

# INDULGE



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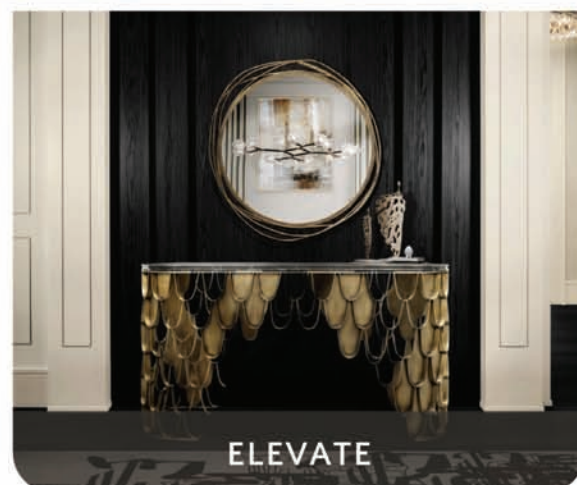
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# INDULGE

## THE MORNING STANDARD

From heritage-inspired motifs to contemporary silhouettes, Susmita Chatterjee shines in Rashi Kapoor's *Hastakala*, capturing the spirit of festive elegance and modern Indian couture this Durga Puja | **P16**

# PAST

# PERFECTED



things  
to do

## INDULGE

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear readers,

As the city comes alive with the vibrant energy of Durga Puja, we bring you a special edition that captures the spirit of the season. Gracing our cover this time is designer Rashi Kapoor's latest festive collection, *Hastakala*. Adorned by actor Susmita Chatterjee, we have curated four exclusive looks from the edit to inspire your festive wardrobe. If you're building your mood board for the season, this is where you begin. Staying in fashion, we offer a sneak peek into the latest collections by Achint Mehta and Surabhi Pansari, perfect for those looking to make a statement this Puja.

And what's a festival without a feast of flavours? Whether you're in the mood for a quick bite or planning an elaborate dining experience, we've rounded up some irresistible Puja offerings by five-star hotels in the city. And for those who consider *bhog* a must during these days, take a look at the traditional fare served at *bonedi bars*.

We have put together a guide to some traditional Durga Puja temples in the Northeast, so you can celebrate in your own style. And for those who are ushering in the Puja here in Kolkata, we present the second edition of the *pandal-hopping* guide that will help you chart your festive trail across the city.

For cinema lovers, it's a festive treat at the box office with four Bengali films hitting screens today. We sit down with actor Mimi Chakraborty to talk about her latest, *Raktabeej 2*, and take you behind the scenes of *Devi Chowdhurani*, with director Subhrajit Mitra giving us a peek into the making of this historical drama.

Don't miss out on our gadget, OTT, wellness, and auto pages.

Enjoy!

Edison Thomas  
Editor, Indulge

## online/events



### Inks & tints

Sept 27 | Southern Avenue

The *Shibori* tie & dye workshop introduces participants to the Japanese art of folding, twisting, and binding fabric before dyeing to reveal unique patterns. In a beginner-friendly environment, attendees can create wearable art, explore a new hobby, and enjoy a calming, hands-on creative experience at *Cafe Buddy's Espresso* till Sep 28, at 2 pm and 4 pm. Register online.



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### Pujo vibes

Sept 28 | Camac Street  
*Maha Shashti Night* at Tall Tales brings live performances from Bandeh and Debang, followed by DJ Neil keeping the crowd dancing until late night. Packed with Pujo spirit, music, and high energy, the evening promises a festive celebration that blends cultural vibes with a vibrant party atmosphere. From 10 pm onwards.

### CHART THE

## W.e.e.k.

### AHEAD

### Pride night

Oct 1 | Dalhousie Square  
The *Navami Party* at The LaLiT Great Eastern is one of the Eastern India's biggest queer celebrations, with drag acts, DJ sets, and a riot of lights and colour. It's a night of bold performances and unapologetic pride, making *Navami* unforgettable with glamour, rhythm, and a vibrant community spirit. From 9 pm onwards.



### Let's dandiya

Sept 27 | Chowringee Road  
*Soul Jams: Dandiya Edition* brings a lively night of *garba*, *dandiya* games, and festive music. With in-house dancers guiding newcomers, *sanedo* sing-offs, and freeze rounds, guests can expect high energy, bright vibes, and a community atmosphere perfect for Navratri. At Roots from 6 pm onwards. Tickets available online.



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### Echoes of time

Sept 27 | Cathedral Road

The play *Neelambala Chhay Ana* follows Neelambala and Uddalak through decades of change, from the political turbulence of the 1960s to the shifts of the 1970s and beyond. It explores youth, ageing, memory, and resilience in a moving theatrical presentation. At the Academy of Fine Arts, 3 pm onwards. Tickets available online.



### Faith fractures

Sept 28 | Cathedral Road

The play *Charane Seba Lage* uses the backdrop of Bengal's Gajan festival to explore caste, tradition, and village life in Debipur. With Haridas as the symbolic Gajan Shiva and Amalkrishna Raychoudhury upholding power, the narrative highlights faith, conflict, and survival. At the Academy of Fine Arts from 6.30 pm onwards. Tickets available online.



### Funny business

Oct 2 | East Topsia

Anubhav Singh Bassi's *Kisi Ko Mat Batana* brings the comedian back to Kolkata after the success of *Bas Kar Bassi*. Known for his sharp humour and storytelling style, Anubhav presents fresh anecdotes and jokes in a new set. From 7.30 pm onwards at Science City Auditorium. Tickets available online.



### GET IN TOUCH

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# KHOSLA ELECTRONICS

## "KOLKATA CELEBRATES IPHONE 17 LAUNCH WITH DURGA MAA'S BLESSINGS AT KHOSLA ELECTRONICS"



(L-R) Prerna Khosla, Vanshika Khosla, Manish Khosla, Ravi Gupta, Manoj Khosla, Sumit Kukreja, Kamlesh Pramanki

**D**urga Maa Ushers in the Grand iPhone 17 Launch at Khosla Electronics, Ballygunge.

Kolkata witnessed a truly spectacular celebration on 19th September as Khosla Electronics, unveiled the much-awaited Apple iPhone 17 at it's premium Ballygunge Flagship Store. This year, the launch carried a festive theme — "Durga Maa Asche iPhone 17 Niye." Theatre artists dressed as Durga Maa and other deities arrived in a vintage car, welcomed warmly by the directors of Khosla Electronics. The store was transformed into



a vibrant pandal, echoing the grandeur of Durga Puja, complete with the rhythmic beats of dhak and the traditional dhanuchi dance, creating an auspicious

atmosphere for the launch. The excitement was unmatched — with eager customers lining up from as early as 8 AM to experience Apple's latest innovation. The store brimmed with energy as visitors got a first touch and feel of the powerful new models and made their purchases. One lucky customer even got a dyson hairdryer with their new iphone 17.

The showstopper of the evening was the Cosmic Orange iPhone 17, accompanied by the AirPods Pro

(3 & 4) and the new Apple Watch Series 11 & Ultra. Available across all Khosla Electronics stores, these products come with exclu-

sive cashback offers on leading credit cards and exciting gifts, making the launch as rewarding as it was grand.



(L-R) Manoj Khosla Director of Khosla Electronics, Manish Khosla Managing Director Khosla Electronics



(L-R) Prerna Khosla Director of Operations, Vanshika Khosla Director of Digital Marketing

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Pics: Sourav Banerjee



Priyadarshini

Madhabilata

Reshmi



Priti



Uzma



Anupama



Joita



Shradha



Tina

Priti Agarwal, recently celebrated her birthday, themed around totem, at a city brewery, joined by her girl gang. Indulge was there too at the celebrations.

# JOYEUX ANNIVERSAIRE



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Preeyam



Lopamudra



Richa



Koneenica



Khushboo



Aparajita



Shalini

Pics: Sourav Banerjee

Pics: Pritam Sarkar



Ritabhari



Pinky and Shaun



Indrani



Swarup and Megha



Raj

## Horology soirée

An evening of horological excellence was hosted by Helios at Taj Raajkutar, presenting the latest creations from 14 of the world's finest watchmakers. Curated for collectors and connoisseurs, the black-tie event was graced by the presence of actor Ritabhari Chakraborty, and other popular faces of Kolkata.

## A classic celebration

Muzaffar Ali's Umrao Jaan had a 4K restored version by NFDC-NFAI recently, and had a special screening in the city, hosted under the Chalchitra Rangmanch initiative of Prabha Khaitan Foundation, in association with Rekhta Foundation. Here are a few glimpses of the evening.



Neel



Somini



Nayantara



Rituparna



Anirban



Mohua



Hiya



Jaya



Esha



Aditi

Pics: Pritam Sarkar



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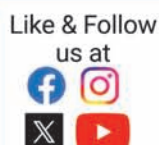
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# Bhog tales from bonedi bari

The *bhog* of Kolkata's old aristocratic homes is a living archive of taste and tradition. The *bhog* is not just eaten, it is inherited, just like the Puja itself

**A**UTUMN IN KOLKATA arrives not quietly but with a silent rustle, a shimmer, and a promise. As the season drapes the city in lights, the skies get clearer, *kash* flowers sway in the breeze, and the faint beat of *dhaak* begins to sway our heart and soul—everything signalling the arrival of Ma Durga. Durga Puja, which goes beyond its religious aspect to represent the city's culture, is associated with new clothes, food, *pandal* hopping, *pushpanjali*, and the delicious *bhog*, an offering made to Ma during the Puja.

In the courtyards of Kolkata's *bonedi baris* (aristocratic or erstwhile feudal households), where marble columns lean into history and the air is thick with incense, food leaps onto faith, and recipes

reflects a tapestry of styles—Islamic arches, Gothic lines, and Italian flourishes. Within the confines of the red walls, *bhog* becomes a meditation. In the earlier years, Ma was offered a dish of salty rice and wild vegetables from the adjoining forest. With the passage of time, the offerings have become richer and more varied, but the devotion remains the same.

Puja mornings begin with raw milk, *luchi*, and *aloo tarkari*, while afternoons are all about *khichuri*, *panch bhaja*, *chanar kalia*, chutneys, *payesh*, *rasogolla*, *pantua*, *khejur*, and mango chutney. The jewel of Harakutir's *bhog* is *Chandoni kheer* (the colour of the *kheer* is exactly like sandalwood), a Dashami speciality, which is slow-cooked until the milk thickens with cane jaggery, saffron, and nuts, served at the end of the meal. Strict silence prevails during the preparation of the *bhog*. "When Ma's

out the day. Mornings begin with fruits, sweets, and coconut *naru*; by mid-morning, *khichuri* with five different fries and sweets is served. Afternoon meals include rice, *dal*, *ghonto*, *dalna* curries, fried vegetables, *payesh*, *pulao*, chutney, and sweets. Nights close with *luchi*, fried aubergine, *dal*, and *mohanbhog*.

The most unique dish here is the *Papad dalna*, a lightly spiced curry made with fried *papadams* and potatoes. No other *bonedi bari* cooks this, making it a true culinary heirloom. "Every family member looks forward to savouring the *Papad dalna* during Puja," says Indrani Mukherjee, a member of the house. Another interesting addition is the tomato capsicum chutney to their *bhog*. Generational cooks carry forward the flavours, ensuring continuity. The women of the household also join in to prepare the *bhog*. On Saptami, Ashtami, and Navami, more than 200 guests are fed daily.

## Sovabazar Rajbari (Rajkrishna Deb)

"This is our 236th year of Puja," says Nandini Mitra, a member of Sovabazar Rajbari, where Durga Puja was started by Raja Nabakrishna Deb in 1757. Unlike other Puja households, this Rajkrishna Deb Rajbari does not have an elaborate *bhog* spread. They only serve *naivedya* to the Goddess, which is fondly called *methai* and consumed as *prasad*.

The hereditary sweet-makers arrive before Sashti to prepare trays of *jeebe gaja*, *chokho gaja*, *mithe gaja*, *nimki*, *kachori* stuffed



Girish Bhavan

## Motilal Seal's Bari

In North Kolkata's Motilal Seal Bari, Durga Puja has been celebrated since 1828. The delectable *bhog* here does not comprise steaming *khichuri* or rice platters. Instead, it is a spread of sweets, *luchi*, and *torkari*, a ritual that has remained unchanged for about two centuries. Every item is still handmade, including the coconut milk extract, to ensure purity.

Family member Indra Prosad Mullick says, "The taste has not changed. What we eat today is the same as what our ancestors ate. The cooks do not want to change anything." Brahmin cooks, whose families have been serving the household for generations, have zealously guarded these recipes.

The house speciality *malpua* fried in pure *ghee* is everyone's favourite. They are two-of-a-kind—one made with jaggery (*gur*) and the other soaked in jaggery syrup. There is also the eternally flavour-some *narkel naru* (coconut sweet) rolled lovingly by hand, *pantua*, *gaja*, *rabri*, *dahi kheer*, and an array of sweets served through the Puja days. At Seal House, *bhog* is an unbroken continuity of faith.

—Suchismita Maity

suchismita.m@newindianexpress.com  
@indulgexpress



Harakutir Ray-Banerjee Bari

become heirloom heritage passed intact to new generations. Ahead of the Pujas, we spoke to the family members of four such aristocratic households to trace the history of their sumptuous and holy *bhog* menus.

## Harakutir Ray-Banerjee Bari

The 333-year-old Puja here began when Keshab Chandra Sen got a divine vision. The house itself

*bhog* is being prepared, the doors are closed, no one utters a word," says Archisman Ray-Banerjee, a family member. The men of the family take charge in the kitchen for *bhog* preparation, and the house serves about 300–400 people during these auspicious days.

## Girish Bhavan

Girish Bhavan's Durga Puja began in 1836, and the house is also known for its elaborate Jagaddhatri Puja. Here, the *bhog* is served through-



Motilal Seal's Bari

with *dal*, *singara*, *jalebi*, *pantua*, and the unique *lal mithai* and *shada mithai*—laddoos made with millets and spiced with cloves and black pepper. Initially, the sweet and sticky delicacies called *moyas* were made with puffed rice and jaggery. Over time, other varieties were introduced. While raw yoghurt is offered as part of the rituals, cooked food is not a part of their *bhog* offerings. The Puja here lasts for 15 days, beginning from Krishna Navami and continuing till Durga Navami.



Sovabazar Rajbari, (Rajkrishna Deb)



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## pujo special

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### Goddess on the Ganges

You have visited the Goddess through *pandal* hopping on land, now visit her on the river Ganga, where she is stationed on the Barge Company for the Durga Puja. Experience a festival like never before on the river with a Grand *Mahabhoj* with vegetarian and non-vegetarian inclusions. Apart from regular lunch and dinner, there is high tea as well. From Sept 27 to Oct 2 at ₹1,899+ onwards per person.

celebratory

### Festive feast

One of the city's finest fine dining experiences is all set to bring out its Durga Puja Special extravaganza. Check out the culinary treat offered by JW Kitchen at JW Marriott Kolkata, which churns out dishes like *Shorshe ilish*, *Kosha mangsho*, *Chingri malai curry*, *Bhuna khichuri*, and more. Alongside the mains, you can also enjoy live counters with unlimited *phuchka*, rolls, *jhaal muri*, kebabs, and more. And don't forget the ambience also treats you to soulful live music. Available from Sept 27 to Oct 2 at ₹2,550+ per person.

# SHARADIYA'R BHURIBHOJ

Here's how the city hotel diners have geared up for Durga Puja this time

Durga Puja is here, and *petpujo* (eating good food) is a must. Be it fuelling up pre or post *pandal* hopping, or meeting friends and family over good food, we keep a watch on both budget-friendly cafés and fine diners. This week, we bring to you what the diners in some city hotels have to offer.

### Savour it, the grand way

This Durga Puja, ITC Royal Bengal and ITC Sonar have a lot to offer. Firstly, *Sonar Mahabhoj* at Pala is the highlight of the festivities offering a lavish buffet of authentic Bengali cuisine. Enjoy dishes crafted from age-old recipes alongside live musical performances. Available from September 29 to October 1 for lunch and dinner, 1 pm to 4 pm and 7 pm to 11.30 pm at ₹2,250+. Along with these, the regular grand buffet options at Eden Pavilion and Grand Market Pavilion, and various niche cuisines of Italian, North-Western Frontier Province, Pan Asian, will be available across their fine diners.

### Global flavours

Durga Puja is no longer limited to the borders of Bengal or India. It is celebrated with much grandeur throughout the Indian diaspora all across the globe. Keeping this fusion in mind, YAYAvar in Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata has come up with the *Pujor Pothik Mahabhoj*, which comprises both Bengali cuisine and global flavours, and live counters. Savour dishes like *Murgh shorba*, *Khow suey*, Veg minestrone, *Bhetki macher chop*, *Tandoori chicken tikka*, *Hara bhara kebab*, *Basanti pulao*, quintessential *Aloo jhuri bhaja*, *Kung pao chicken*, Thai red curry, *Massaman veg*, Eggplant parmigiano, Jacket potato with sour cream, *Kheer kadam*, *Lyangcha*, *Pantua*, *Mihidana*, and much more. Available from Sept 27- Oct 2 at 1,299+ onwards for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

### Nostalgic dining

This pioneer Bengali fine diner is back with its Durga Puja special menus. The *Mahabhoj thali* consists of classic dishes like *Tomato-badam aloor dum*, *Guru barir mochar ghanto* and more. The non-vegetarian *Bhuribhoj* and *Rajbhoj thali* includes the likes of *Kolkatar kosha mangsho*, *Kaju kismis polao*, *Tawai pora bhetki paturi* and more. While you can savour the *thalis* and à la carte at Aheli, Peerless Hotel Kolkata and Sarat Bose Road, the buffet is available at Axis Mall outlet. Available between Sept 27 and Oct 2 at ₹1,195+ per person for lunch and dinner.

### A buffet to remember

Let *Kebab-e-que* at The Astor Kolkata book one of your dates between *Panchami* and *Dashami* with its Durga Puja Special buffet for lunch or dinner. This year, the curation includes a trip down memory lane with home-cooked feasts that would remind you of *ghar ka khana*. Check out items like *Kaffir lime pora anarash ar aada diye sorbot*, *Murgh kasuri tikka*, *Ambala paneer tikka*, and more. Available at ₹1,699+ per person.

Continued on page 10





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food  
&  
drink

## pujo special

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### Midnight bhog bliss

If you plan to immerse yourself in authentic Bengali food, from starters to mains and regional desserts, then head over to The LaLiT Great Eastern Kolkata which is hosting *Sharodiya Mahabhoj* at Alfresco for the regular lunch and dinner timings. But for all the *pandal* hoppers who get hungry around midnight, the feast is open between 1 am and 3 am. From Sept 28 to Oct 2 for lunch, dinner, and midnight at ₹1,299+ onwards.



### Feast in style

Remembering the Zamindari-style food, the Bonedi Barir Bhoj at Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport brings a grand buffet menu at Social Kitchen. Celebrating traditional Bengali cuisine, the menu comprises *Phuchka-r songge anarosh-er tok-jhal-mishti jol*, and *Gangarampur er kheer doi* among many others. Many items are dedicated to the patriots of Bengal like Bagha Jatin's favourite *Lal mangsher jhol*. From Sept 28 to Oct 1 for lunch and dinner at ₹1,666+ per person.



### Reinventing Bengali flavours

Indulge in a grand feast at Newtown's Pride Plaza with their *Sharod Utsaber Sabeki Shaad*, featuring traditional and fusion Bengali dishes like *Kochu shaak er chop*, *Shukto croquette*, *Murgh bhrta* shots to *Posto beguner salad*, village-style *Mete chorchori*, *Radhuni diye murgir jhol*, *Payesh brulee cups*, *Kanchalonka roshogollo* and lot more. Available from September 26 to October 2, lunch and dinner, at ₹1,669+.

### The thali magic

If you want a comfortable sit down luncheon or dinner and savour the flavours of Bengali cuisine, then head to Sonargaon at Taj Bengal for festive special *thalis* that you better not miss. The *Mahabhoj aamish thali* includes *Radhuni murgi*, *Gota mashlar khashir mangsho*, *Doi katla*, while the *Mahabhoj seafood thali* includes *Kashundi macher cutlet*, *Chingri malai curry*, *Chitol macher peti* and the *Mahabhoj niramish thali* has *Phoolkopi roast*, *Lalsaag bodi chorchori*, *Bhaja Sona moong dal* among its contents. Available between Sept 28 to Oct 2 for lunch and dinner at ₹3,450+ per person.



### Celebrating flavours and heritage

Don't miss out on the grand Durga Puja buffet spread by Sarovar Portico Kolkata Rajarhat. The *Pujor Mahabhoj* buffet brings together timeless charm and nostalgia in every dish. Right from *Shahebder gondhoraj jhol* and *Mayer aam pora sharbat* to *Tangra much much*, or *Mullik Barir doi katla*; the items and their names reflect iconic legends and their favourites. Available between Sept 27 and Oct 1 for ₹1,299+ per person.



### Indulgence indeed

The Park Kolkata invites guests to indulge in *Mahabhoj*, a grand buffet lunch that celebrates Bengal's culinary heritage with a festive twist. From the traditional *Bhaja station* to signature dishes like *Sutanutr chingri malai curry* and *Dhakai kosha mangsho*, paired with desserts such as *Baked mihidana* and *Gobindo bhog payesh*, the spread brings together nostalgia and festive cheer. Set at the elegant Rosewood Banquet, the buffet promises a truly celebratory experience. Available from Sept 29 and Oct 1, 11 am to 4 pm at ₹1,599+.

### Flavoursome festivities

Make this Durga Puja special by eating your hearts out at the *Sharodiya Somahar* buffet at Seasonal Tastes, The Westin Kolkata for a celebration of flavours, festivity, and togetherness. Relish a thoughtfully curated spread that beautifully blends traditional flavours, novel culinary creations, and global cuisine, boasting of dishes like *Lahsooni chicken kebab*, *Chilli basil fish*, *Coconut broth with chicken*, *Mutton rezala*, *Golbarir kosha mangsho*, *Mutton biryani*, *Mapo tofu with pak choy*, *Indonesian rendang curry* and a lot more. Available from Sept 27 to Oct 2. From 12.30 pm to 4.30 pm and 7 pm to 11.30 pm at ₹2,499+.



— Subhadrika Sen  
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**M**ANGALIK DOSHA, ALSO known as Mangal Dosh, is a significant concept in Vedic astrology. It occurs when Mars (*Mangal*) is positioned in the first, second, fourth, seventh, eighth, or 12th house of a person's horoscope. Mars, regarded as the God of War and an unmarried planet, is believed to influence marital harmony due to its fiery and aggressive energy.

**Formation and characteristics:**

*Mangalik dosha* arises when Mars is adversely placed in the horoscope. The planet represents energy, power, ego, and self-esteem. Individuals with this dosha tend to be temperamental, dominant, and highly energetic. This can lead to conflicts, difficulties in adjusting with partners, and challenges in married life. Both men and women can be *Mangalik*, and their energy, if not directed constructively, may also affect finances and mental peace.

**Effects based on house placement:**

- **First house:** Causes marital conflicts, tension, and, in some cases, the risk of separation.
- **Second house:** Brings family disputes and obstacles in both married and professional life.
- **Fourth house:** May result in job instability, financial difficulties, and early marriages that face challenges.
- **Seventh house:** Leads to irritability and dominance, making harmonious relationships difficult.
- **Eighth house:** Increases the risk of negative associations and marital or health concerns.
- **12th house:** Creates mental stress, financial losses, and challenges from enemies.

**Remedies and precautions:**

Astrology provides remedies to reduce the negative effects of *Mangalik dosha*. These include performing *Mangal shanti puja*, observing fasts on Tuesdays, chanting mantras dedicated to Mars or Lord Hanuman, or marrying another *Mangalik*, which neutralises the *dosha* naturally. Scientific matchmaking and considering the overall strength of the horoscope are essential in ensuring marital stability.

*Mangalik dosha* should not be feared unnecessarily. When understood in the broader context of the horoscope and combined with mutual respect, patience, and understanding in marriage, its adverse effects can be mitigated. With proper guidance, awareness, and remedies, individuals with *Mangalik dosha* can enjoy a happy, balanced, and harmonious married life.

**By Dr Sohini Sastri, acclaimed amongst top five astrologers in the world.  
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& +91 9163532538.**

# ASTROLOGY AND MANGALIK DOSHA: UNDERSTANDING ITS IMPACT ON MARRIAGE



# ETHNIC FLAIR

Achint Mehta's eponymous label's *Festive Edit* is apt for the season

**A**CHINT MEHTA'S EPONYMOUS label has dropped a festive edit that feels extra special as it reflects her personal love for the season. It's not just about the vibrant colours and playful silhouettes inspired by Punjab, but also about pieces that make one feel both beautiful and comfortable. Excerpts:

**How have you blended the elements of Punjab and Marwar?**

Being Punjabi by birth and married into a Marwari family, both cultures are a part of who I am and naturally, they show up in my designs. From Punjab, I've brought in bold colours and that lively spirit, while from Marwar I've drawn inspiration from the traditional *gota*, *zari*, and mirror detailing. Together, they give the outfits, a balance of vibrance and elegance.

**What is the colour palette that you have chosen for this edit?**

For this collection, I chose festive jewel tones like maroon, gold, and mustard along with softer shades like blush pinks, mint, and ivory. I love the idea of giving women both options — something bold for the big nights and something subtle for intimate celebrations, so

there's truly something for everyone.

**What kind of colours will work this festive season?**

This year, I feel jewel tones like emerald, wine, magenta and of course, classic golds will really stand out. At the same time, pastels like powder blue and blush pink are perfect for those who want something lighter but still festive.

**Do you believe in versatile outfits?**

**Do you think your pieces are versatile and can be restyled for other occasions?**

Yes, I strongly believe in versatile clothing. I always tell my clients don't just wear your *lehenga* once. Pair the blouse with a *sari* or even high-waisted trousers, style the skirt with a shirt or drape the *dupatta* differently. Many of the pieces from this edit can be styled in multiple ways, which makes them perfect beyond just one occasion. This also promotes sustainable fashion and we stand for it.

**Is there a favourite piece which you would like to wear during the festivities?**

There's an ice blue *lehenga* with delicate handwork and mirror work that I personally love, paired with an orange *dupatta*. It's light, easy to carry yet very festive to make you feel dressed up. It's definitely something I'd pick to wear for Diwali.

**Do you have any upcoming collections?**

Yes! After the *Festive Edit*, I'm working on a wedding collection that is very special to me. It will have bridal *lehengas* but also fun, playful pieces for bridesmaids and family. The idea is to create outfits that carry the joy of weddings but are still comfortable and versatile.

—Dharitri Ganguly

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Achint Mehta



Ensembles from the new edit

intricate

## Layers & contrasts

Kolkata-based luxe menswear designer Surbhi Pansari reveals her Durga Puja drop

CATCHING THE TREND, yet rooting it in the harmony of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary comfort is what makes luxury menswear designer Surbhi Pansari's collections different and chic. With Durga Puja around the corner, she has dropped her latest edit and here's why it should make its way to your wardrobe.

**Tell us about your Durga Puja edit.**

This year's collection seamlessly merges timeless aesthetics with modern-day ease through *kurta* sets, asymmetric jackets, *patiala*, overlapping silhouettes and more—each brought alive through jewel-toned hues, soft neutrals, and intricate embroideries that capture the festive spirit.

**What kind of fabrics and colours have you used?**

The palette is a vibrant blend of tradition and trend, featuring jewel tones and muted neutrals—French rose, stone grey, pearl, Schuass pink, sienna, tangerine, midnight blue, and delicate floral prints. Luxurious yet

breathable fabrics ensure comfort through long festive days, while tonal thread work, sequin highlights, and *zari* accents enrich the surface.

**Just like red and white form an eternal combination for women, what works well with men?**

The magic lies in contrasts and layering. Muted tones like ivory, pearl and beige come alive when paired with rich jewel accents such as midnight blue, tangerine, or sienna. A subtle *kurta-pyjama* in pistachio can be instantly elevated with a Schuass pink or French rose jacket. Similarly, embroidery in tonal threads or sequins layered over solid bases creates the same timeless appeal that

red and white hold for women.

**What are the three must-haves in a man's wardrobe for any festive occasion.**

A versatile *kurta-pyjama* set in neutral or jewel hues, a statement jacket with fine embroidery or asymmetric cuts, and an accessory element like a stole or *dupatta* that ties the look together.

**What is one fashion trend that you think will rule this Puja?**

Layering and surface textures will rule the fashion trend this festive season. It's about making a statement not just with silhouettes, but with the colours and craft that bring them alive.

**Tell us about your upcoming collections.**

Expect colour stories that surprise, embroi-

deries that intrigue, and silhouettes that embody the essence of Surbhi Pansari menswear, redefined and timeless.

—Subhadrika Sen

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Surbhi Pansari



Pieces from the collection



# Celebrating the Divine Feminine

Durga Puja is more than a festival. It is a celebration of strength, grace and the eternal spirit of the divine feminine. This special shoot by The Flame captures that essence through the artistry of saree, styling and symbolism, bringing together tradition and modern sensibility in a seamless narrative.

Draped in a creation by Saaj India, actress Parijat Chaudhury embodies the power and poise of the goddess herself. The saree, rich in texture and fluid in form, becomes a canvas of reverence and artistry. In her hands rests a lotus flower, an emblem of purity, beauty and spiritual awakening. The gesture transforms the visual into more than a portrait. It becomes an invocation of Shakti, the life force that inspires resilience and compassion.

The styling by Sougata Sarkar highlights this philosophy with an approach that is minimal yet evocative. Every element has been chosen to complement the strength of the saree while allowing the symbolism of the lotus to speak. The result is a look that resonates with both cultural depth and contemporary refinement.



Through the lens of Subhayan Ghosh, the story reaches its fullest expression. His photography captures light, texture and emotion in equal measure, creating images that are not only striking but soulful. Each frame becomes a tribute to womanhood and to the timeless spirit of Durga Puja.

This special feature is a reminder that fashion can be more than attire. It can be devotion, storytelling and the celebration of the divine feminine within us all.



Somnath Das adds to the vision through make-up and hair design that strike a balance between traditional allure and modern elegance. The look enhances the natural features of the model, ensuring she carries the aura of the divine while remaining approachable and relatable.





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tête-à-tête

# KARIGAR LOOMS TO LUXE COUTURE

Celebrating tradition with a modern twist, this Puja season, Susmita Chatterjee brings Rashi Kapoor's creations to life — a journey through timeless craftsmanship, vibrant colours, and effortlessly chic silhouettes for every festive occasion  
**By Sharmistha Ghosal**

**G**LITZ, GLAMOUR, CHIC, and yet comfy — these words perhaps best describe how the new generation wants to dress up for occasions. With Durga Puja being Kolkata's biggest festival, it's no surprise that everyone will be at their fashionable best.

The city has seen a beautiful melange of global and local fashion trends, and keeping in sync with the festive fervour, designers, too, have come up with collections that merge the best of ethnic flavours with modern palates.

Dressing up in your traditional best is no longer limited to a red-and-white *sari*, layers of gold jewellery, a floral hairdo, and a smudged *sindoori bindi*. If that seems cumbersome for the younger generation, they can channel the *desi* chic vibes in a sequined drape *sari* or a nice red and gold number with a corset blouse.

For this Puja special cover, we decided to showcase four such glamorous and chic Puja looks for the city's stylish crowd, turning every occasion into a show-stealing opportunity. And who can help do that better than couturier Rashi Kapoor? We chose four looks from her collections, which one can easily carry through all the festive dos this season, be it evening get-togethers, dinner or late-night parties at home. And who else can rock them with so much confidence than the dazzling Susmita Chatterjee? The beautiful actor turned each look into a glam affair. On the sidelines of the shoot, Rashi took us through her new bridal-festive edit, *Hastakala*.

#### Tell us about *Hastakala*.

This collection is rooted in tradition yet designed for the modern soul. The idea was to remind people of the value of Indian heritage and the extraordinary hands that have shaped it. In today's fast-paced world, we often overlook the tireless hours and unmatched artistry that our *karigars* pour into each piece. *Hastakala* is about pausing, appreciating, and honouring their craft. It's my ode to India's rich heritage of craftsmanship.

The colour story transitions from delicate pastels — vanilla, blush, and nude — to bold jewel tones like sapphire, ruby, royal blue, and raven black, striking a balance between elegance and impact. There are intricate surface techniques such as *zardozi*, *aari*, *resham*, French knots, pearls, crystals, *chir*, *salma*, *dabka*, and sequins

Pictures: Debarshi Sarkar | Makeup: Kaju Guha | Hair: Amrapali Jana | Styling: Poulami Gupta | Location and food courtesy: The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata



that create elaborate, three-dimensional textures.

Silhouettes range from classic *lehengas*, *shararas*, and *saris* to contemporary gowns, jackets, and structured separates. For men, I've introduced a capsule inspired by Mumbai; its architectural modernity softened with floral accents. The menswear edit embraces geometric embroidery, muted monochromes, and clean tailoring for a fresh take on festive dressing.

#### How different is it from the previous collections?

Each of my collections carries its own soul. My last collection was a tribute to Frida Kahlo, bold, vibrant, and artistic in its palette and essence. *Hastakala*, in contrast, celebrates the timelessness of our hand techniques while reinterpreting them through modern silhouettes.

#### What's trending this winter festive season in Indianwear, especially for weddings?

Indian brides are experimental, and they want pieces that are impactful yet easy to wear. We're seeing deep necklines, gowns with trails, capes, layered skirts, and even structured jackets making their way into the bridal wardrobe. Festive silhouettes are no longer confined to just *lehenga* and *choli*; versatility and individuality are key. International fashion has also influenced Indian couture, and brides are open to adapting global trends into their trousseau.

#### In the current context, what global fashion movements or trends have impressed you?

I'm inspired by how global fashion is moving toward cross-cultural storytelling and sustainability. The lines between couture and ready-to-wear, East and West, are blurring beautifully. Indian designers are pushing boundaries with construction and concepts, and international houses are embracing craft and heritage in new ways. This dialogue feels very refreshing because fashion is no longer bound by geography, it's about creativity that speaks to a global audience.

#### What inspires you?

I draw inspiration from culture, history, and human stories. Over the years, my design sensibilities have evolved from simply appreciating beauty to creating with purpose. I've grown more mindful of balancing elements — blending boldness with restraint, craft with modernity, emotion with structure. I now see clothes as narratives that connect generations and identities.

#### What are your plans for the label?

Our vision is to grow Rashi Kapoor into a label that resonates with every Indian, yet finds relevance globally. In the coming years, we plan to build a stronger international presence, participate in global showcases, and create a dialogue where Indian couture is celebrated on par with the world's finest.

#### How have you seen Indian fashion evolve over the years?

Indian fashion has gone beyond borders. It's no longer just for the Indian market; today, it's global, competitive, and deeply respected. Our designers are showing in Paris, Milan, and New York, while simultaneously reviving traditional crafts at home. What excites me is this duality: being global in outlook yet rooted in culture. That's what makes Indian fashion truly unique.

#### What indigenous elements of Bengali fashion do you love incorporating into your designs?

Bengal has such a profound craft vocabulary; I'm drawn to the *laal-paar shada sari*, *jamdani*, *nakshi kantha*, and *baluchari* motifs. I see these not just as textiles but as design languages. For instance, *kantha* stitches could become contour lines on jackets, *jamdani* weaves could be reinterpreted as sheer overlays, and *baluchari* narratives could inspire placement embroideries. These elements bring depth, nostalgia, and cultural grounding to couture, something I always strive for.

#### What are some festive wardrobe must-haves for men and women?

Women must have a statement *sari* (Benarasi or organza), a *lehenga* or skirt set, a versatile *kurta-sharara* or *anarkali*, and a hero blouse that can transform any

*sari*. Layering pieces like brocade jackets or capes, along with heritage jewellery such as *chandbalis* or chokers, is essential.

For men, a classic *kurta* set in ivory or jewel tones, a tailored *bandhgala* or *sherwani*, and a Nehru jacket that can be mixed and matched are a must. Accessories like *mojaris*, a silk stole, or a pocket square elevate the look without fuss.

#### What's your offering for men this winter festive season?

Our *Hastakala* menswear capsule is monochrome-driven, with shades like ivory, taupe, charcoal, midnight blue, and merlot. It's elegant and minimal, focusing on refined embroidery placed only where the eye naturally rests, on collars, cuffs, or seams. Key pieces include wool-silk *bandhgalas*, merino-silk *kurtas*, *sherwani*-style *achkans*, and textured raw-silk *bandis*. The idea is to create menswear that's timeless, sharp, and wearable across celebrations.

#### Who is the best dressed male and female celebrities in your eyes?

Among women, I admire Zendaya for her sculptural gowns, Deepika Padukone for her powerful *saris*, Sonam Kapoor Ahuja for her couture-forward styling, Cate Blanchett for her architectural minimalism, and Alia Bhatt for her youthful elegance.

Among men, Shah Rukh Khan epitomises timeless charm, Dev Patel brings relaxed luxe to tailoring, Vicky Kaushal carries understated festive wear beautifully, David Beckham is heritage tailoring personified, and Ryan Gosling always finds the right modern twist in suiting.

#### Tell us about your other upcoming collections.

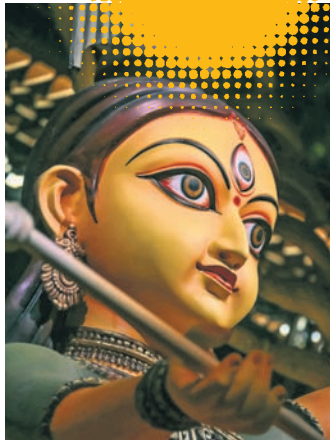
Post *Hastakala*, we're working on our *Bridal Festive 2025* showcase. While *Hastakala* celebrates India's rich craft legacy, our upcoming collections will continue to reinterpret tradition in new ways, drawing from different cultural narratives and weaving them into modern couture.

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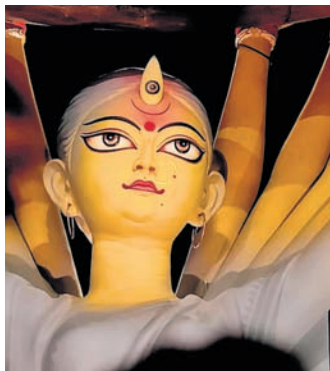
Susmita Chatterjee wearing pieces from Rashi Kapoor's latest collection, *Hastakala*





## Mohammad Ali Park

Mohammad Ali Park (57th year) plunges us underwater. Underwater World, designed by Kush Bera, conjures coral and marine life, with the goddess in a *shanti* avatar—less the warrior, more the calm tide.



## Naktala Udayan Sangha

At Naktala Udayan Sangha (39th year), Arpan invokes the Mahalaya ritual of tarpan. Rintu Das's design is contemplative: homage to ancestors, offerings flowing through space and light, an elegy for the unseen presences who stand behind every festival.



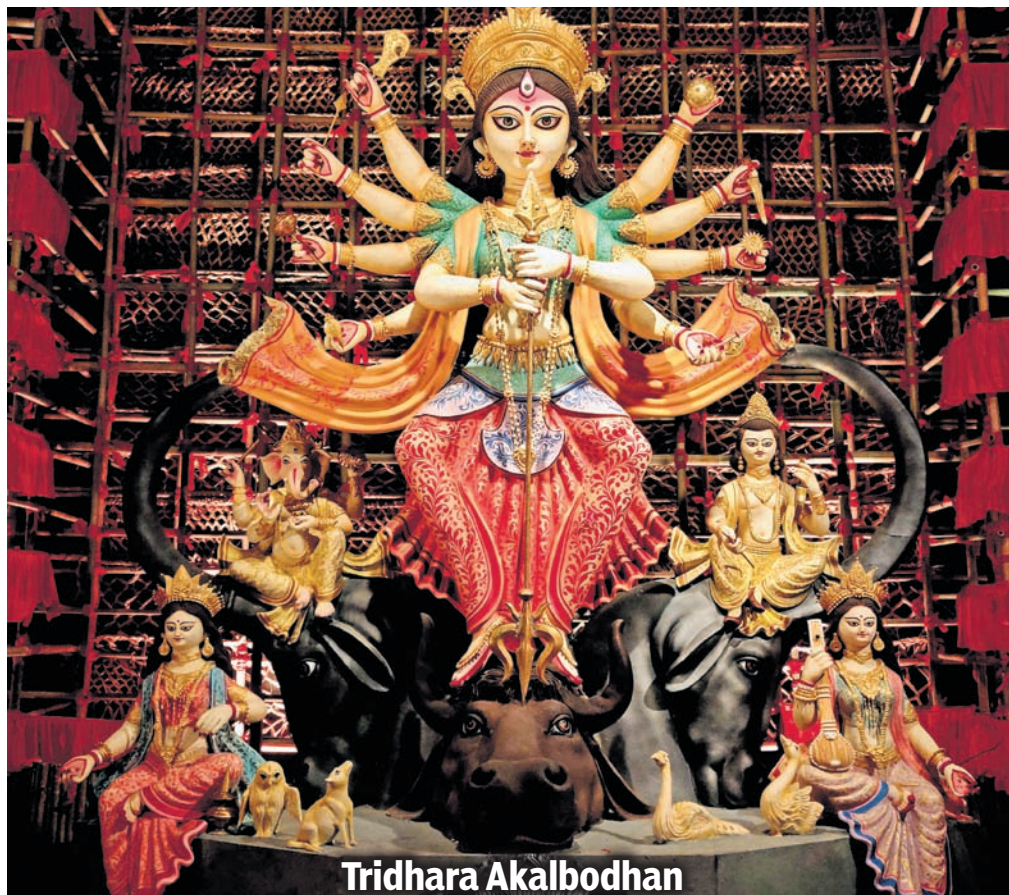
## Santoshpur Lake Pally

Santoshpur Lake Pally (68th year) stages *Jaichitra – Wash*. Young artists led by Anirban Das revive the wash technique of Abanindranath Tagore, transforming the *pandal* into an atelier where Mahisasurmardini emerges in soft brush strokes. It is a homage to art itself as devotion.

# Beyond the pandal

Here's a closer look at Kolkata's Puja spectacle, where tradition meets imagination

If Durga Puja is Bengal's grand theatre, then the *pandals* are its stage sets—each year competing for wit, scale, and sheer audacity. This season's offerings move between nostalgia and futurism, between riot-torn alleys and silicon-fuelled possibilities. The artistry is often breathtaking, sometimes bewildering, and occasionally a touch over-ambitious. But that, of course, is Puja.



## Tridhara Akalbodhan

Tridhara Akalbodhan (79th year) calls its theme *Cholo Phiri*—a summons to return to roots. The *pandal* evokes the *tandav* of Shiva, *aghor* mysticism, and mountain terrains, conjured by artist Gouranga Kuila. It is both austere and kinetic, a reminder that the goddess is as much ascetic energy as maternal refuge.

## 41 Palli

41 Palli offers the season's leap into the future with AI and Technology in its 78th year. Gouranga Kuila imagines how artificial intelligence reshapes our world—Durga as a goddess of algorithms, perhaps, or at least a deity unafraid of circuitry.



## Samaj Sebi

Samaj Sebi on its 80th year looks back to 1946 with *Pather Panchali*. Not Satyajit Ray's film, but the year of riots, relief work and the club's own origins under Lila Ray and Meghnad Saha. A model street will remain even after immersion—a rare gesture of permanence from an art form built on ephemerality.

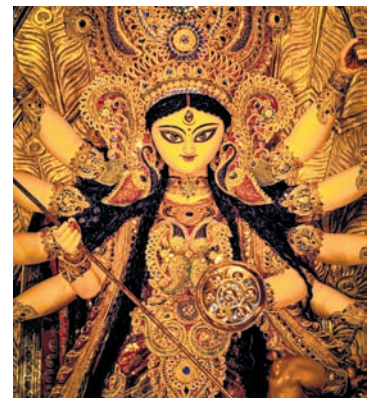
## Barisha Club

Barisha Club, in its 37th year, travels to the other extreme. Its theme, *Sunyo Prithibi*, explores emptiness itself. The *pandal* strips down to suggest the weight of the void, a meditation in bamboo and cloth. Artist Manosh Das turns absence into spectacle—a risky proposition in a city that craves the baroque.



## Santosh Mitra Square

At Santosh Mitra Square, the theme *Operation Sindoor* hints at strategy, but the battle here is visual. The installations are martial, the idol fierce, as if vermillion itself has been weaponised.



## Badamtala Ashar Sangha

Badamtala Ashar Sangha (87th year) turns its *pandal* into a courtroom with Aarji. Somnath Dolui's concept and Pallab Jana's idol suggest Durga as justice incarnate, with scales, gavels, and law books framing the goddess. The divine as judge, not merely vanquisher.





# The Flame: A Celebration of Comfort, Uniqueness and Class

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The fabrics are dyed with intention and care. Every shade has been selected not only for its visual appeal but also for the emotions it conveys. From serene pastels to deep jewel tones, the palette reflects the many moods of contemporary women. Each color tells a story, reminding us that fashion is not just about appearance but also about the feelings it allows us to embody.



In a world where fast fashion often overshadows craftsmanship, The Flame offers a different path. This collection celebrates patience, precision and the devotion of skilled hands. Comfort, uniqueness and class are not simply descriptive words. They are the spirit of sarees designed to transcend seasons and become timeless tributes to tradition and style.

In the ever-evolving world of Indian fashion, some collections follow temporary trends while others define a timeless voice of their own. The Flame's newest offering belongs firmly to the latter. Built around the values of comfort, uniqueness and class, this collection of sarees is a refined expression of grace and individuality.

At its core is pure modal silk, a fabric chosen for both its beauty and its wearability. Known for its soft texture and natural sheen, modal silk drapes with fluid elegance while retaining a gentle glow. This quality makes it ideal for sarees that are graceful yet effortless. Each creation celebrates the tactile luxury of silk, offering pieces that are as comfortable to wear as they are striking to behold.

The true soul of the collection lies in its handcrafted zardosi embroidery. This ancient art, long associated with royal attire, has been revived with a modern sensibility. The embellishments shimmer with quiet elegance, highlighting the fabric without overpowering it. Each motif reflects the skill of artisans whose knowledge has been passed down through generations. Their devotion ensures that every saree is more than a garment. It becomes a work of heritage, artistry and continuity.



The Flame's philosophy is clear. Luxury is best expressed in quiet distinction. Uniqueness here is understated rather than loud. It can be seen in the way the fabric falls, the way embroidery catches light at just the right angle, and the way the saree enhances the wearer without demanding attention. These are sarees created for women who appreciate refinement over extravagance, where comfort, exclusivity and class exist in perfect balance.

The visual presentation of the collection has been designed to reflect this same spirit. Styling is kept deliberate yet minimal, ensuring that the sarees remain at the center. Hair and make-up enhance rather than distract, creating harmony between traditional beauty and modern sophistication. Every element works together to frame the saree as both attire and expression.

Through thoughtful photography, the collection takes its final form. Each frame captures not only the fabric but also the feeling it evokes. The images reveal sarees as more than garments. They portray them as carriers of memory, heritage and individuality.

**Talents:** Riya Bhattacharjee & Sushmita Roy

**Wardrobe:** The Flame (Wedding collections)

**Styling:** Sougata Sarkar

**Hair and Makeup:** Somnath Das

**Photography:** Subhayan Ghosh

**Location:** Maati Bari



## FESTIVITIES IN THE HILLS

As Durga Puja approaches, we take a look at some of the go-to celebrations across the Northeast states

**A**WAY FROM THE grandeur of theme-based celebrations, Durga Puja in the Northeast is all about embracing cultural roots and keeping it simple. Here's a quick look at some of the must-visit places during the festive days.

### Uzan Bazar Ugratara Temple | Guwahati

In the heart of the ancient capital of Kamrup, Guwahati, lies the Uzan Bazar Ugratara Temple, also known as the Ugratara Devalaya. According to reports, the festival has been celebrated here for over 900 years. Interestingly, the form of the Goddess worshipped here is Ugratara. Legend has it that when Sati immolated herself, Lord Vishnu used the *Sudarshan Chakra* to dismember her body, and the navel-like part fell where the Uzan Bazar Ugratara Temple now stands. Thus, this revered temple celebrates the homecoming of the Goddess every year with traditional rituals and sacrifices. Devotees from all over the city come to seek blessings and immerse themselves in the simplicity of the rituals, which stay away from theme-Pujas and wholeheartedly express their commitment to the Goddess through pure tradition.

### Nartiang Durga Temple | Meghalaya

The otherwise quiet and serene abode of the clouds also comes alive to the tunes of the *dhaaks*. If you happen to be in Meghalaya, then taking time out for a quick trip to the 600+ years-old Nartiang Durga Temple should definitely be on the cards. What attracts people to this Puja is its simplicity and homeliness, where everyone contributes to work together to bring out the vibrancy of the festive season. Away from the excruciatingly bright lights and embracing the innocence of culture and art, the Puja sees the mandatory distribution of *khichdi bhog* on all the days and cultural functions, which truly makes one feel not only a part of the celebrations but also one with the Goddess. The temple itself was built during the Jaintia dynasty and houses priceless relics, monoliths, and more. Taking a break from the celebrations, you can stroll around the temple and soak in its natural beauty, surrounded by the hills.



The Durga idol at Pandu 3 No. Ferry Ghat Colony, Assam

### Durga Bari | Tripura

When you take the name of Goddess Durga, the vision in front of you is of a woman with ten hands, holding various weapons, calm and peaceful yet powerful and mighty, with a defeated Mahishasur near her legs, isn't it? But the most striking feature when you enter the Durga Bari in Tripura is the Goddess with only two hands! It is said that the idol did have ten hands, but that scared the then queen, and it was modified to have two. What's more, Durga Puja is actually celebrated twice here — once during the Basanti Puja and again during the conventional Durga Puja. Initiated by the then Royal Dynasty of Tripura, the celebrations have now been state-sponsored for over seven decades. However, written approval must still be sought from the eldest member of the Royal Family. The celebrations are over 500 years old and are one of the most revered in the State.

### Pandu 3 No. Ferry Ghat Colony | Assam

Durga Puja in the Northeast is not just about traditional and heritage ones. Modern theme *pandals* can also be seen here, though always with a touch of heritage. The Puja committee at Pandu 3 No. Ferry Ghat Colony, which is incidentally celebrating its 75th year this time, has come up with the theme, *Prati Maar Majot Pratima Birajman*. What will make the Puja truly commendable this year is that the *pandal* will be hand-drawn and painted by the stu-

dents of the Assam Government Art Academy. Besides, there will be several cultural programmes including dance, singing performances, and recitations apart from the regular *dhaak* and *dhunuchi naach*, which form major attractions. With a display of local talent and traditional intricacies even within a theme Puja, the festivities merge heritage, modernism, local talent, and the aura of the celebrations itself.

### Hiyangthang Lairembi Temple | Manipur

Although not a Durga Puja in itself, this temple in Manipur becomes a sacred pilgrimage spot during this time, ushering several hundred devotees into the temple. Legend has it that the temple is named after Princess Irai Leima, who escaped from a tiff between a suitor and her father, seeking refuge with the family of Sarangthem Luwangba. She was later regarded as a goddess and is worshipped now. Located in the hills of Heibok Ching, the temple attracts thousands of devotees on Bor Numit (Boon Day). It is believed that whoever prays from the heart on this day has their wishes fulfilled. This Bor Numit coincides with the third day of Durga Puja, which is Maha Ashtami, an equally auspicious occasion.

—Subhadrika Sen

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@sensubhadrika

Representative image

Hiyangthang Temple nestled in the hills

Nartiang Durga Temple, Meghalaya



out  
of the  
box

Pic: Pritam Sarkar



Ishaa Saha

## CURTAIN CALL

Actor Ishaa Saha opens up about working on the finale of the series *Indu* and her fondest Durga Puja memories

drama

**A**S ISHAA SAHA steps into the character of Indu for the series finale of *hoichoi's Indu*, she opens up about her shooting experience and her Durga Puja plans.

**How does it feel that such a beloved series is finally reaching its conclusion and giving the audience the answers they were waiting for?**

It feels great, and we too wanted it to reach a culmination and know what finally happens. We were curious as well. Many of my friends have often asked me what happens next, but I really didn't know back then. When shooting was completed and the questions continued, I obviously wouldn't have divulged. One needs to watch it to find out for themselves. We are equally excited now that it is finally releasing.

**What was your mantra for transitioning back to Indu between shooting other projects?**

There's no mantra. I had to re-watch the previous seasons. When I play a character once, there is not much to think about. But when you reprise a role, and you have done so much in between, I thought I should go over the show once more. I discovered that Indu is very calm, and I had to match her personality despite being different.

**How was the last day of the shoot?**

Only Manasi (Sinha) and I were there on



Stills from the show

the last day. It was a 15-day schedule, and everyone finished on time.

**What's your plan for Durga Puja?**

I have a lot of plans. Almost all of *Sasthi* night I will be *pandal*-hopping. Then I'll sleep till *Saptami* afternoon. And from the evening, I'll visit a few Pujas held in my friends' homes, have *bhog*, offer *anjali*, and all of that. I don't know what I will wear, but the tentative plan for the festival days has been chalked out.

**What's your fondest Durga Puja memory?**

Our childhood Durga Pujas were the best. Now that I am older, my excitement

has mellowed. I spend my Puja in the city. The simple bamboo structure of the *pan-dals* wrapped in colourful cloth, where everyone from the neighbourhood gathered together to decorate the *mandap*, is something I miss. Many Puja songs were released then. *Pandal*-hopping with grandparents and gorging on egg rolls are things I miss terribly.

**What are your upcoming projects?**

*Lawho Gouranger Naam Re.*

—Subhadrika Sen

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**M**IMI CHAKRABORTY IMPRESSED everyone in *Raktabeej* as the bold and unapologetic SP Sanjukta Mitra. As the prequel gears up to hit screens, *Raktabeej 2* the actor talks about her upcoming movie, character, and life within and beyond the glamour of silver screen.

**With *Raktabeej 2* releasing soon, how are you feeling?**

I am nervous. It's a Pujo release and *Raktabeej* was a megahit and the expectation of people from *Raktabeej 2* will be humongous. With many other films releasing, the pressure is huge.

**You have reprised your role as SP Sanjukta Mitra in this film. And sequels often come with challenges. In many cases, we see sequels not faring as well as the original movie. Are you worried about that?**

This is my first sequel and the character is already built. Everyone who works on a sequel focuses on building on the characters and story. So the nuances of Sanjukta Mitra's character have been more escalated in the film so she becomes stronger. The relationship between individuals has also developed. The audience will decide whether there has been any growth as far as Sanjukta Mitra is concerned.

**The teaser shows the film is action-packed. Did you find the action sequences challenging?**

I love action sequences. In *Dainee* too, there was action and I loved doing them. I enjoy going outdoors and taking challenges. If I do not try new things and get bored myself, what will I give to my audience? And how many actors get the opportunity to play a character like Sanjukta? So I tried to do as much as I could in this film and think people will like the action scenes.

**Do you use body-doubles?**

No, never. I have immense respect for those who do, but it's a very demanding profession.

**Since you do all your stunts yourself, is there any training that you undergo?**

I train in the gym very hard, which has helped me evolve in my fitness journey. For certain films, you need specific training like I had to learn Krav Maga for *Khela Jokhon* and practise the combat scene in *Dainee*. But for *Raktabeej 2*, I know the character and having come from a commercial background, I am aware of how things happen.

**How do you prepare yourself for films that deal with sensitive issues?**

I do not really prepare myself. Now we have no clue what blows out of proportion. I don't think about that anymore because you cannot control it, and more so because of social media. As an actor, my job is to not do something that will affect my society adversely or send out the wrong message. This is a conscious choice I make.

**How do you deal with the negativity on social media?**

I ignore. I only address it when it crosses a limit. And everyone should take action when needed.

**Recently fans loved seeing you with Subhashree Ganguly, saying that your friendship has rekindled. To begin with, there was no problem despite what people assumed. Every year on my birthday she sends me flowers and I**

do the same. We watch and appreciate each other's works. Just because we don't kiss and post on social media doesn't mean we are having a problem.

**Let's talk about work-life balance.**

**What do you do when you are not working?**

I have zero interest in being anywhere else but my home. I hate going out and dressing up. My job is to dress up and socialise, I don't want to do that when I am not working. I love spending time with my dogs, or in my garden. I visit dog institutes and feed cows and detach from social media. I love peace and nature and animals bring me that.

**You are a dog person, where do you stand on the stray dog issue?**

I am an animal person. With all due regards, the apex court of India considers dogs as threats, but not rapists, molesters, cat-callers, or murderers. That is very sad. There are more troubling issues in the capital, such as air pollution. The apex court should not view the voiceless as threats; there are other authorities responsible for such matters. Who will talk for them if we don't?

**What are your Puja plans?**

I organise the Puja in my apartment, so I stay there and go nowhere. I make it a point to never leave Kolkata and have never agreed to work for events during Puja.

Releasing in theatres today.

— Udishia

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✉ @indulgexpress

**action**  
*Fearless femme*

Mimi Chakraborty is back this Puja as the tough cop Sanjukta Mitra in *Raktabeej 2*

With all due regards, the apex court of India considers dogs as threats, but not rapists, molesters, cat-callers, or murderers. That is very sad. There are more troubling issues in the capital, such as air pollution. The apex court should not view the voiceless as threats; there are other authorities responsible for such matters

”



out  
of the  
box

drama

# UNVEILING THE MYSTERY

Director Ayan Chakraborti spills the beans on the long wait for *Indu 3* and whether there will be more to the character

**A**YANCHAKRABORTIREMAINED firm in brushing aside all rumours: Indu's story ends with the season finale. Ayan talks about directing the popular series in its last leg.

**What took so long for *Indu 3* to finally release?**

This is actually Sahana's (Dutta) series. She wrote the first two seasons. I have just come in for the third season as writer-director. Since Sahana has been busy with other works, she was not able to find time to write *Indu 3*, which is why I had to step in for the finale season.

**Since there are three directors in the series, how has uniformity in the narrative been maintained?**

There is no issue with continuity. Most of us who work in the Bengali entertainment industry get so little time to shoot that there is more or less continuity maintained in the narrative.

**Did the massive success of *Indu 1* and *2* add to the burden of keeping up with the series' fame?**

Absolutely. Immense pressure was always

there—in fact, it is still there. After watching seasons 1 and 2, people have a lot of expectations. The pressure definitely lies in whether season 3 will be able to touch that mark or not, and whether it will go beyond. One has to give certain twists that people would not have thought of at all.

**Do you think it is better to keep a narrative as a limited series?**

I prefer the narrative to end in a limited structure. That is why I probably come in to write off the series. *Shei Je Holud Pakhi* season 2, *Paap 2*, and *Indu 3* are also mine. I prefer to conclude the narrative.

**What is the easiest thing about working with an ensemble cast?**

I like having an ensemble cast. Even in my other works, there is an ensemble cast. The advantage is that the pressure doesn't fall on the shoulders of any one actor; rather, it gets divided.

Ayan Chakraborti

Pic: Pritam Sarkar



ed. Moreover, whenever I write, there are a lot of characters in the narrative, so obviously, there will be an ensemble cast.

*Indu 3* releases on September 27 on Hoichoi.

—Subhadrika Sen

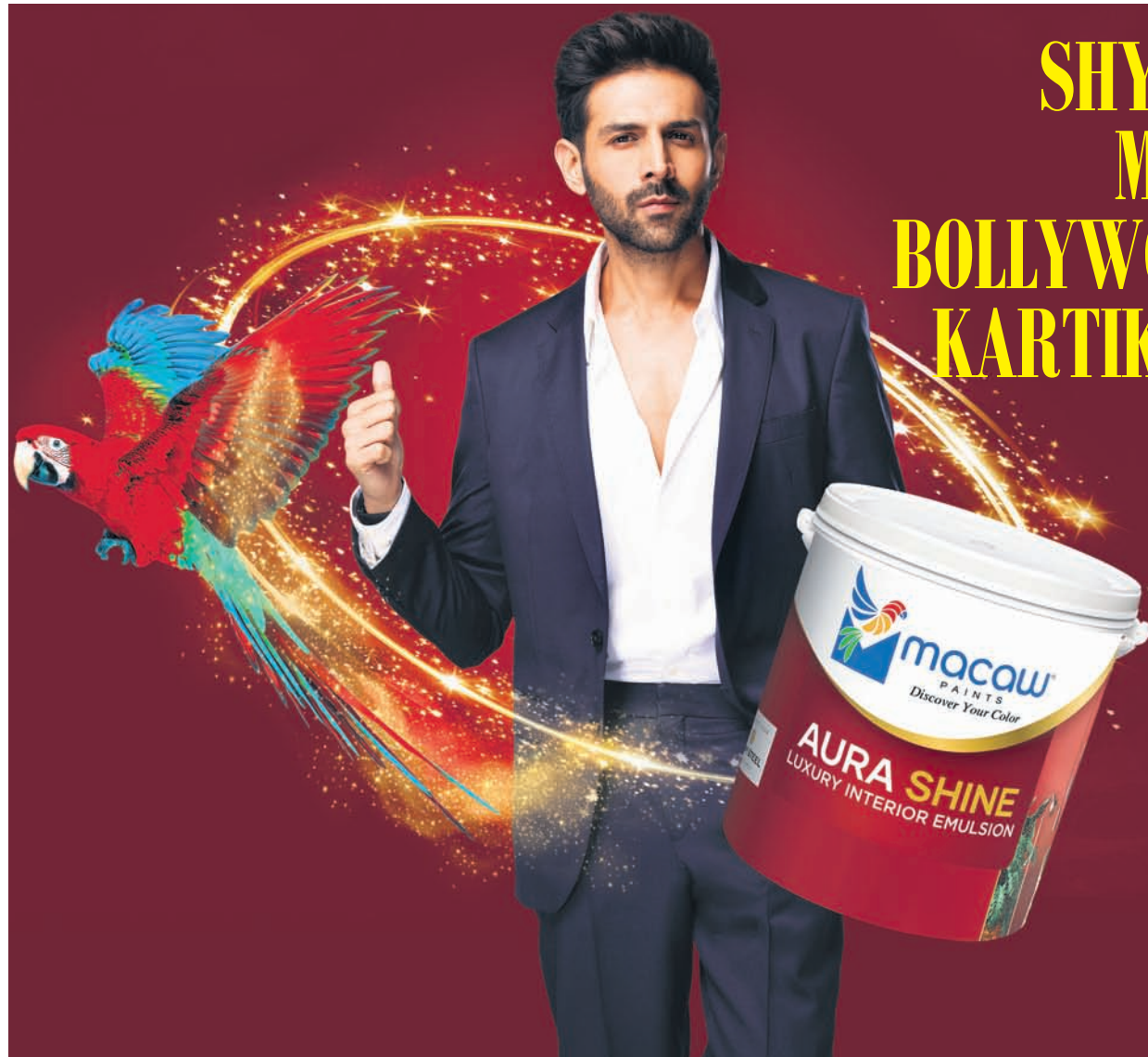
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## SHYAM STEEL LAUNCHES MACAW PAINTS WITH BOLLYWOOD'S HEARTTHROB KARTIK AARYAN AS BRAND AMBASSADOR



**S**hyam Steel, one of India's most trusted steel brands with a legacy spanning over 79 years, proudly announced its grand entry into the decorative paints industry with its vibrant new brand – Macaw Paints. To add youthful charm and star power, Bollywood's young superstar Kartik Aaryan has been onboarded as the brand ambassador. With its core philosophy *Macaw ke rang, magic ke sang*, Macaw Paints promises to bring bold, vibrant, and premium paints to homes across India. As the company states, these are truly "Paints that carry trust, legacy, and blessings".

Expressing his excitement, Kartik Aaryan shared, "I am delighted to be associated with Macaw Paints from the house of Shyam Steel as a brand ambassador. Just as paints bring joy and vibrancy to our lives, Macaw Paints brings freshness and magic to every home".

A Shyam Steel spokesperson said, "For us, Bengal is not just a market but an emotion. Launching Macaw Paints during Durga Puja reflects the spirit, energy, and cultural pride of the region. With youth icon Kartik Aaryan, who is loved across generations and cherished in family homes, as our brand ambassador, Bengal witnesses a new udaan – Macaw Paints".

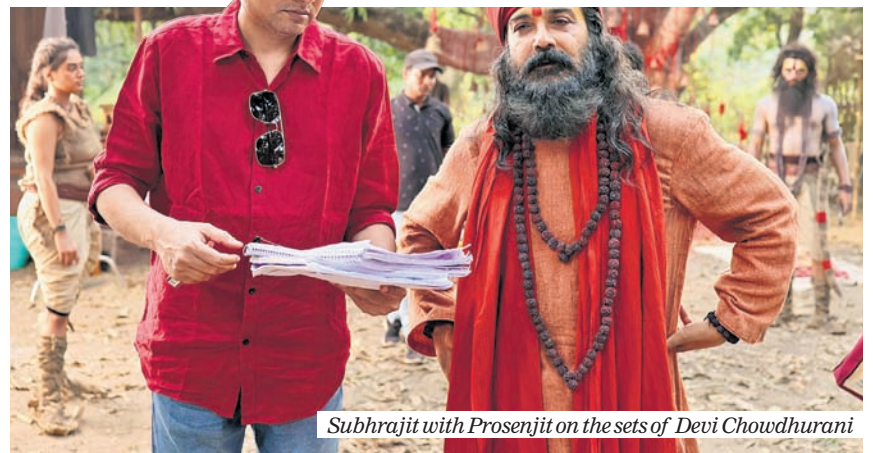


# PATRIOTISM WITH A TWIST

Filmmaker Subhrajit Mitra's Puja release *Devi Chowdhurani* revisits the story of Bengal's one of the most fearless women



Subhrajit Mitra



Subhrajit with Prosenjit on the sets of *Devi Chowdhurani*

**A**FTER AVIJATRIK'S NATIONAL Award win, filmmaker Subhrajit Mitra got a proposal from a Mumbai-based production house to write a script around the historic Battle of Plassey that led to the toppling of Siraj-ud-Daulah's reign in Bengal. The ensuing research led Subhrajit to other contemporary events happening around that time, including the Sanyasi and Fakir rebellions and the Great Bengal Famine, which happened in 1776. The fascinating history of that period drew Subhrajit to further research and he realised that author Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's two novels, *Anandamath* and *Devi Chowdhurani*, had these events as the background too.

"I liked the narrative of *Devi Chowdhurani* because it is the story of an ordinary woman's extraordinary journey, blending feminism with patriotism. And, this film came into being. I started reading the stories of Devi Chowdhurani and Bhavani Pathak's fights against the colonisers, preserved in the East India Company Archival Records. My film is more about fictionalising the history instead of following the novel to the tee," recalls Subhrajit as he chats with *Indulge* about his latest film *Devi Chowdhurani*, which is set for release today.

**Devi Chowdhurani is a legend with both fiction and lore attached to her. How well did you do your research?**

Devi Chowdhurani is a legend, but she is also part of a long-forgotten history. Actually, she was the *zamindar* of Rongpur district's Manthana village. Her real name was Joydurga Devi. The local folk tales and the East India Company records also added to the lore. I am always neck-deep into studies related to archaeology and history, albeit from different eras and subjects. So, almost all of my films are perfect in terms of research work.

**How much of the film sticks to reality?**

I definitely had to fictionalise it, because at the end of the day, I have to tell a story through the film. The events mentioned have corroborative evidence along

with a splash of drama. But, of course, it had to be realistic too. I have taken help of Bankimchandra's novel for the skeleton of the story. I feel the film is very much true to history.

**Why did you choose Srabanti Chatterjee for the role?**

Srabanti was my only choice. If you read the description of Devi Chowdhurani by Bankimchandra, Srabanti fits the bill perfectly: a facelike Goddess Durga, not exactly a gym figure. If you look at the 18th-century Indian social fabric, the upper castes had certain beauty standards: a woman must be fair, with dark, long hair, and must have a curvy figure. Srabanti has it all. Also, she is the best from her generation in acting. It is the industry's loss that she hasn't been explored beyond commercial, mainstream cinema, except for a few films like *Goynar Baksho* and *Buno Haansh*. For this film, she learned horse-riding, to wield a sword, and went to the gym. She has a broad bone structure, which is a must for sword-fighting. No one could have done Devi Chowdhurani better than Srabanti.

**And why Prosenjit Chatterjee for the role of Bhavani Pathak?**

Bhavani Pathak is a larger-than-life character who has his own aura. I don't know anyone who can play this character perfectly. Kamal Haasan, perhaps. Since I needed the Bangaliyaana, Prosenjit was perfect. And he was the first one I read the script to, even before Srabanti.

As a director, I am satisfied to have worked with them. Srabanti is a director's actor, and so is Prosenjit. Despite being such a senior actor, he would listen to my dialogue deliveries like an obedient student. This is what makes him who he is.

**What would be the audience's takeaway?**

After ages, a film has been made based on Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's novel. This is a Bengali film about Bengal's culture and legacy, and is a beautiful story from our forgotten history.

**What's your upcoming project?**

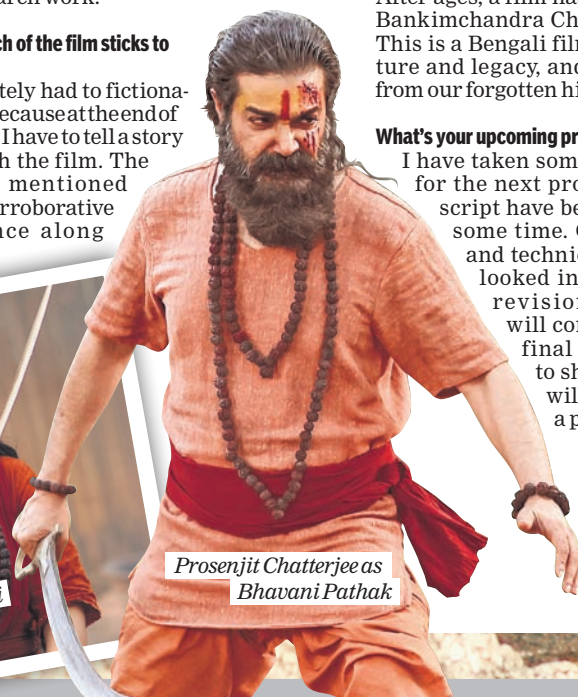
I have taken some basic preparations for the next projects. Research and script have been in place for quite some time. Currently, logistical and technical aspects are being looked into along with script revisions. Once done, we will contact actors with the final draft before moving to shoot. The next project will be my first venture as a producer as well.

— Sharmistha Ghosal

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Srabanti as  
Devi Chowdhurani



Prosenjit Chatterjee as  
Bhavani Pathak



**I**MAGINE WAKING UP without that nagging ache in your knees or back, your skin glowing with confidence, and your body humming with energy instead of weighed down by bloating or fatigue. For countless people like busy mothers battling arthritis in harsh winters or young professionals fighting stubborn eczema, raw potato juice has been a quiet hero, turning everyday struggles into stories of triumph. This humble kitchen staple isn't just food; it's a nutrient-packed elixir that can gently restore balance and vitality. Packed with vitamin C for immune strength, fibre for smooth digestion, B vitamins for steady energy, potassium for heart health, magnesium for calm nerves, manganese for bone support, copper and iron for vibrant blood, etc, raw potato juice offers a natural boost that's easy, affordable, and backed by real experiences and science.

**Let's look at a few benefits of the same:**

- Raw potato juice's natural anti-inflammatory powers and compounds like antioxidants and minerals help calm swelling in joints, from arthritis flares in cold weather to back or elbow discomfort.
- Ever feel like your body is running so tired that no nap can fix it? Poor circulation might be the culprit, starving your billions of cells of oxygen and nutrients. Raw potato juice steps in like a gentle guide, enhancing blood flow to deliver life-giving essentials everywhere. The result means better digestion of the foods you love, turning meals into fuel that reaches every corner of you. Feel

# Potato power

Potatoes are nutrient-packed elixirs that can gently restore balance and vitality



the warmth of renewed vitality, knowing your heart and cells are thriving.

- In our fast-paced world of stress, junk food, and medicines, our bodies can tip toward acidity, inviting discomfort and fatigue. Raw potato juice, highly alkaline, helps restore that delicate pH harmony, creating an environment where wellness flourishes.
- That persistent itch from eczema or the embarrassment of dry patches? Raw potato juice offers tender relief when applied topically. Its soothing properties help in pigmentation, fading rashes, cleansing, under-eye puffiness, etc. Use raw potato juice application once a week only to get its benefit.
- The sharp toe pain of gout signals kidney overload from uric acid buildup. Raw potato juice breaks it down and flushes it out, easing that torment. A cup of juice first thing in the morning keeps the body alkaline and helps in reducing uric acid as well.
- Heartburn, bloating, or that post-meal discomfort from gastritis steals the pleasure from eating. A tablespoon or two of raw potato juice in water 45 minutes before meals neutralises acidity, bringing soothing relief in one to two weeks. Do it for two weeks only and then stop.
- Applying raw potato juice to the scalp and hair keeps the hair softer, reduces dandruff, slows greying, and improves hair follicles. Apply the juice and rinse after 20-30 minutes.



## HEALTHY LIVING DEEPIKA RATHOD

Chief Nutrition Officer, Luke Coutinho Holistic Healing Systems. The writer is a clinical nutritionist with a focus on healthy lifestyle choices.



## FIBRE: NOT JUST ROUGHAGE, BUT RESILIENCE

**A**S A CELEBRITY dietitian, I often see people chasing protein shakes and exotic superfoods, while overlooking something deeply simple—fibre. Right now, the trend of "fibre-maxxing" is making waves on social media, and for good reason.

Fibre does more than just keep you "regular." It helps lower cholesterol, stabilise blood sugar, nurture good gut bacteria, and even reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes. But there's a catch. Too much fibre too quickly, especially from supplements or processed sources, can cause bloating, gas, and discomfort.

Take Neha, one of my clients, for example. She wanted a flat stomach and jumped onto fibre supplements overnight. Within a week, she felt swollen, uncomfortable, and frustrated. When we switched her approach to whole-food fibre—lentils, brown rice, leafy greens, and fruit and spread her intake across meals, the transformation was remarkable. By the third week, she felt lighter, more energetic, and noticed improvements not just in her appearance, but in her mood and digestion too.

So how do you do fibre-maxxing? Prioritise whole foods like beans, vegetables, and whole grains. Increase your intake gradually, not all at once. Drink plenty of water to help fibre do its job. And aim for a mix of soluble fibre (like oats and apples) and insoluble fibre (like leafy greens and bran) for a balanced gut.

Trends come and go, but consistency is what truly matters. Fibre may not be flashy, but when honoured properly, it quietly builds resilience—for your gut, your metabolism, and your long-term health.

**Priyanka Shah,**  
clinical dietitian and founder  
at Nutridate with Priyanka.



### ARIES

(Mar 21 - Apr 19)

Legal battles and court cases will be won. Those who are fighting against justice and inequality will see the light of the day. The ruling will be made in your favour, so do not give up now. You can manifest the life you want, and what you need will magically appear in front of you. Successful new beginnings will be the highlight of this week. Monitor your finances. Lucky colours: **Red, black**



### TAURUS

(Apr 20 - May 20)

You have done a wonderful job, and now it is time for you to move to your next project. Awards, scholarships, and promotions are on the cards. Insights will come only from quiet meditation. Ensure you get enough sleep or take time off. You have the power to nurture yourself and those you love by making anything more beautiful. Lucky colour: **Bright pink**



### GEMINI

(May 21 - June 20)

You can achieve anything right now, provided you go after what you desire. This is going to be your lucky week, where new resources of money, time, and support are coming your way. A job change or promotion is going to be the highlight. With determination and self-control, you will be galloping towards your career advancement. Your success will be acknowledged. Lucky colours: **Golden, white**

## Angel Calendar

This weekly column is based on angel oracle guidance and numbers



### AALIYAA H JARRIWALA

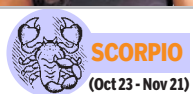
Chaldean numerologist,  
Angel oracle  
guide & healer



### LIBRA

(Sep 23 - Oct 22)

It's time to make a decision and be clear about what you want. Take action only when you are completely sure about the consequences. You need a complete detoxification and balancing of your chakras. Release yourself from the past, and you will grow from the situation. Time heals all wounds. The search for the meaning in life is in uplifting yourself. Lucky colour: **Purple**



### SCORPIO

(Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Release the past and let it go. There is a more enriching future coming. Your dreams are going to be fulfilled because of the hard work you have put in the past. There are better ways of action available for you, and working alone may not be the best answer. Review all your details before proceeding ahead. Those who are into trading or betting, think twice. Lucky colour: **Dark blue**



### SAGITTARIUS

(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Your plans will work out as expected. Professional and financial success is guaranteed, provided you use your resources wisely. A rise in salary or an increment is on the cards. The joy that comes through spiritual growth is the ultimate form of joy. You have the power to be the light to others. At work, there are better ways to handle a situation. Lucky colour: **Light lavender**



### CANCER

(June 21 - July 22)

There is so much to achieve in the coming days, provided you make a detailed plan of it right now. It is important for you to balance your personal and professional life, as working multiple jobs can be taxing. Keep your sense of humour intact, and you shall be able to sail through. A gift of passion and inspiration is coming. Lucky colour: **Orange**



### LEO

(July 23 - Aug 22)

This week, you will meet a person who will have a great sense of humour, is self-reliant and brilliant in his or her work field. This is the time for your career rather than relationships. Focus only on the big picture and leave the final details to others. Your materialistic needs will get fulfilled in the most magical ways. Charity will amplify your blessings. Lucky colour: **Fuchsia pink**



### VIRGO

(Aug 23 - Sep 22)

You can be free from the demons of the past, provided you make a courageous choice to change your situation. Due to overwhelming emotions, you may not be able to see things clearly. Focus your thoughts only on the outcome you desire. Release any feeling of regret. This is a crucial time for your celebrations. Lucky colour: **Lime green**



### CAPRICORN

(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Stand up for what you believe in and have confidence to claim your personal power. A dream of yours will come true, provided you believe in yourself. The end of a difficult situation will also mark a new beginning. Powerful psychic insights, reflection, and meditation will provide valuable information. Be at peace from within. Lucky colour: **Magenta**



### AQUARIUS

(Jan 20 - Feb 18)

With full confidence, enthusiasm, and your courageous nature, it is time for you to take action. Embrace your inner child and new friends. Relationships will bring a lot of happiness. Spend more quality time with your childhood friends or your children. Everything in life happens for a reason, so release any regret. Lucky colour: **Emerald green**



### PISCES

(Feb 19 - Mar 20)

The wheel of fortune favours you now. A change in direction will offer you happiness. For those who have been angry at themselves and others around them, the times are changing now. A gift of fashion opportunity and inspiration is coming your way. Business partnerships will work out well. Lucky colours: **White, light brown**



# on-screen/showtime

telewatch

**Horror-comedy: Death of a Unicorn**  
This wild film from the house of A24 follows the story of Elliot (Paul Rudd) and Ridley (Jenna Ortega) as they encounter an accident which results in the death of a unicorn. Unaware of the looming threat from its parents and in a split moment decision, Elliot and Ridley choose to drive to their destination. Upon discovering the magical nature of the creature, a horrific range of events unfolds, changing the father-daughter duo's life forever. September 28. On JioHotstar.

## Docu-series: Nightmares of Nature

Divided into two chapters: *A Cabin in the Woods* and *Lost in the Jungle*, this nature documentary series gets a spooky twist, presenting tales of survival in the wild from the perspective of the animals that are the subject of these stories. *A Cabin in the Woods*, releasing first, will follow a pregnant mouse, a raccoon and a froglet taking refuge in a cabin in the North American woods as their trusted shelter. But their fight for survival is only beginning. *Lost in the Jungle* will shift the focus to the rain forests of South America. September 30. On Netflix.



## Janaawar – The Beast Within

Sub-Inspector Hemant Kumar (Bhuvan Arora), a dedicated cop and member of a marginalised community, is investigating three heinous crimes that have shaken up the inhabitants of Chhand, a fictional town. As mysteries are uncovered, Hemant realises that corruption and other crimes are deep-seated in the community. He must take his next actions carefully while dealing with his demons. September 26. On Zee5.



## Romance: All of You

In a world where a 'soulmate test' is accepted as a trusted way to find love, college best friends Simon (Brett Goldstein) and Laura (Imogen Poots) are at a crossroads, after sharing a platonic relationship for many years, when they realise that they cannot deny the feelings that they share for one another. Given that Laura took that test years ago, leading her to find Lucas (Steven Cree) and build a marriage and family with him, what happens next? September 26. On AppleTV+.

## Drama: 13th: Some Lessons Aren't Taught in Classrooms

Inspired by real-life events, *13th* will follow Ritesh (Pareesh Pahuja), who's tired of seeing start-ups begin and fail as a venture capitalist. Leaving his corporate job behind, Ritesh discovers that his mentor, MT Sir (Gagan Dev Riar), is attempting to start an ed-tech company that aspires to make a real change in society. With hopeful tones and meaningful lessons, this will be an inspiring watch. October 1. On Sony Liv.



## Thriller: The Savant

Inspired by a popular pre-COVID-19 article, Jessica Chastain stars and executive produces this thriller series. As the titular character, Jessica portrays the life of an undercover investigator who balances a suburban life while unearthing disturbing online conspiracies and foiling plans of online hate groups who may be planning acts of extreme violence. September 26. On AppleTV+.

## Sports: ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, 2025: India vs Sri Lanka

India takes on co-host Sri Lanka in the opening match of the biggest stage in cricket, the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025. With an in-form Smriti Mandanna showing off her prowess in the recently concluded bilateral series against Australia and all-rounder Deepti Sharma stepping up during crucial moments, the dominant side will look to begin its World Cup campaign with a brilliant display. September 30. On JioHotstar.



hot  
stuff

## technology/gizmos

INDULGE

THE MORNING STANDARD  
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 | KOLKATA

slim

The iPhone Air offers a taste of the future, today

# AIR APPARENT

IT'S PRETTY AMAZING how even shaving off a few grams and slimming down the side profile can have a dramatic effect on how a phone feels in the hand. Yet so it is with the iPhone Air, the first major shakeup in iPhone design since the all-screen iPhone X, a phone so different from every other iPhone that it's the first flagship after the 2007 original to not have a number attached to it.

Over the past week of using the Air out and about in public, I've had people come up and ask to hold the device and loudly wonder "Where's the rest of the phone?" At just 5.6 millimeters thick and 165 grams for a 6.5-inch phone — for reference, the iPhone 17 Pro with its smaller 6.3-inch screen is 8.75mm thick and weighs 204 grams — the difference is palpable. And with its rounded corner and polished titanium edges, it comes closest to what I'd describe as holding a futuristic screen in your hand, with the "phone elements" disappearing away from view — you really have to hold this in your hand to appreciate the craftsmanship and how good it feels in the hand. Pictures just don't do it justice.

Its sleek dimensions raised eyebrows (initially) about durability and strength, and while I haven't subjected the Air to the 'meant-for-views' bend tests, the titanium frame held up pretty well when I dropped the phone onto the tiled flooring (for science!), as has the Ceramic Shield 2 panel that offers better scratch

resistance. All this reengineering doesn't come at the cost of the IP68 rating for dust and water resistance, and the slim frame makes space for the customizable Action button and the Camera Control key while forgoing a physical SIM slot — the Air is eSIM only.

As for the display itself, it joins the rest of the 17 lineup with 3000 nits of peak brightness, 1-120Hz ProMotion support and an anti-reflective coating that does well to cut down glare under direct lighting. The screen-only phone effect is rather pronounced when you're watching content on the Air, and if anything is let down, it is only by the exclusion of a second stereo speaker — the mono speaker, while packing punch and volume, is left a little hamstrung with the single channel audio.

In the story of superlatives thus far, the manner in which Apple has kitted out the Air with the more powerful A19 Pro chip, the custom C1X modem and N1 wireless chip for Wi-Fi 7/Bluetooth 6 all within the camera plateau on the rear deserves mention, and it plays a big role in another key factor: battery life. With the Pro chip, the Air is never left wanting for speed or grunt, even if you're running the new glassy iOS 26 interface or if you push it with demanding games or AI-intensive tasks, though I'd recommend you opt for the bulkier Pro/Pro Max if you're looking for pure sustained performance.

Now, packing the phone internals into the top fifth of the device means Apple's been able to pack in a slim battery across the rest of the device, and in my experience, I managed about a day's worth (between 11 and 12 hours) of use. Snapping on the new iPhone Air MagSafe battery, a slim battery pack that adds about 5-6 hours of use, feels like a middle-ground solution — carry a slim phone for most of the day, and juice it up when needed for longer days.

That leaves us with the last and possibly most controversial decision — the single 48MP Fusion camera setup — and really, it may not be enough for you. While the single shooter takes great shots and portraits, and you do get the new Center Stage selfie camera that takes portrait and landscape selfies without changing your grip, excluding the ultra-wide means you will have to take a few steps back for that group shot and miss out on macro photography altogether. Having had the almost-as-thin Samsung S25 Edge pass through these pages earlier this year, that was a compromise the competition somehow was able to overcome.

In the end, the Air may ask some tradeoffs of those who decide to buy it, but it rewards you each time you pick it up. One week down, I still smile at just how much I'm enjoying using the Air — it nails style while keeping things light, perfect for fashionistas and light-packers alike.

—Tushar Kanwar

The writer is a tech columnist and commentator and tweets @2shar

Rating: 8/10  
Price: 1,19,900 onwards

wearable

# Watch Out

Apple's entry-level watch no longer feels like settling for less



IT'S A STORY similar to the base iPhone. Every year, the Watch SE represented the "there but not quite" option, in that it had all the elements but was held back to meet a lower price point. Much like the iPhone on this page, the year sees Apple flip the script, with the Apple Watch SE 3 seeing the biggest upgrades, year on year.

Still the splitting image of the 2022 SE, the SE 3 is now available in 40mm and 44mm options, and sure, the bezels are still there (and noticeably thicker than the Watch Series 11), but the watch sees an upgrade to

Ion-X enhanced glass, which is the same as on the Series 11 for improved scratch resistance. Crucially, you now get an always-on display for telling time at a quick glance, without having to raise your wrist or tap the display. On the SE 3, the OLED display ships with a peak brightness of 1,000 nits, which dims to 500 nits when your arm is down to continue showing you the time, your workout stats, or a phone notification.

Under the hood, the third-generation Watch SE is powered by the same S10 chip that powers the Series 11 and the Ultra 3,

which enables all the double-tap gestures, wrist flick controls, and on-device Siri that give the SE 3 a proper, uncompromised feel. The story continues on health features, with the SE 3 packing many of the same health tracking features as the Series 11, including sleep apnea detection, high- and low-heart-rate alerts, AFib detection, temperature sensors for more granular menstrual tracking, and the ability to calculate a nightly Sleep Score, the latter a new feature that rates each night of sleep based on when you slept, how long you slept and how many times your sleep was interrupted. Super handy to look at in the morning and know why you're feeling the way you are.

You do miss out on the Watch Series 11's ECG tracking and blood oxygen monitoring for the pretty savings you make on the SE 3. You'll also have to contend with average battery life and charge daily, but when you do, it will go past the 50% mark in just 30 minutes, perfect for a splash and dash in the middle of the day if needed. Bear in mind, the smaller display and sizes may work better for those with smaller wrists, but it may be too small for others, so try one on for size before picking it up.

—TK



Rating: 9/10  
Price: 25,900 (40mm) onwards



**I**F THERE IS one company that understands the pulse of the market, it is Maruti Suzuki. In 2025, the company brings to us the car that has it all—the VICTORIS.

Let's start with taking a look at the actual product. With a length that's just shy of 4.4 metres and a wheelbase of 2600mm, the VICTORIS is not shy of space. On the outside, the vehicle is totally high-tech with all LED lighting on the top models with extended features. The rear also gets a connected LED lamp at the back, making it look quite futuristic. Here too, the top models get a powered tailgate with gesture control.

Step inside and you can see where Maruti has made a difference. There is a snappy 10.1-inch touchscreen in the centre for the infotainment and other control displays. It has a sharp display and shows no lag. Wireless CarPlay and Android Auto are present, and for the first time again in a Maruti, you get an Infinity sound system with a total of eight speakers, including two subs! Dolby Atmos is present to rock you in a 5.1 channel format, so everything from ragas to rock sounds fantastic — and we love that rotary volume control.

There are three powertrain options—petrol, S-CNG, and Full Hybrid. As expected, the S-CNG is the slowball here with a mere 87 horses at its disposal. However, it does come with an innovative system of positioning of the CNG cylinders below the floor level, freeing up boot space. You get a choice of a 5-speed manual, a 6-speed auto, and the Hybrids get an eCVT. Interestingly, Maruti also offers ALLGRIP (its version of all-wheel-drive) in select variants as well, though only with

# AN INDIGENOUS WIN

India's largest car manufacturer has just introduced its fully indigenous SUV and it comes with three separate powertrain options and innovative packaging



an automatic. We drove this very version and were really happy with the way the car drove over a variety of surfaces, with its good ground clearance ensuring that we did not run afoul of any potholes or speed breakers.

Safety has not been ignored as well, and the VICTORIS has scored a 5-star safety rating not only in BharatNCAP but also in GlobalNCAP as well, making it one of the safest vehicles on Indian roads. Six airbags are standard across the range. Again, for the first time, Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) Level 2.0 makes an appearance with the VICTORIS.

Whatever little we drove the VICTORIS, we came away with the feeling that finally Maruti has made a car that has everything except the proverbial kitchen sink. The VICTORIS is available in 21 variants—yes, you read that right—and there is one model for everyone. Does it warrant a place in your garage? We would say a resounding yes.

Prices start at  
₹10.5 lakh, ex-showroom.  
— Ranojoy Mukerji  
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## The week that was



### • BMW launches 1000RR

The new BMW S 1000 R is fitted with an oil/water-cooled four-cylinder four-stroke in-line engine with a displacement of 999 cc. Peak output is 170 hp at 11,000 rpm, and a maximum torque of 114 Nm at 9,250 rpm, sprinting from 0-100 km/h in 3.2 seconds, and a maximum speed of 250 km/h. (Electronically Limited). The R comes equipped with standard features such as the M Quick Action Throttle, Engine Drag Torque Control (MSR), etc. Priced at ₹19.9 lakh, ex-showroom.



### • Renault's 10th Anniv. KWID

Renault India has launched a special 10th anniversary edition of the KWID, limited to 500 units. Two new dual colour options include a yellow line in the grille, shiny black flex wheels, and a new interior theme with yellow accents on the seats and metal mustard trims. You also get illuminated scuff plates and puddle lamps. 3-point seatbelts are now standard, and six airbags are standard on the Climber variant. Both manual and Easy-R AMT transmission choices are available. Prices for the KWID Anniversary edition start at ₹15.14 lakh, ex-showroom, onwards.

impressive

A scooter from one of India's larger two-wheeler manufacturers has the guts and the glory to battle it out in a crowded market place

THE TVS NTORQ has always stood out as a symbol of performance in the scooter segment. With the introduction of a 150cc variant, this position seems to have been cemented even further. Performance and reliability were always the brand's forte, and with the official launch of the afore-said 150cc version, the scooter



## Street performer

seems to be the market leader now.

The design, of course, is something new—a fresh take, featuring an arrowhead-shaped front apron inspired by what the company calls a Graphite concept. It comes equipped with an all-LED headlight that includes a sophisticated four-part projector unit and LED DRLs, which double as turn indicators. Visually, it appears larger than the NTORQ 125, clearly identifying it as a 150cc model. The vibrant yellow colour, complemented by matching 12-inch alloy wheels, adds to its appeal.

With a naked handlebar that lends a sporty, motorcycle-like and switchgear borrowed from

the Apache motorcycle series, the NTORQ 150 is designed for those seeking a more thrilling ride. The under-seat storage mirrors that of the NTORQ 125, adding to its practicality.

The digital console resembles a gaming interface, featuring ride modes, trip details, and connectivity options for pairing with a smartphone app. You can also connect a smartwatch, and things like music can be controlled from the dash as well. A lot of features exist, including the ability to support turn-by-turn navigation on the vibrant TFT display. Other safety features include adjustable brake levers, a new master cylinder (found on larger bikes), single-channel ABS, a large petal disc brake up front, and a drum brake at the rear. The addition of traction control is a notable advantage for this scooter.

The NTORQ 150 is powered by a 3-valve engine that delivers 13 bhp and 14 Nm of torque. Its micro-

hybrid assist system provides a quick torque boost right from the start, and the company claims it can go from 0 to 60 km/h in just 6.3 seconds. The CVT gearbox is smooth and refined, enabling the engine to rev freely. Nonetheless, the scooter showcases excellent riding performance, maintaining stability and balance without compromising ride quality. It also impresses with solid braking performance and tire grip, thanks to the Eurogrip Remora tires. While the rear suspension may feel a tad soft, most riders will find it manageable unless pushing the scooter to its limits on the track. Impressively, the top speed exceeds 100 km/h, with heavier riders hitting 100 km/h on the speedometer and lighter riders reaching a 110!

Overall, we are thoroughly impressed with the TVS NTORQ 150's performance, practicality, and aesthetics, making it a top recommendation in its category against all competitors.

Priced at ₹1.19 lakh onwards, ex-showroom.  
— Mohit Soni



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