



# Exit Polls indicate upsets

## Congress to sweep Haryana

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI/ HARYANA

The exit polls have predicted a thumping majority for Congress in Haryana, after a decade. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is projected to trail significantly. According to the exit polls the regional parties will have considerable losses. With this, the political landscape of Haryana is set for a dramatic shift. The voter turnout was 61.19 percent till 8 pm on Saturday. The results will be declared on October 8. The Dainik Bhaskar poll predicted the Congress getting 44-54 seats and the BJP 15-29 seats in the 90-member Haryana Assembly. The Republic-Matrise poll put the Congress tally even higher at 55-62 seats as against the BJP's 18-24. According to NDTV's Poll of Polls, 55-62 seats are predicted for the Congress while the ruling BJP may win 20-32 seats. The Red Mike-Datansh exit poll gave the Congress 50-55 seats in Haryana and the BJP at 20-25, while the Dhruv Research poll pegged the Congress at 50-64 seats, BJP 22-32 seats, and others 3-8 seats. Peoples' Pulse exit poll gave the Congress 49-60 seats and the BJP 20-32 seats in Haryana. Most exit polls pegged the Indian National Lok Dal



Voters wait in a queue to cast their votes at a polling station in Rohtak, Haryana PTI

(INLD) tally higher than that of the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), while others were seen getting up to 10 seats. The ruling BJP is eyeing a hat-trick while the Congress is hoping to make a comeback in the state after a decade. The other key contestants are Congress, JJP, INLD, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), INLD, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and Azad Samaj Party (ASP). Key candidates include Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, BJP leaders Anil Vij and OP Dhankar, Congress leaders Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Vinesh Phogat, INLD's Abhay Singh Chautala, and JJP's Dushyant Chautala. The BJP's campaign was spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who addressed four rallies, where he attacked the Congress on several issues and said they kept every matter important for the country entangled, including the Ram temple issue. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also addressed many public meetings where he said a "Congress storm" is on its way in Haryana and his party would form the government, which will be one for the poor and

farmers, and a "mohabbat ki dukan" will be opened in every corner of the state. In the 2019 Assembly elections, the BJP won 40 of the 90 seats, forming a coalition government with the JJP, which won 10 seats. The Congress secured 31 seats. However, JJP later broke out of the coalition. Manohar Lal Khattar served as the Chief Minister of Haryana for around 9.5 years. He was succeeded by Nayab Singh Saini in March this year. The single phase polling for 90 Assembly Constituencies in Haryana concluded largely peacefully, in more than 20,000 polling stations set up in the state, except for stray incidents of minor scuffles and stonelpelling were reported from Haryana's Nuh district. The Election Commission has seized cash, drugs and liquor worth Rs. 75.72 crores in Haryana in the run up to the polls. This is four times more than the seizures worth Rs 19.3 crore, reported in 2019. Seizures have been made across all districts & cohorts, which includes Rs. 31.5 crore cash, Rs. 16.6 crore worth of liquor and 11.13 crore drugs. Ambala (Rs

11.82 crores), Faridabad (Rs 10.07 crores) and Gurugram (Rs 9.94 crores) remained the top 3 districts in terms of seizures. Mewar recorded voter turnout of 68.28 percent, followed by Yamunanagar 67.93 percent and Palwal (67.69 percent). Gurugram and Faridabad recorded lowest voter turnout of 49.97 percent and 51.90 percent respectively. Interestingly, BJP leader and Kurukshetra MP Naveen Jindal arrived at a polling station in Kurukshetra on a horse to cast his vote, while a groom delayed his wedding to cast his vote, and Olympians proudly flaunted their inked fingers. "Riding a horse is considered auspicious... People ride horses while going to attend weddings. That is why I came on a horse for his auspicious work," Jindal told reporters after casting his vote. On his mother Savitri Jindal contesting the polls as an Independent from Hisar, Jindal told reporters people made her contest the elections and they were quite enthusiastic about her candidature. The EC bringing polling booths into high-rise apartment complexes was a hit among their residents who would earlier "think twice about taking out time for voting". The voters residing in many high-rise apartment complexes especially in the NCR cities of Gurugram and Faridabad said they found it convenient to cast their votes as polling stations were set up in several such residential buildings.

**PATANJALI**

Use only Patanjali Cow's Ghee and sesame oil in Pooja lamps

Prepare Prasad at home with pure and Satvik edible oils and other food items to gain Blessings of Goddess Saraswati, and to protect your family from the poison of adulteration.

- Patanjali Cow's Ghee is 100% pure and free from any artificial colour, animal or vegetable fat etc.
- Passed national and international quality tests. Patanjali ghee has proven its 100% purity in more than 60 parameters for testing purity of ghee.

Patanjali's Pure and Satvik Food Products

Shop Online- [www.patanjalijayurved.net](http://www.patanjalijayurved.net) | Customer Care Number - 18001804108  
Order Patanjali Products Online from ORDER ME APP Scan to know Patanjali Stores near you



## NMDC 66<sup>th</sup> AGM Chairman Message

# FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

### Responsible Mining

Scientific | Sustainable | Spreading Smiles



**Dear Shareholders,**  
It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility that I address you as the Chairman and Managing Director of your company - NMDC Limited, a cornerstone in the Indian mining industry. As we navigate through dynamic market landscapes and global economic shifts, I am honoured to lead a company known for its resilience, innovation, and commitment to sustainable growth. NMDC is devoted to Responsible Mining, the goal is to mine sustainably, restore ecosystems, invest in social initiatives, and meet the country's thriving demand for iron and steel. NMDC delivered historic iron ore volumes in FY24, an accomplishment that will echo through time as a testament of its mettle and shape the destiny of the company and the industry. Our legacy has been truly enriched by the surpassing of the 45 million tonnes mark in the financial year 2023-2024. India's largest iron ore producer continued to realize the weight of the country's dreams in fortifying mineral security. In this journey, NMDC has mitigated cyclical volatilities of the sector, built upon its technical and digital strength, bolstered its financial resilience, and worked tirelessly to deliver value to its stakeholders. As we reflect on FY24, I take pride in sharing the achievements, challenges and strategic vision of the company with you. NMDC's operational excellence, financial prudence, and strategic agility dovetailed with the stakeholders' confidence is positioning the company at the forefront of sustainable growth.

**Operational Highlights**

NMDC's major iron ore mines - Kirandul and Bachel in Chhattisgarh, and Donimalai in Karnataka delivered their highest-ever annual production in company history. The bottlenecks in pellet production were also resolved leading to peak volume of 2.65 lakh tonnes pellet production in FY24, highest since the plant's commissioning. During the year under review, NMDC made a strategic move to boost evacuation capacity and build supply chain resilience by commencing operations from its Kumar Marenga stockyard and implementing a 10 MTPA Rapid Wagon Loading System at its Kirandul complex. These developments give a peek into the business model that the company is finalizing for leapfrogging to double its capacity. Another significant development in FY24 was the resumption of operations at Panna Diamond Mines in Madhya Pradesh, revitalizing a historic asset that diversifies our mineral portfolio. A landmark achievement in the direction of expansion and diversification came with the commencement of gold mining at Mount Celia in Western Australia in FY24 through the company's subsidiary, Legacy Iron Ore Limited. Legacy has also signed a Joint Venture agreement to unlock the potential of magnetite resources at Mount Bevan and explore minerals of strategic interest like Lithium in Australia. Towards enhancing efficiency, transparency, and ease of doing business, a new organizational structure - 'Works Organisation' was conceptualised and implemented for the close monitoring and timely execution of all major capital projects.

**ESG Performance**

To minimise carbon emissions, NMDC is moving towards eco-friendly ore transportation through slurry pipelines and railways instead of roadways. Progress in this direction is underway with the doubling of the Kirandul-Kothavalasa railway line expected to be completed in FY25 and the laying of the 15 MTPA Slurry Pipeline from Bachel to Visakhapatnam via Nagarnar slated for completion in FY27. NMDC is building a 2 MTPA Pellet Plant and 10 MTPA Beneficiation Plant along the Slurry Pipeline route with plans to introduce blending yards in its ecosystem as a step towards zero waste mining. The company is also investing in solar and wind energy projects while exploring opportunities to mine critical minerals like lithium and cobalt to fuel the renewable energy sectors and the green transition of India.

**Corporate Governance**

NMDC upholds the highest standards of corporate governance and ensures transparency, accountability, and integrity in all our operations. Corporate governance is not just a regulatory requirement but a fundamental pillar of our culture, guiding our actions and decisions to create long-term value for our stakeholders.

**Towards Progress and Prosperity**

As we progress further into the era of NMDC 2.0, we are gearing up to deliver 50 million tonnes of iron ore in FY25. Our journey from hereon will be guided by an ambitious growth strategy. We are investing in capacity expansion and new infrastructure to augment our production capacity to 72 million tonnes from our existing iron ore mines, while also developing the NCL (NMDC CMDC Limited) JV mines to contribute another 28 million tonnes. Leveraging on our intrinsic strengths and constraint optimization are the two drivers for realisation of our vision to achieve a 100 million tonnes production capacity by 2030. This narrative aligns with the National Steel Policy's vision to enhance India's steel production capacity to 300 million tonnes by 2030. NMDC's 100 million tonnes

would account for a quarter of the ~ 430 million tonnes of raw material required to reach that target. Towards becoming a 100 million tonnes mining company, NMDC is transforming its approach to machinery, material and manpower planning. Innovation and digitalization are key tenets of this transformation. A steely intent is driving our investment in intelligent equipment and cutting edge mining systems, such as Automatic Sampling, Fleet Management, and Rapid Wagon Loading. These technologies ensure the highest standards of productivity and efficiency, positioning us among the global mining powerhouses. The accomplishments of NMDC find a unified representation in our new logo, unveiled in August, 2023. This logo heralds a new era of responsibility at NMDC, conveying the spirit of NMDC 2.0. We convey our sincere gratitude to the Government of India for their constant support in creating an enabling environment that fosters growth and innovation in our industry. To our valued customers, banks, shareholders, associates, and global partners, I express my deepest gratitude for your trust, collaboration, and continued partnership. Together, we have overcome challenges and achieved iconic milestones. I am confident that with our collective effort, we will continue to thrive. Thank you for your invaluable contributions to the journey of NMDC. Our achievements for FY24 are commendable, but the path ahead beckons with both promise and challenge. Our compass points north - toward innovation, sustainability, shared purpose and a 100 million tonnes strong future.   
Jai Hind

**Physical and Financial Performance**

During the year under review, NMDC registered its best ever yearly physical performance as it produced 45.02 million tonnes and sold 44.48 million tonnes of iron ore. The company recorded a 10% growth in production and 16% growth in sales compared to FY23 volumes. It translated into a strong financial performance earning a revenue of Rs. 21,294 crores in FY24, which is a 21% increase from the revenue generated in FY23. Strategic financial planning and pricing mechanisms led to a Profit After Tax (PAT) of Rs. 5,532 crores and Profit Before Tax (PBT), before exceptional item, of Rs. 8,294 crores in FY24, realizing an upswing of 2% in PAT and 30% in PBT over CPLY. For FY24, NMDC's EBITDA stood at Rs. 8,709 crores representing a 28% growth from the previous financial year. The company's operating profit margin in 2023-24 was 34%. Company's highest-ever capital expenditure of Rs. 2,066 crores was expended towards capacity building in FY24, which was 17% north of the capex target, Rs. 1,769 crores. NMDC's standalone net worth (post the demerger of NSL) crossed the Rs. 25,000 crore mark in FY24 reinforcing the company's financial stability and its capacity to invest in growth and generate value for stakeholders.

**Response to Climate Change**

NMDC plans to leverage and enhance its sustainable and efficient mining legacy to meet the evolving needs of the environmentally conscious customers and align with India's goal of achieving Net Zero Emissions by 2070.

**Operational Highlights**

NMDC is intensifying efforts to curtail GHG emissions, enhance wastewater recycling, manage solid waste, and conserve biodiversity. We have developed a Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Inventory to meticulously vet our value chain emissions. Our Biodiversity Conservation initiatives continue to thrive as we collaborate with the State Forest Departments to restore habitats and preserve ecosystems. Contributing to Chhattisgarh's environmental health, NMDC presented a first of its kind Mobile Environment Lab to Chhattisgarh Environment Conservation Board. The company's transformative CSR initiatives are a source of pride and purpose for us. From empowering women to upskilling youth, generating employment opportunities to addressing public health, NMDC has been a steady pillar in enabling progress in the hinterlands of India. Our flagship social initiatives - Shiksha Sahayog Yojana and Balika Shiksha Yojana have empowered the journeys of thousands of tribal children with scholarships for higher education and nursing education, making them agents of change in their communities. It is this approach that gave way to the Education City, Hospital on Wheels, Sports Academies,

**Corporate Governance**

NMDC upholds the highest standards of corporate governance and ensures transparency, accountability, and integrity in all our operations. Corporate governance is not just a regulatory requirement but a fundamental pillar of our culture, guiding our actions and decisions to create long-term value for our stakeholders.

**Towards Progress and Prosperity**

As we progress further into the era of NMDC 2.0, we are gearing up to deliver 50 million tonnes of iron ore in FY25. Our journey from hereon will be guided by an ambitious growth strategy. We are investing in capacity expansion and new infrastructure to augment our production capacity to 72 million tonnes from our existing iron ore mines, while also developing the NCL (NMDC CMDC Limited) JV mines to contribute another 28 million tonnes. Leveraging on our intrinsic strengths and constraint optimization are the two drivers for realisation of our vision to achieve a 100 million tonnes production capacity by 2030. This narrative aligns with the National Steel Policy's vision to enhance India's steel production capacity to 300 million tonnes by 2030. NMDC's 100 million tonnes

**Amitava Mukherjee**  
CMD (Additional Charge)

Excerpts from the CMD Speech at 66<sup>th</sup> AGM of NMDC held on September 27, 2024.

**एनएमडीसी**  
**NMDC**

Regd. Office: Khanji Bhavan, 10-3-311/A, Castle Hills, Masab Tank, Hyderabad - 500028, India. [www.nmdc.co.in](http://www.nmdc.co.in)

















# GET READY TO SLAY

## THE COLLECTION THAT REDEFINES STYLE!

The Orry x Flying Machine capsule collaboration offers a bold collection that celebrates youth, creativity and self-expression in every piece, says SAKSHI PRIYA

In an exciting development within the fashion industry, *Flying Machine* has teamed up with the sensational social media star *Orry* to launch a limited-edition capsule collection that promises to turn heads and make waves among the youth. *Orry*, a digital influencer renowned for his vibrant style and engaging content, has garnered a massive following on platforms like Instagram. His unique blend of charisma and fashion savvy resonates with Gen-Z consumers, making him an ideal partner for a brand like *Flying Machine*, which is celebrated for its edgy denim and youthful vibe.

*Flying Machine*, the pioneering homegrown denim brand in India, has evolved significantly since its inception in 1980. Known for its trendy and spontaneous designs, the brand has made a concerted effort to revamp its image and align itself with the tastes of the modern consumer. With a renewed focus on Gen-Z, this collaboration with *Orry* is a strategic move to tap into the vibrant energy of young fashion enthusiasts.

The *Orry x Flying Machine* collection embodies a perfect blend of funky colours and oversized silhouettes, catering to individuals who dare to stand out. Featuring a range of unisex items such as T-shirts, shirts, vests, caps, bucket hats, jorts, parachute pants and classic jeans, the collection captures the essence of contemporary street style. *Orry's* distinct aesthetic shines through each piece, encouraging wearers to express their individuality through bold fashion choices.

A standout feature of this collaboration is *Orry's* hands-on involvement in the design process. His creative input ensures that the collection reflects his signature style, with playful slogans like "L&R H&R" and "Can I live" adding a fun twist. This level of engagement not only enhances the authenticity of the collection but also resonates with consumers looking for genuine connections with brands. The vibrant designs and oversized fits are more than just fashion statements; they are an invitation for young people to embrace

their identities and showcase their unique personalities.

*Shailesh Chaturvedi*, Managing Director and CEO of Arvind Fashions, expressed his excitement about the collaboration, highlighting the shared appreciation for Korean and Japanese fashion aesthetics. This partnership reflects a broader trend within the fashion industry, where global influences meet local sensibilities, creating a dynamic fusion that appeals to the youth. With oversized pieces and an androgynous flair, the collection exemplifies a modern approach to dressing that celebrates diversity and self-expression.



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

The *Orry x Flying Machine* collection will be available at select *Flying Machine* stores throughout India, as well as on popular online platforms like *Myntra* and *NNNOW*. This accessibility ensures that young fashion lovers can easily engage with the collection and incorporate these statement pieces into their wardrobes.

The *Orry x Flying Machine* collaboration signifies a bold new direction in youth fashion. By merging *Orry's* vibrant style with *Flying Machine's* denim legacy, this collection captures the essence of modern youth culture, inviting individuals to express their identities through fashion. With its funky colours, oversized designs and engaging slogans, the collection is not just about clothing, it represents a movement towards embracing individuality and creativity in everyday style. As excitement builds around this launch, both *Orry* and *Flying Machine* are poised to make a significant impact on the fashion landscape, paving the way for a new era that celebrates the dynamic spirit of today's youth.

## NEW OFFERINGS



### CELEBRATE NAVRATRI WITH A SPECIAL THALI

This Navratri, elevates your festive dining experience at *Seasonal Tastes in The Westin Gurgaon*, with a specially curated Navratri Bhog Thali. Enjoy a harmonious blend of authentic flavours, including *Sabudana Vada*, *Khata Mitha Kaddu* and *Sabudana Kheer*. Perfect for both festival observers and food enthusiasts, this thali offers a delightful journey through the essence of Navratri. Experience a soul-satisfying meal that celebrates the spirit of the season.

#### DETAILS

**Dates:** October 3 - 12, 2024  
**Location:** The Westin Gurgaon  
**Price:** INR 1,499 plus taxes  
**Availability:** A-la-carte menu for lunch and dinner

### CELEBRATE SAKETOB

Join this October for a month-long sake celebration at *Guppy!* Indulge in specially curated sake cocktails, tasting flights and enjoy a Buy 1, Get 1 free offer on sake. Delight in options like the Sake Highball and Sake Bombs and join for Sake Sing-along karaoke nights and live music every Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday.

#### DETAILS

**Location:** 28, Main Market, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi  
**Timings:**  
Lunch: 12 PM - 4 PM  
Dinner: 6 PM - 12 AM  
**Price for Two:** INR 3700 approx. (including cocktails)  
**Reservations:** 011 24690005/6, +91 965018500



### CULINARY FUSION EXPERIENCE

*Indian Accent* celebrates 15 years with an exclusive culinary collaboration with Nadodi. Chefs *Shantanu Mehrotra* and *Yashin Sirwardhana* will create a 9-course menu blending inventive Indian flavours with South Indian and Sri Lankan influences. Expect an unforgettable dining experience showcasing the best of both culinary worlds.

#### DETAILS

**Date & Time:** 9th October 2024, 7 pm onwards.  
**Location:** Indian Accent, New Delhi.  
**Price:** INR 7,900++ per person; Additional INR 5,500++ for wine pairing.  
**Reservations:** +91 1166175151; 9871117968.



Disclaimer: The Pioneer does not endorse or promote the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

## TAAZA KHABAR

### A CONTINUED TALE OF GREED AND REDEMPTION

With a strong cast and engaging storyline, the new season of 'Taaza Khabar' is a must-watch, says ABHI SINGHAL

Maintaining high standards in the second season is a challenge but *'Taaza Khabar'* continues to shine with its new season. This web series emphasises how greed can destroy lives, especially in today's fast-paced world. Directed by *Himank Gaur*, the new season retains the stellar cast from Season 1, including *Bhuvan Bam* as *Vasant Gawde*, *Shriya Pilgaonkar* as *Madhu*, *Deven Bhojani* as *Mehboob*, and *Prathamesh Parab* as *Raja Chaturvedi*. A notable addition this season is *Javed Jaffrey*, who plays the character of *Yusuf Akhtar*.

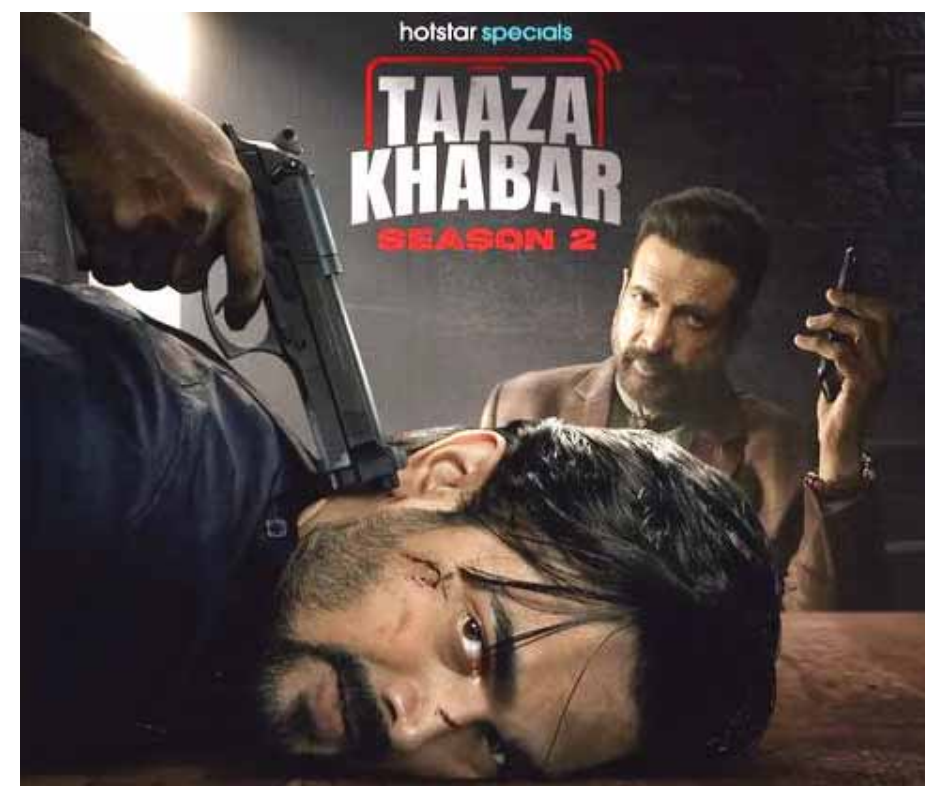
Released on *Disney Plus Hotstar*, the series offers a beautifully crafted storyline, continuing to revolve around *Vasant Gawde (Bhuvan Bam)* and his boon, *'Taaza Khabar'*. The first three episodes are gripping, portraying *Vasant's* efforts to free himself from the crushing debt on his shoulders. Although the series is primarily a comedy and thriller, it connects on a deeper, emotional level by exploring themes of right and wrong. The mix of genres adds depth, keeping the audience invested throughout.

In the world of filmmaking, both a strong script and excellent acting can make or break a series, and *'Taaza Khabar'* excels in both the departments. The characters truly outdo themselves this season. *Bhuvan Bam* shines as *Vasant*, improving even further from the first season with his impeccable comedic timing and reactions.

*Javed Jaffrey*, known for his comedic roles, plays the antagonist this time. His portrayal of a villain driven by malevolence, political power, and money brings intensity to the show. *Shilpa Shukla's* character *Aapa* perfectly complements *Jaffrey's* dark, twisted role. The addition of *Jaffrey's* character brings much-needed energy to the new six-episode arc.

*Shriya Pilgaonkar (Madhu)*, *Vasant's* love interest, has fewer scenes this season, but her presence is felt at key moments. *Prathamesh Parab's* portrayal of *Raja*, *Vasant's* loyal friend, is heartwarming and crucial to the emotional core of the show.

The witty dialogues, penned by *Abbas Dalal* and *Hussain Dalal*, add layers to the characters and elevate the humour in the series. The use of foul language, reflective of the protagonist's world,



adds authenticity to the setting. However, the flashbacks intended to give depth to the characters feel dull and add very little to the overall plot. These moments do not significantly enhance our understanding of *Vasant's* mental processes or the reasons behind his choices. Despite this, the overarching narrative is a reality check for the modern world, showing the rise and fall of *Vasant*, whose boon quickly turns into a curse, alienating him from his loved ones, including *Madhu* and his parents. The music in *'Taaza Khabar'* perfectly

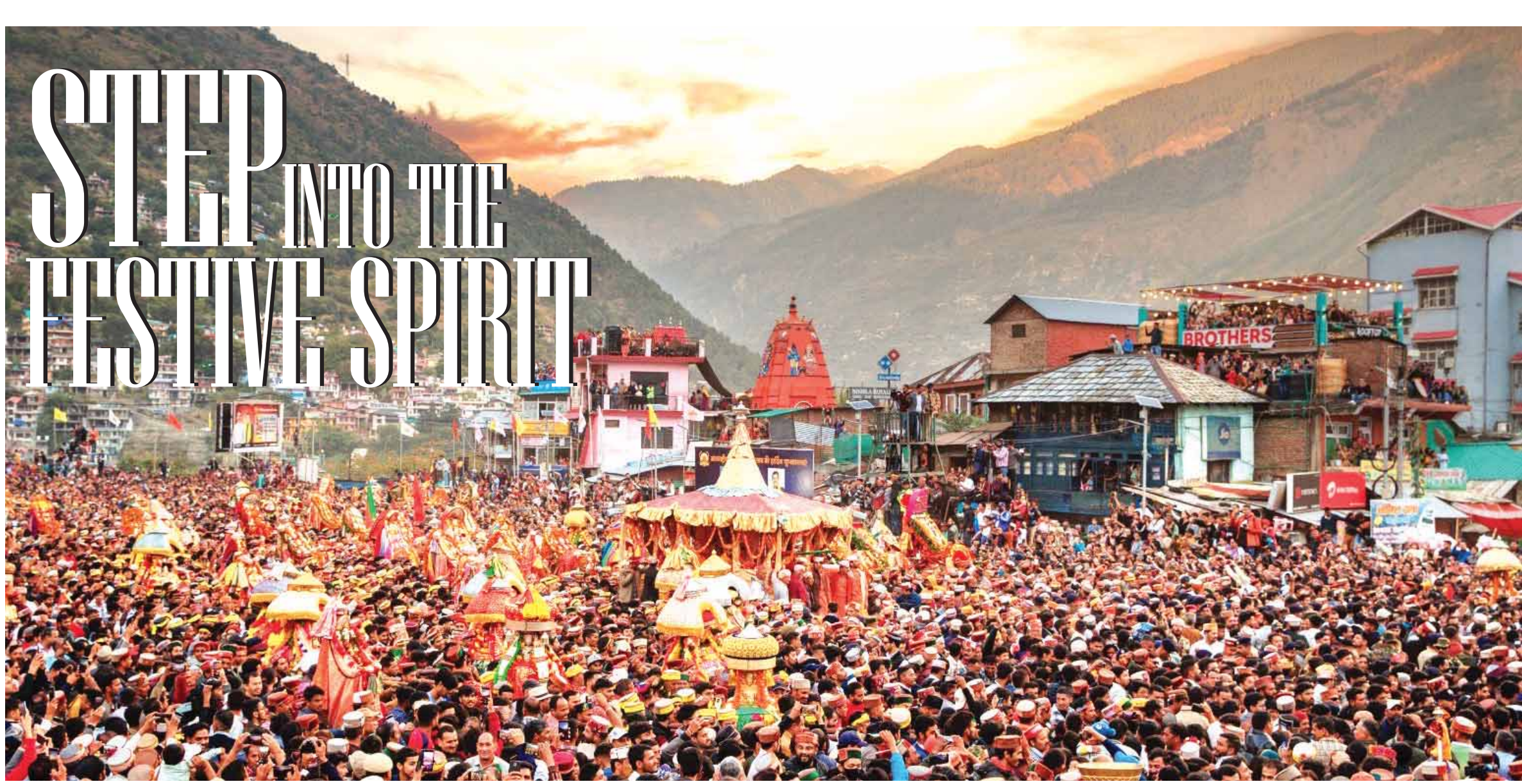
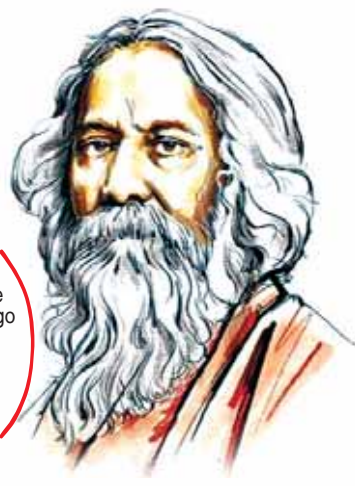
complements the scenes, with songs like *'Kaan Hai'* by *Faridkot*, *'Rajarshi Sanyal'*, and *'IP Singh'*, and *'Hoke Majboor'* by *Mohan Kannan*, *Akshay*, and *IP Singh*, adding emotional depth. The *Baba* theme and *Kathak* theme further enhance the storytelling, giving the audience a rich auditory experience.

Overall, *'Taaza Khabar'* is a must-watch. Its engaging scenes and witty dialogues keep viewers on the edge of their seats, eager to see what happens next. While the show hints at a potential third season, an official confirmation would only add to the growing excitement among its fanbase.

**'Rating: 4/5'**



"Now, I ask, has the time  
come at last when I may go  
in and see thy face and  
offer thee my silent  
salutation?"  
— Rabindranath Tagore



## STEP INTO THE FESTIVE SPIRIT

*Kullu Dussehra* is a vibrant festival in Himachal Pradesh that brings the Kullu valley to life with colourful processions, traditional music, and cultural performances. Celebrated in honour of Lord Raghunath Ji, this annual event attracts visitors from all over, creating a sense of community and joy, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**



**K**ullu Dussehra, celebrated in the picturesque valley of Kullu in Himachal Pradesh, is a vibrant week-long festival that goes beyond just religious observance. It brings together centuries-old traditions, the unity of hundreds of local deities and the incredible artistic expression of the region. *Kullu Dussehra* has a distinctive flavour, embracing the valley's culture, history and devotion. This year, the International *Kullu Dussehra* Festival is set to take place from 13th to 19th October 2024, offering visitors a chance to immerse themselves in the vibrant festivities while also appreciating the breathtaking scenic beauty and natural wonders of this enchanting region.

The origins of *Kullu Dussehra* date back to the 17th century when *Raja Jagat Singh*, a ruler of Kullu, brought the idol of Lord Raghunath Ji to the valley. From then on, Lord Raghunath Ji became the central deity of the festival and *Kullu Dussehra* has been celebrated in His honour ever since. What sets this festival apart is its spirit of inclusion, with over 300 local deities from surrounding villages joining the celebrations. These deities, carried on beautifully decorated palanquins, are accompanied by their devotees, musicians and dancers, creating a lively and spiritual atmosphere as they converge at Dhalpur Maidan in Kullu. The festival begins on 13th October with the grand Rath Yatra, a procession where Lord Raghunath Ji is placed in a chariot and pulled through the streets by devotees. This procession marks the beginning of a week filled with devotion, music and dance. The streets come alive with the sounds of traditional instruments, the colourful sight of waving flags and the energy of people who have come from far and wide to participate in this sacred event. The Rath Yatra is not just a religious act; it's a celebration of the unity and shared faith that binds the people of Kullu together.

*Kullu Dussehra* is not only a spiritual gathering but also a cultural festival that showcases the rich artistic heritage of the region. Every evening, the open-air auditorium at Lal Chand Prarthi Kalakendra becomes a stage for performances by local, national and international artists. From traditional Himachali folk dances like the Nati to contemporary performances, the festival offers a diverse range of cultural experiences. This year, approximately 15 international cultural troupes will participate, bringing their unique traditions and performances to Kullu. These performances reflect the universal language of art, reminding everyone of the shared human connection through culture.

On 14th October, the Cultural Parade takes place, showcasing a vibrant display of traditional attire, music and dance from across India and the world. This parade highlights the rich diversity of cultures, where each troupe brings its own distinct flavour to the celebrations.

**"Kullu Dussehra beautifully showcases our cultural richness and serves as a reminder of the bonds that unite us as a community." - Sushil Kumar Singla, Principal Resident Commissioner of Himachal Pradesh Sadan, New Delhi**



Sunder Singh Thakur CPS and Sushil Kumar Singla, Principal Resident Commissioner Government of Himachal Pradesh, New Delhi

The sight of dancers in traditional costumes, performing to the rhythmic beats of their native instruments, creates a colourful experience that celebrates unity in diversity. The Cultural Parade embodies *Kullu Dussehra's* inclusive spirit, welcoming different cultures to come together in celebration. A highlight of *Kullu Dussehra* is the performance of Lalhri, a traditional dance native to the Kullu Valley. Passed down through generations, Lalhri is not just a dance but a form of storytelling, where each graceful movement and musical note carries the history of the region. Watching the dancers perform in their traditional attire is like stepping back in time, where the cultural legacy of Kullu comes alive through the art of movement and music. This performance encapsulates the very essence of the festival, where tradition and heritage are celebrated and preserved.

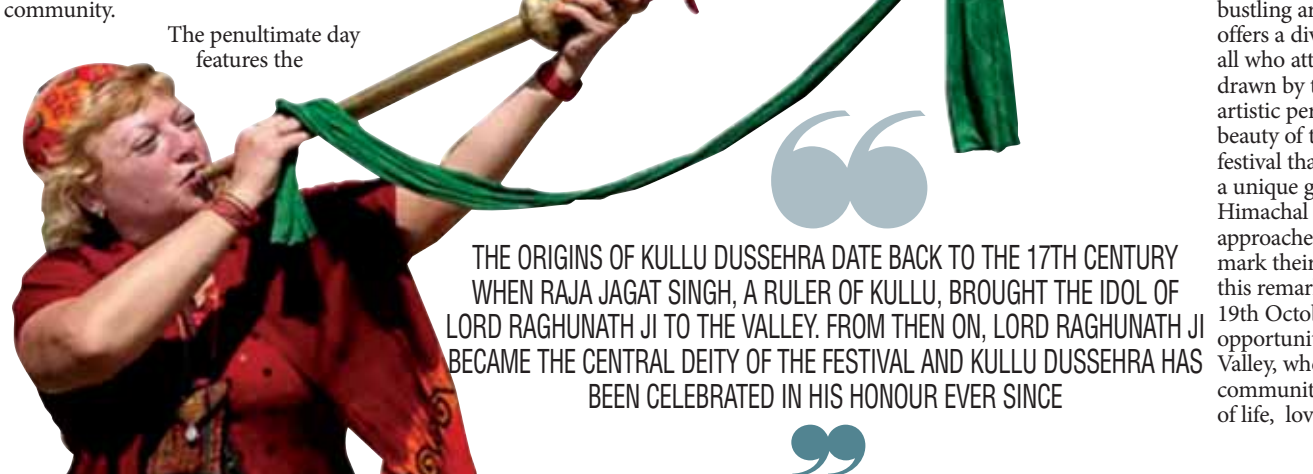
The spiritual climax of *Kullu Dussehra* takes place on 19th October with the symbolic Lanka Dahan, marking the return of nearly 300 deities, or devidevatas, to their homes. This significant day begins as the Raja approaches Lord Raghunath Ji, causing all music and dance to pause. After the Raja circumambulates the chariot, the procession moves towards Lanka by the river Beas. Here, bushes and grass are set ablaze, symbolising the burning of Lanka. The flames create a captivating spectacle, while the Lanka Dahan ceremony reinforces values of justice, morality, and goodness, highlighting the festival's importance in uniting the community.

The penultimate day features the

Muhalla ceremony, an event filled with joy, music and festivity. Villagers from across Kullu gather at Dhalpur Maidan, setting aside their daily lives to participate in this lively celebration. The deities, surrounded by flags and accompanied by traditional music, pay their respects to Lord Raghunath Ji. The Muhalla is a vibrant reflection of the community spirit that defines *Kullu Dussehra*, where unity and togetherness are celebrated in a colourful display of devotion. Historically, *Kullu Dussehra* has also been a major commercial event. It once served as a trading hub where villagers would sell their crops, handicrafts and other goods. Traders from regions like Lahaul and Ladakh would bring products such as pashmina shawls, carpets and local herbs, creating a bustling marketplace. Today, this tradition continues with the Artisan Showcase, where award-winning artisans display their crafts, from textiles to woodwork. Visitors can purchase these handmade items, taking home a piece of Kullu's rich artistic heritage and supporting the local economy. For those who enjoy food, *Kullu Dussehra* is a culinary journey that showcases the flavours of Himachal Pradesh. The food courts at the festival serve traditional dishes such as siddu (a type of steamed bread) and madra (a rich chickpea curry), offering a taste of the region's culinary traditions. Alongside these local delicacies,

international cuisine is also available, ensuring that visitors can enjoy a wide variety of food during the festival. The culinary experience is an integral part of *Kullu Dussehra*, reflecting the valley's agricultural richness and its connection to the land. This year's *Kullu Dussehra* will also feature the Ambassador's Meet on 18th October, presided over by *Shri Sukhvinder Singh*, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh. The event will bring together resident ambassadors from various countries, promoting cultural exchange and enriching trade ties. The Ambassador's Meet reflects *Kullu Dussehra's* growing global recognition, where tradition meets modernity on an international stage. This blend of cultural celebration and diplomatic engagement adds a new dimension to the festival, highlighting its significance beyond the local community. Beyond its vibrant cultural performances and religious rituals, *Kullu Dussehra* offers a diverse range of entertainment options for visitors of all ages. Families can enjoy amusement rides like toy trains and swings, while sports enthusiasts can engage in competitions such as

volleyball, kabaddi and tug-of-war. The open-air performances continue late into the night, ensuring that the festivities are alive with music, dance and laughter. As the festival progresses, visitors will also have the opportunity to explore the natural beauty of the Kullu Valley, which offers breathtaking views of snow-capped peaks, lush green valleys, and flowing rivers. Many visitors choose to explore nearby attractions such as the Great Himalayan National Park, Bijli Mahadev Temple, and the historic Hadimba Devi Temple in Manali, combining the spiritual experience of *Kullu Dussehra* with the serene beauty of Himachal Pradesh's natural landscape. As *Kullu* prepares to host this grand celebration, it's essential to reflect on the significance of festivals like *Kullu Dussehra* in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. The festival not only showcases the artistic traditions of Himachal Pradesh but also serves as a reminder of the unity and community spirit that festivals inspire. It brings together people from different walks of life, whether they are locals, tourists or international dignitaries, all coming together to celebrate the rich cultural legacy of the region. *Kullu Dussehra* is a festival that everyone should experience at least once in their lifetime. It's not just a celebration; it's a living tradition that continues to evolve while staying deeply rooted in the values of the community. The festival's grandeur, coupled with the warm hospitality of the people of Kullu, makes it a truly unique experience. As the date approaches, excitement is building, and the town of Kullu is gearing up to welcome visitors from all over the world. It's a time of joy, devotion and celebration, an event that leaves a lasting impression on all who attend. *The International Kullu Dussehra Festival 2024* is set to be a spectacular event that will showcase the best of Himachal's culture, art and traditions. *Kullu Dussehra 2024* promises to be a celebration unlike any other. From the grand Rath Yatra to the vibrant cultural performances, from the symbolic Lanka Dahan to the bustling artisan markets, the festival offers a diverse range of experiences for all who attend. Whether visitors are drawn by the spiritual devotion, the artistic performances or the natural beauty of the valley, *Kullu Dussehra* is a festival that speaks to the heart, offering a unique glimpse into the soul of Himachal Pradesh. As the festival approaches, everyone is encouraged to mark their calendars and experience this remarkable celebration from 13th to 19th October 2024. It's a perfect opportunity to enjoy the magic of Kullu Valley, where tradition, culture and community come together in a festival of life, love and joy!



THE ORIGINS OF KULLU DUSSEHRA DATE BACK TO THE 17TH CENTURY WHEN RAJA JAGAT SINGH, A RULER OF KULLU, BROUGHT THE IDOL OF LORD RAGHUNATH JI TO THE VALLEY. FROM THEN ON, LORD RAGHUNATH JI BECAME THE CENTRAL DEITY OF THE FESTIVAL AND KULLU DUSSEHRA HAS BEEN CELEBRATED IN HIS HONOUR EVER SINCE

# A TASTE OF THE NEW

## EXCITING RESTAURANTS SHAPING NCR'S FOOD SCENE

Explore NCR's newest hotspots, serving up bold flavours and vibrant atmospheres for those looking to experience the best in dining and nightlife



**PAWAN SONI**  
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

The food scene in the NCR is heating up, with a host of new eateries making their mark, each worth a visit. This month, I sampled a few, and here are my impressions.

### LITCHI BISTRO

Nestled in the culinary hub of Malviya Nagar, *Litchi Bistro* offers a creative world cuisine menu alongside freshly brewed coffee from their in-house roastery. The spacious open patio outshines the indoor seating, creating a vibrant atmosphere. Two dishes I highly recommend are the *Spicy Tuna Taco*, served on a crisp Nori sheet with a kick from sriracha mayo and *the Korean Bacon*, a miso-marinated pork belly. The latter is so exceptional that I would return just for this dish.

### AVARTANA AT ITC MAURYA

This is easily the most intriguing restaurant I've explored this year. *Avartana* offers set-course menus ranging from 7 to 13 courses, priced from Rs. 2,950 upwards per person. The cuisine is a contemporary interpretation of South Indian ingredients, far from the traditional dishes we usually associate with the region. I'll be doing a detailed review soon, as it's hard to choose favourites when each dish is stellar. It's no surprise that *Avartana* ranks 44th among Asia's 50 best.



### 689, GURGAON

*Six Eighty Nine* at Two Horizon brings Quorum Club's finesse into the public domain. This Asian restaurant draws inspiration from Japanese cuisine, with a clever twist of Japanese ingredients across its offerings. A standout dish is the *Flame-Kissed Avocado* from the Robotayaki section. The buttery avocado, glazed with soy-mirin, perfectly balances saltiness and sharpness, with a



zing from shichimi lime. Ideal for those who enjoy Asian flavours and refined cocktails without the distraction of loud music.

### TEPPANYAKI AT EEST, WESTIN GURGAON

Gurgaon finally has a live *Teppanyaki* counter. What was once

Eest's Omakase section has been revamped to accommodate a *Teppanyaki* grill. The sauces are fresh, the ingredients top-notch and Chef Jatin engages with diners to craft dishes tailored to their preferences. The food here is as delicious as it is healthy, ensuring my return visit soon.

### ROOM XO, AIPL JOY CENTRAL, GURGAON

The new party hub, *Room XO*, features one of the largest bars in the city, offering high-energy music, creative cocktails, massive screens and a performance bar. The food, curated by celebrity chef *Sabyasachi Gorai*, complements the lively atmosphere. With the same founders as *Studio XO*, this spot is set to be the next big thing in Gurgaon's nightlife.

### THANKS AND BEYOND, NEHRU PLACE, DELHI

Veteran nightlife impresario *Priyank Sukhija's* latest venture at *Epicuria Mall* offers three distinct zones. 'Thanks' is a casual dining space, 'And' is the outdoor area, and

'Beyond' is a high-energy bar. For a great time, I recommend the Tequila-based *Picante*, *the Sheesha*, and *the Tuna on Toast*.

### PIRATES OF GRILL GRANDE, CYBERHUB, GURGAON

Buffets just went gourmet, thanks to the famous *Banga Brothers*, who have redefined the concept with their Grande edition of *Pirates of Grill*. The quality, variety, and pricing are a revelation - priced at around Rs. 1,000 per head; the spread rivals the best à la carte restaurants. Standout items include *the Benne Dosa* with *Podi Masala*, possibly the best in the NCR and *Dim Sum* that would hold its own in any reputable dim sum restaurant. Don't miss the *Grilled Pineapple*, an old favourite or *the Indianised Meatballs* with shredded ghee cauliflower and cheese, a delightful fusion.

Now that you're in the loop on the hottest dining and nightlife spots in the NCR, where are you heading tonight or later this week? Let me know at [pawan.soni@indianfoodfreak.com](mailto:pawan.soni@indianfoodfreak.com).

## FROM KOLKATA TO DELHI: THE TASTE OF TWO CITIES

While Durga Puja is celebrated across the country, it is at a different level in Kolkata. The rhythm of the dhak, the vibrant atmosphere and the exquisite food transport you to another world, writes DIVYA BHATIA



A visit to Kolkata revealed the grandeur of the festivities, showcasing stunning pandals and creating cherished moments. As a foodie, I was captivated by the culinary extravaganza, especially the traditional *Bhuribhoj* and *Bengali Thali*. The unforgettable flavours of *Basanti Polao*, *Aloo Bhaja*, *Begun Bhaja*, *Potol Bhaja*, *Luchi* and *Chholar Dal*, paired with *Mishtoi Doi* and *Rasgulla*, left a lasting impression. The magic of these dishes lies in the love behind their preparation. Bengalis savour their meals in small courses, enhancing the authentic flavours of their cuisine. While I've felt a festive spirit in Delhi, it cannot match Kolkata's enchanting transformation during Durga Puja. However, Delhi offers its own take on Bengali cuisine, and this year, I explored delightful recipes from young chefs, ensuring that whether you're in Kolkata or elsewhere, you can enjoy traditional Puja dishes.

### CHEF GAUTAM KUMAR'S RECIPE FOR GOBINDOBHOG GURER PAYESH

Chef *Gautam Kumar*, Executive Chef at Foodlink F&B Holdings (India), brings over 20 years of experience in regional Indian cuisine. He emphasises fresh, locally sourced ingredients and has held prestigious positions at top hotels like *Shangri-La* and *Grand Hyatt Delhi*. His innovative approach has garnered numerous accolades, and one of his favourite dishes is *Gobindobhog Gurer Payesh*.

### GOBINDOBHOG GURER PAYESH

*Kheer*, or 'payesh' in Bengali, is a sweet rice and milk dish beloved in Bengali culture. Offered to the goddess Durga as 'bhog,' it is shared among devotees after the puja. Made with date palm jaggery, 'nolen gud kheer' is a healthier alternative to sugar, especially popular during Durga Puja. Sharing *Payesh* symbolises unity and harmony among family members. Durga Puja. Sharing *Payesh* symbolises unity and fosters harmony among family members.



### INGREDIENTS

- 1 litre full-fat milk
- 50 grams Gobindo bhog rice
- 150 grams nolen gur (date palm jaggery)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon green cardamom powder
- 20 grams cashew nuts
- 10 grams raisins (soaked and drained)
- 10 grams ghee

### METHOD

- **Soak the Rice:** Soak the rice in water for 30 minutes, ensuring not to over-wash it to retain as much starch as possible. After soaking, drain the rice and spread it out to dry.
- **Coat the Rice:** Coat the soaked rice with ¼ teaspoon of ghee and set aside.
- **Prepare the Raisins:** Soak the raisins in water until swollen.
- **Fry Cashews:** Heat ghee in a pan and fry the cashews until golden. Set aside.
- **Boil the Milk:** Boil the milk in a heavy-bottomed pan, simmer for 15 minutes, and add cardamom powder.
- **Cook the Rice:** Add the ghee-coated rice to the milk and cook on low heat until fully cooked. The rice should be soft and mushy when mashed between your fingers, as it will firm up while cooling. Stir gently to prevent burning and release starch, which thickens the payesh.
- **Thicken the Payesh:** Ensure the rice is fully cooked; the payesh should be slightly thicker than desired, as the gur will thin it out.
- **Add Gur:** Turn off the heat and mix in the gur, salt, soaked raisins, and fried cashews, keeping the heat off to prevent curdling. Gently fold everything together, cover the pan, and let the residual heat melt the gur completely. Serve the payesh hot or cold in a bowl, garnished with fried cashews and soaked raisins.

## RECIPE FOR NARKEL NI CHINGRI

Chef *Gagandeep Singh Bedi*, Director of Culinary at Roseate Hotels & Resorts, specialises in reviving regional Indian cuisines and creating signature dishes at *Kheer*. He focuses on organic produce and minimising food waste.

### NARKEL NI CHINGRI RECIPE

One of his standout creations is *Narkel ni Chingri*, a delightful prawn dish cooked in coconut milk. This recipe exemplifies Chef *Gagandeep's* commitment to authentic flavours and sustainable practices. Here's how to make it:

### INGREDIENTS

- 500g prawns, cleaned and deveined
- 200ml fresh coconut milk
- 75g fresh grated coconut
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ginger paste
- 1 tsp garlic paste
- 2-3 green chilies, slit
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp red chili powder
- 40ml mustard oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander for garnish

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Marinate the prawns with turmeric and salt for 15 minutes.
- Roast the grated coconut on medium flame until golden brown.
- Heat mustard oil in a pan until smoking, then reduce heat.
- Sauté onions until golden brown, then add ginger and garlic paste.
- Add green chilies, turmeric and red chili powder, stirring well.
- Add marinated prawns and cook until pink (5-7 minutes).
- Pour in coconut milk and simmer for 5-10 minutes.
- Add roasted grated coconut and cook for an additional 2-3 minutes.
- Adjust seasoning and garnish with fresh coriander and Serve hot with steamed rice for a delicious meal!



## Navratri: The essence of Satvik food

BY TEAM VIVA

The festival of Navratri is there and the air is filled with a spirit of devotion and celebration. During these nine auspicious days, millions across India follow a special dietary regimen, abstaining from regular food and opting for Satvik meals. While these dishes are rooted in tradition, chefs at hotels like *Le Meridien, New Delhi* have taken the opportunity to elevate this sacred cuisine with contemporary flavours, ensuring that even the most discerning food lovers can enjoy fasting meals with a gourmet touch. Navratri food is characterised by simplicity, with ingredients that align with spiritual purity. Common dishes consumed during this period have been improvised by Chef *Setuu Gupta*. Here are the dishes:

- **'Kuttu ki Puri' (Buckwheat Flour Puri)** - A deep-fried, gluten-free flatbread made from buckwheat flour, which is one of the staples during Navratri.
- **'Sabudana tikki'** - A light and flavorful dish made with soaked tapioca pearls, peanuts, and mild spices like cumin, offering a fulfilling yet easy-to-digest meal.
- **'Paneer Tikka'** - Cottage cheese cubes marinated in yoghurt and mild spices, then grilled to perfection. Paneer dishes are popular as they provide a protein-rich option for those fasting.
- **'Samak Rice Pulao'** - This is made from barnyard millet, often called "vrat rice," and is cooked with mild spices and



vegetables to offer a flavorful alternative to regular rice.

- **'Anjeer ka Halwa'** - A dessert made from figs, slow-cooked in milk and flavoured with cardamom, is a popular sweet indulgence for the fasting period.
- **'Makhana Curry'** - A creamy salty pudding made from foxnuts (makhana) and curd flavoured with spices and nuts for a rich taste.
- **'Kacche Kale Sabudana Tikki'** is a crispy snack made from raw banana, sabudana (tapioca pearls), green chilies, and spices. Shallow-fried and enjoyed during fasting periods like Navratri, it offers a flavourful and energising treat.
- **'Arbi Singara Kadhi'** - is a flavourful curry made with colocasia (arbi) and water chestnuts (singhara), simmered in a spiced yoghurt-based gravy. It's thickened with singhara flour and seasoned with mustard seeds, curry leaves and chilies for a tangy, savoury dish. Navratri food has always been about maintaining purity and simplicity, but at *Le Meridien, New Delhi*, Chef *Setuu Gupta* and his team have shown that fasting meals can be both humble and sophisticated. By elevating traditional dishes with innovative techniques, they ensure that guests not only honour their spiritual commitment but also indulge in a culinary journey that excites the senses. This fusion of faith and flavour is a testament to the evolving nature of India's food culture, where tradition and modernity walk hand in hand.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar



## CELEBRATING NAVRATRI

# A SPECTACULAR DANCE-DRAMA EXPERIENCE

With the festive spirit of Navratri, *Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra* presents a captivating dance-drama that brings the timeless tale of the Ramayana to life, highlighting the struggle between good and evil and the victory of righteousness, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

October marks the arrival of a magical time in India, where the festive spirit fills the air and people from all walks of life come together to celebrate the rich cultural heritage passed down for generations. Among the many stories and traditions that take centre stage during this season, none are as cherished or as timeless as the story of the Ramayana. Retold through art, music, dance and drama, the Ramayana during Navratri is more than just a mythological tale; it's a reminder of the eternal struggle between good and evil, love and loss, and the ultimate victory of righteousness. One of the most iconic ways to experience this story is through the grand production of "Shri Ram" by the *Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra*. For 68 years, this dance-drama has been a hallmark of Delhi's festive calendar, drawing audiences into the epic saga of the Ramayana. The production spans 24 days during the Navratri festival; it's not just a performance but an experience, a journey through time and a deep dive into India's cultural and spiritual heritage.

### A GRAND STAGE AND CAPTIVATING ATMOSPHERE

From the moment visitors arrive at the venue, they are welcomed by an impressive stage representing ancient Ayodhya. The meticulous attention to detail in the stage design is evident, featuring intricate patterns and vibrant colours that transport the audience to the heart of the Ramayana. The lighting shifts throughout the performance, enhancing the emotional depth of each scene. As the performance commences, the atmosphere buzzes with excitement and anticipation. Artists in elaborate costumes fill the stage, celebrating the arrival of their lord Ram. The traditional music accompanying their movements resonates with the audience, enveloping everyone in the festive spirit. The dance-drama format allows for a seamless blend of storytelling and art; classical Indian dance forms like Kathak, Bharatnatyam and Odissi take centre stage, where each gesture and expression conveys deep emotion. The opening scene beautifully showcases themes of community, love, and unity, drawing everyone into the celebration.

### A DIVINE BEGINNING

The story begins with the birth of Lord Ram and his brothers, as the people of Ayodhya rejoice in the arrival of their beloved prince. The joy on stage is visible, reflecting the warmth and happiness of the occasion. The scenes that follow take the audience on a journey through Ram's life, from his education in scriptures and warfare to his marriage with Sita, highlighting the trials he faces along the way.

What makes this story captivating is not just Ram's destiny as a divine figure but his humanity. From a young age, Ram exemplifies virtues of humility, patience and wisdom, shaping his actions throughout his life. This sense of divine purpose, combined with Ram's ability to empathise with ordinary people, makes his character relatable and inspiring to devotees during Navratri. As "Shri Ram" beautifully portrays, Ram's early years symbolise the joys of life and the weight of

“SHRI RAM” IS MORE THAN JUST A RETELLING OF THE RAMAYANA; IT IS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL, A COMMON CONNECTION BETWEEN GENERATIONS, AND A TRIBUTE TO INDIAN TALENT IN DANCE, POETRY AND DESIGN”



Photo: Pankaj Kumar



responsibility he must bear as the future ruler. The early relationships that shape him, including his bond with his brothers Lakshman, Bharata and Shatrughna, each play an essential role in the unfolding drama.

### THE JOURNEY OF LORD RAM AND HIS BROTHERS

As the story progresses, spectators witness the formative years of Ram alongside his brothers, training under Vishwamitra. This segment showcases the dedication and brotherly camaraderie that define their relationships, expressed through intricate choreography that highlights their commitment to duty. The physical movements and emotional expressions of the dancers capture the essence of loyalty, honour, and sacrifice, core values that resonate throughout the Ramayana. The portrayal of Ram's marriage to Sita is another highlight of the performance. The ceremony is beautifully staged and thoughtfully executed, illustrating the depth of love and devotion between the two characters. Sita is depicted with grace and strength, captivating the audience as she expresses her hopes and dreams. The artistry of this scene reflects the timeless nature of love, with each gesture drawing the audience deeper into their narrative. This portrayal captures the essence of their divine union while reminding the audience that true love involves enduring hardship and remaining steadfast in faith.

### THE RISE OF CONFLICT

The story takes a dramatic turn with the introduction of Ravana. The portrayal of Ravana brings an air of tension and complexity, masterfully performed by a talented artist whose commanding presence leaves a lasting impression. The audience feels the weight of impending conflict as the stage transforms into a realm where good clashes with evil. One of the most gripping moments comes when Ravana sends a golden deer to tempt Sita, leading to the separation of Ram and Sita. The tension during this scene is visible, as Sita's innocence and longing are powerfully conveyed. This pivotal moment marks the beginning of trials that will test Ram's love and resolve.

The fierce confrontation between Lakshman and Surpanakha highlights themes of loyalty and honour. The

choreography in this segment is intense, illustrating the raw emotions involved in defending family honour. Lakshman's decisive action in cutting off Surpanakha's nose showcases the protective instincts that run deep within the characters of the Ramayana.

### THE BATTLE OF GOOD AND EVIL

As the narrative escalates, the stage transforms into a dramatic battlefield. The choreography during these scenes is breathtaking, with performers moving in perfect synchrony to depict the chaos of war. Ram's battle against Ravana becomes the climactic moment of the performance, showcasing the bravery and determination of the forces of good. The audience is enthralled as Ram ultimately conquers Ravana, a victory resonating with the core message of the Ramayana: righteousness prevails in the face of evil. The final scenes, where Ram returns to Ayodhya to be crowned king, are a celebration of joy and mastery. The atmosphere fills with colour and light, reflecting the happiness of the citizens of Ayodhya as they welcome their lord home. This ending serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of justice, duty, and the values that bind communities together.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "SHRI RAM"

Under the artistic direction of Padmashri *Shobha Deepak Singh*, the show has evolved over the years while retaining its essence. *Singh*, Chairperson of SBKK, beautifully articulated this sentiment when she stated, "Shri Ram" is more than just a retelling of the Ramayana; it is an educational tool, a common connection between generations, and a tribute to Indian talent in dance, poetry, and design." Her words resonate throughout the venue, emphasising the importance of preserving and celebrating Indian culture. The entire production is a tribute to the dedication of the artists and the meticulous planning that went into its execution. Every detail, from the stunning costumes to the intricate choreography, was carefully curated to create a seamless experience for the audience. This performance not only entertains but also educates, providing insights into the values



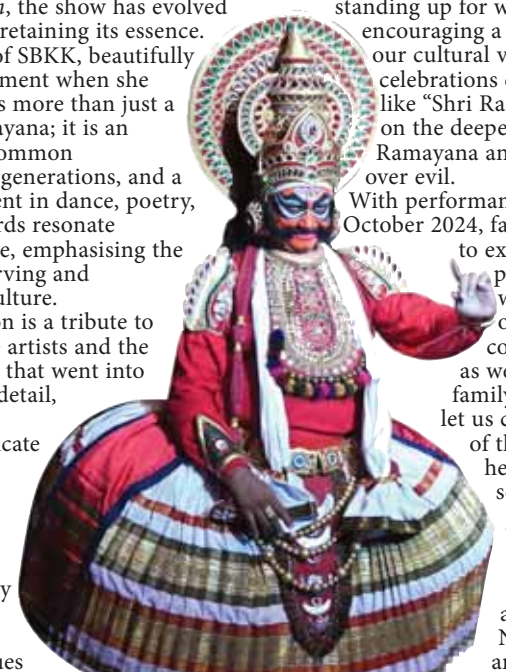
of loyalty, courage, and righteousness at the heart of the Ramayana.

### A CELEBRATION OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

The performance of "Shri Ram" is not just an artistic display; it is a celebration of culture and community. The universal messages of love, sacrifice, and the struggle against adversity resonate deeply, reminding everyone of the cherished values in our lives. The lighting is masterfully used to reflect shifts in tone, from the warmth and joy of Ram and Sita's union to the ominous darkness of Ravana's plans. As the scenes transition, the stage transforms fluidly, drawing the audience deeper into the narrative. The costumes are a visual feast - rich, vibrant and steeped in historical authenticity. Each character, from Ram and Sita in their royal attire to Hanuman and his monkey warriors, is dressed to reflect their roles and the cultural and mythological significance of their actions. The grandness of the set and costumes adds a layer of magic to the story, allowing the audience to fully immerse themselves in the spectacle.

Embracing the Spirit of Navratri The festival of Navratri is a time for reflection, devotion and celebration, beautifully captured in the performance of "Shri Ram." This production highlights the strength of unity and the importance of standing up for what is right while encouraging a shared understanding of our cultural values. As the Navratri celebrations continue, performances like "Shri Ram" inspire us to reflect on the deeper meanings of the Ramayana and the victory of good over evil.

With performances scheduled until 26 October 2024, families have the chance to experience this iconic production together, witnessing the brilliance of Indian art and culture come to life on stage. So, as we gather with friends and family to celebrate Navratri, let us carry forward the lessons of the Ramayana in our hearts. May this festive season fill our lives with joy, love, and an unwavering commitment to righteousness. Wishing all readers a blessed Navratri filled with love and light!





**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week begins with an international touch, whether it's receiving uplifting news from afar or having a family member travel overseas. Expect a flurry of activity, suggesting potential overseas travel for work. Stay prepared for swift movements and transitions. In legal domains, anticipate favourable outcomes that might require decisive action on your part. Health-wise, if you've been under the weather, you'll find yourself mending and returning to your usual activities. As the week concludes, joy emerges from family matters, particularly involving your children who may excel academically or bring surprising news of a potential marriage, leading to joyful wedding preparations. For those already wed, expect deepening bonds and enhanced stability in your relationship.

**Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour** Teal  
**Lucky day** Friday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

If you're feeling the need to escape the everyday turmoil and start anew, consider reflecting on your past experiences and future aspirations. Gaining mental clarity is essential for a smoother transition, helping you shift from chaos to calm and positivity. Making conscious decisions is crucial because once actions are taken, they can't be reversed. The principle of reaping what you sow always holds true, emphasizing the importance of your choices. This week, some may find themselves connecting deeply with a special someone, experiencing a profound synergy reminiscent of two luminaries that, although bright on their own, radiate even more brilliantly together. This connection can bring significant joy and fulfillment, enhancing the journey ahead.

**Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour** Red  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week promises a series of significant shifts, especially in your professional life. You may find yourself navigating through a rapid succession of events that could reshape your career landscape favorably. However, if you've been riding a high wave recently, stay vigilant as challenges loom on the horizon. Be cautious of deceptive individuals who might be scheming behind your back, potentially leading to a loss of what you've diligently worked for, which could be quite distressing. As the week closes, your bold and dynamic nature will come to the forefront. You'll find yourself invigorated, and ready to tackle any challenge without hesitation. Your ability to make quick, effective decisions will enhance, driven by a proactive and energetic approach to life.

**Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour** Fuchsia  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week calls for patience and minimal social interactions. Embracing practices like yoga and meditation could greatly enhance your sense of peace. Reflecting on the recent challenges in both your professional and personal life, it's crucial not to let these setbacks cloud the current period. An optimistic outlook reveals promising opportunities for financial growth. Engaging in new business ventures could prove lucrative. Your natural intuition might become a useful tool in navigating straightforward scenarios, leveraging your fair and analytical disposition to transition from negativity to positivity smoothly. This approach will not only clear your mind but also deepen your understanding of financial and emotional matters, guiding you towards a more enlightened state.

**Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour** Saffron  
**Lucky day** Monday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

The week begins with notable challenges. Recent endeavors have piled on numerous obligations, making you feel overwhelmed and stuck in your current circumstances. This sense of confinement may make you hesitant to make bold moves. Additionally, there may be individuals who seem opposed to your success, adding to the strain. However, amidst these trials, remember that you possess an inherent strength capable of overcoming these hurdles. Drawing on this positive energy will be crucial as you navigate through the week. By week's end, a calming presence will replace the earlier turmoil, allowing you to distance yourself from worldly concerns. Supported by your loved ones, you'll find yourself relaxing into a state of profound contentment and joy, reinvigorated by the peace that envelops you.

**Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour** Maroon  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you have every reason to celebrate your achievements. A stable financial foundation brings you both security and comfort. For many, these rewards stem from diligent effort and personal commitment. Your aspirations for prosperity are now coming to fruition. Take a moment to reflect on your riches, both tangible and spiritual. The recognition of your hard work may manifest as advancements or salary increases, boosting your self-assurance. You stand as a dependable beacon for those around you, drawing everyone's focus. Your balanced perspective allows you to view situations uniquely. As the week closes, you'll find yourself deeply engaged in reflective practices, seeking to understand the depth of your own insight.

**Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour** Black  
**Lucky day** Friday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week, your innate kindness, generosity, honesty, and tranquility shine through. Some individuals may embark on a budding relationship brimming with promise that could blossom into profound joy and love. This period marks a significant phase where your deepest aspirations might begin to materialize, guided by a strong internal intuition. Professionally, your tenacity, swift responses, and unwavering commitment to your objectives help you navigate challenges effortlessly. Your hard work is likely to gain recognition and commendation from your peers, affirming your efforts. This is a time to relish the rewards of previous challenges that have now been surmounted. As the week wraps up, expect to find yourself in festive spirits, celebrating recent successes with a significant gathering or a festive event.

**Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour** Mint  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, be wary as envy surrounds your accomplishments, and others may attempt to tarnish your reputation. There's a possibility of encountering obstacles that could disrupt your plans dramatically. Additionally, there's a risk that your own talents could be misdirected to work against you. Remember, the primary challenge comes from within. You might face disputes and resistance at work, where your proposals could be rigorously questioned by doubters. It's crucial to maintain your composure and seek amicable resolutions when possible, while steadfastly pursuing your goals. As the week closes, you might find yourself drawn to familiar places. A trip back to places filled with memories and reuniting with loved ones could rejuvenate your spirits and restore a positive outlook.

**Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour** Lavender  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week, a significant emotional journey begins, characterized by an evolving intensity of feelings, culminating in a period of significant personal insight and potential fulfillment of deep-seated desires. As the days progress, you may find yourself grappling with a challenging home situation, feeling weighed down by nostalgia or a sense of loss. However, as the week draws to a close, there is a noticeable shift towards a more uplifting scenario where you may discover newfound peace and happiness. In resolving life's challenges, a change of scenery could be on the horizon, whether through a strategic move or a professional relocation. Significant figures in your professional life are likely to influence these transitions, marking a pivotal moment in your journey.

**Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour** Gold  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week marks a phase of deep satisfaction as a long-held dream comes to fruition. You find yourself in a joyful union or embarking on a career path that fills you with pride. Riding a wave of bliss, you feel the support of a higher power enriching your journey. Recognition for your perseverance and tenacity inspires others, while guidance from a mentor proves to be incredibly beneficial. Your commitment to a balanced and harmonious approach to life strengthens. As the week closes, your interactions are characterized by fairness and responsibility. You secure a role that promises emotional and financial rewards, brightening your prospects for the future. Your outlook is optimistic as you navigate forward, ready to embrace new opportunities with open arms.

**Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour** White  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

At the start of the week, some individuals might find themselves overwhelmed by their emotions. Minor issues, whether related to personal health or family matters, could cause tension. This period encourages introspection and expressing oneself through writing. As the week progresses, a shift occurs, bringing a surge of enthusiasm and energy. This phase is characterized by a strong sense of leadership and commitment to responsibilities, possibly coinciding with new responsibilities or projects. The latter part of the week signals a significant period of change, marking the arrival of new professional opportunities. These changes are poised to positively influence one's future, setting the stage for lasting improvements in personal and professional life.

**Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour** Turquoise  
**Lucky day** Monday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

Throughout this week, individuals prone to deep empathy are especially attuned to the needs of others. They naturally excel in nurturing roles, offering their support and guidance generously. Their compassion extends widely, ensuring that those who seek their help find solace and assistance. Known for their capability to address and manage the challenges faced by others, they blend resilience with a profound capacity to care. Not only are they mentally and physically robust, but they also possess an indomitable spirit characterized by bravery and endurance. Their unique approach to action is guided by a clear, unaffected rationale. This week, many will find themselves impressed by these intrinsic traits, strengthening bonds and forming meaningful connections with those dear to them.

**Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour** Olive  
**Lucky day** Thursday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331

# Is boredom a blessing or a curse?

*There are 365 days in a year and there are so many years in your life. If for one or two days you feel you are wasted, life is a failure, it's okay, never mind!*

GURUSPEAK



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar  
Spiritual Guru

*Take a few moments to sit down, be open to boredom, and you'll effortlessly move into a deep meditative state*

**I**N an ocean, the waves keep coming non-stop, it doesn't get boring! Birds sing the same song, every morning, all their life, they don't get bored! It is only human beings who get bored! 'Oh! Once again the same thing'. And why do you get bored? It is because of memory. You remember whatever you have done before, so you get bored. Memory is both a blessing and a curse. It is because you get bored that you feel the need to look for something different, something new, and that is how creativity comes up; you look for the ultimate. Otherwise, you could have remained like an animal doing the same thing every day. But, you can't do it because you get bored!

So, in that sense, boredom is a blessing. Because you get bored, you move on, you look forward, you become a seeker and you rise higher. At the same time, boredom is also a curse because it doesn't

allow you to be centred and steady in one place. So your mind aimlessly keeps jumping from one place to another. Because you get bored of everything, you can't enjoy anything. There are two different paths that boredom leads you to. Boredom is a blessing when it leads you to wisdom. Boredom is a curse when it leads you to frustration and depression. Because you are bored, you can't enjoy it, and when you can't enjoy it you get depressed and frustrated. Or, because you are bored you wake up and begin with a quest.

When life feels dull, there's this magical moment where everything becomes lively. You can repeat the same thing over and over, and it won't bother you. It's like finding a spring of life. Just let go of the past, be like a carefree child, and every moment becomes priceless.

You move ahead and you look into the Self which is fresh all the



time! The Self is ever new. Because you are bored with the ephemeral, the surface, you go deep into the Self. So boredom is both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because it takes you away from the routine monotonous life, makes you aware and brings life into you.

And it is a curse because it doesn't let you stabilise. People who are in love don't get bored. The heart knows no boredom. The head knows boredom.

In life both are essential, the heart and the head. If you are only

in the heart, it is no good. And if you are only stuck in the head, that is also no good. Balancing both is Yoga. Spirituality is balancing the heart and head together. Anyone who feels that they are a failure, just wake up! So what?! Life is eternal.

Meditation acts like a bridge connecting your head and heart. Take a few moments to sit down, be open to boredom, and you'll effortlessly move into a deep meditative state. Otherwise, that boredom might just lead you to sleep. It's a choice — either you sleep, become more sluggish, or you seize the opportunity of boredom to delve into a deep meditation.

There are 365 days in a year and there are so many years in your life. If for one or two days you feel you are wasted, life is a failure, it's okay, never mind!

On a full moon, if it is cloudy and the light cannot shine on the Earth, the moon does not get

upset. If on one full moon night, you cannot see the moon rising, so what? The moon is still there. Like that, inside you there is potential, there is divinity which is so complete. If it has not come to the surface in one day, never mind! You have all the great qualities. If some do not exhibit on a particular day, never mind.

Don't blame yourself, don't analyze yourself too much. We start analysing ourselves too much; to the extent that we feel upset and down. We are so hard on ourselves. I am saying this to those who feel bad about themselves. NEVER MIND, WAKE UP! Never mind if these many years are wasted. The future is bright and there is still so much for you to do. All regrets happen only when you are looking at the past. If you are walking and your head is turned backwards, then that is called regret. Turn your head and look forward, and you will see the future is always bright.