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PAPER WITH PASSION

A game changer

The strengthening of EU-India ties offers a promising path towards stability, prosperity and technological advancement

The European Union's outreach to India has gained significant momentum, marking a new chapter in their strategic relationship. In the wake of global disruptions, including the shifting stance of the United States under Donald Trump-characterised by tariffs, the withdrawal of support for Ukraine, and disengagement from Gaza-the strengthening of EU-India ties emerges as a stabilising force in global geopolitics. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's recent visit to India underscores the EU's commitment to deepening ties with New Delhi. Meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Hyderabad House, von der Leyen expressed the EU's high regard for India as a partner. She emphasised that as the two enter the third decade of their strategic partnership, "the best is yet to come." This sentiment reflects the EU's vision of India as a key player in shaping global economic and political landscapes. A focal point of their discussions was the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a crucial initiative aimed at boosting connectivity, trade and energy cooperation.



Given the evolving geopolitical dynamics, this corridor could serve as a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative, ensuring a more diversified and resilient global supply chain. A significant highlight of the India-EU partnership is its deepening engagement in digital and technological arenas. With India emerging as a technological powerhouse and the EU striving for digital sovereignty, collaboration in these areas can create a formidable synergy. The EU's focus on clean energy aligns with India's ambitious renewable energy goals. Such initiatives can help India and the EU lead the global transition towards a sustainable future. Beyond technology and energy, trade remains a cornerstone of EU-India ties. Both sides are actively negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that could unlock significant economic potential. The EU is India's second-largest trading partner and a comprehensive trade agreement would not only boost exports but also enhance supply chain resilience, particularly in a world grappling with economic volatility. With Trump's protectionist policies disrupting global trade, an EU-India trade pact could serve as a counterweight, ensuring that both economies remain competitive and open to global commerce. The collaboration on supply chain resilience will also be crucial in mitigating risks associated with overdependence on specific markets. With Trump's policies creating uncertainty in trans-Atlantic relations and global trade, the EU's pivot towards India reflects a strategic recalibration. The EU recognises India's growing role as a stabilising force in global affairs-both as a democratic counterweight to authoritarian regimes and as a crucial player in maintaining a rules-based international order. The EU-India partnership stands at a defining moment. With digital collaboration, green energy initiatives, and robust trade negotiations at the forefront, this relationship could reshape global economic and political alignments.

EU lead the global transition towards a sustainable future. Beyond technology and energy, trade remains a cornerstone of EU-India ties. Both sides are actively negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that could unlock significant economic potential. The EU is India's second-largest trading partner and a comprehensive trade agreement would not only boost exports but also enhance supply chain resilience, particularly in a world grappling with economic volatility. With Trump's protectionist policies disrupting global trade, an EU-India trade pact could serve as a counterweight, ensuring that both economies remain competitive and open to global commerce. The collaboration on supply chain resilience will also be crucial in mitigating risks associated with overdependence on specific markets. With Trump's policies creating uncertainty in trans-Atlantic relations and global trade, the EU's pivot towards India reflects a strategic recalibration. The EU recognises India's growing role as a stabilising force in global affairs-both as a democratic counterweight to authoritarian regimes and as a crucial player in maintaining a rules-based international order. The EU-India partnership stands at a defining moment. With digital collaboration, green energy initiatives, and robust trade negotiations at the forefront, this relationship could reshape global economic and political alignments.

PICTALK



An Indian myna perches on a red silk-cotton tree (Bombax ceiba), in Nadia

One of the bigger challenges in life is to find an answer to a question dealing with life itself. The glib belief is that every problem has a solution. A wise-crack has rightly commented that every problem has a solution but the solution creates a problem of its own. If it were a simple, straightforward dimension, such as that, there would be nothing to worry about because problems and solutions would be in a dyadic relationship. The problem arises when a problem is not solvable because two sides want a solution on their terms or indeed have no solution at all. This need not necessarily be an act of mischief, but it may be a simple case of jealousy/envy or indeed a bitter competitiveness that brooks no solution at all. The first exposure to such an intractable jungle-like situation today is that the two parties concerned themselves do not see a solution worth pursuing. This may be because of many reasons, one of them being that the person concerned may genuinely believe he has an upper hand and that he is not going to lose that advantage. Very often, this gets intertwined with ego, worth, or dislike.

If there are stakeholders beyond this, of a variety which see an advantage in the contending parties being maintained as contending parties, or there is a personal dislike between the two people concerned, then also a solution becomes well-nigh impossible. Thus, it is that certain problems have subsisted beyond generations and led to devastating wars which ultimately wiped out both parties, and there was nothing for the winner to take away at all. The story of the Mahabharata is a telltale story of the winners ultimately having nothing to gain, at least for the generation in play. In more recent times, World War I and World War II did not produce any obvious winners, and the world went



THUS, IT IS THAT CERTAIN PROBLEMS HAVE SUBSISTED BEYOND GENERATIONS AND LED TO DEVASTATING WARS WHICH ULTIMATELY WIPED OUT BOTH PARTIES AND THERE WAS NOTHING FOR THE WINNER TO TAKE AWAY AT ALL

back to a full circle. The better-known cases of history have similar dots on a lesser scale and indeed, this can be true also in personal lives. The long and short of it is, it takes more than a 'win' to become a winner. At a different scale altogether, personal dislikes and prejudices can be so large that one adopts an attitude where one concludes that, irrespective of the nuances, one will simply not work towards a solution. Here again, the resolution of the conflict becomes difficult. Hence, it is a fortunate situation where both sides want a situation of solution and therefore are open to it. This is so often a given in this set of circumstances that to pray for it would be to hope for the near impossible. To expect divine grace to sort out the situation may be the only route forward. Other factors prevent a meaningful resolution of a conflict, one being a gender dimension and another as sibling rivalry. Be that as it

may, it is necessary to recognise that no conflict can be eternal either. While it is true that generations have transferred the conflict from one to another, the nature of the conflict itself became an impediment to solutions, and if nothing else, the ego factor may become a primary determinant of the way forward. Under such circumstances, the generational transformation of the rivals involved alters the nature of the solution that is feasible. Indeed, no solution is feasible unless it is doable and sustainable. People often align together because of their own needs and then find arguments to sustain their position. In many cases, logic gives way to simple impulses and a non-thinking solution takes hold of the operationally powerful. The operationally powerful impose their solution, and the predictable happens. The flawed solution is subverted by the party whose basic need for advantage

flowing out of the conflict was not met. Under such circumstances, it may be useful to suspend the conflict and learn to live with it rather than solve the problem. Avoiding a problem or indeed learning to live with it may at times be a solution. This can follow many routes including not letting the problem escalate. The enigmatic context is that very often, as the needs of the combatants change, the search for solutions also becomes elusive. This is because one has no use for "the solutions". The times have changed, and the solutions are passive because there is nothing left to enjoy in becoming a winner. It is therefore important to realise, in many cases, that a solution is only a solution if it makes winners of all concerned. However, that may be another matter altogether. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

When no solution is the only solution

Whether due to ego or rivalry, certain disputes become intractable, spanning generations. The irony is that winning does not always make one a winner

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BLUE ECONOMY NEEDS PROTECTION

Madam — Kudos for 'Balancing growth and conservation' (March 6) for highlighting the most sensitive issue of conservation at Kerala's Quilon fish bank. This is only one of the several aspects of conservation, and its ignorance has a massive, devastating effect on the blue economy and fishing community. Fifty-six percent of our coastal population is directly and indirectly dependent on the blue economy. The conservation aspect of sustainable growth and development has long been ignored by the policymakers. The political ecosystem is insensitive to conservation. In fact, extensive conservation projects need to be conceived and implemented on all river fronts, particularly in the hilly areas. In the absence of geological studies and research and conservation, mass destruction of life and property in hills is caused by torrential rains and floods. Several rivers are disappearing fast, causing mass annihilation of flora and fauna as well as cultivation. The Geological Survey of India should carry out wide-ranging and widespread surveys and research in hills, riverbeds, and coastal regions to ascertain and fetch fresh data. The Archaeological Survey of India should engage conservation architects for carrying out conservation of excavation sites, historic places and buildings, ancient temples, river fronts, and coastal regions. Against all beliefs and perceptions, the conservation projects are potential employers and sources of revenue. Unfortunately, our engineering colleges are producing fewer conservation architects. Urban development is incomplete without conservation. Oceanic studies and research institutions should be established in all potential regions for sustainable growth and development.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

US IMPOSES HEAVY TARIFF

Madam — US President Trump launched trade war against America's three biggest trade partners, drawing immediate retaliation from Mexico, Canada and China.

PM Modi inaugurates Vantara



The recent visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the inauguration of Vantara - Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre in Gujarat's Jamnagar has hit the headlines with heart warming pictures of the PM spending happy moments with the animals there. Spread over 3,000 acres, Vantara-a brain child of Anant Ambani of the Reliance group is all set to become the world's largest zoo and

rehabilitation centre. The world class rehabilitation centre is equipped with modern veterinary technology, including ICU, MRI, CT scan, X-ray, dialysis, ultrasound and endoscopy units, besides research institutions and academic hubs. Vantara which received the prestigious 'Prani Mitra' national award focusses on rescue, rehabilitation and protection of animals globally. The facility has through its various operations rescued abused, injured and endangered animals from different parts of the globe. The rehabilitation center has been designed to recreate a natural and nurturing environment akin to the lush habitats from which the rescued animals hail from.

M Pradyu | Kannur

proceedings against US at the WTO on the additional tariffs. Trump's new tariff Imposition will certainly rattle financial markets, raising concern about renewal inflation and business uncertainty in US and abroad.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

CONG LEADER COURTS CONTROVERSY

Madam — Congress spokesperson Sharma Mohamed stirred controversy by calling Rohit Sharma "fat for a sportsman" and the "most unimpressive" captain India has had. Congress is already losing deposits and the recent debacle at Delhi elections proved their worth and the high command must have decent control over the cadres by teaching them how to talk on a public platform. In a historic achievement, India captain Rohit has become the first captain to lead his team to the final in all four major Men's ICC tournaments.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A parent's reflection on society and the next generation



SANJAY CHANDRA

I was raised with the values of respect, resilience and financial prudence principles. yet, I sometimes wonder if these values still carry the same significance

I was born in a middle-class family 66 years back, less than 12 years after independence. My father was an engineer in a state government department. I came across my mother's diary a few years back. She had spent her life painstakingly balancing a low government income against the rising expenses of bringing up three children. My parents inculcated in us the value of money. Another value that was deeply ingrained into our psyche by them was to respect everyone. I was taught that relationships were more important. A look of reproach from my mother was enough for me to realise my mistake if I was disrespectful.



This is what I tried to pass on to my children. I often look at them with pride. Having lived a better part of my life trying to hold on to these values, I now find myself at crossroads. Rapid urbanisation has resulted in concentration of bigger population in apartments. Technology has evolved like never before to provide faster modes of communication. Society WhatsApp group is unfortunately used by a few people at the expense of harmonious relationships. Recently, I found myself at the receiving end of a vitriolic diatribe. My fault was that I had taken the initiative of organising a cultural and literature festival. I sincerely believe that our youngsters need more exposure to the arts to navigate an increasingly fast-paced and more stressful world than what we grew up in. The language used by a few of these persons, who have claimed to be my good friends and neighbours over the past eight years, left me nonplussed at best and painfully hurt at worst. It should not have surprised me. These very people have been habitually doing the same followed by profuse apologies as it suits them. It just seems expedient to them in the murky world of society

politics. It does not matter to them if their actions are derogatory. The condominium seems to be mirroring the happenings beyond the residential complex. I am left wondering that the politics and religion, the two factors that should create a unified society, are used to divide. It is at times like these that I start doubting the values inculcated by my parents, and that in turn, I expect my children to follow. I talked to many other residents working with me for the festival. They were also indignant and sad about the way things were turning out to be. They had their own stories to narrate. One lady was rudely told to curb her flair for taking good initiative. Another lady was left with only four

other friends when it was time to pitch in. The majority suffers in silence at the hands of the minority. It made me rethink if our parents were wrong in turning us what many may call timid to suffer mental anguish. I also debated if we passed the right values to our children. We were unanimous in our shared belief. I derived strength as I looked around, and talked to these parents, many of whom were younger. We have been right in teaching our children to be better humans. Our children are better than us. They are putting the same technology to better use. #Me Too, Girls' Right to Education, Let's Talk, Good Touch Bad Touch are only a few of the initiatives that they are pursuing with single-minded devotion to make this a better world. I am confident that they will set better examples for the next generations to raise their voices and not suffer in silence against the bullies (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE RISE OF EU-INDIA DIGITAL COOPERATION

The EU and India are strengthening ties in digital governance, AI and semiconductor resilience



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Even as President Trump of the USA was busy being the world's most popular content creator, the global forces were turning the gears of a strategic realignment. After the televised, admonishment of Ukrainian President Zelensky by US President Trump and his VP JD Vance, the former was seen with several leaders of the European Union. As the case may be European leaders didn't have much to offer to Ukraine, except a subtle message to make peace with the US President. It may be a matter of time, before, Ukrainian President Zelensky has to evacuate his bunker office in Kyiv and perhaps make way for a more, current US head of state worldview representative. The message for the world was clear, the US would no longer be happy to bankroll, what it considers vague political narratives, potentially considered to be the hallmark of a free liberal world order. This world order, incidentally a post-World War creation, by the US, ensured free fair open markets, meant for the prosperity of all. What this free world order has achieved in the past many decades can be debated, however, it has ensured the US retains its supremacy in the economic prosperity index and so have many of the aligned nations including India (since the 1990s). Just before the US and Ukraine visible spat, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen led a large delegation of senior ministers to Delhi to re-establish the high-level EU India Trade and Technology Council conversations. Given the current geo-political landscape, one of the major focus areas was Digital Economy and Governance.

The European Union (EU) and India reaffirmed their commitment to deepening digital cooperation, emphasising shared values through their Working Group 1 on Strategic Technologies, Digital Governance, and Digital Connectivity. Both sides pledged to accelerate human-centric



digital transformation and advance key technologies, including AI, semi-conductors, High-Performance Computing and 6G, to benefit both economies and societies. The two parties agreed to enhance research and innovation to improve competitiveness and economic security while promoting a cyber-secure global digital ecosystem. They also stressed the importance of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in fostering inclusive digital economies. Both sides committed to ensuring interoperability between their respective DPIS, safeguarding human rights, and protecting personal data and intellectual property. They also discussed mutual recognition of e-signatures to facilitate cross-border digital transactions.

On semiconductor collaboration, the EU and India focused on strengthening the resilience of supply chains and expanding joint research in areas such as chip design and sustainable technologies.

The two sides underscored their shared commitment to the responsible development of AI, agreeing to further cooperation through joint projects and the development of frameworks for ethical AI. They also plan to enhance cooperation on large language models and AI applications in sectors like climate change and bioinformatics. They also committed to implementing the Global Digital Compact, which was endorsed at the UN General Assembly in September 2024, and ensuring continued global support for multi-stakeholder internet governance at the upcoming World Summit on Information Society +20. It may be the right click for both the EU and India. The EU and India are seizing the opportunity to strengthen their digital and technological ties. Their renewed partnership signals a commitment to fostering a resilient, secure, and inclusive digital future, underpinned by shared values and mutual economic interests. As old alliances shift, new partnerships may define the contours of the evolving world order.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Namaste at Oscars: Indian cinema has arrived

Indian storytelling captivates and inspire audiences worldwide. With the right strategy, this moment can shape the future of Indian cinema



CHAITANYA K PRASAD



The Namaste at the Oscars 2025 has reinforced the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: "The world is one family," a vision that transcends borders yet thrives on respect, mutual interdependence and a shared spirit of creativity. This symbolic gesture was not merely a greeting but a powerful moment of inclusivity, reflecting cinema's unique ability to bring together artists, audiences and creators from across the globe. This moment at the Academy Awards highlights how soft power is no longer confined to diplomacy alone; it now permeates events, institutions, and cultural exchanges. Cinema, often regarded as the perfect brand platform for fostering relationships, stood at the centre of this phenomenon.

The Namaste was a gateway, introducing the legacy of Indian storytelling to a diverse global audience and reinforcing the deep cultural interconnect between nations through the lens of cinema. Beyond its immediate impact, this gesture has set the stage for the future of the Oscars and similar global platforms. It paves the way for cultural ethos to play a larger role in how nations and their creative industries collaborate and connect. A simple, well-timed Namaste has given Incredible India a renewed global identity, transforming its participation in world cinema from occasional recognition to strategic influence.

Conan O'Brien's decision to open the Oscars with Namaste was not accidental. It was a statement, an acknowledgement that Indian cinema is no longer at the periphery of global storytelling. This was not a token mention of India, nor was it a cursory reference to its billion-strong audience.

This was a recognition of India's growing cinematic legacy and influence. India has long been part of Oscar history, but often through an external gaze. Films like Gandhi (1982) won big, Lagaan (2001)



A SIMPLE, WELL-TIMED NAMASTE HAS GIVEN INCREDIBLE INDIA A RENEWED GLOBAL IDENTITY, TRANSFORMING ITS PARTICIPATION IN WORLD CINEMA FROM OCCASIONAL RECOGNITION TO STRATEGIC INFLUENCE.

came close, and Slumdog Millionaire (2008) swept the Academy Awards, yet these narratives were largely shaped by Western filmmakers. The paradigm began to shift with R (2022), which not only won an Oscar for Naatu Naatu but also forced global audiences to acknowledge the unapologetic, high-energy storytelling of Indian filmmakers.

This shift was further cemented when Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine as Light (2024) won the Grand Prix at Cannes, a rare honour for Indian cinema. Films like Chaitanya Tamhane's The Disciple (2020), Rima Das's Village Rockstars (2017), and Nandita Das's Manto (2018) have been steadily breaking barriers, proving that Indian cinema is no longer defined by stereotypes but by diverse, powerful narratives. The power of this Namaste must be harnessed beyond the Oscars. As India gears up for Cannes 2025, this moment should serve as a launching pad for stronger positioning. India's representation at global film festivals must be strategic; ensuring that films sent to these platforms reflect the depth, diversity, and dynamism of Indian storytelling.

The Cannes Film Festival has already been a crucial stepping stone for Indian cinema. From Neecha Nagar (1946) winning the Palme d'Or to Masaan (2015) winning the Un Certain Regard prize, India's legacy at Cannes has been long-standing. However, now is the time to transition from isolated wins to sustained influence.

The government and industry stakeholders must work together to ensure that Indian cinema is

not just participating but actively shaping the conversation. One powerful example of how such moments create ripples is Life of Pi (2012). When director Ang Lee won the Oscar for Best Director, he greeted the audience with a Namaste, acknowledging the deep Indian cultural influence on the film.

That moment reinforced India's storytelling traditions, but the Namaste at the Oscars 2025 is even more significant; it wasn't just about one film, it was about the entire Indian cinematic movement.

India must now leverage this momentum through platforms like WAVES, the country's film export initiative. WAVES has the potential to push Indian cinema into untapped markets, ensuring that films from independent, regional, and mainstream creators reach wider international audiences.

By riding the wave of this Namaste moment, WAVES can position Indian cinema not just as entertainment, but as a formidable cultural force. Strategic collaborations, international distribution networks, and dedicated Oscar campaigns must now be part of the plan.

If South Korea could orchestrate a global push for Parasite (2019), resulting in its historic Oscar win, India must now do the same, systematically pushing its best films into the international awards circuit.

This is not just about recognition; it's about claiming a rightful place in world cinema. The Namaste at the Oscars 2025 should serve as a wake-up call, a reminder that Indian cinema has evolved from

a land of fantasy to a nation of action. It is no longer a question of whether Indian films will win the Oscar; it is now a matter of when and how often. India is no longer a guest at the global film table—it is a host, a creator, and an influencer.

The Namaste was not just a greeting; it was an invitation for the world to recognise Indian cinema's true potential. The time to capitalise on this moment is now. With the right vision and action, this could be the defining decade when Indian cinema not only participates in global storytelling but leads it.

The world has acknowledged India. Now, Indian cinema must ensure that every frame, every story, and every festival presence echoes the power of that Namaste. The Namaste at the Oscars 2025 was more than a greeting—it was a defining moment for Indian cinema on the global stage. It symbolised India's growing influence in storytelling, marking a shift from sporadic recognition to strategic presence. To sustain this momentum,

India must leverage platforms like WAVES, push for global collaborations, and ensure strong representation at festivals. The world has acknowledged India's cinematic potential; now, it is time for Indian cinema to lead. With the right strategy, this moment can shape the future, ensuring that Indian storytelling continues to captivate and inspire audiences worldwide.

(The writer is former civil servant writes on cinema and strategic communication. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan)

Ganges dolphin resurfaces in Charikadia river after 25 years

The conservation of the Gangetic dolphin is not just about protecting a single species; it is intrinsically linked to keeping the Ganga clean

The recent sighting of the endangered Ganges dolphin (Platanista gangetica) in Assam's Charikadia River at Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur district, has sparked immense interest. Locally known as Sih, this marks the first recorded presence of the species in the river since 1998, ending a 25-year absence. The prolonged disappearance of the Ganges dolphin from this waterway had fueled concerns over its dwindling numbers and possible extinction.

The disappearance of the species from the Charikadia River has been attributed to several factors, including hunting, habitat destruction, and depletion of food sources. Historically, Ganges dolphins thrived across major river sys-



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

tems in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, including the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems. However, their population has now become fragmented, with significant numbers surviving only in isolated sections of these river systems. The Ganges dolphin is a unique freshwater species that is functionally blind and relies

on echolocation to hunt. Despite its remarkable adaptations, the species faces severe threats, primarily due to habitat degradation from large-scale development projects, including dam construction, drainage works, and embankments.

Pollution further exacerbates the risks to their survival. Recognizing the urgent need for conservation, India has taken steps to protect the Ganges dolphin. The National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC), the country's first dedicated research facility for this species, was inaugurated on March 4, 2024, in Patna, Bihar. Located on the Patna University campus, near the Ganges River, the center spans 4,400 square meters and aims to conduct in-depth research

on dolphin behavior, survival, and threats.

It also provides training to fishermen, equipping them with conservation techniques to protect dolphins during fishing activities. Despite conservation efforts, human infrastructure projects continue to pose significant challenges. The collapse of a four-lane bridge under construction over the Ganga River at Sultanganj-Agwani in Bihar for the third time has drawn attention to the environmental impact of such developments. In 1990, the Bihar government declared a 60-km stretch of the Ganga River from Sultanganj to Kahalgaon as the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, aiming to protect the species while promoting eco-tourism. Recognizing the ecological



significance of the Ganges dolphin, the Government of India designated it as the national aquatic animal in October 2009 during the inaugural meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA), chaired by then-Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. The Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary currently hosts approximately 250 dolphins, frequently observed between Shankar Talkies and

Manik Sarkar Ghat. While government agencies have made efforts to protect the species, conservationists emphasize that illegal sand mining must be curbed to ensure its survival. Large-scale sand extraction disrupts river ecosystems by altering water flow and destroying the dolphins' habitat and food sources, such as small fish. Mechanized sand mining further exacerbates environmental damage, creating deep trenches that negatively impact

river health. Experts warn that unless illegal activities are controlled, the already fragile dolphin population will continue to decline. On a more optimistic note, Union Water Resources Minister C.R. Patil has stated that the Namami Gange Mission—a large-scale initiative aimed at rejuvenating the Ganga—has contributed to a rise in the dolphin population. Experts view this as an encouraging sign of improving environmental conditions. According to the Wildlife Institute of India, approximately 4,000 Gangetic dolphins currently inhabit the Ganga and its tributaries, with nearly 2,000 residing in Uttar Pradesh alone. In response, the Uttar Pradesh government has introduced a tourism policy designating a dolphin sanctu-

ary within the Chambal Sanctuary to bolster conservation efforts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's launch of Project Dolphin has significantly increased public awareness of the species. This initiative strengthens conservation measures while promoting the ecological health of the Ganga River. Further emphasizing its commitment to protecting the species, the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife has designated October 5 as National Dolphin Day. With increasing awareness and conservation initiatives, there is renewed hope that these remarkable creatures will continue to thrive in their natural habitat.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

EU leaders open emergency summit on defence and Ukraine aid

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Facing the prospect that the United States might cut them adrift under President Donald Trump, European Union leaders launched a day of emergency talks Thursday in a bid to beef up their own security and ensure that Ukraine will still be properly protected.

Friedrich Merz, the likely next chancellor of Germany, and summit chairman Antonio Costa discussed over breakfast in Brussels ways to fortify Europe's defences on a short deadline.

Merz pushed plans this week to loosen the nation's rules on running up debt to allow for higher defence spending. Meanwhile, the 27-nation bloc was waking up to news that French President Emmanuel Macron would confer with EU leaders about the possibility of using France's nuclear deterrent to protect the continent from Russian threats.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of the European Council to discuss continued support for Ukraine and European defense, in Brussels on Thursday. AP/PTI

It all underscored the sea change that has taken place in the two months since Trump took office and immediately started questioning the cornerstones of cooperation between the United States and Europe that had been the bedrock of Western security since World War II.

Her proposal is underpinned by 150 billion euros (\$162 billion) worth of loans to buy priority military equipment. Most of the increased defense spending would have to come from national budgets at a time when many countries are already overburdened with debt.

Five other countries using the euro currency have debt levels over 100% of GDP: Belgium, Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal. Europe's largest economy, Germany, has more room to borrow, with a debt level of 62% of GDP.

S Korean fighter jets accidentally drop bombs, injuring 8 people

AP ■ SEOUL

Two South Korean fighter jets accidentally dropped eight bombs on a civilian area during a joint live-fire exercise with the US military on Thursday, injuring eight people, officials said.

with the US military in Pocheon, a city close to the heavily armed border with North Korea. The air force also said a committee would investigate the accident and examine the scale of the damage inflicted.

Mayor Paek Young Hyeun called the bombings "awful" and urged the military to halt drills in the city until it formulates reliable steps that can prevent a recurrence. He said that Pocheon, a city of 140,000 people, provides three major firing ranges for the South Korean and US militaries.

Russian missile kills 4 in Zelenskyy's hometown hotel

AP ■ KYIV

In Ukraine, a Russian ballistic missile killed four people staying at a hotel in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown during the night.

NZ diplomat in London loses his job over Trump remarks

AP ■ WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND)

New Zealand's most senior envoy to the United Kingdom has lost his job over remarks he made about US President Donald Trump at an event in London this week, New Zealand's foreign minister said Thursday.

Winston Churchill from 1938, when Churchill was a lawmaker in the government of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Churchill's speech rebuked Britain's signing of the Munich Agreement with Adolf Hitler, allowing Germany to annex part of Czechoslovakia.

Peters said in a written statement. Goff has been New Zealand's envoy to the UK since January 2023. He did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

'Bear with me', Trump says as both farmers, consumers brace for tariff effects

AP ■ OMAHA (US)

Farmers and meat producers across the US can expect the new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China and the retaliatory action from those countries to hurt their bottom lines by billions of dollars if they stay in place a while, and consumers could quickly see higher prices for produce and ground beef.

that agricultural imports hurt American farmers and asked them to "bear with me again" as he seeks to protect them. He didn't mention any additional aid.

University. The situation has some farmers stocking up on equipment and supplies in preparation for prices to go up, but it's not like they can easily buy all their fertilizer ahead of time.

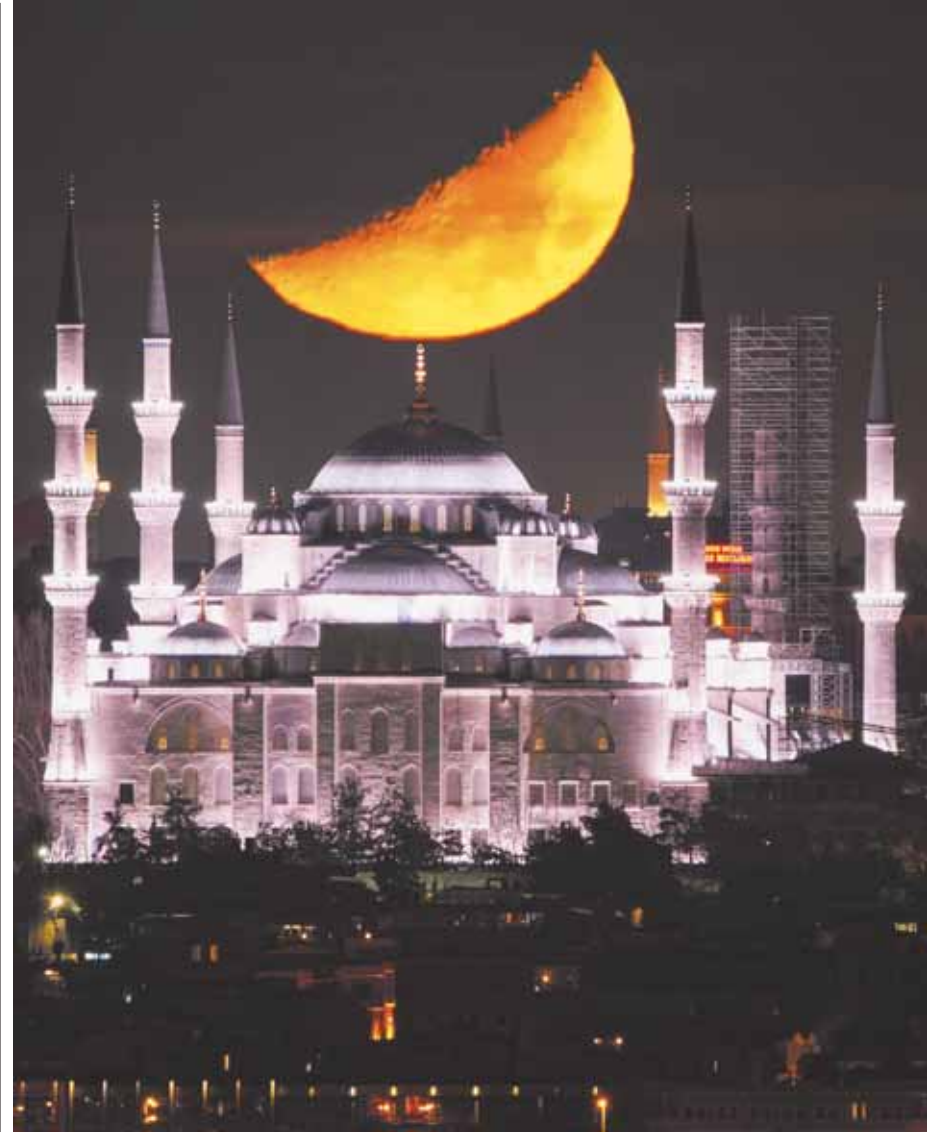
for the amount of corn, soybeans, wheat, and other agricultural products that we now export in significant quantities," he said.

er to their fields last fall and may not have to pay the higher fertilizer bills until later.

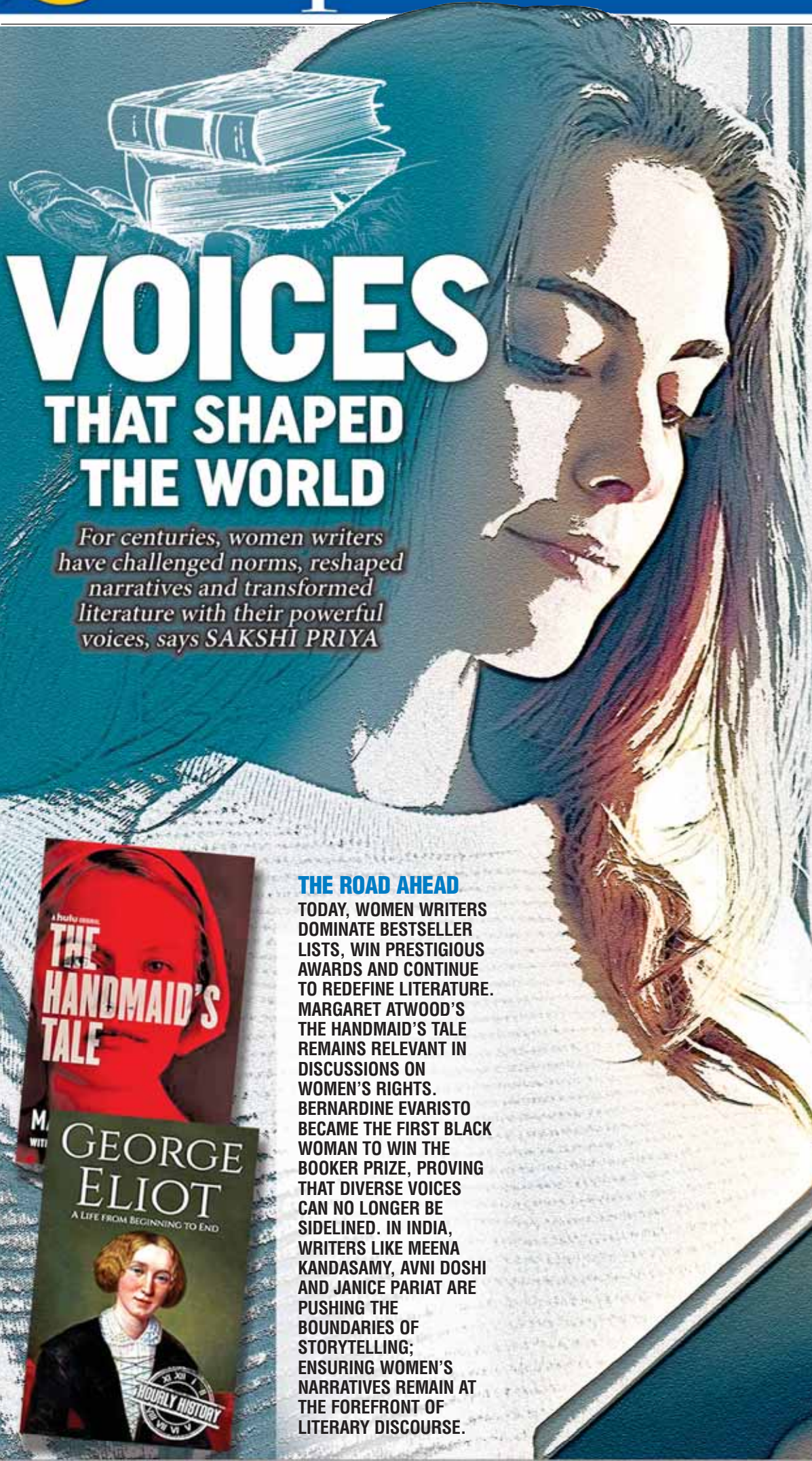
uct. For instance, demand for steaks and bacon may remain relatively steady because little of that is exported, but the price of hams could drop in the US because Mexico is a major buyer of those.

as soon as Trump started talking about tariffs she bought everything she thought would see a price hike in the coming months.

the pandemic. But Janzen notes that Trump is working to drastically slash spending across the federal government.



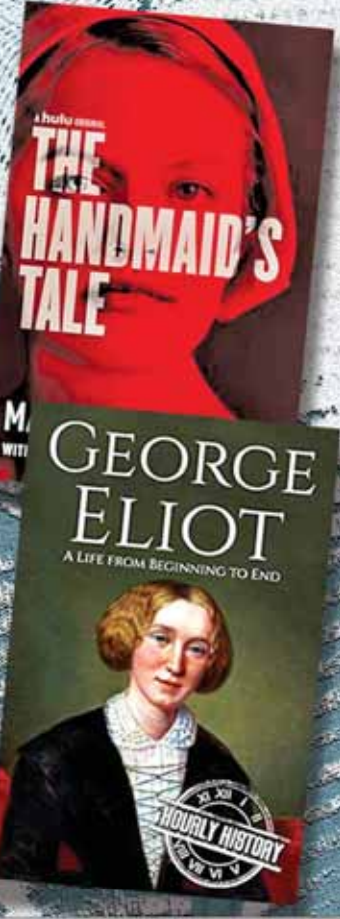
A half-moon sets behind the Sultanahmet Mosque during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in Istanbul, Turkey on Thursday. AP/PTI



VOICES THAT SHAPED THE WORLD

For centuries, women writers have challenged norms, reshaped narratives and transformed literature with their powerful voices, says SAKSHI PRIYA

THE ROAD AHEAD
 TODAY, WOMEN WRITERS DOMINATE BESTSELLER LISTS, WIN PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS AND CONTINUE TO REDEFINE LITERATURE. MARGARET ATWOOD'S THE HANDMAID'S TALE REMAINS RELEVANT IN DISCUSSIONS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS. BERNARDINE EVARISTO BECAME THE FIRST BLACK WOMAN TO WIN THE BOOKER PRIZE, PROVING THAT DIVERSE VOICES CAN NO LONGER BE SIDELINED. IN INDIA, WRITERS LIKE MEENA KANDASAMY, AVNI DOSHI AND JANICE PARIAT ARE PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF STORYTELLING; ENSURING WOMEN'S NARRATIVES REMAIN AT THE FOREFRONT OF LITERARY DISCOURSE.



WHY WOMEN'S STORIES MATTER
 WOMEN'S LITERATURE IS NOT A NICHE; IT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR COLLECTIVE HUMAN EXPERIENCE. IT CHALLENGES STEREOTYPES AND DEEPENS EMPATHY. EVERY BOOK WRITTEN BY A WOMAN CARRIES WITHIN IT THE STRUGGLES, DREAMS AND HISTORIES OF THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE HER.

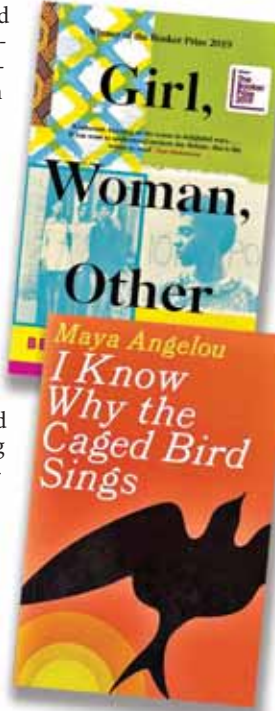
The Struggle for Recognition
 In earlier times, societal norms denied women access to education, making it difficult for them to enter the literary world. Many resorted to pseudonyms to get published. Mary Ann Evans wrote as George Eliot, while the Brontë sisters first published under the names Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Even Jane Austen's early works were signed "By a Lady." Despite these challenges, their narratives carried immense depth, challenging gender roles, class structures and moral dilemmas in ways that few male writers dared to explore.

In India, the struggle was even more pronounced. For centuries, women's stories remained within the oral tradition, passed down through generations but rarely written. It was only in the 19th century that writers like Toru Dutt and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain began breaking societal constraints. Hossain's *Sultana's Dream*, published in 1905, imagined a world where women ruled and men were confined to their homes, questioning patriarchal norms in a way that was revolutionary for its time.

The 20th century marked a turning point globally and in India. Women writers not only published under their real names but also dictated literary trends. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* questioned the systemic suppression of women's voices in literature.



Nobel laureate Toni Morrison chronicled the Black female experience in America with unmatched brilliance. Meanwhile, Amrita Pritam became a literary icon with her evocative poetry on love and Partition, particularly *Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu*. Mahasweta Devi's writings on tribal communities and marginalised women forced society to confront uncomfortable truths.



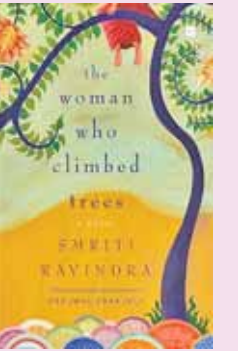
Literature as Change
 Women's literature has never been just about storytelling, it has also been a tool for activism. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* laid the foundation for feminist thought. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird*

Sings exposed racism and misogyny with raw honesty. In India, Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* challenged conservative mindsets with its bold depiction of female desire. Kamala Das's poetry and autobiographical works fearlessly explored themes of identity, love and rebellion, inspiring generations of women to embrace their truths.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* reframed gender discussions for a new generation. In contemporary Indian literature, writers like Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri and Perumal Murugan continue to challenge social norms, bringing stories of the unheard into mainstream cultural consciousness and discourse.

THIS WOMEN'S DAY, LET US NOT ONLY CELEBRATE WOMEN WRITERS BUT ALSO READ THEM, AMPLIFY THEIR VOICES AND RECOGNISE THEIR ROLE IN SHAPING OUR WORLD, ONE STORY AT A TIME

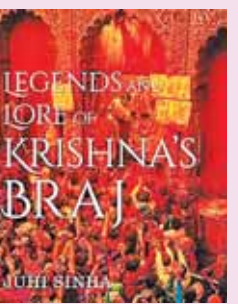
MARCH READS



Book: Woman Who Climbed Trees
 Author: Smriti Ravindra
 Publisher: HarperCollins
 Price: ₹599



Book: Everything the light touches
 Author: Janice Pariat
 Publisher: HarperCollins
 Price: ₹599



Book: Legends and lore of Krishna's Braj
 Author: Juhi Sinha
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹1750



Book: The Artistry of Handwork
 Author: Jaya Jaitly
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹395

Strength, Sisterhood & Survival

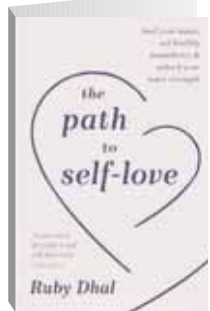


Fearless & Unstoppable
 For the trailblazers, risk-takers and rule-breakers who refuse to conform. Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus - A brilliant scientist-turned-TV-star shakes up the male-dominated world of the 1960s. Great Circle by Maggie Shipstead - A daring female pilot battles societal constraints to chase her dream of flying.

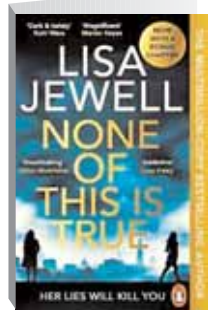
Stronger Together
 Because the women who stand by us, our friends, sisters and chosen family, shape who we become. Everything I Know About Love by Dolly Alderton - A raw, witty memoir on friendship, heartbreak and growing up.



Unapologetically Herself
 For those embracing every part of who they are. Open When by Julie Smith - A heartfelt guide to self-care, resilience and mental well-being. The Path to Self-Love by Ruby Dhul - A warm, empowering roadmap to putting yourself first. The Book You Want Everyone You Love to Read by Philippa Perry - A witty and wise take on relationships, self-discovery and emotional well-being.



Women on the Edge
 Complex heroines, unsettling twists and gripping suspense that will keep you hooked. Strange Sally Diamond by Liz Nugent - A woman with a traumatic past unearths chilling family secrets. None of This Is True by Lisa



Jewell - A journalist's chance meeting with a mysterious woman spirals into a terrifying nightmare. The Crash by Freida McFadden - Trapped in a snowstorm, a pregnant woman realises her safe haven isn't what it seems. The Wrong Sister by Claire Douglas - A dark, twisted tale of sisterhood gone terribly wrong.

Books That Uplift and Inspire Women

BY TEAM VIVA

Here's a specially curated list of books from Rupa and Aleph, celebrating the strength, resilience and brilliance of women.



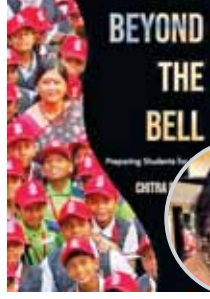
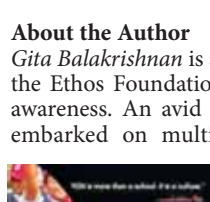
She Storms the Norms - Anisha Motwani & Priyadarshini Narendra
 A powerful sequel to *Storm the Norm*, this book shares inspiring stories of women who have shattered societal barriers and self-doubt to redefine success. A must-read for those who dare to challenge the status quo.



About the Authors
 Anisha Motwani is a business leader, speaker and author of the bestselling *Storm the Norm*. She serves as an independent director on various boards and has been recognised among the '50 Most Powerful Women in Indian Business' by Business Today. Priyadarshini Narendra is a marketing and strategy expert with decades of experience in advertising, consumer research and consulting. She has authored fiction books and contributes to discussions on women in the workplace.



1700 in 70: A Walk for a Cause - Gita Balakrishnan
 Follow architect Gita Balakrishnan's extraordinary 1,700-km journey across India on foot, exploring design's impact on life and culture. A story of endurance, discovery and the power of walking with purpose.



About the Author
 Gita Balakrishnan is an architect and founder of the Ethos Foundation, which promotes design awareness. An avid marathon runner, she has embarked on multiple walking expeditions, advocating for the role of design in everyday life.

Beyond the Bell: Preparing Students for Life - Chitra Prasad
 A transformative guide on holistic education, this book goes beyond academics, focusing on life skills,

values and personal growth to help students thrive in a rapidly changing world.

About the Author
 Chitra Prasad is an educationist with three decades of experience and head of the NSN Group of Schools. With a strong focus on values-based learning, she integrates spirituality into education to shape well-rounded individuals.

A Stitch in Time: The Biba Story - Meena Bindra



The inspiring journey of Meena Bindra, who built Biba from a home-based venture into a fashion empire. A compelling story of passion, perseverance and the rise of India's fashion industry.

About the Author
 Meena Bindra, a pioneer in Indian fashion, founded Biba, transforming the salwar kameez into a modern style statement. From a small home-run business to a leading brand, her journey is a testament to innovation and determination.



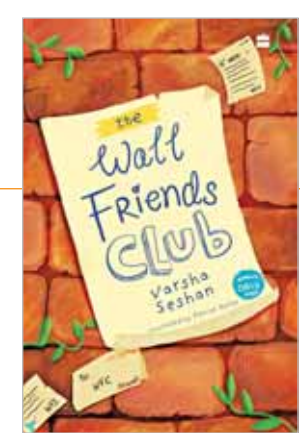
These books offer wisdom, courage and motivation, perfect for Women's Day and beyond.

A Story of True Friendship

A touching story celebrating the strength, trust and support found in women friendships across generations, says TEAM VIVA

As International Women's Day approaches, there is no better time to celebrate the power of friendship, resilience and support. *The Wall Friends Club* by Varsha Seshan beautifully captures the essence of human connection, showing how even the most unexpected friendships can shape our lives in meaningful ways. Told through an epistolary format, the novel follows two young protagonists, Anandi and Sriya, who form an unlikely bond through letters slipped into a hidden gap in a wall. Despite never meeting, their relationship grows into something deeply special, proving that true friendship goes beyond physical presence. Varsha Seshan, speaking about the book, shares, "I love letters, old-fashioned letters, not just emails. I also had several pen pals as a child, which made me wonder ... could two children who never meet grow to be the best of friends? An epistolary novel has always seemed an exciting genre to explore, so here is my first one: *The Wall Friends Club*." At its core, the story is about breaking barriers, embracing differences and find-

ing comfort in the written word. Anandi and Sriya start as strangers, hesitant yet curious, unsure of who will find their letters. But as their exchanges continue, their letters become a refuge, a place where they can share their dreams, fears and small moments of joy. Their honest and heartfelt conversations reflect the beauty of friendships where trust and support come naturally, unburdened by the complexities of adulthood.



ABOUT THE BOOK
 Book: The Wall Friends Club
 Edited by: Varsha Seshan
 Publisher: HarperCollins
 Price: ₹175

The Wall Friends Club truly special is its timeless message about women's friendships. It reminds readers, especially girls, of the importance of lifting each other up rather than competing or tearing each other down. The characters, though young, face real struggles, doubts, insecurities and moments of self-reflection. Their journey resonates with anyone who has ever felt unsure about their place in the world or struggled to find their voice. Since *International Women's Day* is around the corner, this book is a perfect fit as it carries a powerful message about kindness, connection and the importance of supporting one another.

