a special liking towards black and white images; I prefer clicking animals in their habitat. Every wild animal is beautiful, be it a warthog, a hyena or a hippo. What classifies them is their size, structure and features. An image devoid of colours brings out that characteristic in an animal. But for my bird photography, I love to add colours to the pictures.

### **How is photographing for official events different from wildlife photography?**

As a wildlife photographer I enjoy the unpredictability. I have learnt to be quick with my reflexes to capture the moment and to play around with the natural light. In an official event, the approach is different as a plan is chalked out. In wildlife photography one has to have an open mind, luck

and patience as it's all about "lighting and sighting".

### **What are your future plans?**

I live for the moment. I am happy to have gained different experiences in life. From a Chartered Accountant I became a photographer, and now I am trying to be a successful mom to a 7-year-old. I am trying to increase awareness of wildlife conservation through social media, conservation project photoshoots, exhibitions and photo tours. I am happy that my work has been noticed and inspired others to be aware of different animals.

### **Apart from photography what makes you instant happy?**

I enjoy being with children, and their innocent pranks make me instant happy. I also feel happy when I listen to Carnatic music on the violin. ▲





# FOR A CALMER YOU

Practicing meditation as a part of your yoga session helps you get a peaceful mind, improve overall fitness, relieve stress and make the journey called life happier and more fulfilling

**Y**oga, the ancient physical and spiritual discipline, is being practiced from the time immemorial. Today, it's not just confined to Indian homes, but has also become one of the most practiced forms of exercise and therapy abroad as well because yoga shows us the way to live a healthy and happy life.

Yoga, though already popular among foreigners for a long time, became an international event after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 suggested that June 21 be declared as 'International Day of Yoga', with the aim of "freeing the universe from stress and spread the message of love, peace, unity and goodwill".

Yoga, now considered an important holistic regime for the mind and the body, does not limit itself to *asanas* or the physical practice. It must not be practiced for obtaining flexibility. Apart from the physical activity, yoga is about gaining energy, to wake up and be aware of your mind and body, improve posture, alleviate anxiety and depression, increase blood flow, boost metabolism, improve balance, and help calm the mind to handle emotions well.



A statue of meditating Buddha

Yoga has also been declared as a useful way to cure diseases and ailments like headache, fever, flu, asthma, back pain, controlling blood sugar, hypertension, indigestion, depression, and liver problems. If practiced regularly, yoga helps keep many health problems at bay.

However, when one combines yoga with meditation, the results are more beneficial as then it controls your mind and soul along with the body. It promotes better habits in one's life.

In fact, meditation, which means 'the act of focusing your mind' is regarded as one of the main aspects of yoga and it must be considered necessary to meditate after practising *asanas* as it helps delve deep into our own self. Meditation guides us to subtler aspects of life, our own being, and help us

experience joy and prosperity. Meditation must become a way of life where your mind is free of scattered thoughts and patterns, and other distractions. It helps us achieve mind and body connection.

Initially, you might find it difficult to meditate as you sit in one pose and a barrage of thoughts cross your mind. But practicing it often can help you get desired results. Honing the art of meditation requires patience and skill. Trying to be mindful of the present moment and not letting thoughts about your past and future distract you, help you streamline your attention.

Yoga and meditation practiced together work as a healing therapy to provide you a sense of intense relaxation as meditation being one of the five principles of yoga enhances the other four – exercise, diet, breathing, and relaxation.

During yoga one is preoccupied with their bodies, but meditating for a while after physical activity helps you open your heart, have a balanced and calmer mind, and know and control on how your mind works. It also helps you untie the knots in your heart and mind. ▲





# SWORD DANCE OF KUMAON

Dating back to over a thousand years, Chholiya has its roots in old-day marriage rituals. This dance form is said to protect the newlyweds from evil spirits and demons

WORDS DISHA GANJOO



Picture courtesy: Lokesh Bisht

Owing its origin to the martial arts of Kumaon, *Chholiya* – a sword dance – is mainly performed by the Rajput community of Kumaon region in Uttarakhand. Dating back to the 10th century, *Chholiya* has its origin in the warring Khasiya kingdom of Khandesh where weddings were performed at the point of swords.

In earlier days, Kshatriyas would accompany the king to protect him from enemies. Due to the power and authority wielded by the king, the Kshatriyas could scare the girls from and around the villages and marry them forcefully. All this authority and fear came from the sword. So, in contemporary performances of *Chholiya*, this weapon symbolises fear. Over time, the concept of forceful marriages diminished, but the tradition of dance continued. People now believe it to be an auspicious dance form which protects newlywed couples from evil spirits and demons. Perhaps this is one reason why *Chholiya* has more grandeur to it than other folk dances of the region.

The *Chholiya* dance is performed by 22 men – 8 of them are sword

dancers while the other 14 are musicians. This royal dance of swords and shields is beautifully paired with different kinds of bass instruments like *turi*, *nagphani* and *ransing*, as well as percussion instruments including *dhol* and *damau*. Earlier used to boost the morale of the troops, these instruments now complement the grace of *Chholiya*. Perfectly synchronised with the music, the dance is characterised by jumps and turns of the body as the dancers showcase their sword-fighting feats.

*Chholiya* is performed in traditional Kumaoni attire. The costumes resemble the ones worn by ancient martial warriors who inhabited the Kumaon region – a white *churidar pyjama*, a *taanka* (turban) on the head and a long *chol*. The faces of the dancers are covered with sandalwood paste and decorated with vermilion. Armed with the swords and brass shields, it seems as if the artists are getting ready for a battle. Accompanied by war-like music and a huge red flag with animal symbols on it, the dancers try to convey fear, joy, awe and wonder through their bold use of eyes, eyebrows and shoulders.



**The dancers try to convey fear, joy, awe and wonder through their use of eyes, eyebrows and shoulders**

There are various forms of *Chholiya*, differing from each other in terms of the movements. *Bisu Nritya*, *Saraanv*, *Rann Nritya*, *Veerangana*, *Chholiya Baja*, *Sarankar*, *Shauka Shaili* and *Paitan Baja* are the different kinds of *Chholiya* popular across the Kumaon region – in Pithoragarh, Champawat, Bageshwar, Almora and Garhwal.

Tradition is kept alive in the sword feats, music and symbols of *Chholiya*. And most importantly, through the specially trained Rajput dancers whose profession is not dancing, it is the rarity of fine swordsmanship. ▲





## FIRST DRIVE

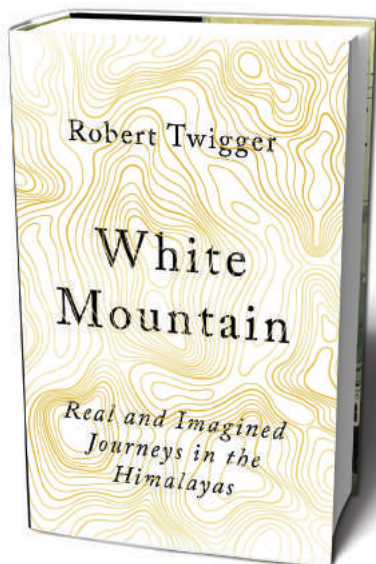
## TOYOTA FORTUNER

Toyota brought in the new Fortuner, with a sleek and edgy design. Engine options include a 2.8-litre turbo diesel making 177 PS and 420 Nm (450 Nm for the AT version) and, for the first time in the Fortuner, a 2.7-litre naturally-aspirated petrol making 166 PS and 245 Nm. Diesel-powered variants are equipped with either a six-speed manual transmission (MT) or a six-speed automatic transmission (AT), while the petrol variants use a five-speed MT or a six-speed AT. Four-wheel-drive is available only in the diesel variants. Safety kit includes ABS, EBD, seven SRS airbags, vehicle stability control, and seat belts with pretensioners in the front row. Prices begin at INR 25.92 lakh for the petrol variants and INR 27.52 lakh for the diesel variants (all prices ex-showroom Delhi). ▲



## BOOKWORM

## WHITE MOUNTAIN BY ROBERT TWIGGER



The Himalayas are home to Buddhists, Jains, Muslims, Hindus, shamans and Bonposa. People travel to the Himalayas for a dream journey, a pilgrimage, wars and expeditions, hunting and a spiritual experience. British author Robert Twigger, in his new book "White Mountain" unravels some real and imaginary journeys as he explores the seismic history of the Himalayas. He is fascinated by the mountains as his father was born in a Himalayan hill resort. As he follows a meandering path across the Himalayas, he seeks out the Nagas who helped his grandfather build a camp for Allied soldiers

near Imphal during the 2nd World War. Twigger leaves no mountain path untouched in his book as he writes a fascinating and surprising journey of the Himalayas – part of a vast mountain belt that stretches halfway around the world from North Africa to the Pacific Ocean coast of Southeast Asia.

Each chapter opens with a proverb and mentions stories from mountaineers, mystics, pundits and prophets. Brief and unexpected excursions of Twigger's own past make the read interesting and entertaining. ▲

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

# THALASSA

This season welcome the Greek taverna with a big heart as Goa's iconic restaurant Thalassa brings the smell of the sea and the Goa vibe to Mumbai.

Located at 21st street, Khar, this restaurant is Thalassa's owner and head chef Mariketty Grana's foray into the maximum city. The Mumbai restaurant will give you same signature warmth and happiness-on-a-plate so that you do not miss Goa.

Thalassa has been built in a sprawling yet intimate space, its design and ambience with its classic white and blue decor, vintage terrazzo flooring and traditional music will make you feel like you are in Greece. Canopied with bougainvillea,



nestled away from Mumbai's chaotic pace, is a courtyard where time slows down over food and wine. There is a cellar named after Dionysus – the god of wine.

A well priced menu encompasses traditional Greek comfort food, healthy vegetarian selection and

delicious desserts. The menu is divided into themes like dips and appetisers, salads, grill and rotisserie, souvlaki and gyros and desserts. You can club your food with heady range of wines and signature cocktails like the Mykonos Blue, Tropical Storm and Poseidon's Elixir. ▲

## DIY REUSING YOUR OLD SAREES FOR HOME DECOR

A lot of our outfits get packed and never get to see the daylight again. Silk sarees are one of those items that occupy closet space and are difficult to part with. We tell you how you can transform old sarees and display your creativity by converting them into cushion covers.

All you need is some patience, and these steps:

1. Shortlist your favourite saree, measure your cushion pad and add 3cm to each measurement to allow

for 1.5cm seam allowances.

2. Pin the cushion front and back together; tack 1.5cm in from the sides, round 3 sides and 4 corners, leaving a gap on one side. Sew the panels, secure thread ends, and remove tacking.

3. You can add motifs or borders of sarees to cushion covers for a designer look.

4. Turn the cushion cover right side out, press and insert cushion pad. Using a needle and matching thread, stitch the fourth opening to close. Your cushion covers are ready! ▲





now in fitness

## WORKOUT AT HOME

### LifeSpan E2i Elliptical Cross Trainer

For those whose office hours do not leave them with the luxury of visiting a gym regularly, we bring to them an option to workout at home. Try LifeSpan E2i Elliptical Cross Trainer which helps you do cardios and focus on toning the body.

A solid metallic construction, this cross trainer can be used for popular fitness exercises while it gives you the feeling of working in a gym. The best part is that this cross trainer helps you get full-body workout without troubling your knees or putting stress on your joints. Its integrated core balance technology helps in injury prevention and the advanced technology also provides you with the right calculations on the amount of pressure exerted by your body. Correcting your imbalances thoroughly, LifeSpan E2i Elliptical Cross trainer gives you the overall toning and emphasis that you have been missing out on not having a personal trainer. ▲



now in accessories

## CELEBRATING WITH SILVER GIFTS

Frazer and Haws has been designing the most exquisite silver collectibles and precious jewelry for over 250 years. Their silver items are most sought after for their craftsmanship, design and finish. The silver products from the brand are always sterling silver (92.5%) and hallmarked.

Their Indian collection is created around traditions and is homage to a melange of religions, culture and beliefs.

This festive season do not miss out on the special range of products brought out by the brand to add glamour to your celebrations and give a chic look to your home.

Check out their Safari Butler. The beautifully crafted candlesticks

on the back of a reindeer brings us the very feeling of Christmas. Well-crafted reindeers carry the burden of light on their horns, only to make sure that we don't forget the very essence of Christmas.

Another item you can go for is Ice Bucket that is not basic, boring and cliched. This stylish product has royal looks with golden coloured detailing on the front.

Lastly, we bring to you Cake Platter as no festive season is complete without cakes. This timeless piece will sprinkle the touch of class and lavishness at your dining table during get-togethers and parties. The spark of silver at your abode will redefine the aura of celebration and merry-making. ▲





## I am Chembur - an ode to the spirit of Chembur

Chembur's strongest asset is its people;  
the people who live here.

The people of Chembur are Chembur.  
I am Chembur is the motto that creates the brand for  
the people of Chembur. In saying or expressing  
"I am Chembur", we demonstrate a clear dedication  
and devotion for our locality. It is our personal  
endorsement for our beloved Chembur. If you are a  
passionate Chemburkar and love it, please  
support this campaign by liking us on

[www.facebook.com/iamchembur](https://www.facebook.com/iamchembur)

I am your HOME  
I am your SPIRIT







**TRIDHAATU<sup>®</sup>**

प्रोत्साहान

Encouraging Sports and Healthy Lifestyle

Tridhaatu Protsaahan has been launched with the thought of supporting young Indian sportspersons and sports in general. Tridhaatu endorses sportspersons from various disciplines such as Basketball, Badminton, Cycling and Running. Tridhaatu also supports the cause of special children with the help of this initiative.



**TRIDHAATU<sup>®</sup>**

संरक्षण

Conserving Environment

Tridhaatu Sanskruti aims to promote Indian Culture, Arts and Music by supporting various music and cultural events. Music and arts are important aspects of Indian culture and Tridhaatu aims to keep this tradition alive for future generations. Tridhaatu Sanskruti also supports the cause of Fine Arts, Indian Classical Music & Dance on a regular basis.



**TRIDHAATU<sup>®</sup>**

संस्कृति

Promoting Indian Culture & Arts

With the idea of conserving our environment and supporting green initiatives, we have launched the Tridhaatu Sanrakshan program. The aim is to take efforts to not only sensitize the public but also be actively involved in creating a positive change. We are actively associated with Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and conduct educational walks, workshop and meets.



**TRIDHAATU<sup>®</sup>**

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