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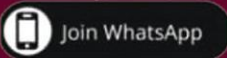
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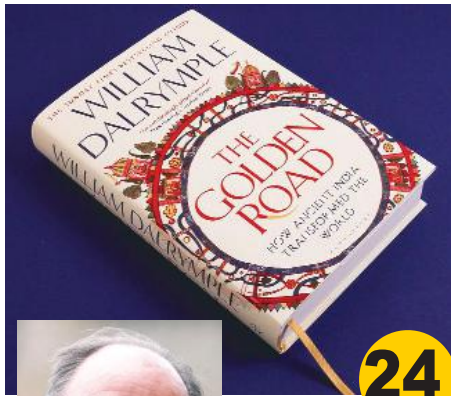
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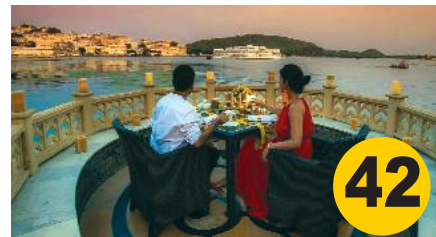
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Rajeswari Annavarapu

Editor, Printer & Publisher

The Art of Reflection

As a year comes to an end, the instinct to rush forward, to make new resolutions, set new goals, and imagine new possibilities, can be strong. Yet, before stepping into what comes next, there is a quiet and often overlooked practice that holds immense value: reflection. Taking the time to look back is not merely about nostalgia; it is about understanding. It is a way of honoring the journey that brought us to where we stand today.

Reflection invites us to slow down and sift through the experiences of the past year, not to judge them as good or bad, but to recognize what they offered. Every challenge faced, every moment of joy, every routine that shaped our days holds meaning. When we pause to truly see these moments, patterns emerge. We begin to understand what strengthened us, what drained us, and what inspired us. This awareness becomes the foundation for more intentional living.

In a world that rewards constant motion, reflection is an act of mindful resistance. It reminds us that growth does not happen simply by moving forward; it happens when we make sense of where we have been. It helps us identify the resilience we may have overlooked in ourselves. It helps us name the small, quiet joys that sustained us. It helps us see not



**Rajeswari
Annavarapu**



only what we achieved, but what we learned and how we changed.

Importantly, reflection also cultivates gratitude. Even in years marked by difficulty, there are threads of support-people who stood by us, moments of clarity, acts of kindness, or strength that surfaced unexpectedly. Gratitude does not erase hardship; rather, it provides balance, making

room for appreciation alongside struggle.

Reflection also clarifies intention. When we acknowledge what worked for us and what did not, our goals for the future become more grounded. Instead of vague resolutions, we can choose actions aligned with our values and needs. Reflection turns hope into direction.

As a new year approaches, the act of looking back becomes more than memory, it becomes meaning. It allows us to step forward not out of habit, but out of awareness. Reflection reminds us that every ending carries the quiet promise of beginning again, this time with deeper understanding, renewed purpose, and a steadier heart.





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Month December	Language English	Base Calendar Gregorian			
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In the landscape of 21st-century healthcare, a significant and palpable shift is underway. As modern society grapples with an escalating burden of chronic illness, unrelenting stress, and complex environmental challenges, there is a growing collective turn toward systems that view health not merely as the absence of disease, but as a vibrant, dynamic state of balance. At the forefront of this global movement is Naturopathy, a distinct and comprehensive system of primary health care that acts simultaneously as an art, a science, a philosophy, and a practice dedicated to the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of illness.

The urgency for such a paradigm shift is driven by alarming global statistics. According to recent data from the World Health Organization, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular issues, and respiratory conditions are responsible for more than 74% of global deaths. These are diseases often rooted in lifestyle, environment, and diet-factors that conventional medicine's acute-care model is not always best equipped to address alone. Furthermore, chronic pain is estimated to affect up to 20% of the world's population, accounting for a significant portion of medical visits and creating an immense eco-



Rajeswari Annavarapu

nomic strain on healthcare systems.

Amidst this backdrop, naturopathy has regained global significance. It is no longer seen merely as a fringe alternative but as a vital, preventive, and eco-friendly approach that complements modern medicine. People are increasingly seeking solutions that are less invasive, free from harsh side effects, and capable of addressing the "whole person" rather than just a set of isolated symptoms. Naturopathy answers this call by

operating on the fundamental premise that the human body possesses an innate biological intelligence, a "vital force", that continuously strives for self-regulation, repair, and healing.

To truly understand the depth and potential of naturopathy, one must look to its ancient roots. The concept of natural healing is as old as humanity itself. Since the dawn of history, every culture and race has developed its own unique system of healing, utilizing the natural resources provided by the earth, plants, water, sunlight, and air, to maintain health and treat illness.

The philosophical bedrock of what we now call naturopathy was laid approximately 2,400 years ago by the Greek physician Hippocrates, often revered as the "Father of Medicine." It was Hippocrates who famously advocated for the *vis medicatrix naturae*, the healing power of nature.

Naturopathy in the Modern Era



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He emphasized that the physician's primary role is to support the body's natural processes rather than to suppress them.

He taught that health was the result of living in accordance with natural laws, highlighting the critical importance of diet, exercise, and environmental factors long before "lifestyle medicine" became a modern buzzword.

Parallel to these Greek traditions, other ancient systems were developing similar holistic frameworks. Ayurveda in India, dating back over 5,000 years, emphasized the balance of doshas (body constitutions) and the importance of preventive care through daily regimens. Similarly, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) focused on the balance of energy (qi) and the harmony between yin and yang. These ancient wisdom traditions share the naturopathic commitment to treating the individual rather than the disease and focusing on prevention as the highest form of medicine.

The formalization of these ancient practices into the modern profession of "naturopathy" began in 19th-century Europe. This period saw the rise of the "Nature Cure" movement, which emerged as a reaction against the harsh and often toxic medical practices of the

time, such as bloodletting and the administration of heavy metals. This movement was eventually transported to the United States in the early 20th century by Benedict Lust, a German physician who is often credited as the father of modern naturopathy. Lust integrated the hydrotherapy and herbal traditions of Europe with other natural modalities, establishing a comprehensive system that has since evolved to incorporate advances in clinical nutrition, psychology, and biomedical sciences.

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE PRACTICE



Naturopathy is distinguished not by the specific therapies it employs, which can range from high-tech nutritional supplementation to ancient water cures, but by the philosophy that guides every clinical decision. Naturopathic practice is governed by a set of core principles that are continually re-examined in the light of scientific



advances, ensuring that the practice remains both traditionally grounded and empirically sound.

The Healing Power of Nature

The most fundamental principle is the unshakeable belief in the body's inherent ability to heal itself. Naturopaths believe the human organism possesses complex, cybernetic biological processes that account for this capacity. When the skin is cut, it repairs itself; when the body is infected, the immune system mounts a defense. The role of the naturopath is to facilitate this natural process by identifying and removing obstacles to recovery, such as poor diet, chronic stress, or toxic environments-and providing the necessary building blocks for health.

First, Do No Harm

Naturopaths prioritize gentle, non-invasive therapies that minimize the risk of harmful side effects. While naturopathy acknowledges that aggressive therapies may sometimes be necessary in critical situations, they are reserved for the last resort. The approach favors methods that work synergistically with the body rather than suppressing symptoms. This principle dictates that the practitioner must respect the body's own healing timeline and avoid treatments that might weaken the vital force.



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Treat the Cause

In the naturopathic worldview, symptoms are viewed not as the disease itself, but as the body's attempt to heal or a signal of a deeper imbalance. For example, a fever is seen as a defense mecha-



nism to cook out an infection, rather than a negative event to be immediately suppressed. Naturopathy strives to identify and treat the underlying causes of illness, whether they are physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. By addressing the root cause rather than merely managing symptoms, naturopathy aims for a permanent cure rather than temporary relief.

Treat the Whole Person

This holistic principle acknowledges that the mind, body, and environment form an indivisible ecological whole. A physical ailment in one organ system, such as the skin, may actually be a clue to a larger systemic pathology involving digestion or stress. Consequently, treatment plans are highly individualized. A naturopath does not treat "diabetes" or "depression" in the abstract; they treat a specific person who happens to have those conditions, addressing the unique physical, mental, emotional, social, and environmental factors influencing their health.

Doctor as Teacher

A primary role of the naturopath is to educate the patient. By sharing



knowledge about health conditions, physiology, and treatment options, practitioners aim to increase the patient's health literacy. This principle seeks to transform the patient from a passive recipient of care into an active, empowered participant in their own healing journey. The ultimate

goal is to make the patient independent of the doctor, possessing the knowledge and skills to maintain their own wellness.

Prevention and Wellness

Naturopaths emphasize the prevention of disease over the cure of disease. This involves assessing risk factors, heredity, and susceptibility to disease and making appropriate interventions to prevent illness before it manifests. The goal is not just the absence of disease, but the maintenance of optimal wellness, a state of vitality where the individual can thrive in all aspects of life.

EMPOWERMENT AND THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

Recent qualitative research into the practitioner-patient dynamic has revealed that empowerment is a central mechanism in naturopathic care, particularly for patients managing chronic conditions like chronic pain. The consultation itself is often viewed as a therapeutic tool, distinct from the remedies prescribed.



One of the most striking features of a naturopathic consultation is the luxury of time. Initial consultations frequently range from 55 to 90 minutes. This extended time-frame allows for deep, active listening, where patients are encouraged to detail their healthcare experiences, fears, and histories in their own words. For patients who have often felt unheard or rushed in conventional medical settings, this validation is a critical first step toward healing. Practitioners create a "safe place" where patients feel respected and understood.

The language used in naturopathy often reflects a shift in power dynamics. Many practitioners prefer the term "client" over "patient" to avoid the passive connotations associated with the latter. This semantic choice underscores a partnership model, where the individual is an active agent in their healthcare decisions.

Naturopathy promotes a "person-centered" model where treatment protocols are negotiated rather than dictated. Practitioners actively engage in shared decision-making, taking into account the patient's preferences, financial capacity, and previous experiences. If a patient is hesitant about a certain supplement or lifestyle change, the practitioner works with them to find a viable alternative. Even when patients present with ideas that may not be strictly evidence-based, practitioners navigate these conversations with respect, using them as opportunities for education rather than dismissal.

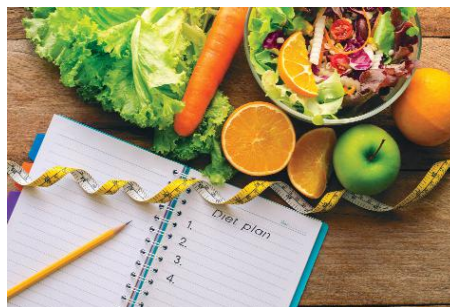
This collaborative approach fosters "psychological empowerment", a sense of meaning, self-agency, and impact. By helping

patients identify the specific triggers of their conditions, such as stress, weather changes, or specific foods-practitioners equip them with the coping skills and self-confidence necessary to manage their daily lives.

THERAPEUTIC MODALITIES

Naturopaths do not rely on a single method of treatment. Instead, they utilize a broad and diverse array of natural therapies, often combining them to suit the individual needs of the patient. This multimodal approach allows for flexibility and comprehensiveness in treatment.

Diet Therapy and Nutrition



Nutrition is a cornerstone of naturopathy, based on the ancient belief that food is medicine. Naturopaths view improper diet as a root cause of many modern diseases. Treatment often begins with correcting dietary imbalances. Therapies may include whole-food diets, raw food therapy, juice fasting, or "mono-diets" (eating one type of food for a period) to cleanse the digestive system. Emphasis is placed on organic, seasonal, and natural foods to maximize nutritional value and minimize toxin intake. The goal is to correct nutritional deficiencies, strengthen immunity, reduce systemic inflammation, and support the body's natural detoxification pathways.

Hydrotherapy



Water therapy is one of the oldest and most widely practiced naturopathic treatments. It utilizes water in various forms-hot, cold, steam, or ice-to stimulate circulation, modulate the immune system, and improve metabolism.

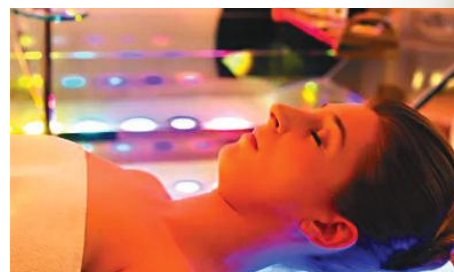
Mechanisms: Cold water is used to stimulate blood circulation and tone muscles, while hot water promotes relaxation, increases blood flow to the skin, and induces sweating to eliminate toxins.

Techniques: Common methods include spinal sprays, sitz baths (for pelvic health), mud packs, fomentations (warm compresses), and alternating hot and cold applications. This "contrast hydrotherapy" is particularly effective for activating the nervous system and pumping blood through congested tissues.

Applications: It is considered effective for conditions ranging from arthritis and digestive disorders to respiratory ailments and stress relief.

Color Therapy (Chromotherapy)

A unique and often overlooked modality in naturopathy is Color



Therapy. This is a drugless method that uses different colors of light, often through solar-charged water, to treat disease. The theory posits that sun rays contain seven spectrum colors, each with specific therapeutic properties essential for health.

Red, Orange, and Yellow (Stimulating): These warm colors are considered stimulating and expanding. Orange-charged water, for example, is used to treat issues related to the stomach, liver, kidneys, and spleen. It is believed to help with "cold" conditions like paralysis, anemia, and slow digestion.

Green (Harmonizing): Situated in the middle of the spectrum, green is a neutral, harmonizing color. Green-charged water is often called the "king of colors" and is used for blood purification and building muscle. It is a go-to remedy for inflammatory conditions, typhoid, malaria, and skin troubles like eczema.

Blue, Indigo, and Violet (Soothing): These cool colors are contracting and soothing. They are powerful antiseptics. Blue-charged water is indicated for "hot" conditions like high fevers, high blood pressure, dysentery, and burning sensations. It acts as a sedative for the nervous system.

Preparation: These remedies are prepared by exposing water in colored glass bottles to direct sunlight for 6-8 hours, allowing the water to absorb the specific vibrational energy of the color.

Herbal and Botanical Medicine

Naturopaths utilize plant substances to treat and prevent disease, drawing on a vast heritage of herbal knowledge from Western



herbalism, Ayurveda, and Chinese medicine.

Science of Herbs: Herbs are valued for their complex chemical structures, containing phytochemicals like alkaloids, flavonoids, and tannins that provide anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antioxidant effects.

Usage: Common remedies might include turmeric for inflammation, ginger for nausea and respiratory issues, or peppermint for digestion. Unlike synthetic drugs which often isolate a single active ingredient, herbal remedies use the whole plant, which proponents argue creates a gentler, synergistic effect with fewer side effects.

Fasting and Detoxification



Detoxification is central to the naturopathic approach, based on the idea that chronic illness often stems from the accumulation of toxins due to poor diet, sedentary lifestyle, and environmental pollutants.

Fasting: This is viewed not as starvation, but as a period of phys-

iological rest. By temporarily ceasing the intake of solid food, the body can redirect the energy usually spent on digestion toward healing, repair, and "housekeeping" at the cellular level.

Scientific backing: Modern research into autophagy (the body's process of cleaning out damaged cells) supports the benefits of controlled fasting for improving insulin sensitivity and cellular repair.

Methods: Detox protocols often combine fasting with mud therapy, enemas, or colon cleansing to ensure toxins are efficiently eliminated from the body.

Yoga and Meditation



Recognizing the inextricable link between the mind and the body, naturopathy integrates practices like yoga and meditation to treat psychosomatic illnesses and stress.

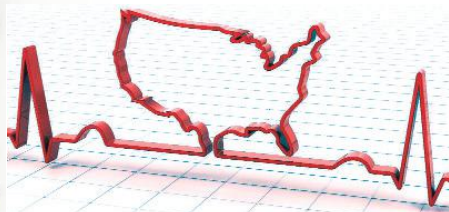
Yoga: Through physical postures (asanas) and breathing exercises (pranayama), yoga improves circulation, hormonal function, and musculoskeletal strength.

Meditation: This practice is used to reduce stress hormones, calm the nervous system, and promote emotional stability. Research has consistently shown these practices to be effective in reducing hypertension, depression, and chronic pain.

Other Key Therapies

The naturopathic toolkit also includes Reflexology (applying pressure to points on the feet or hands that correspond to organs), Acupuncture (balancing energy flow along meridians), "Massage Therapy" (manipulating soft tissue for circulation and relaxation), and Counseling (addressing the emotional roots of disease).

Combating the Chronic Disease Epidemic



With non-communicable diseases responsible for the vast majority of deaths globally, the conventional "acute-care" model, which excels at trauma and emergency intervention-is often ill-suited for long-term management. Naturopathy offers a viable strategy for this crisis because NCDs are largely preventable through lifestyle modification. By targeting root causes such as obesity, nutritional deficiency, and stress, naturopathy fosters long-term well-being rather than lifelong dependency on pharmaceuticals.

Effectiveness in Pain Management



Chronic pain is a massive burden on society, affecting the quality of life for millions. Research has shown promising results for natur-



opathic interventions in this area. Clinical trials have demonstrated that naturopathic care for conditions like low back pain can result in significantly lower pain scores and improved quality of life compared to standard physiotherapy education alone. Patients often report not just physical relief, but a greater sense of control over their pain through the self-management strategies taught by naturopaths.

Economic and Sustainable Value

Naturopathy is increasingly viewed as a cost-effective alternative. Studies have indicated that naturopathic care can result in significant societal savings due to reduced absenteeism from work and lower costs for adjunctive care. Furthermore, naturopathy aligns with global goals for sustainability. Its reliance on natural resources, low-tech interventions like fasting and yoga, and eco-friendly practices makes it a sustainable choice for both the planet and the health-care budget. It reduces the environmental load associated with the production and disposal of pharmaceutical products.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

Despite its growing popularity and clear benefits, the integration of naturopathy into mainstream health-care is not without significant hurdles.

The Quest for Scientific Validation

A primary challenge is the uneven landscape of evidence. While specific modalities like yoga, meditation, and many herbal medicines are now backed by robust scientific research, other traditional naturopathic treatments-such as specific hydrotherapy techniques or detoxification methods-still lack large-scale, standardized clinical trials. This gap can lead to skepti-



cism from the biomedical community and regulatory bodies, who demand rigorous proof of efficacy.

Regulatory Inconsistencies

There is a lack of uniform educational and regulatory standards globally. While countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia have accredited naturopathic colleges and licensing boards, many other regions lack this structural support. In some



areas, the title "naturopath" is not protected, allowing untrained individuals to practice. This poses risks to public safety and creates confusion about what qualified naturopathic care actually looks like.



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Integration and Safety Risks

There is a risk of adverse outcomes if patients rely exclusively on naturopathy for critical, life-threatening illnesses like cancer or severe acute infections, potentially delaying necessary conventional treatment. The naturopathic profession advocates for an integrative model, where natural therapies support conventional treatment, but navigating this boundary requires skill and cooperation. Furthermore, there is an internal concern within the profession regarding the "pharmaceuticalization" of natural supplements—where practitioners might over-prescribe supplements in a "pill for an ill" fashion, drifting away from the core holistic principles of the field. Practitioners must constantly engage in critical self-reflection to ensure they are adhering to their ethical roots.

THE FUTURE LANDSCAPE

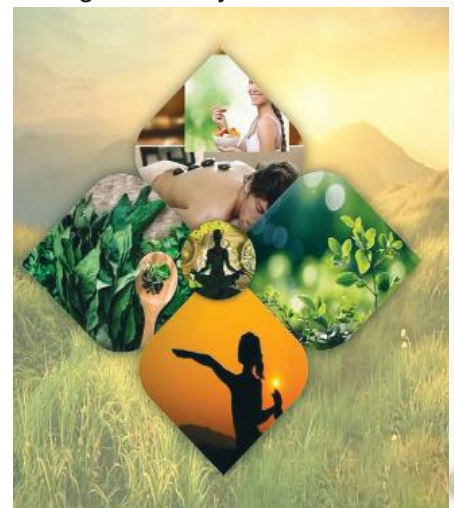
The future of naturopathy appears promising. The World Health Organization has acknowledged the vital role of traditional and complementary medicine, noting that over 80% of the world's population uses it in some form. As patients increasingly demand "whole person" care, the profes-



sion is moving toward a more integrated and standardized future. Key areas of development include strengthening the evidence base through rigorous research, developing global regulatory frameworks to ensure practitioner competency, and fostering collaboration between naturopaths and conventional doctors. The vision is a multidisciplinary healthcare model

where a patient can receive the best of both worlds: the life-saving technology of modern medicine when needed, and the restorative, preventive wisdom of naturopathy for long-term health.

Naturopathy stands at the intersection of ancient wisdom and modern necessity. By upholding principles such as *Vis Medicatrix Naturae* and *Docere*, it offers a healthcare model that is inherently empowering, preventive, and holistic. It teaches that health is not something that is given to us by a doctor, but something we build through our daily choices.



As we navigate an era defined by lifestyle imbalances and environmental disconnect, naturopathy reminds us that the power to heal resides not just in a pill, but in the food we eat, the water we drink, the thoughts we think, and the natural world that surrounds us. It challenges us to take responsibility for our own well-being and offers a compassionate, sustainable path back to balance. For a modern world in search of healing, naturopathy offers not just a cure, but a way of life.

 **Rajeswari Annavarapu**





Ayodhya Before the Epic

In the vast tapestry of Indian epics, the Ramayana occupies a singular position as both a literary masterpiece and a spiritual guide. Composed by the sage Valmiki, it is not merely a story of kings, wars, and devotion, but a work steeped in philosophy, aesthetics, and moral instruction. Chapter 5 of the Bala Kanda opens not with action or conflict, but with admiration. It is a portrait of a city at the height of its grace, prosperity, and harmony.

The tradition tells us that the lineage of Ayodhya's rulers stretches back to Prajapati, the primordial creator. Among their ancestors stands the formidable King Sagara, whose name is remembered for giving the oceans their depth. His sixty thousand sons, legends in their own right, accompanied him in his conquests. It is in this distinguished line - a lineage of courageous and expansive rulers - that the Ramayana takes shape. The epic is not a tale born in obscurity. It rises from a civilization fully alive, confident, and flourishing.

Valmiki describes the land of Kosala, the region in which Ayodhya rests, as abundant in wealth and crops. The kingdom is not merely fertile - it is joyful. Its prosperity is not a boast but a lived experience, evident in daily life. The Sarayu river curves alongside it, giving the city nourishment and grace, a companion to its rhythm and culture. Ayodhya itself, we are told, was originally built by Manu, the ancient lawgiver. This detail is not incidental. Manu symbolizes order, ethics, and social balance. To say that Ayodhya was built by him is to say the city stands not only on stone and timber, but on a foundation of shared values, responsibility, and mutual regard. The city is described as being twelve yojanas in length and three in breadth - vast by

ancient measures - laid out with clarity and care. Its wide avenues and meticulously planned streets reflect not just architectural skill, but civic wisdom.

The main roads are sprinkled with water and strewn with fresh flowers - not occasionally, but as a daily act of devotion to public life. The city breathes beauty. The decorative gates and tall arches are not excess ornamentation, but expressions of dignity. Wealth, in Ayodhya, is not something to display for vanity but part of a shared culture of refinement.



At its center is King Dasharatha, ruler of a great and steady realm. Valmiki does not present him as merely powerful. Instead, Dasharatha is a king compared to Indra - not in divinity, but in the responsibility of sustaining harmony. The city is a reflection of his nature: organized, protected, and vibrant. Armories, craftsmen, skilled warriors, and learned scholars all find space and purpose under his patronage.

Ayodhya is alive with sound - drums, flutes, strings, and the voices of storytellers and singers. Music is not luxury here; it is part of life's backdrop. Performers, dancers, and actors are supported by the state, their work integrated into the rhythm of civic celebration. Gardens full of mango groves and clear wells surround the city, making space for rest, shade, and shared leisure.

Its defenses are equally impressive. Deep moats make the city difficult to approach for enemies. Horses, elephants, oxen, and camels fill its stables. Trade routes bring merchants from distant lands. Local rulers and representa-

tives of neighboring territories visit regularly, strengthening alliances and renewing cultural exchanges. Ayodhya is not isolated or insular. It is a hub - lively, open, and connected.

Yet it is not military strength nor urban grandeur that Valmiki elevates as the city's finest attribute. Rather, it is the quality of its people. The city is home to scholars who know not only the Vedas but the intricate disciplines that accompany them. Ritual fires are tended with care, not superstition. Truthfulness and generosity are praised more than conquest. Citizens are described as steady, compassionate, disciplined - not because they are perfect, but because they live in a community where virtue is nurtured.

Even the city's warriors are characterized by restraint. They are taught never to strike someone who flees or someone who stands defenseless. Archery is not merely skill here; it is a matter of ethics. Strength is guided by conscience.

Valmiki's purpose is clear: Ayodhya is not just a backdrop; it is a character. Its values shape Rama's values. Its harmony mirrors the harmony Rama later seeks to restore. Its grandeur is not empty spectacle, but an ideal - one that reveals what civilization can look like when prosperity, culture, and moral clarity grow together rather than in opposition.

Chapter 5 invites the reader to imagine not simply a city, but a way of life. A place where public beauty and private integrity reinforce each other. A city that does not rush, does not fracture, does not forget its roots.

In showing us Ayodhya's fullness, Valmiki is not indulging in nostalgia - he is showing us what Rama stands to lose, and later, what he stands to restore. The city's radiance makes the rest of the epic meaningful. To understand Rama's journey, we must first stand with him in the warmth of home.



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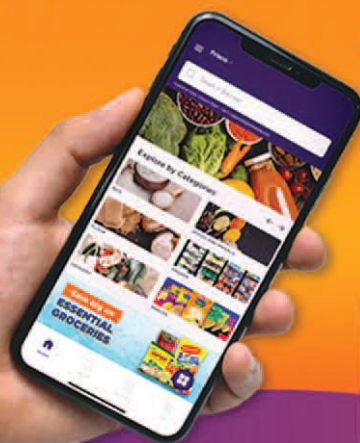
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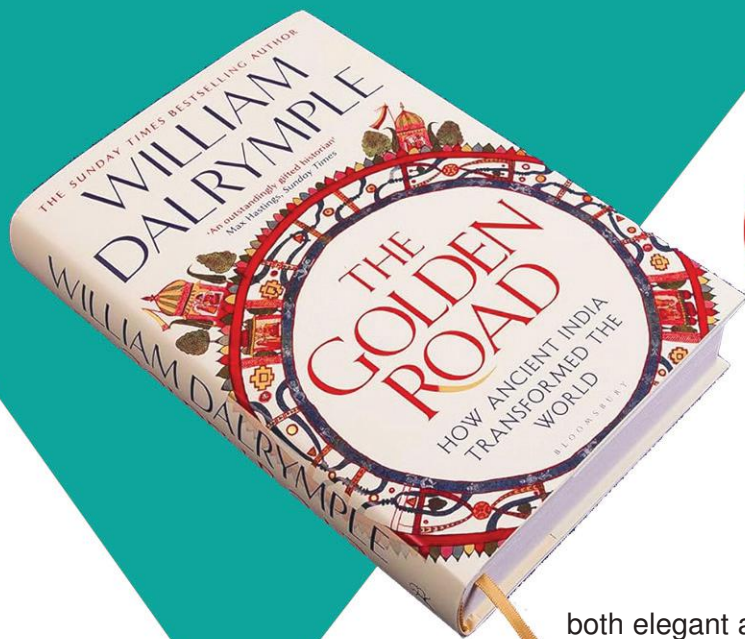
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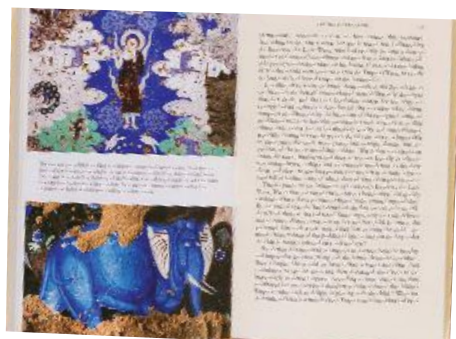


THE GOLDEN ROAD

by William Dalrymple

Stand for a moment

on an ancient Roman quay and listen: bales of cotton whisper as they're hoisted from hull to cart; pepper rattles in amphorae; muslin, so sheer it seems woven from mist, slips through a merchant's fingers. Rome is enthralled, and the thread that binds its appetite to supply runs not across sand but over sea. With *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World*, William Dalrymple invites us to rediscover that ocean highway and to rethink the map of antiquity itself.



What emerges is a gloriously connective vision of the past, one where India is not a periphery to someone else's story but an inexhaustible source of goods, stories, sciences, and states of mind. Dalrymple's central proposition is

both elegant and expansive: long before the romance of the overland Silk Road captured modern imaginations, an



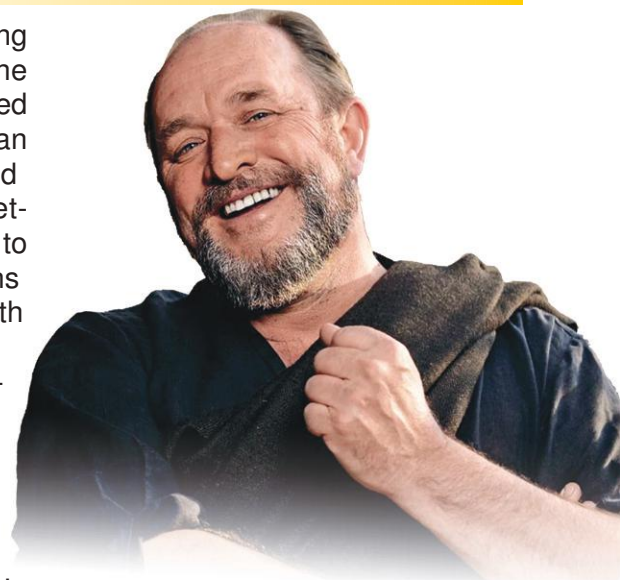
Dr. Naresh Parikh, M.D.,
F.A.C.C., F.A.S.N.C.,
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Indian-centred maritime network, timed to the monsoons and alive with merchants, monks, artisans and scholars, linked the Red Sea to the South China Sea. He

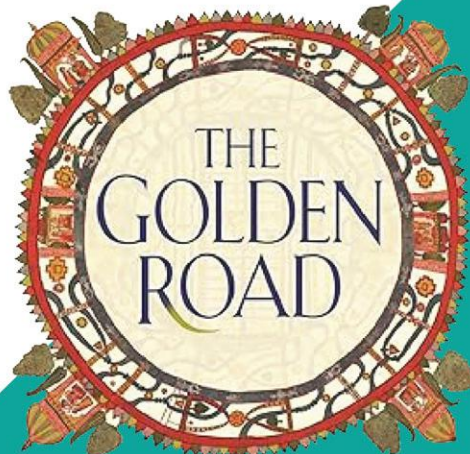
calls this network the "Golden Road." Through its ports and searoutes, Indian textiles and spices seduced imperial palates, Sanskrit epics seeded new literatures, Buddhism and Hindu statecraft found far-flung homes, and place-value numerals (including that astonishing placeholder we call zero) crossed languages and continents. The result, Dalrymple shows, was an "Indosphere" whose reach and resilience shaped more than half the world's population, then and now.

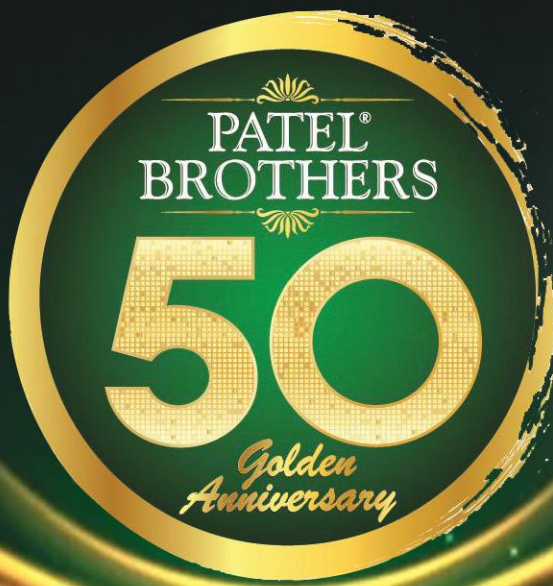
When the sea stitched a world together

Part of the book's joy is logistical. Dalrymple makes the wind a protagonist: those steady,



seasonal monsoon streams that turned the Indian Ocean into a navigable superhighway. He lingers in cave-monasteries along the Deccan coast that doubled as warehouses; he unrolls papyri and inscriptions that capture contracts, cargoes, and quarrels.





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Bit by bit, a different map swims into view. The sea doesn't divide; it unites. A ship from Muziris can ride a July wind straight to the Red Sea, return on the winter reversal, and make a mockery of the slow plod of caravans. In that small shift of perspective lies the book's largest reward: a world reimagined as littoral, cosmopolitan, and impatient with borders.

That maritime reorientation grounds everything that follows. It explains Roman astonishment at the speed and scale of the East-West trade, and it clarifies why Indian goods weren't mere luxuries but market-makers. Pepper becomes more than spice; it is a habit. Cotton is not just cloth; it is a desire encoded in fibre. Pliny the Elder's famous splutter about precious metals draining toward India gains texture in Dalrymple's telling: we see why the flow happened and how Indian ports, guilds, and craftspeople were ready for it.

Stories that sailed, and stayed

Across these sea-lanes, ideas travelled as surely as cargo. The

Golden Road is at once an economic history and a cultural atlas, and nowhere is Dalrymple more enchanting than in following literature on the move. He traces the breath of Sanskrit epics as they cross brackish waters to new courts, and he delights in the stories' afterlives: Indian animal fables that surface in Aesop's repertoire; Buddhist parables that later blossom in Sufi teaching tales; a game

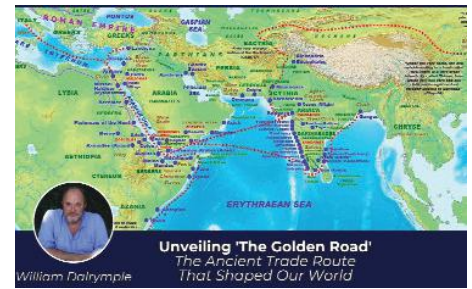


we call chess that passes from India into Persia and beyond. This is cultural diffusion not as lecture but as adventure, the kind of narrative where a monk's saddlebag may hold, quite literally, a library that will tilt a civilization's future.

The book's portrait of Xuanzang, the seventh-century Chinese pilgrim-scholar, is especially vivid. Dalrymple renders him not merely as a saint of persistence, but as a



precise ethnographer of the sub-continent's learning. Xuanzang's seventeen-year odyssey, culminating in his studies at Nalanda, then the most sparkling hub

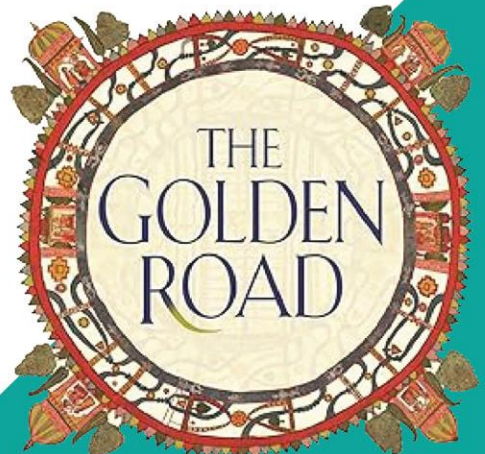


of scholarly life, becomes a parable of the Golden Road's magnetic pull. When he returns to Chang'an, his bundles of sutras and his meticulous memoirs are not trinkets; they are seeds. Soon, translation workshops hum; monasteries multiply; Chinese Buddhism absorbs Indian logic while evolving in unmistakably local directions. Dalrymple shows how such moments crystallised across Asia: Indian ideas absorbed, adapted, and loved into new forms.

Temples that re-sketched the sacred

If books let ideas travel, architecture makes them stay. Dalrymple is a superb guide to places where stone out-argues text. At Borobudur in Java, a mountain of carved devotion rising from volcanic soil—he traces a Buddhist cosmology spiralling outward in reliefs and terraces, a pilgrim's progress chiseled in lava. At Angkor in Cambodia, a city-as-cosmos proclaims Hindu political theology at a scale few courts anywhere dared to match.

Both monuments lie outside





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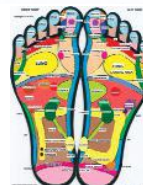
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modern India. Both, as Dalrymple delights in showing, are saturated with Indian conceptions reimagined by local genius. The result is not derivative but incandescent: courtly cultures that took Sanskrit names and Indic gods yet remained irreducibly Javanese or Khmer. This is the Indosphere at its most persuasive, open-handed, generative, full of vernacular splendour.

Courts that hungered for learning

Dalrymple's eye is equally sharp when the Golden Road turns north and west into the high caliphal world. In Baghdad, the Abbasid "House of Wisdom" and the Barmakid viziers, heirs, intriguingly, to a Buddhist lineage from Balkh, become portals through which Indian astronomical handbooks, medical compendia, and mathe-



matical techniques enter Arabic. The scene hums with intellectual hospitality: a Sanskrit treatise adapted into new terms, tables recalculated for a different meridian, court physicians comparing diagnoses across traditions, number-forms becoming truly global. From there, via Spain and Sicily, those sciences enter Latin Europe and help to midwife a new era of reckoning and reason.

Dalrymple does more than list transmissions; he knits them into human stories. He lingers over an Indian physician known to Arabic sources as "Manka", working in a Baghdad hospital. He sketches scholars on both sides of the Persianate world reconciling calendars, arguing about omens, measuring the sky. Such portraits, accumulated chapter by chapter, make the book's larger point felt, not merely stated: Indian learning travelled because it was useful and beautiful, because it helped people make sense of their cosmos and their accounts.

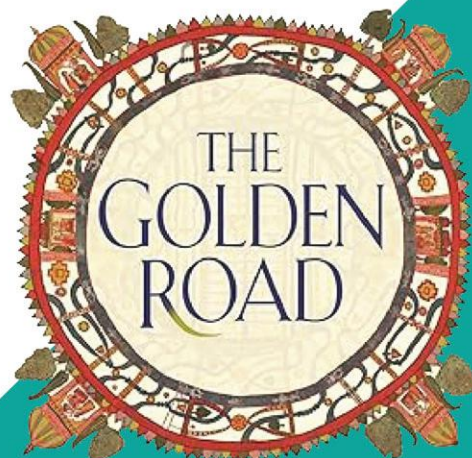
A historian who writes like a novelist

All of this is delivered in prose that moves. Dalrymple is a natural storyteller with a painter's eye. Ports bustle, forests breathe, and in a few clean strokes, he can make a coin hoard or an inscription feel like a voice. The book's structure, which pairs a pacy, 300-page narrative with a vast trove of notes and bibliography, keeps it accessible while making plain the depth of reading that supports it. You can enjoy *The Golden Road* as a feast of scenes; you can also treat it as a map for further exploration. Few writers manage that double gift. His handling of breadth is equally deft. The canvas is

wide: Rome's craving for Indian luxuries; the Deccan's cave-monasteries that became entrepôts; Tamil guilds whose signatures show up in faraway inscriptions; the Chinese court under Empress Wu Zetian, where Buddhist prophecy and politics danced a waltz of mutual benefit. Yet the narrative never feels scattered. It returns, like a sailor counting winds, to anchoring themes: trade as the engine of exchange; religion as a portable technology of meaning and legitimacy; science as a set of tools that flourish in translation; story as civilization's most reliable courier.

Rethinking "soft power," ancient-style

One of Dalrymple's most compelling contributions is to liberate "soft power" from modern cliché and show how it worked in antiquity. Armies did march in the Indian Ocean world, but the book's emphasis is on seduction rather than subjugation. Courts chose Sanskrit because it dignified their rule; artisans borrowed iconographies because they captivated local tastes; scholars adopted algorithms because they worked better. The Golden Road, in this telling, is a highway of willingness. It shows how influence looks when it is pulled, not pushed, when societies reach for ideas because those ideas help them think, govern, and imagine more capaciously.



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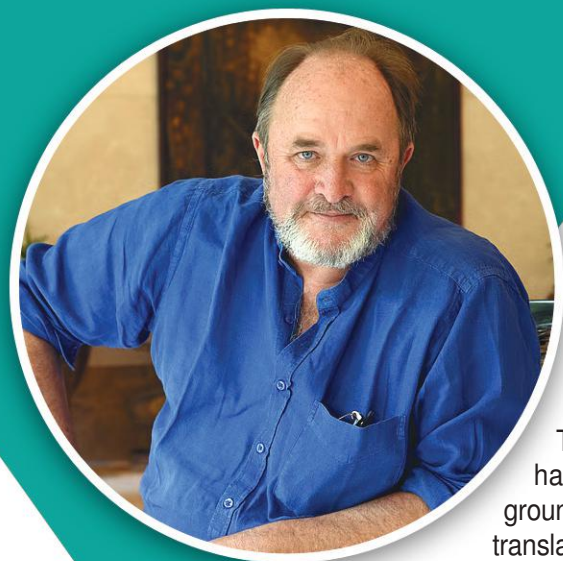


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That emphasis yields an unexpectedly

contemporary resonance. In a world often tempted by narrowness, *The Golden Road* is a reminder that creativity thrives in contact. The ancient India that Dalrymple recovers is open and hybrid: curious about foreign courts, generous with its exports, unafraid to learn and to teach. The book's final pages gesture gently toward the present, suggesting that India's most brilliant historical phases were its most connected ones. It is a hopeful lesson, drawn not from nostalgia but from evidence.

A new mental map-rich in vistas, generous in spirit

For general readers, the book offers a cascade of "I didn't know that"



moments that accumulate into a transformed mental map. Why does Indonesia's national airline take its name from Garuda, Vishnu's mount? Why does Cambodia's greatest temple complex enshrine Indian deities?

How did a small clay token, the zero, rewrite the arithmetic of entire continents? Dalrymple doesn't simply answer; he sets the answers in motion across seas and centuries, so that each fact becomes a waypoint on a longer voyage.

For students and specialists, *The Golden Road* provides a handsome synthesis that foregrounds maritime history and cultural translation without slighting the delights of narrative. It makes space for the craft of art history, bas-reliefs and bronzes, and for the textures of text, edicts, sutras, chronicles, without losing sight of the traders, translators, and travelers who carried them. It honours scholarship while remaining, crucially, a book to read for pleasure.

Why this book matters now

The achievement of *The Golden Road* lies not only in the arguments it advances, but in the sensibility it models. Dalrymple writes with admiration, for the patience of monks, the skill of shipwrights, the sophistication of merchants, the ambition of kings, and that admiration is contagious. He treats the past as a conversation among equals, not a competition among chauvinisms. The Indosphere he evokes is capacious, made of borrowings that enrich both giver and receiver. In his telling, everyone wins: Rome with pepper on its tongue; Java with a cosmic mountain in stone; Baghdad with new ways to count and to heal; China with a Buddhism reborn in its own accent; India with the confidence of a culture at home abroad.

This spirit gives the book its afterglow. When you close it, you may find yourself measuring distance in seasons rather than miles, hearing winds as schedules rather than obstacles, and noticing, in place names, in rituals, in artefacts, the traces of an India that travelled without

losing itself. You may also feel newly protective of the institutions that made such travel meaningful: libraries like Nalanda, where curiosity felt like citizenship; port cities where difference was a daily, practical asset; translation circles where scholars turned hospitality into knowledge.

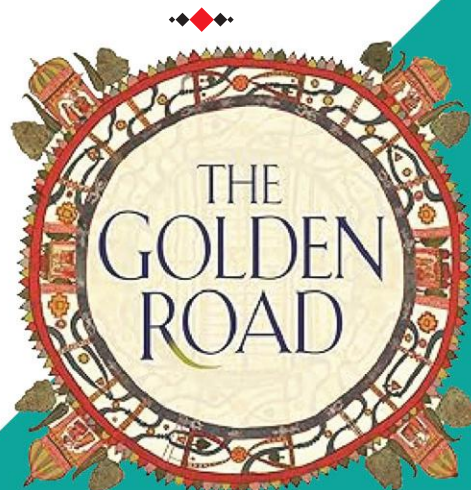
Verdict

The Golden Road is the rare history that both enlarges the past and lightens the present. It restores India to the centre of a world it helped to make, through trade and tale, temple and theorem, while inviting readers everywhere to take pride in a shared inheritance. Dalrymple's storytelling is unfailingly clear; his scenes are beautiful; his synthesis is generous. Most of all, his book is animated by a deep respect: for India's capacity to attract and transform, and for the countless people, named and unnamed, who made an ocean into a road.

Read it for its panoramic sweep. Read it for its intimate moments, the monk at a desk, the mason on a scaffold, the captain watching a wind shift. Read it because it offers, in an age narrowed by noise, a capacious way to think about connection. The world that *The Golden Road* reveals is older than our arguments and bigger than our borders, and Dalrymple has given it back to us with grace.

The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World by William Dalrymple (Bloomsbury £30 pp496).

 **- Dr. Naresh Parikh**



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The Next Vegan Meat May Come From Sunflowers

Sunflowers may soon play a larger role in plant-based diets. A team of researchers in Brazil and Germany has developed a protein-rich meat alternative made from refined sunflower flour, offering a mild flavor and impressive nutritional profile. The ingredient comes from sunflower seeds after the oil has been extracted, a process that typically leaves behind a byproduct used mostly for animal feed. By removing the husks and certain compounds that affect taste and nutrient absorption, the researchers transformed the flour into a food-grade material suitable for human consumption.

The research involved scientists at the Institute of Food Technology and the University of Campinas in Brazil, working alongside the Fraunhofer IVV Institute in Germany. They created two prototype versions of a meat-like product. One was made using flour from roasted sunflower seeds, while the other used textured sunflower protein. Both were seasoned with tomato powder, spices, and oils from sunflower, olive, and linseed to enhance flavor and improve nutritional balance.

The mixtures were shaped into burger patties and baked before

being evaluated for texture and taste. The textured protein version stood out with a firmer structure and significantly higher protein content. It also contained beneficial fats, including monounsaturated fatty acids, and contributed meaningful levels of important minerals, supplying nearly half the recommended daily intake of iron and even greater proportions of zinc, magnesium, and manganese.



Because sunflower oil production is already widespread, especially in Europe and increasingly in Brazil, the researchers point to sunflower flour as a sustainable protein source that fits within existing agricultural systems. The ingredient is also naturally non-GMO, which may appeal to consumers who prioritize clean-label or minimally processed foods. The mild taste of the refined flour gives it an advantage over some other plant proteins that can have strong, distinctive flavors, making it easier to incorporate into recipes without masking agents or heavy seasoning.

The development aligns with grow-



ing global interest in plant-based foods that can offer environmental benefits and meet nutritional needs. The researchers note that achieving a fibrous, meat-like texture remains crucial for wider acceptance, and processing techniques such as extrusion can help create that structure. As plant-based options continue to expand, products that deliver both nutrition and familiarity are more likely to succeed with consumers who are open to reducing meat but prefer foods that resemble traditional meals.

Beyond its food technology potential, the project highlights how collaboration between research groups can foster innovation and deepen understanding of how familiar crops can be used in new ways.

The team also hopes that further advances will make sunflower protein more affordable to produce on a commercial scale, opening the door to its use not only in burgers, but in sausages, nuggets, and ready-to-cook meals. The researchers hope their findings will encourage greater use of sunflower-based ingredients, expanding both agricultural value and consumer choices in the plant-based food market.



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in Practice: Seven Yoga Postures

1. Reverse Prayer Pyramid

(Parsvottanasana
Paschima
Namaskarasana)

This pose looks deceptively simple: the body folds forward over the front leg while the palms press together behind the back, fingers pointing upward. Yet the



effect is profound. The hamstrings stretch deeply, the wrists and shoulders soften, and the hips learn to square with integrity. The breath becomes longer, the spine lengthens with quiet determination. What distinguishes this pose is the prayer gesture behind the back—a symbol of inward humility. It is a reminder that flexibility is not just physical; it is emotional.

The key is to keep the shoulders relaxed and elbows wide, allowing the chest to broaden even while folding inward. Those with

blood pressure concerns or shoulder and wrist injuries should ease into modified arm positions. From standing humility, we move to seated reflection.

2. Seated Forward Bend (Paschimottanasana)

This pose is among the oldest described in yogic texts, revered as a posture of introspection and nervous system restoration. Sitting with legs extended, the spine reaches forward from the pelvis rather than rounding from the shoulders. The hamstrings, calves, and lower back gradually lengthen. With time, the breath deepens into the abdomen, massaging internal organs and encouraging a quiet inward gaze. Paschimottanasana teaches



patience. Unlike more dramatic stretches, this one unfolds slowly. The instruction is clear: relax the shoulders, keep the spine long, and release the urge to "pull." Pregnant practitioners or those with hernia or sciatic discomfort should modify or practice under guidance. Once the mind settles in calm, we invite the body to brighten again.

Yoga is an ancient practice which dwells on breathing, flexibility, and strength with the aim of enhancing mental and physical well-being. Yoga is one of the six forms of Hindu philosophy, as well as a major component of Buddhist theory and applied meditation.

It consists of a set of physical, mental, and spiritual exercises or disciplines. Breathing and postures, a sequence of movements that strengthen and loosen the body, are the key elements of the practice. According to yoga advocates, the technique was developed thousands of years ago in India, and various countries have adapted it into different variations.

Asanas, literally meaning sitting postures of meditation, form the foundation of yoga. Among the classical 84 asanas, we will discuss seven key poses in this month's series: Reverse Prayer Pyramid (Parsvottanasana Paschima Namaskarasana), Seated Forward Bend (Paschimottanasana), Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana), Bow Pose (Dhanurasana), Camel Pose (Ustrasana), Reclined Hero Pose (Supta Virasana), and Fish Pose (Matsyasana).



3. Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana)



Cobra is a gentle backbend, yet it awakens every vertebra. The legs press actively into the mat, the chest moves forward before lifting upward, and the spine extends evenly. The pose strengthens the back muscles, encourages deeper breathing, and stimulates digestion. It is an antidote to hours spent sitting, rounding, and collapsing inward.

The emphasis is not on height. The elbows may stay softly bent, shoulders drawn down, hips rooted. This maintains integrity and prevents compression in the lower back. For those with neck, spine, or shoulder injury, the pose is best practiced mindfully or in a softened variation. From the serpent, we move to the bow.

4. Bow Pose (Dhanurasana)



Bow Pose embodies uplift. The hands clasp the ankles, the chest lifts, and the legs rise behind, creating an arc of active energy. The front body stretches-the abdomen, chest, thigh muscles-while the back body strengthens. Because the abdomen presses against the floor, internal organs receive a gentle massage, supporting digestion and circulation.

The key here is the graceful lifting of both chest and legs at once, rather than pulling the legs back forcefully. The gaze stays soft, the breath steady. Those with spinal or neck sensitivity should enter slowly. Next comes a deeper heart opener.

5. Camel Pose (Ustrasana)



Camel Pose invites vulnerability. With knees grounded and chest rising, the front of the body opens from hip to collarbone. The hands reach toward the heels or stay on the lower back for support. The pose stretches the thighs, strengthens the arms, and teaches the spine to bend evenly rather than compress. It can feel emotionally intense; heart openers often do.

The instruction is consistent: keep the hips above the knees, shoulders soft, and the lower back spacious. Those with blood pressure sensitivity or neck issues should enter gently. Then, the journey softens into a recline.

6. Reclined Hero Pose (Supta Virasana)



Supta Virasana stretches the quadriceps and ankles while opening the chest in a quiet, restorative way. Unlike the dynamic backbends, this one invites stillness. It can be deeply nourishing for the digestive organs and supportive for posture. Yet it requires care-especially for the knees. If pressure arises, one leg may extend, or blankets may be added under the hips. Finally, the practice closes with a gentle heart expansion.

7. Fish Pose (Matsyasana)

The chest lifts, the shoulders draw back, and the crown of the head touches the ground. This posture



releases tension held in the upper back, throat, and jaw. It expands the lungs, countering rounded posture and shallow breathing. Matsyasana is traditionally used as a counterpose to Sarvangasana, balancing both body and breath.

Those with neck injuries or migraine history should support the head with a blanket or practice a more upright modification.



The Yog of Renunciation

The Bhagavad Gita, or the "Song of God," is one of the most revered texts in Indian philosophy. Delivered by Lord Shree Krishna to Arjun on the eve of the great war of the Mahabharata, it is more than a battlefield dialogue. It is a spiritual guide, a manual on life, and a timeless meditation on duty, righteousness,

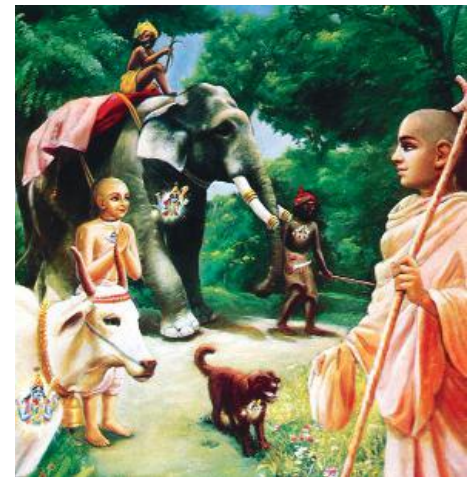
and the search for truth. Composed of 18 chapters, the Gita explores paths of

devotion, wisdom, discipline, and action, weaving them into a vision of harmony between worldly responsibilities and spiritual liberation. In the fifth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, often called The Yog of Renunciation, Krishna turns to a question that has echoed through centuries of spiritual inquiry: is a meaningful life found in withdrawing from the world or in participating fully in it? Arjuna, still seeking clarity, asks whether it is better to renounce all action altogether or to continue acting while maintaining inward discipline.

Krishna's response is both subtle and practical, offering guidance that remains deeply relevant today.

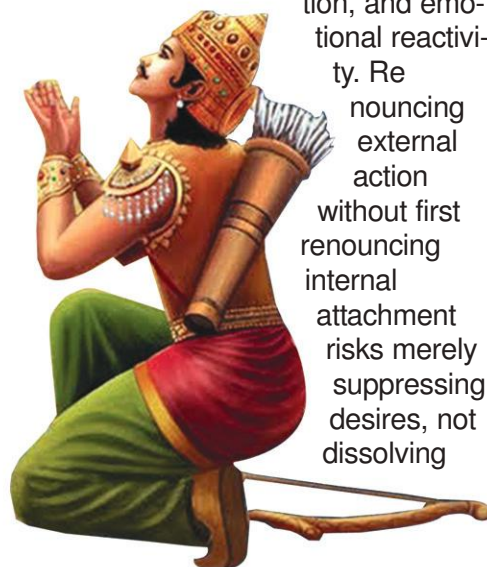
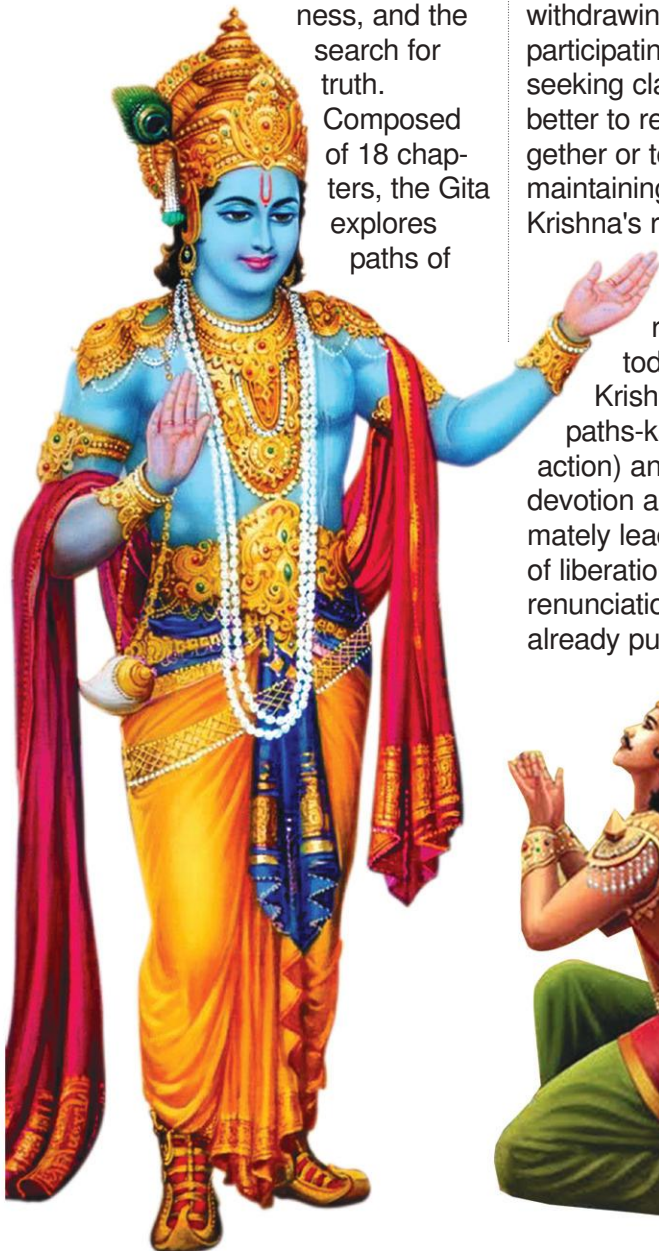
Krishna explains that both paths—karm sanyas (renouncing action) and karm yog (acting with devotion and detachment)—can ultimately lead toward the same state of liberation. However, the path of renunciation requires a mind that is already purified of ego, expectation,

and emotional reactivity. Renouncing external action without first renouncing internal attachment risks merely suppressing desires, not dissolving



them. Most people, Krishna says, achieve clarity not by stepping away from life, but by learning how to move through it differently. In karm yog, individuals continue to carry out their responsibilities—family commitments, work, community engagement—but without tying their identity to the outcomes. They act sincerely, but they do not cling to success or collapse in failure. Their actions are seen as offerings, not transactions. This way of living turns daily routine into a form of meditation.

Krishna uses a simple but elegant metaphor. A lotus leaf rests in water but does not absorb it. In the same way, one who practices karm yog participates actively in the world yet remains inwardly untouched by its fluctuations. The world continues; obligations continue; but the sense of "I am the one doing everything" begins to fall away. This shift in perspective fundamentally changes how one sees others. Krishna describes the learned person as someone who sees the same divine presence in all beings—whether it is a priest, a cow, an elephant, a dog, or someone living at the margins of society. This is not mere moral tolerance; it is a deep recognition that dignity does not depend on status, education, or culture. Spiritual maturity, according to Krishna, expresses itself in the ability to perceive unity beneath social difference.





Such a person does not look to external pleasures for happiness. The Gita recognizes something that modern psychology now frequently emphasizes: sensory pleasure often creates the same cycle of craving and dissatisfaction that keeps people restless. Enjoyment comes, it fades, and then desire appears again. The karm yogi turns instead toward a quieter joy, one that arises from a steady relationship with the inner self.

After establishing the value of working in the world with awareness, Krishna turns to the path of karm sanyas, the renunciation of action. This is not simply abandoning one's home or occupation. True renunciation means calming the mind so thoroughly that the pulls of desire, anger, and fear no longer drive behavior. One who follows this path trains the intellect, disciplines the senses, and reduces dependence on external validation. Withdrawal, in this context, is not escape—it is refinement.

Yet Krishna is direct: such renunciation is extremely difficult for most people unless it grows naturally after years of selfless engagement. For those who have not yet tempered their inner world, withdrawing from responsibility can intensify inner conflict rather than resolve it. For this reason, he repeatedly emphasizes that acting with devotion is usual-

ly the more accessible path. It is life itself that becomes the teacher.

Krishna then describes one of the most transformative ideas in the chapter: the individual soul is not the ultimate "doer." Actions unfold through the body, the senses, and the mind, all of which are shaped by nature and circumstance. When a person thinks, "I alone am responsible; I alone control outcomes," they become bound by anxiety and attachment. When they see themselves instead as a



participant in a larger flow-responsible for effort but not for final results—they begin to feel lighter. The same actions may continue, but they are no longer accompanied by strain.

For the person who recognizes this, life becomes peaceful. There is no need to excessively cele-




brate success or mourn disappointment, because identity is no longer tied to outcomes. Pleasure loses its urgency; pain loses its dominance. Happiness is no longer pursued outside—it is uncovered inside.

Krishna concludes the chapter with an image of internal stillness. A person who has quieted desire, regulated the breath, softened anger, and centered their attention begins to feel as though the presence they once sought outside has always been within them. They no longer see God as distant or abstract, but as a friend and companion in the heart. This intimacy dissolves fear and invites a sense of ease, belonging, and freedom.

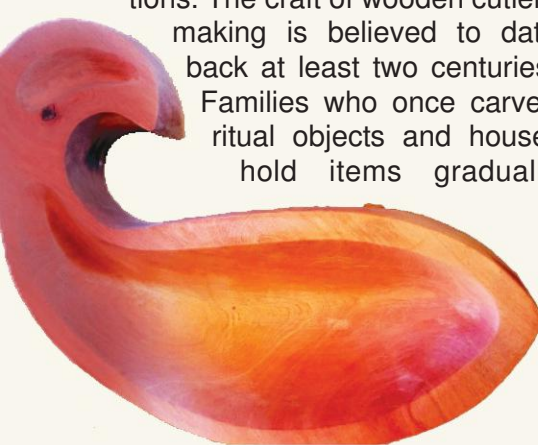


Udayagiri

Wooden Cutlery



India has long been known for its intricate craft traditions, each rooted in local history, resources, and generational skill. Among these craft clusters, the town of Udayagiri in Andhra Pradesh holds a quiet yet remarkable place. Here, artisans produce handcrafted wooden cutlery and kitchenware that are celebrated not only for their beauty, but also for their sustainable, functional design. The wooden ladles, forks, bowls, trays, serving spoons, spatulas, and decorative pieces made in Udayagiri reflect a legacy of craftsmanship that continues to adapt with the times while honoring its roots.



Udayagiri is located in the rolling hills of the Nellore district, surrounded by teak, nandi, and devadari trees that have supplied wood to the region for generations. The craft of wooden cutlery making is believed to date back at least two centuries. Families who once carved ritual objects and household items gradually

refined their techniques to produce utensils with graceful forms and fine detailing. The craft evolved according to daily need, and its simplicity is its beauty.


Udayagiri wooden cutlery is not carved from any random wood. The artisans choose specific hardwoods that are durable, resistant to moisture, and safe for food use.




Woods like nardi, devadari, and chittagong wood are selected for their fine grain and density. These woods lend themselves to smooth finishes, clean carving, and long-lasting use.

The process begins with selecting the right wood. Artisans assess the block for moisture content, texture, and grain direction. Once the wood is prepared, the block is shaped using chisels, hand-axes, and knives. Every curve of a spoon, every angle of a ladle is formed through controlled pressure, guided not only by skill but by memory. These are techniques inherited rather than taught in classrooms.

After shaping, the item is refined with rasps and sandpaper until the surface becomes smooth. The finishing touch involves coating the item with natural oils, typically linseed or coconut oil, to protect the wood and bring out its warm sheen. Unlike mass-produced




kitchenware, Udayagiri cutlery carries small traces of the hand: a curve that reveals the stroke of a chisel, a surface that feels alive. What makes this craft remarkable is the convergence of utility and elegance. A ladle carved in Udayagiri is not just functional but balanced in weight and form. A serving spoon fits naturally in the hand. Every item is made to be used daily, to age gracefully, to be touched and handled.



Many Indian craft traditions are known for decorative abundance. Udayagiri stands out for its restraint. The designs tend to be simple, almost sculptural, emphasizing shape rather than ornament.

Key design features include: Soft curves and ergonomically shaped handles. No elaborate lacquer or paint, preserving the





wood's natural beauty. Motifs subtle enough to blend with both contemporary and traditional kitchens. A focus on durability and everyday practicality

This quiet aesthetic has made Udayagiri wooden cutlery particularly appealing to modern consumers looking for sustainable, natural homeware that complements minimal interiors.



Despite its elegance and heritage, the craft of Udayagiri wooden cutlery faced significant decline in the last few decades. Industrially produced plastic and metal utensils flooded markets at low prices. Younger artisans left the tradition, seeking better income in cities. The number of families practicing the craft shrank.

For many years, the Udayagiri craft existed in a fragile balance, depending on the patience and perseverance of a few artisan households. The work was slow, profits irregular, and recognition limited.



Recently, there has been a renewed interest in hand-crafted products and sustainable materials. Government organizations and craft development bodies have helped Udayagiri artisans gain access to better tools, improved finishing processes, and broader markets. Design schools and independent designers have collaborated with artisans to introduce new product lines: salad servers, cheese boards, stirrers, chopsticks, and contemporary tableware sets. The craft now appears in curated lifestyle stores, boutique kitchen shops, and international craft fairs. Social media and online marketplaces have played a significant role in bringing the work of Udayagiri weavers directly to consumers who value authenticity and artisan labor.

Slowly, awareness is growing. While challenges remain, particularly in ensuring fair wages and consistent demand, the craft has moved from near-obscurity to a promising stage of revival.

In a time when conversations about sustainability often revolve around avoiding plastic, Udayagiri cutlery stands as an example of how tradi-



tion and eco-conscious living can align naturally. These products require no industrial manufacturing, involve minimal waste, and can last



years if cared for properly.

Each piece carries a story: the texture of a particular tree, the rhythm of a chisel, the patience of hands that work silently but skillfully. To bring Udayagiri cutlery into one's home is to bring more than utility. It is to support craftsmanship that values time, ethics, sustainability, and grace.

Craft traditions survive when they are used, shared, and valued. Udayagiri wooden cutlery is not a museum artifact nor a relic of the past. It is an object meant for daily life, yet shaped with artistry that rewards attention.

In a fast world, these handcrafted spoons and ladles encourage slowing down, noticing texture, appreciating form, and remembering the human hands behind everyday things. Udayagiri's craft is a reminder that beauty does not have to shout. Sometimes, it is carved quietly, polished patiently, and placed gently into the rhythm of life.





Panchakarma

The Ancient Way of Resetting

In a world where wellness trends come and go at a dizzying pace, one healing system has quietly endured for thousands of years. Panchakarma, a core therapeutic practice in Ayurveda, is not just a detox regimen or a spa ritual—it is a structured, time-tested method for cleansing and rejuvenating the body from within. What sets Panchakarma apart is its depth: it doesn't merely treat symptoms but seeks to remove the root causes of illness, restoring balance between the body, mind, and inner energies.



The word Panchakarma literally translates to "five actions." These five therapeutic techniques are designed to expel accumulated toxins, known in Ayurveda as ama, and refresh the body's natural systems. Unlike many modern med-



ical interventions, which focus on suppressing discomfort, Panchakarma works by encouraging the body's own healing intelligence. The herbs and oils used are natural and organic, and the therapies are designed to avoid side effects—making the system gentle, profound, and sustainable. The philosophy behind Panchakarma begins with two fundamental observations. First, most diseases arise when toxins from food, stress, and environmental

exposure accumulate in the body. These toxins disrupt the balance of the doshas—the three energies that govern physiological and psychological well-being. Second, the body has the innate ability to restore itself when blockages are removed and the internal systems are supported. Panchakarma provides the conditions for this restoration to occur. Ayurvedic rejuvenation is generally understood through two approaches. Shodhana—the cleansing process—removes impurities from the system. Shamana—the pacification process—focuses on calming, nourishing, and strengthening. Panchakarma integrates both. First, it clears the body of what harms it, and then it rebuilds vitality so that healing becomes long-lasting rather than temporary. The treatment unfolds in three carefully sequenced stages, each essential to the next. The journey begins with Purvakarma, the preparatory phase. Here, the goal is to loosen toxins that have lodged deep in the tissues. The body is gently coaxed into releasing them using

warm herbal oils, massage, and induced sweating. These therapies, known as *Snehana* (oil application) and *Swedana* (heat therapy), encourage the toxins to move toward the digestive system, where they can later be expelled efficiently. This stage may last anywhere from three days to a week, depending on the person's constitution and condition. It is a period of softening-physically and mentally-as the body opens itself to healing.



aftercare, the body may once again accumulate the toxins it has worked so hard to release. Panchakarma recognizes that healing is not simply an event-it is a way of living. The therapy offers a blueprint that encourages the patient to remain in conversation with their body and to choose nourishment over neglect. What makes Panchakarma especially relevant today is its deeply personalized nature. It does not assume that one diet suits all, that



Once the body is prepared, *Pradhanakarma*, the main treatment stage, begins. This is the heart of Panchakarma. Here, the body undergoes specific detoxifying therapies chosen to suit the individual's needs. The choice of treatments is never generic; it

system for extended periods to repair deeper tissues. The treatment continues until the system is cleared of impurities and the internal balance begins to stabilize. Healing, however, does not end with detoxification. This is where many wellness systems fall short-but Panchakarma continues its work through *Paschatkarma*, the post-treatment integration phase. The goal now is to rebuild, nourish, and protect. The patient is slowly reintroduced to daily routines, mindful eating habits, gentle movement, and improved lifestyle rhythms. Herbal tonics may be prescribed to restore strength. Specific yoga practices or meditation may be recommended to calm the mind and maintain emotional balance. *Paschatkarma* also prevents old patterns-dietary, physical, or emotional-from pulling the body back into imbalance.

This stage is vital. Without thoughtful



one stress-relief method works for everyone, or that one body heals like another. It is a system that listens, adapts, and respects the individual. It gives us permission to pause, to cleanse deeply, and to begin again.



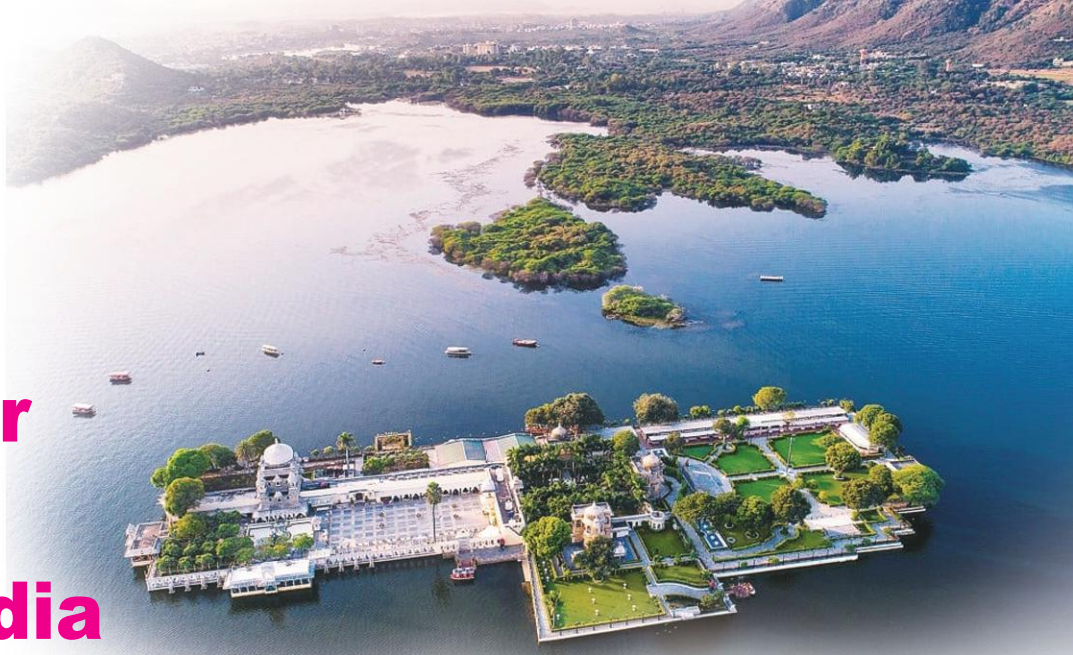
takes into account the season, the intensity of the imbalance, the dominant dosha, and the patient's overall strength. Herbal medicines, medicated oils, and cleansing techniques are administered at carefully timed intervals. A strict diet-often simple, warm, and easily digestible-is followed so that the digestive fire remains stable and strong. Some therapies require the herbal medicines to remain in the



At its essence, Panchakarma is not only a medical treatment-it is a reset for the entire being. It clears space inside the body and mind for clarity, vitality, and renewal. In a world driven by speed and distraction, Panchakarma invites us to return to ourselves.



A December Journey Through India



December has always held a special place in the rhythm of travel in India. It is the month when monsoons have retreated entirely, the plains cool gently, the mountains shimmer under sheets of early winter mist, and festival season still lingers in the air. For travelers seeking experiences that blend culture, landscape, food, and memory, December offers India at its most welcoming.

From desert towns glowing under soft winter sun to forested foothills breathing cool pine-scented air, here are destinations where the final month of the year unfolds slowly and beautifully.

1. Udaipur, Rajasthan

Udaipur has always drawn travelers for its palaces, marble temples, mirrored havelis, and soft desert light. But it is in December



that the city truly reveals its most inviting personality. With temperatures hovering between 55°F and 75°F, the days are pleasantly warm and the evenings comfortably cool, making it ideal for exploring on foot or by boat. The clarity of the air enhances the reflections on Lake Pichola, where the palaces appear to float in still water, and the surrounding Aravalli hills form a blue-gold horizon.

A boat ride on Lake Pichola near sunset remains one of the defining experiences. The final rays of daylight illuminate the City Palace, Jag Mandir, and the old ghats in a warm amber tone. For a different

perspective, the Monsoon Palace, perched atop a hill, offers a panoramic view of Udaipur and its surrounding lakes. Art lovers may explore miniature painting workshops in the old city, where artists specialize in fine brushwork using natural pigments.



Food is an essential part of the experience as well. Udaipur's cuisine leans toward mild spice with an emphasis on ghee, lentils, and grains. Try dal-baati-churma in a traditional courtyard restaurant, or sip saffron-flavored warm milk while overlooking twinkling lake lights. Many rooftop restaurants offer candlelit dinners with live folk music on winter nights.





2. Munnar, Kerala

Located high in the Western Ghats, Munnar is surrounded by velvety tea plantations, thick forests, and mountain ridges that vanish into pale morning clouds. Winter mornings often begin with a layer of silver fog rolling over the hills, giving the landscape a dreamlike quality. As the sun rises, the fog parts slowly to reveal endless green slopes.



December is also one of the best times for trekking. Trails near Kolukkumalai, Top Station, or Anamudi National Park are clear, offering wide, mountaintop views. The crisp weather means you can walk for hours without fatigue. Wildlife sightings are more likely this time of year, especially birds, including the Malabar whistling thrush whose clear song echoes at dawn.

Munnar's food traditions match the

climate. Pepper chicken, Kerala-style appams, vegetable stews simmered in coconut milk, spicy banana fritters, and freshly brewed tea with notes of cardamom and cloves warm the body from within. In December, local markets are filled with fresh cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, and pepper, perfect to carry home.

Evenings are quiet in Munnar. Most travelers gather around fireplaces in small homestays or heritage guesthouses, sipping hot ginger tea while the night air cools sharply. December in Munnar offers more than scenic beauty. It offers space to breathe.

3. Kutch, Gujarat

Few landscapes in India can match the surreal beauty of the Great Rann of Kutch. December marks the height of the Rann Utsav, the annual cultural festival celebrating the region's crafts, music, and desert heritage. The

salt desert stretches white and flat under the sun, reflecting light in a way that feels almost lunar. Under the full moon, the land turns silver, glowing with a quiet brilliance.

Visitors stay in tent clusters near the desert edge, where evenings come alive with folk songs, traditional percussion, and dances performed by local communities such as the Rabari and Meghwal. Days are spent exploring artisan villages known for embroidery, leatherwork, lacquered wood, bell metal craft, and intricately woven shawls.



The festival atmosphere is lively but never rushed. Camel rides at sunset, stargazing in the still desert air, and walks across the



salt flats give travelers a sense of solitude and wonder. Kutch is not only visually stunning. It is also a living museum of craftsmanship and identity. December here feels like being part of something both ancient and immediate.



4. Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh



Varanasi is timeless in every season, but December lends it a gentler tone. The mornings are cool along the ghats, and a soft mist settles over the Ganga. Pilgrims wrapped in shawls gather at dawn to bathe, pray, or simply sit in silence. The city wakes slowly, accompanied by temple bells and the sound of oars cutting through the river.

This is the best time to take a sunrise boat ride. The ghats reveal themselves as layered theaters of life: priests reciting mantras, families offering flowers, children learning classical music, and tea vendors pouring steaming chai into clay cups. December also brings malaiyo, a seasonal delicacy made from milk foam, saffron, and sugar, available only on winter mornings.



Exploring Varanasi means wandering through narrow lanes filled with silk weavers, sweet shops, music schools, and shrines at every turn. Evenings are centered around the Ganga Aarti, where lamps and incense rise into the night sky and reflect on the river's dark surface. Varanasi in December encourages reflection. It is a city that does not ask travelers to hurry. It simply asks them to witness.



5. Goa

December is the most vibrant month in Goa, but it offers more than just beach parties. The weather is ideal, the sea is calm, and the skies are clear. Coastal villages come alive with Christmas decorations, church choirs, and traditional sweets like bebinca and guava cheese. Local bakeries run from dawn to accommodate holiday cooking.

Travelers can choose their own pace. North Goa is lively with nightlife and beach cafés. South Goa moves at an unhurried rhythm, with quiet beaches framed by palm groves. Inland, spice plantations and river backwaters offer tranquil day trips. December sunsets are particularly memorable in Goa. The sky turns shades of coral, lavender, and deep gold as fishing boats return to shore.

Goa in December is both festive and peaceful. It can be a celebration or a retreat depending on where you stay and how you move through it.

6. Kohima, Nagaland

Tribes from across Nagaland gather in Kohima to share music,



dance, craft, and food. It is not a performance for tourism but a living celebration of identity. Attending the festival allows travelers to learn about clan histories,



ceremonial dress, bamboo architecture, war chants, and seasonal harvest traditions.



Beyond the festival grounds, Kohima is surrounded by pine-covered hills and cool winter air. Trekking to Dzukou Valley is especially popular in December. The valley, with its sweeping green meadows and winding streams, feels untouched and quiet.

Local rice beer warms the evenings, and meals are prepared slowly over fire. Kohima in December is immersive, respectful, and unforgettable. It offers connection rather than spectacle.



A Peculiar Rock

With Unknown Origins

Deep in the remote forests of Siberia, far from roads, settlements, and the patterns of ordinary life, lies a curious geological structure known as the Patom Crater. Rising in a region of dense taiga in the Irkutsk Oblast, the crater sits like an immense stone ripple, as if something powerful once pressed up from beneath the earth. Despite decades of study, its true origin remains uncertain, making it one of the most intriguing natural mysteries in Russia.

The crater was discovered in 1949 by geologist Vadim Kolpakov during a survey expedition. What he encountered was nothing like the smooth depressions associated with most meteor impact sites. Instead, the structure stood 150 feet high, shaped like a huge mound, with a shallow pit in the center and steep, terraced sides. Its layered rock formation resembles a giant stone nest, earning it the nickname Kolpakov Cone.

For years, scientists debated whether it was volcanic in origin. The shape seemed to support the theory that magma once pushed toward the surface but never erupted. Yet, no clear signs of volcanic rock or lava were found. The possibility of a meteor impact was also considered. However, impact sites typically distribute rock out-



ward, not in concentric rings rising upward as seen here. The Patom Crater appeared to have been built from within the earth rather than shaped by an external collision.

Adding to the mystery, local Yakut legends speak of the site as a place where bad spirits dwell. Hunters long avoided the area, and some believed it to be a landing site of something not of this world. In the modern era, stories of UFO origins circulated widely, fueled partly by the crater's unusual structure and partly by the fact that no conclusive scientific explanation has been accepted.

In recent decades, another hypothesis has gained credibility.

Some researchers believe the crater formed from a subterranean gas explosion, caused by the slow buildup of deep geologic

pressure. This theory suggests that the mound was pushed upward suddenly, creating a hill rather than a crater in the traditional sense. The lack of volcanic residue and the orientation of the rock layers support this interpretation, though no definitive proof has been established.

Visiting the site remains difficult. Reaching the crater requires long hikes through thick forest, with few trails and minimal human presence. Those who make the journey describe an eerie stillness surrounding the formation, as if the land itself remembers a disturbance long forgotten.

Today, Patom Crater stands as a reminder that Earth still holds secrets not easily categorized or explained. Whether shaped by geology, cosmic forces, or something yet unknown, it invites curiosity and wonder. It is a quiet monument to the mysteries of the natural world and the enduring human quest to understand it.



When Vegetables Become the Main Story

Across Indian kitchens, vegetables have always occupied a central but understated role. They appear in nearly every meal—stir-fried with spices, simmered into dals, stuffed into breads, added to rice, or served raw alongside pickles and papads. Yet, in restaurant menus and contemporary food conversations, vegetables are often treated as secondary, overshadowed by meats or rich gravies. A new cookbook, *Vegetables: The Indian Way*, seeks to correct that imbalance by placing Indian vegetables at the heart of culinary creativity.

The book brings together 120 recipes from different regions of India, with each showcasing how vegetables can be prepared in ways that are nutritious, flavorful, and deeply rooted in local traditions. Rather than treating vegetables as simple accompaniments, the cookbook honors them as ingredients deserving of focus and finesse.

Indian cooking has long been shaped by geography, climate,

regional availability, and centuries of agricultural wisdom. While global dining trends have often spotlighted Indian curries, breads, and sweets, the day-to-



day vegetables of Indian households have remained largely uncelebrated outside the home. Many of these vegetable preparations rely on subtle techniques—tempering spices in the right order, adjusting heat at precise moments, allowing slow cooking to coax natural sweetness or depth of flavor.

What this cookbook does is showcase how thoughtful vegetable-based dishes can be as layered and satisfying as more elaborate non-vegetarian fare. It encourages cooks—both new and experienced—to rediscover vegetables not as routine necessities, but as ingredients that can inspire creativity. One of the most distinctive elements of the book is the way it organizes recipes. Instead of grouping them by meal type or region, the vegetables are

arranged according to how they grow. This system reflects a deep agricultural understanding of plants: Root Vegetables: Carrot, radish, beetroot, sweet potato, yams. Aquatic Vegetables: Lotus stem and water chestnut. Ground-Grown Vegetables: Pumpkin, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli. Climbers and Vines: Bottle gourd, bitter melon, cucumber, ash gourd. Tree-Grown Vegetables: Banana flower, raw jackfruit, drumstick.

This structure draws attention to the ecological environments that shape the flavor, texture, and nutritional content of vegetables. For example, the lotus stem grows underwater and has a



unique porous structure that absorbs spices differently from a carrot growing underground. Bottle gourd, growing on vines in warm climates, has a gentle cooling effect on the body—an understanding that has informed traditional meal planning in many regions of India.





By organizing vegetables this way, the cookbook encourages cooks to think about seasonality, soil conditions, and growing patterns-aspects that are typically considered only in professional agricultural or nutrition spaces.



In addition to recipes, the book includes detailed notes on nutrition, digestive impact, fiber content, and how different vegetables interact with the body. Each vegetable is presented with context-how it is used historically, which communities rely on it most, and what forms of preparation bring out its best qualities.

This attention to detail reflects a broader shift in contemporary food culture: a return to traditional knowledge. Many cooks, especially younger and urban ones, are now more interested in understanding why certain ingredients work well together, and how everyday foods influence long-term health. Indian cuisine, rich in spice science and culinary intuition, already contains these answers-it simply needs to

be made more visible.

This cookbook becomes a bridge between that inherited wisdom and the needs of modern kitchens. It does not romanticize older practices, nor does it discard them in favor of convenience. Instead, it adapts them thoughtfully.

The recipes come from homes, markets, roadside food stalls, temple kitchens, and family gatherings across India. They reflect generations of experimentation, memory, and care. Some dishes are quick weekday staples-a lightly sautéed okra, a cabbage poriyal, or a comforting rasam. Others are celebration dishes-a jackfruit curry slow-



simmered with coconut, or banana flower fritters prepared with patience and shared during festivals.

What ties these recipes together is not complexity, but clarity. The instructions are written to be followed in home kitchens with everyday ingredients and basic utensils. Rather than relying on specialized equipment, the recipes remind

readers that many of the most memorable flavors in Indian cooking come from the simplest techniques.

In recent years, Indian cuisine has undergone a global renaissance, with chefs and restaurants showcasing regional dishes, ancient grains, forgotten greens, and traditional preparation methods. At the same time, younger Indians and the diaspora are seeking connections to heritage foods-often through health, sustainability, and identity.

It draws on India's unmatched variety of plant-based cooking methods-steaming, grating, fermenting,



grinding, roasting, slow-braising-and presents them with clarity and respect. It reminds us that so much of what makes Indian food nourishing and distinctive comes not from the grand feasts, but from the meals that take place every day in home kitchens.

Vegetables: The Indian Way is ultimately a celebration of the ordinary. It acknowledges that vegetables have never really been "secondary" in Indian meals-only underrecognized. By placing them front and center, the book invites home cooks to see the familiar with new appreciation.

Indian cuisine has always had the tools to elevate vegetables. The flavors were already present. The knowledge already existed. What this cookbook offers is simply a new invitation to notice, value, and celebrate what has been there all along.





Seven Winter Treats Worth Returning To

Winter has a way of reshaping our appetites. As the air sharpens and evenings stretch longer, we begin craving foods that comfort, foods that warm, foods that feel like familiar company. Across India, and beyond, this shift in the kitchen is almost instinctive-pots begin to simmer slower, spices grow more fragrant, and snacks somehow taste better when eaten with cold fingertips wrapped around a steaming cup of tea. This season, we turn to a few evergreen winter favorites-some rooted deeply in regional memory, others borrowed across borders and given new life in Indian kitchens. What they share is simple: they are warm, grounding, and deeply satisfying.

1. A Warm Crunch: Stuffed Mirchi Bajji

There are winter days when only a plate of something golden and freshly fried will do. Mirchi bajji



answers that longing. At its heart, this snack is straightforward: large green chillies slit open and stuffed, usually with a mixture of spiced gram flour or tangy peanut-sesame paste, then coated and fried. But simplicity does not diminish its impact. The heat of the chilli is mellowed by frying, the filling offers depth, and the gram flour exterior crisps into the perfect bite. Paired with a hot cup of masala chai, it becomes a moment of pure pleasure on a cold evening.

2. Winter, Sugar, and Slow Heat: French Apple Cake



While Indian kitchens are full of apple chutneys and stewed fruit, winter apples also lend themselves beautifully to baked desserts. A French-style apple cake is rustic rather than flashy, often made in a single bowl. What makes it special is how the apples soften as they bake, releasing

their juices and caramelizing into the batter. The result is tender, lightly sweet, and fragrant-something to be sliced warm, dusted with sugar, and eaten while sitting by a window on a late afternoon.

3. A Taste of the Holidays: Chocolate and Toasted Marshmallows



Winter brings with it celebrations, and celebrations invite whimsy. The joy of melting marshmallows over heat-even a stovetop flame-belongs to childhood memory. When paired with chocolate between biscuits, the result is a winter treat that tastes playful and comforting all at once. This is less about culinary finesse and more about the sensory delight of soft, warm marshmallow and melting chocolate. It is a reminder that winter encourages us to indulge, to laugh, and to let go.



4. A Salad in Festive Clothing: Apple and Walnut Bites



Not all winter snacks need to be heavy. A refreshing, textured bite can feel just as comforting. One imaginative seasonal treat layers diced apples, celery, walnuts, a touch of honey, and a mild creamy base on small, crisp crackers. The combination recalls the spirit of holiday flavors-nutty, slightly sweet, crisp, and bright. Served on party platters or as an easy snack to eat while working, it brings freshness to a season known for richness.

5. Millet Makes Its Way to the Center: Bajra "Risotto"

As conversations around sustainability and regional grains grow, millets have reclaimed their place in winter kitchens. Bajra, or pearl millet, has been eaten for centuries in cold-weather regions because of its warming and strengthening qualities. Reimagining bajra in the style of a risotto-slow-cooked with broth until creamy-bridges tradition and innovation. The grain softens while retaining character, and vegetables or herbs can be added



according to mood. What emerges is a bowl that is both nourishing and contemporary, deeply rooted and quietly elegant.

6. Tangy Comfort: Kadhi With Crisp Pakoras



There are few winter comforts as universally loved as a bowl of kadhi. The gentle tartness of yogurt simmered with turmeric, ginger, cumin, and a hint of spice becomes the kind of flavor that feels like home. Add freshly fried pakoras-soft inside, lightly crunchy outside-and the dish becomes complete. It is the kind of meal that warms you from within, especially when spooned over hot rice or served with soft rotis. The fragrance of kadhi rising from the kitchen is an invitation in itself: come in, sit down, be cared for.

7. Decadence, Layered: Banoffee Pie

Banoffee pie is not Indian by origin, yet its ingredients-banana,



caramel, cream-fit seamlessly into Indian sensibilities about dessert. Winter is the perfect season for it: cold weather welcomes richness, and gatherings call for desserts that feel generous. The layers work together: the softness of banana, the deep sweetness of toffee, the airy lightness of whipped cream, and the gentle resistance of a biscuit crust. It is indulgence-but indulgence that feels celebratory, not heavy.



The Curious Story Behind the World's Most Expensive Coffee

Coffee lovers often talk about aroma, texture, roast depth, and brewing technique as the elements that define a cup's quality. Even so, there exists a coffee so unusual that its origin story is almost always the first thing mentioned. Kopi luwak, often called the world's most expensive coffee, is made from beans that have passed through the digestive tract of the Asian palm civet, a small nocturnal mammal native to parts of Southeast Asia and India. The civet eats ripe coffee berries, digests the



pulp, and excretes the inner seed, which is then collected, cleaned, roasted, and brewed.

For years, the big question has been whether kopi luwak's high price is justified by taste or simply driven by novelty and rarity. Coffee experts have long debated whether the civet's role is truly transformative. One idea suggests wild civets naturally choose the ripest, sweetest berries, meaning the beans they excrete are among the highest quality from a crop. Another view focuses on what happens inside the animal: the bean is exposed to enzymes and fermentation during digestion, subtly altering its chemical profile.

Recent scientific research supports the second theory. A study examin-

ing beans collected from wild civet droppings found notable differences compared to beans taken directly from the same coffee plants. The civet-processed beans contained higher levels of certain fatty acids that are known to influence aroma and flavor in coffee. These compounds are associated with richer, creamier notes in food and drink. The beans were also slightly larger on average, suggesting wild civets do preferentially select plumper fruit.

However, the study stopped short of evaluating whether these chemical differences translate into an objectively better-tasting brew. Flavor remains subjective, and expert tasting comparisons were not part of the research. Still, the findings strongly suggest that the civet's digestive

system acts as a natural fermentation chamber, subtly reshaping the bean's internal chemistry.

The global kopi luwak market has expanded rapidly in recent decades, especially in Indonesia. But with rising demand came a troubling shift: instead of gathering beans from the droppings of wild civets, many producers now keep civets in cages and feed them coffee cherries in large quantities.

This controlled environment removes the element of selective fruit picking and raises serious ethical concerns. Animal welfare groups have documented cramped living conditions, stress, and long-term harm to the animals. In addition, much of the kopi luwak sold as "wild-sourced" may actually come from these farms.

Ethical considerations aside, kopi luwak's flavor excellence is still tied to the same fundamentals as any coffee: the freshness of beans, the skill of the roaster, the grind, and the brew method. A poorly executed cup of kopi luwak can be as unremarkable as any stale or over-extracted coffee. Kopi luwak remains an object of fascination, combining rarity, legend, biology, and taste. But whether it deserves its luxury status depends not just on curiosity, but on conscience, craftsmanship, and care.



The Timeless Weave of Mangalagiri

India's handloom traditions are vast, diverse, and deeply intertwined with its cultural identity. Among these, the textiles of Mangalagiri stand apart for their simplicity, craftsmanship, and historical continuity. Tucked between the hills of the Eastern Ghats and the banks of the Krishna River, Mangalagiri is a town in Andhra Pradesh that has nurtured a weaving legacy for more than five centuries. The Mangalagiri saree is not just a garment; it is a living document of the region's artistic instincts, community livelihood, and devotion.

Located just outside Vijayawada, Mangalagiri's name literally translates to "Auspicious Hill," referencing the sacred temple of Panakala Narasimha Swamy that crowns the nearby slopes. For cen-



turies, pilgrims visiting the temple also visited the local weavers' workshops to purchase cotton and silk textiles. The act of buying a saree from Mangalagiri became both a devotional offering and support for the artisan families who depended on this craft.

This tradition continues today. While modernization and changing fashion trends have reshaped the textile market, Mangalagiri remains an active weaving hub,

though the number of weaving families has steadily declined as younger generations seek alternative livelihoods. Yet, the weavers who remain continue to produce some of the finest cotton textiles in India.

At the heart of the Mangalagiri craft is a distinctive cotton weave known for its smooth, crisp finish. Unlike many other handloom textiles, Mangalagiri fabric is woven using pit looms that are set below ground level. The weaver sits at floor height, allowing for greater physical stability and even tension, producing fabric that is strong, breathable, and feather-light. Mangalagiri sarees are characterized by: Uncompromised cotton quality, lending durability and comfort. Firm, even weaving, which gives the fabric its classic crispness. Vibrant, saturated colors achieved through careful dyeing. Wide, embellished borders, traditionally woven with zari. Minimalistic body design that highlights color and craftsmanship. The hallmark is the border. Traditionally called the "Nizam zari border," it is crafted using gold or silver-toned thread woven tightly into the edge. The body of the saree remains typically plain or follows subtle stripe or check patterns, letting the border create the central visual impact. This minimal yet striking aesthetic makes the saree suitable for both daily wear and ceremonial occasions.

The journey from cotton fiber to finished saree is long and meticulous. First, raw cotton is spun into yarn and thoroughly cleaned. The yarn is then soaked, dried, and prepared for dyeing. Mangalagiri dyers still practice slow dyeing techniques that require repeated washing and sun-drying to ensure even color and long-lasting vibrancy.





After dyeing, the warp threads are stretched and aligned, a step requiring patience and skill to prevent breakage. The loom is then assembled, and weaving begins. With each movement of the shuttle, the weaver interlocks warp and weft threads, constructing fabric layer by layer. After weaving, the saree may be embellished with motifs such as mango, leaf, paisley, or small geometric shapes. These motifs often draw from tribal and temple traditions, grounding the textile in its cultural landscape.

Every saree is the result of multiple days of labor, concentration, and skill refined through generations.

The color palette of Mangalagiri sarees has evolved with time. Where earlier shades leaned towards earthy reds, mustard yellows, and parrot greens, contemporary versions include lilac, teal, ivory, charcoal, coral, and other modern tones. Yet, the magic of Mangalagiri lies in how its threads blend color visually.

When warp and weft threads of different hues are woven together, the resulting fabric carries a gentle, shimmering color transition that feels organic and expressive.

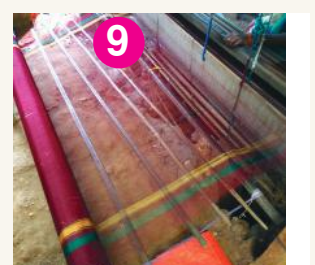
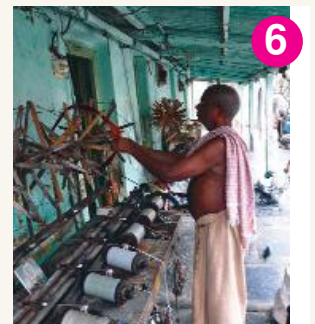
For everyday wear, pure cotton Mangalagiri sarees provide

breathability and movement ideal for warm climates. For special occasions, silk Mangalagiri sarees introduce a richer drape and sheen, often paired with more intricate zari motifs. Silk variations maintain the same understated elegance of the cotton originals, making them suitable for weddings, festivals, and temple ceremonies.

Like many traditional crafts in India, Mangalagiri weaving has faced obstacles. Machine-made fabrics, mass production, and changing consumer habits have reduced demand. Many families that once operated looms now work in other professions. Yet, there has been a renewed awareness and appreciation for handloom products in recent years. Designers and craft retailers are beginning to highlight Mangalagiri cotton for its versatility and timeless style.

Cities across India and abroad are witnessing a resurgence of handloom clothing among younger consumers who value authenticity and sustainable production. Mangalagiri sarees are increasingly seen in contemporary wardrobes not only for their comfort but also for their graceful simplicity.

To wear a Mangalagiri saree is to acknowledge the hands that shaped it: the dyer who watched the yarn dry in the shade, the spinner who prepared the thread, the weaver who patiently worked each row, and the artisan community that has kept this tradition alive for centuries. In an age of rapid consumption and fleeting fashion, Mangalagiri stands for endurance. It stands for craft that respects time. And most of all, it stands for elegance defined not by ornamentation, but by harmony.



The Legacy of India's Philosopher-King, Vikramaditya

Across the vast canvas of Indian history, certain figures rise not only as rulers but as icons woven into cultural memory. Among them stands King Vikramaditya, a monarch celebrated for courage, justice, wisdom, and a deep love for the arts. His name has traveled through centuries, carried in folktales, poems, temple inscriptions, children's stories, and scholarly debates. Even today, Vikramaditya is often held up as the ideal of what a just king should be: strong in battle, fair in governance, and compassionate toward



came to be known as the Navaratnas, or the Nine Gems, each a master of their discipline. Their contributions expanded knowledge in astronomy, grammar, literature, medicine, and philosophy. Under Vikramaditya, scholarship was not merely supported—it was celebrated.

This cultural atmosphere helped establish Ujjain as one of South Asia's great learning capitals, a place where ideas traveled freely and creative expression thrived.

Much of Vikramaditya's enduring fame comes from storytelling traditions.

One of the most cherished

is the collection known as Vikram and Betal. In these stories, the king is tasked with capturing a mischievous spirit named Betal. Each time Vikram lifts Betal onto his shoulder, the spirit tells him a story that ends with a moral dilemma. The king must answer wisely or face failure. The cycle repeats, symbolizing the endless challenge of wisdom: each answer we find gives rise to new questions.

These tales serve more than entertainment. They nurture critical thinking, empathy, and ethical

reasoning. For children, they become engaging lessons; for adults, they remain thought-provoking meditations on human behavior.



his people.

While history records several rulers who assumed the title "Vikramaditya," the most renowned is believed to have lived around the 1st century BCE, ruling from the ancient city of Ujjain. His reign, real or partially embellished through legend, has become symbolic of a golden age—an era when intellectual life

flourished and peace prevailed.

The name Vikramaditya translates to "Sun of Valor," and he is remembered for embodying this meaning fully. Tales portray him as fearless in war, yet thoughtful in judgment. More importantly, he is depicted as a ruler who considered ruling to be a responsibility of service rather than power. This philosophy earned him loyalty not out of fear, but admiration.

Ancient texts describe his court at Ujjain as a vibrant center of learning. Scholars, poets, mathematicians, and musicians gathered under his patronage. This group



The blending of historical memory with folklore occupies a special place in Indian storytelling. Vikramaditya is one of those rare figures whose presence in legend feels as real as his presence in recorded history.

Historical accounts suggest that Vikramaditya's empire extended across much of central and northern India, stretching towards the borders of what was then the known world. Trade routes flourished under his administration. Law and order were firmly established. His rule is described as a time when farmers, traders, and



scholars lived without fear, supported by fair policies and a stable economy.

One of his most lasting legacies is the Vikram Samvat calendar, still used in many parts of India today. The adoption of this calendar was a symbolic gesture—an acknowledgement of a new era of stability and cultural brightness.

The values associated with his reign—cultural openness, intellectual respect, and ethical leadership—continue to resonate. Many later Indian rulers attempted to model their courts after his, invoking his name as a measure of good governance. Why does Vikramaditya's story persist so powerfully, even after two millennia?

The answer is not simply that he was a great king. It is because his

memory bridges history and humanity. He represents virtues that societies value across time: fairness, curiosity, courage, integrity, and humility. Through him, we glimpse an image of leadership that is conscious, thoughtful, and generous.

Temples, sculptures, and inscriptions believed to date to his era still stand today, especially around Ujjain and central India. These structures are not just architectural achievements. They are cultural landmarks that connect the present to an era of artistic and intellectual vibrancy.

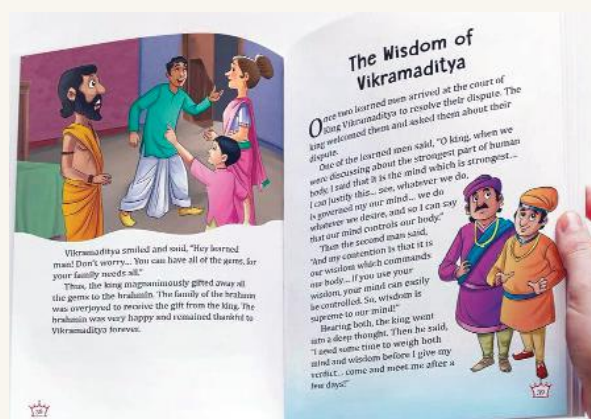
Moreover, oral storytelling has played a crucial role in preserving his legacy. In rural India, elders still tell Vikramaditya stories to teach moral lessons. In city classrooms, children encounter him through illustrated books and animated

adaptations. He remains a figure who belongs equally to scholarship and imagination.



In today's world, confronted with rapid change and evolving social challenges, Vikramaditya's ideals feel strikingly relevant. His stories remind us that leadership requires not only strength, but also listening. That knowledge thrives when shared. That justice is a matter not only of law, but of compassion.

For young learners, his life offers a foundation of character education: how to think deeply, act bravely, and treat others with fairness. For adults, his story prompts reflection on what we expect from those in positions of power.





Selling Property in India:

What Every NRI Should Know

For many Non-Resident Indians, real estate in India represents more than just an investment. A house may be a memory of childhood summers, a gift from parents, or an anchor point for future plans to return. Yet when the time comes to sell that property, the experience can feel unexpectedly complex. The sale triggers tax obligations not only in India but often in the country where the NRI currently lives. Between capital gains rules, TDS deductions, repatriation paperwork, and the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), navigating the process can feel overwhelming.

But the rules are clearer than they seem. And understanding them before the sale can help NRIs avoid unnecessary tax burdens and delays.

Consider the case of Akshay, a 38-year-old software professional living in the United States. In 2012, he purchased an apartment in India for Rs.20 lakh. Thirteen years later, he sold it for ₹1 crore. Because he had held the property for more than 24 months, it qualified as a long-term capital asset. After indexation—that is,

adjusting the purchase price to account for inflation—the cost rose to Rs.36.3 lakh. The difference, approximately Rs.63.7 lakh, counted as his taxable long-term capital gain in India.

Long-term gains from property are taxed at 20% in India, plus a 4% health and education cess. In Pradeep's case, the tax came to roughly Rs.13.25 lakh. However, NRIs do not pay this tax directly. Instead, the buyer is required to deduct it upfront as TDS, along with a 1% TCS on properties valued



above Rs.50 lakh. After filing his tax return in India and adjusting for the TDS and TCS already withheld, Pradeep received a small refund before transferring the remaining proceeds to his account in the U.S. But the tax story did not end there. Because the United States taxes its residents on global income, Akshay also had to report the capital gain to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Under U.S. tax rules, long-term capital gains may be taxed at rates such as 15%, along with an additional 3.8% Net Investment Income Tax depending on the individual's income level. Fortunately, the India-U.S. Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement allowed

Pradeep to claim a foreign tax credit for the tax already paid in India. This meant that the tax paid in India reduced his U.S. liability almost entirely, preventing him from paying tax twice on the same income.

The result was that Akshay's global tax burden remained close to the 20% already paid in India. That is the purpose of the DTAA—not to eliminate tax but to ensure that NRIs are not taxed twice unfairly. The question many NRIs face is: does this apply only to the U.S.? The short answer is no. But each country treats foreign income differently.

The United Kingdom, like the U.S., taxes its residents on worldwide income. However, until April 2025, non-domiciled individuals could choose to be taxed only on foreign



income that they bring into the UK. This was known as the remittance basis. After April 2025, this system is replaced by the Foreign Income & Gains regime, which allows new residents to temporarily avoid tax on foreign gains for their first few years in the UK. Beyond that period, foreign income becomes fully taxable and foreign tax credits apply in a manner similar to the U.S.

Singapore takes a different approach. It does not generally tax capital gains at all. So, for a Singapore-based NRI who sells property in India, only Indian capital gains tax would apply. However, if the tax authorities determine that someone is effectively a property trader-buying and selling frequently for profit-those gains can be taxed as business income. This distinction matters especially for investors who own multiple properties and sell regularly.

No matter where they live, NRIs are allowed to repatriate the proceeds from the sale of property, subject to certain conditions. Up to one million U.S. dollars can be transferred abroad per financial year, provided the money comes from a Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) account and all taxes have been settled. To complete the transfer, banks require documentation that proves the tax liability has been appropriately addressed. This includes the sale deed, buyer's TDS certificate, and two key compliance forms: Form 15CA, filed by the remitter, and Form 15CB, a certificate from a chartered accountant verifying that the tax has been properly accounted for.



The process may seem bureaucratic, but it is designed to ensure clear money trails under India's foreign exchange regulations. Completing the documentation correctly avoids delays in repatriation and prevents the transfer from being flagged by the bank's compliance team.

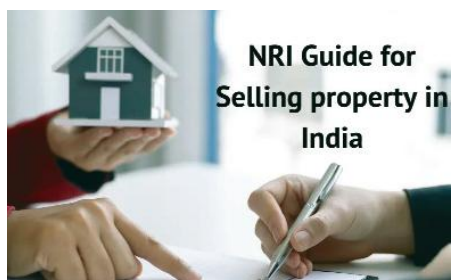
For NRIs planning a sale, one of the most important concepts to

understand is the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement. India has signed DTAA with more than 85 countries, including the U.S., the UK, and Singapore. The general rule in most of these agreements is that the country where the property is located has the primary right to tax capital gains. The country of residence may also tax the gains but must allow credit for



tax already paid in the source country. In practice, this means that NRIs usually end up paying the higher of the two tax rates, not both in full.

For example, if the resident country taxes capital gains at 15% and India taxes the same gain at 12.5%, the NRI will pay 12.5% in India and 2.5% in the country of residence. If the situation is reversed, the foreign tax credit ensures the NRI does not pay 15% on top of the 12.5% already paid. The most avoidable mistakes happen when NRIs try to complete a property sale without understanding these cross-border interactions. Selling before clarifying tax residency status, failing to calculate indexed cost correctly, ignoring documentation for repatriation, or assuming tax exemption without



checking the DTAA are common missteps.

Selling property in India is not merely a real estate decision. It is a financial planning event that intersects with two tax systems, currency regulations, and sometimes immigration rules. When handled with clarity, the process can be smooth and financially efficient. When handled without understanding, it can lead to unexpected tax bills, blocked transfers, or delayed refunds.

The key for NRIs is preparation.

- ◆ Determine whether the gain will be short-term or long-term.
- ◆ Check the DTAA rules that apply to your country of residence.
- ◆ Keep the sale transaction transparent and traceable.
- ◆ Ensure the buyer deducts TDS correctly.
- ◆ File tax returns in India even if the tax has already been deducted.
- ◆ Retain documents for repatriation before initiating the transfer.

The sale of a family home or investment property can be emotional. But when it comes to tax and compliance, clarity matters more than assumption. NRIs may live abroad, but when they sell property in India, the rules of two countries are at play. Understanding those rules early ensures not only smooth financial settlement, but peace of mind.



How NRIs Can Now Pay through UPI in India

For years, NRIs visiting India faced a frustrating gap in daily convenience: even though UPI payments were everywhere—from autorickshaws to supermarkets—making those same payments required an Indian mobile number linked to an Indian bank account. This meant that an NRI arriving in India often found themselves borrowing a family member's phone, paying in cash, or depending on international cards that came with unpredictable conversion charges. That is now changing.

Paytm recently announced that NRIs from 12 countries can log into the Paytm app using their international mobile number and make UPI payments directly from their NRE (Non-Resident External) or NRO (Non-Resident Ordinary) accounts. This marks one of the most significant expansions of UPI access since the system was launched.

The feature is rolling out in a phased manner and applies to NRIs living in Singapore, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Oman, Qatar, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, France, and Malaysia. These are regions with large Indian-origin communities—



and many of them travel frequently between India and their country of residence.



The new system allows NRIs to use Paytm UPI much the same way as residents do. Everyday purchases become smoother: groceries, metro tickets, cabs, street food, pharmacies, and neighborhood stores. Payments no longer need currency conversion or international card fees. The same UPI QR codes that appear at shops and stalls across India now work for NRIs as well.

For money movement within India, the convenience is significant. Funds can be transferred instantly to friends or relatives with a UPI ID. Bills can be paid directly. An NRI can even send money between their own accounts—such

as transferring from their NRE account to an NRO-linked UPI bank.

To set up the system, NRIs simply need to download the Paytm app and log in using an international mobile number. Verification is done through SMS. Once the number is verified, they can link either their NRE or NRO account. The UPI ID is then activated, and payments can begin immediately.

This brings up an important distinction

the choice between NRE and NRO matters. An NRE account holds foreign income, while an NRO account is used for earnings generated within India. When a



UPI transaction is made, the amount is deducted from whichever account is linked. For everyday purchases during travel, many



choose their NRE account, as balances there are freely repatriable, meaning the remaining funds can be transferred back abroad without restriction. The NRO account, however, has repatriation limits and typically requires additional documentation to move funds overseas.



The system is also structured to ensure compliance. The NRE or NRO account must already be KYC-verified with the respective bank. UPI is simply the interface for movement, not the storage of funds. No new accounts are created—Paytm simply provides the UPI layer that was previously restricted.

For NRIs, this update does more than streamline coffee purchases or auto fares. It eliminates a symbolic gap. UPI has become a defining feature of the Indian payment landscape. It is the system that allows vendors selling coconut water or flower garlands to accept digital payments instantly. For Indians abroad, not having access to UPI meant carrying a



logistical reminder of living between two financial worlds.

By extending UPI to international mobile numbers and NRE/NRO accounts, Paytm and NPCI (the National Payments Corporation of India) are working toward a more seamless experience—one where identity across borders is acknowledged rather than frag-



mented.

There are additional conveniences built into Paytm's system as well: users can hide transac-



tions when needed, download monthly UPI statements, track spending trends, and view balances across multiple linked accounts in one place. The interface does not feel different for NRIs; it offers the same functions that domestic users rely on every day.

This move also aligns with a broader global shift. Over the last year, India has been in discussions with several countries to expand UPI-based cross-border payments. The aim is financial mobility for Indians worldwide, especially as diaspora communities continue to grow and travel patterns deepen.

The most significant shift, however, may be social. The ability to scan a QR code in India—without borrowing a phone or reaching for cash—simplifies everyday interactions. It restores independence. It also brings the NRI experience closer to what they remember from before leaving India, yet updated to match the technology of today's India. ♦♦♦





Richest Indian Professional Managers in 2025

India's influence on the world economy is no longer defined only by entrepreneurs and family-owned business empires. Increasingly, it is shaped by individuals who have risen through the ranks of global corporations, leading some of the most powerful companies in technology, finance, retail, and innovation. These are not founders. They are professional managers—people who built wealth through expertise, leadership, and the ability to guide complex organizations on the world stage.

The Hurun India Rich List 2025 confirms this rise. Sixteen professional executives of Indian origin now hold fortunes exceeding Rs.1,000 crore. Most of them reside in the United States, steering boardrooms that influence global markets. They are admired not just for personal accomplishment but for reshaping corporate culture, opening pathways for future Indian talent, and demonstrating that leadership can be built—not only inherited.

What makes this year particularly noteworthy is the person who leads the list. The wealthiest

Indian-origin corporate executive today is a woman—surpassing Silicon Valley giants like Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella. Her presence at the top is a symbolic moment in global business, reflecting both the broadening of opportunities and the shifting patterns of power.

1. Jayshree Ullal - CEO, Arista Networks

Jayshree Ullal, the wealthiest Indian-origin professional manager in 2025, was born in London and raised in Delhi, where she completed her schooling before moving to the United States to



pursue higher studies. She earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from San Francisco State University and later a master's degree in engineering management from Santa Clara University. Her early life was shaped by the disciplined, academic environment of her family, where education and integrity were strongly emphasized. These values would later define her leadership style.

Ullal began her corporate journey at engineering firms and soon joined Cisco Systems, where she spent over 15 years. While at Cisco, she led and scaled the company's data center, switching, and networking products, helping Cisco grow into a leader in enterprise networking. In 2008, she took on the role of CEO at Arista Networks, then a young company positioned in the emerging field of cloud network

ing. Under her leadership, Arista transformed into a global powerhouse, providing high-speed data networking solutions for top cloud platforms and data centers. Known for her strategic clarity and quiet authority, Ullal has become an influential figure in Silicon Valley, proving that leadership can be powerful without being loud. Her success marks a milestone for Indian women in global technology leadership.

2. Satya Nadella - CEO, Microsoft

Satya Nadella was born in Hyderabad, India, in 1967, where he grew up in a middle-class family that emphasized education and curiosity. His



father was a civil servant, and his mother was a Sanskrit lecturer. Nadella studied at Hyderabad Public School and later earned a degree in electrical engineering from Manipal Institute of Technology. Seeking to expand his horizons, he moved to the United States, where he completed a master's degree in computer science from the University of Wisconsin-

Milwaukee, followed by an MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. This blend of technical knowledge and business education laid the foundation for his leadership philosophy.

Nadella joined Microsoft in 1992 and steadily rose through the ranks by working in various divisions, including cloud computing, search, and enterprise solutions. When he became CEO in 2014, Microsoft was considered a legacy company struggling to stay relevant in a rapidly changing tech world. Nadella shifted the company's focus toward cloud services, artificial intelligence, and collaborative culture. Under his guidance, Microsoft Azure became a global cloud leader, and the company regained its position among the most valuable enterprises in the world. Nadella is admired for bringing empathy into corporate leadership, demonstrating that strength and humility can coexist at the highest levels of global business.

3. Nikesh Arora - CEO, Palo Alto Networks

Nikesh Arora was born in Ghaziabad, near Delhi, where he studied at the Air Force School before earning a degree



in electrical engineering from IIT BHU. He later moved abroad to pursue an MBA from Northeastern University and acquired further executive training at the prestigious INSEAD Business School. Arora's early life was influenced by discipline and aspiration, as his father served in the Indian Air Force. His global educational journey gave him a unique ability to navigate corporate cultures across continents.

Arora began his professional career in finance and tech advisory roles before joining Google in 2004. At Google, he contributed significantly to the company's global sales operations and later became Senior Vice-President and Chief Business Officer. His leadership helped Google expand advertising revenue and global outreach. He later served as President and COO at SoftBank Group, where he played a key role in major global investments. In 2018, Arora became CEO and Chairman of Palo Alto Networks, a cybersecurity firm crucial to the digital economy. Under his leadership, the company expanded its security platforms and AI-driven threat response solutions. Arora's career reflects a mastery of scale, negotiation, and long-term strategic thinking across multiple industries.

4. Ignatius Navil Noronha - CEO, Avenue Supermarts (D-Mart)



Ignatius Navil Noronha is a rare figure among India's corporate elite: a homegrown business leader who built success entirely within the country. Born and raised in Mumbai, he completed his schooling there before earning a management degree from Mumbai's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS). Noronha began his career in the fast-moving consumer goods sector at Hindustan



Unilever, where he gained insight into the complexity of Indian consumer behavior-knowledge that would later become the foundation of his success.

Noronha joined Avenue Supermarts, the parent company of D-Mart, at a young age and eventually became CEO. D-Mart's business model emphasizes efficiency, affordability, and consistency-qualities deeply aligned with Indian shopping habits. Noronha's leadership focused on minimizing costs, maintaining strong supplier relationships, and choosing strategic store locations, avoiding the debt-driven expansion seen in many retail chains. D-Mart grew steadily into one of India's most profitable and trusted retail brands. His rise demonstrates that innovation in India does not always come from high technology; it can emerge from thoughtful simplicity and deep understanding of local needs.

5. Ajaypal Singh Banga - President, World Bank Group



Ajay Banga was born in Pune, Maharashtra, into a family with a tradition of service and discipline. His father was a high-ranking officer in the Indian Army, and Banga spent his early



years moving from one cantonment town to another. He attended St. Edward's School in Shimla and later graduated from the prestigious St. Stephen's College in Delhi with a degree in economics. He went on to earn his postgraduate degree from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, one of India's leading business schools. This academic foundation prepared him for a global career that combined finance, leadership, and cross-cultural collaboration.

Banga began his professional career at Nestlé India, where he spent more than a decade in multiple roles across marketing and general management. He later joined PepsiCo during its expansion phase in India before transitioning to Citigroup, where he rose to become CEO of the Asia-Pacific region. His most influential tenure came as CEO and later Chairman of Mastercard, where he spearheaded global financial inclusion initiatives and digital payments expansion. In 2023, he was appointed President of the World Bank Group, where he now leads international economic development strategies. His career underscores the increasing presence of Indian leadership in global governance and multilateral finance.



6. Thomas Kurian - CEO, Google Cloud



Thomas Kurian was born in Bengaluru, Karnataka, and grew up in a family that strongly encouraged academic excellence. He and his twin brother George were both top-ranking students. After finishing school at St. Joseph's Boys' High School, Thomas earned a place at Princeton University, where he studied electrical engineering and computer science. He later pursued an MBA from Stanford Graduate School of Business. This combination of technical expertise and business training positioned him for influential leadership roles in the technology industry.

Kurian spent more than two decades at Oracle, where he held several senior roles, eventually rising to President of Product Development. He oversaw Oracle's extensive software portfolio and played a central role in shaping enterprise software strategies worldwide. In 2019, Kurian became the CEO of Google

Cloud. Under his leadership, Google Cloud shifted from a developer-focused platform to a structured enterprise solution provider. He focused on partnerships, sales expansion, and industry-specific cloud applications, helping Google become a more competitive force in enterprise cloud computing. Kurian's leadership style is analytical and performance-driven, reflecting his experience in scaling large, complex technology organizations.

7. Sundar Pichai - CEO, Alphabet and Google

Sundar Pichai was born in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, and grew up in Chennai in a modest household where his father worked as an electrical engineer in a factory and his mother was a stenographer. He attended Jawahar Vidyalaya and then IIT Kharagpur, where he earned a degree in metallurgical



engineering. His academic excellence earned him a scholarship to Stanford University, where he studied materials science and engineering. He later earned an MBA from the Wharton School, where he was recognized as a Siebel Scholar and Palmer Scholar for outstanding academic performance.

Pichai joined Google in 2004, ini-



tially working on the Google Toolbar and later leading the development of Google Chrome, which would become the world's most widely used internet browser. His strategic vision and calm leadership led to increasingly senior roles, culminating in his appointment as CEO of Google in 2015 and CEO of Alphabet, the parent company, in 2019. Pichai has guided the company through major technology transitions, including artificial intelligence advances, regulatory scrutiny, and global expansion. He is known for his patient, inclusive leadership and his ability to align large teams behind complex strategic goals.

8. Indra K. Nooyi - Former CEO, PepsiCo

Indra Nooyi was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, into a middle-class family that valued education and



cultural discipline. She attended Holy Angels Anglo Indian Higher Secondary School and went on to study physics, chemistry, and mathematics at Madras Christian College. She completed her MBA at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, before moving to the United States to study public and private management at Yale School of Management. Her academic journey reflects her intellectual rigor and global ambition. Nooyi began her career in product management roles in India before joining the Boston Consulting Group in the United States. She later held senior strategic planning roles at Motorola and Asea Brown Boveri before joining PepsiCo in 1994. Rising through the leadership ranks, she became CEO in 2006. During her tenure, she reoriented PepsiCo toward sustainability and health-focused products, while maintaining global brand strength. Nooyi emphasized responsible growth by investing in communities, environmental initiatives, and nutritional product lines. Widely regarded as one of the most influential women in corporate history, her leadership continues to shape discussions around diversity, strategic vision, and purpose-driven business.

9. Shantanu Narayen - CEO, Adobe

Shantanu Narayen was born in Hyderabad, where he attended Hyderabad Public School before earning a degree in electronics and communication engineering from Osmania University. He later moved to the United States, completing a master's degree in computer science from Bowling Green



State University and an MBA from the University of California, Berkeley. His career is built upon a strong foundation of both technical and managerial expertise. Narayen joined Adobe in 1998 and played crucial roles in product strategy and engineering before becoming CEO in 2007. Under his leadership, Adobe underwent one of the most significant business transformations in the technology sector: shifting from physical software packages to subscription-based cloud services. This move not only modernized Adobe's business model but also positioned the company at the center of digital creativity and marketing technology ecosystems. Narayen is known for his patient, long-term perspective and his focus on empowering digital communities worldwide. His leadership has made Adobe indispensable to creative professionals and enterprises alike.

10. Ajit Jain - Vice Chairman, Insurance Operations, Berkshire Hathaway

Ajit Jain was born in Odisha, India, and earned his degree in engineering from IIT Kharagpur, one of India's most competitive technical institutions. He later completed an MBA from Harvard Business School, a transition that shifted his career toward finance and strategic management. Jain began his



career at IBM before joining American International Group (AIG), where he developed expertise in insurance underwriting. In 1986, he joined Berkshire Hathaway, where he rapidly became one of Warren Buffett's most trusted advisors. Jain built Berkshire's reinsurance group into a major global business known for disciplined risk



assessment and analytical rigor. His leadership style is understated and execution-driven, focusing on long-term performance rather than short-term gains. In 2018, he was appointed Vice Chairman of Insurance Operations, formally recognizing his decades of contribution to Berkshire Hathaway's growth. Jain remains a central figure in one of the world's most respected investment organizations, known for judgment, precision, and deep understanding of financial risk.



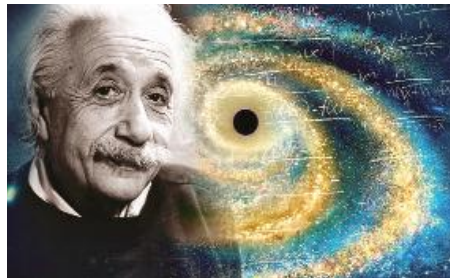
Is Einstein Wrong About Black Holes?

Black holes are often described as the great cosmic eaters - regions of space where gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape. For many years, these mysterious objects existed only in theory and scientific imagination. That changed when the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) collaboration released the first images of two supermassive black holes: one at the center of the galaxy M87 in 2019 and another in the center of our own Milky Way in 2022.

These images showed a glowing ring surrounding a dark center. The dark center is the shadow of the black hole, and the glowing ring is made of extremely hot gas orbiting just outside the event horizon - the point beyond which nothing can return. Even though we still cannot see the black hole directly, the shadow gives scientists a powerful new tool to study gravity under extreme conditions. Einstein's theory of general relativity, introduced over a century ago, predicts the existence of black

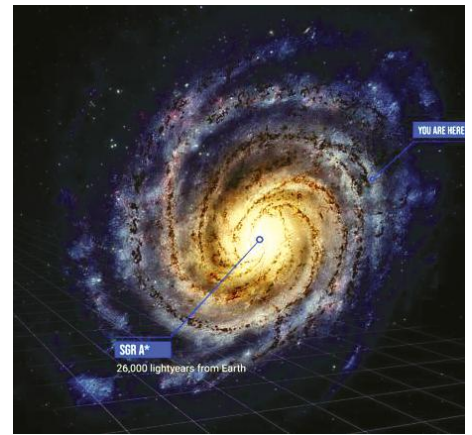
holes and event horizons. So far, many observations have supported his model. But scientists emphasize that any scientific theory must always be tested, especially when dealing with something as extreme as a black hole.

This is where the new research



comes in. A team led by Professor Luciano Rezzolla of Goethe University Frankfurt, in collaboration with scientists from the Tsung-Dao Lee Institute in Shanghai, has proposed a method to test Einstein's theory using black hole shadows. Their study, published in *Nature Astronomy*, explains how different theories of gravity predict slightly different shadow shapes and sizes.

The team used advanced computer simulations to model how gas

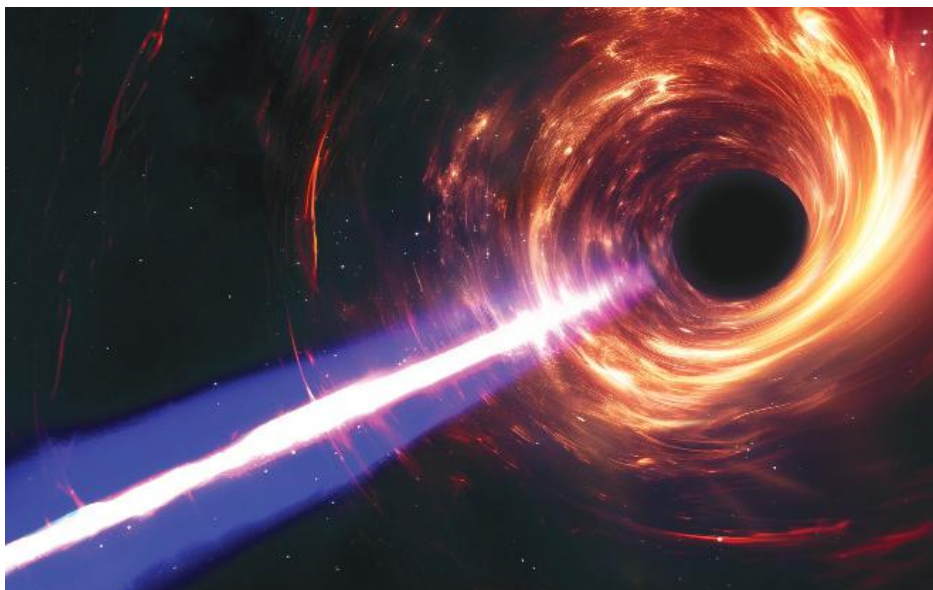


and magnetic fields behave around black holes. These simulations helped them generate synthetic images to compare what black holes would look like under various theories. The results show that if Einstein's theory were incorrect, the differences in the shadow's size or brightness distribution could reveal it.

Right now, our telescopes are not sharp enough to detect these small differences. But with improvements to the EHT network - including adding more observatories and possibly placing a telescope in space - the resolution could increase enough to make these comparisons possible. Future observations could then confirm whether Einstein's model continues to hold or whether another explanation may be needed.

For now, the black holes observed in M87 and the Milky Way appear consistent with Einstein's predictions. More exotic possibilities, such as wormholes or black holes without event horizons, are becoming less likely. But scientists say the work is far from finished.

The next generation of black hole imaging will not only offer clearer pictures but may also reveal whether our current understanding of gravity is complete. If Einstein's theory ever fails under the most extreme conditions, it would open the door to a new era of physics and a deeper understanding of the universe.

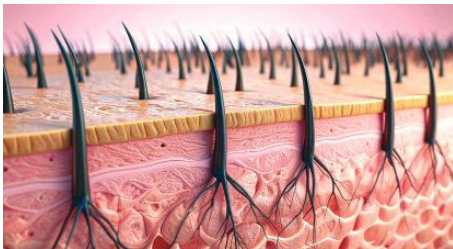


Scientists Discover How Hair Cells Help Skin Heal Faster

Scientists have long known that the skin relies on two main groups of stem cells to stay healthy: epidermal stem cells that maintain the outer layer, and hair follicle stem cells that grow hair. Each was thought to stay in its own lane.

But recent research from Rockefeller University shows that hair follicle stem cells are far more adaptable than expected. When the skin is wounded and the usual repair cells are damaged, these hair-producing cells can switch tasks and step in to help heal the injury instead.

The research team wanted to understand what signals trigger this shift. They found that the cue



comes from a cellular stress response linked to the amino acid serine. Serine is a nutrient found in everyday foods like grains, dairy, and meat. The researchers discovered that when serine levels drop, hair follicle stem cells slow down hair growth to save energy. If the skin is wounded at the same time, this stress response becomes stronger, causing the cells to stop producing hair altogether and focus entirely on repairing tissue. This helps the wound close more quickly,

especially in situations where the usual pool of skin-repairing stem cells has been destroyed.



The study, published in *Cell Metabolism*, followed how hair follicle stem cells respond when they are deprived of serine. In experiments with mice, the researchers either restricted serine in the diet or genetically blocked the cells from producing their own. In both cases, the cells activated the stress response and shifted away from hair production toward wound healing. For the body, a patch of missing hair is not dangerous, but an open wound is. The cell's response reflects this prioritization of survival. The work builds on earlier findings from the same lab showing that some precancerous skin cells depend heavily on serine to fuel their abnormal growth. Reducing dietary serine slowed that process. But the new study focuses on healthy stem cells and how they use serine to make decisions about where to direct their energy. This

research helps explain how tissues ration resources when under strain. The team also tested whether increasing dietary serine could speed hair growth. The body, however, tightly regulates serine levels, so even very high-serine diets only raise levels modestly. Hair growth did not dramatically increase. However, when cells were prevented from making their own serine, adding more serine through diet did help restore some hair regeneration. This suggests that manipulating serine levels could potentially be useful in specific cases where cell production is impaired.

The researchers now plan to explore whether adjusting serine intake or using medications that influence the stress response could



help wounds heal faster. They also intend to study whether other amino acids send similar signals to stem cells during times of stress. The work reveals that stem cells constantly evaluate their environment and shift their behavior based on need. Healing the skin takes precedence over maintaining hair, especially when resources are limited.



Why Kids' Colorful Snacks Come With Hidden Health Risks

Many of the brightly colored foods that appeal most to children may be contributing to behavioral challenges later on. A new study examining nearly 40,000 packaged foods and drinks in U.S. grocery stores has found that almost one in five products contains synthetic food dyes. These dyes are added to enhance color and visual appeal, especially in sweets, cereals, snacks, juices, and sports drinks that are frequently marketed toward children. However, scientific evidence has increasingly linked synthetic dyes to hyperactivity and attention difficulties in young people. Some children appear more sensitive than others, which may explain why certain families notice behavioral changes while others do not.

The research team, from The George Institute for Global Health, the University of North Carolina, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, reviewed ingredi-

ent labels from the 25 largest food manufacturers in the United States.

They paid particular attention to products commonly advertised to children. These items were substantially more likely to contain synthetic dyes compared with foods in other categories. Nearly 28 percent of foods aimed at young consumers included artificial coloring, compared to only 11 percent among products not specifically marketed to children.



The study also revealed a strong connection between dyes and sugar content. Packaged foods containing synthetic dyes had, on average, more than double the amount of sugar found in similar items without dyes. Many of these products were highly processed sweets or flavored drinks designed to be visually attractive, reinforcing the idea that color is being used to sell sugary foods.

Researchers and nutrition experts expressed concern that companies continue to rely on dyes when safer natural alternatives exist. Dr. Elizabeth Dunford, one of the study's authors, noted that evidence connecting synthetic dyes

to behavioral issues has been building for decades, yet manufacturers continue to use them widely. The combination of artificial coloring and high sugar, she explained, raises particular concerns for children's long-term health.

Major confectionery and beverage brands were among the most frequent users of synthetic dyes. Some of the largest candy companies used artificial colors in more than half of their products, and sports and energy drinks also showed high rates of dye use. Even though the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has asked companies to voluntarily reduce reliance on synthetic dyes, follow-through has been inconsistent. In contrast, the European Union requires warning labels on dyed foods, which has pushed many companies there to switch to natural coloring.

Several U.S. states have begun considering legislation to limit or label synthetic dyes in foods intended for children, but such measures will take time. In the meantime, researchers suggest that consumers carefully read ingredient lists. If a packaged food contains synthetic color additives or unusually high sugar levels, it may be better to avoid it, especially when purchasing for children who are more vulnerable to the behavioral effects associated with these ingredients.



Reactivate a Cell's Anti- Aging Switch



Scientists have uncovered a way to reactivate one of the cell's most basic housekeeping systems, and their discovery may offer a path toward slowing or even reversing certain aspects of aging. The breakthrough centers on how cells break down damaged or unwanted proteins. When this cleanup system weakens, harmful proteins can accumulate and interfere with normal cell function. One such protein, known as progerin, plays a central role in Hutchinson-Gilford progeria syndrome, a rare disorder that causes children to age rapidly.

Children with progeria develop traits normally associated with much older adults, including wrinkled skin, hair loss, reduced fat beneath the skin, hardened arteries, and metabolic complications. About 90 percent of cases stem from a mutation that causes cells to produce progerin, an abnormal version of a protein found in healthy cells. Even in natural aging, small amounts of progerin can accumulate, suggesting it may contribute to the gradual decline seen in older tissues.

A team of scientists led by Professor Chuanmao Zhang at Peking University and Kunming

University of Science and Technology set out to understand how cells manage progerin and why it builds up. Their research, published in *Science China Life Sciences*, shows that the buildup occurs when the lysosome, a small structure in the cell responsible for waste removal, stops functioning properly. Under normal conditions, damaged or excess proteins are carried to the lysosome to be broken down. But in cells affected by progeria, this disposal process is disrupted, allowing progerin to gather inside the cell and interfere with essential functions such as DNA repair and cell division.

The researchers followed the movement of progerin inside cells and observed that it leaves the cell's nucleus and enters the cytoplasm, where it should be dismantled by the autophagy-lysosome pathway. When they examined cells from patients with progeria, however, genes linked to lysosome function were significantly less active. Tests confirmed that the lysosomes themselves were sluggish and unable to process cellular waste effectively.

The next step was to determine whether lysosome activity could be restored. The researchers activated lysosome formation using two different biochemical approaches. Both methods successfully



strengthened lysosome function and allowed cells to clear out progerin more efficiently. When this happened, cells showed fewer signs of stress and aging. DNA damage decreased, cell growth improved, and the overall health of

the cells rebounded.

These findings suggest that targeting the lysosome may be a promising strategy not only for treating progeria but also for addressing aging more generally. Because small amounts of progerin also appear in typical aging and in certain chronic diseases such as kidney disease, therapies that enhance lysosome activity could potentially benefit many conditions linked to cellular decline.

Rather than trying to eliminate



aging entirely, this research points to a more practical approach: supporting the body's natural systems for repair and renewal. By helping cells clear away harmful proteins before they accumulate, scientists may one day be able to slow the cellular wear and tear that accompanies growing older.





Harmony Of The Seas

It was a big day recently for cruise fans as Royal Caribbean's record-breaking Harmony of the Seas set sail with paying passengers for the first time.

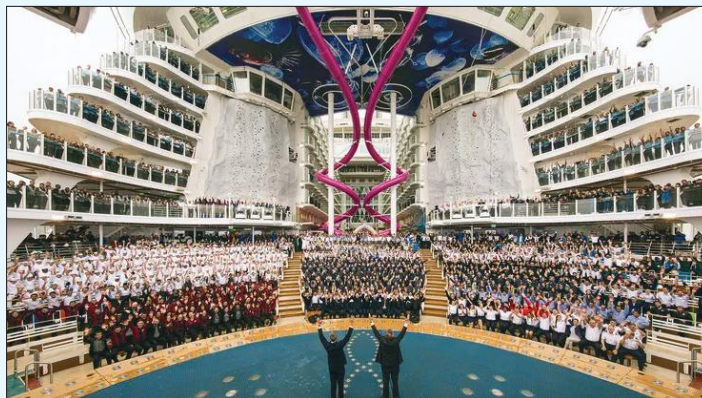
At 226,963 tons, Harmony is the largest cruise ship ever, a floating mega-resort with three main pool areas, a water slide complex, an adults-only solarium, an ice skating rink, two rock climbing walls, a basketball court and a mall-like indoor promenade with shops, bars and eateries. It departed from Southampton, England on a four-night voyage to Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Harmony is a larger version of Royal Caribbean's giant

Oasis of the Seas and Allure of the Seas, the previous size leaders in the cruise world. While a number of its features are the same as its siblings, it also offers a number of new additions. Among them: Ultimate Abyss, which just might be the most thrilling attraction ever conceived for a cruise ship. Comprised of two swirling slides, it drops 10 stories from near the top of the

vessel down to one of its lowest decks.

Harmony also is home to a Bionic Bar where the drinks are served by robot bartenders - a concept that first debuted in 2014 on Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas. In addition, Harmony has larger cabins than Oasis and Allure in some categories, and windowless "inside" cabins are outfitted with Royal

Caribbean's exclusive Virtual Balconies, which offer a real-time view of the outdoors. It's a concept that first debuted in 2014 on the line's Navigator of the Seas. The water slide area on Harmony is something Royal Caribbean just began adding to ships this year.



Like Oasis and Allure, Harmony also has an open-air, tree-lined area called Central Park with restaurants, bars and upscale shops such as Bulgari. The vessel also has a 1,380-seat theater that will show the Broadway musical Grease, comedy club, jazz club, casino, aquatheater and karaoke bar. It has more than a dozen eateries including an



Italian restaurant by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver.

Wider than Oasis and Allure by about 2.5 feet and a tad longer, too, Harmony holds nearly 100 more passengers than its sisters at double occupancy. Its total capacity is 6,780 people, not including crew - a new record for the cruise industry.

After an initial series of cruises in Europe, Harmony will re-position to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in the fall to offer alternating, seven-night Eastern and Western Caribbean voyages.



Harmony Of The Seas is a 1,188 foot and 227,000-ton cruise ship_ the newest and biggest the world has ever seen.

Worth £800m, it boasts the Ultimate Abyss_ the tallest slide at sea - as well as seven separate 'neighbourhoods'.



Stood on its stern the ship would soar above the Shard, the Eiffel Tower and the Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai.

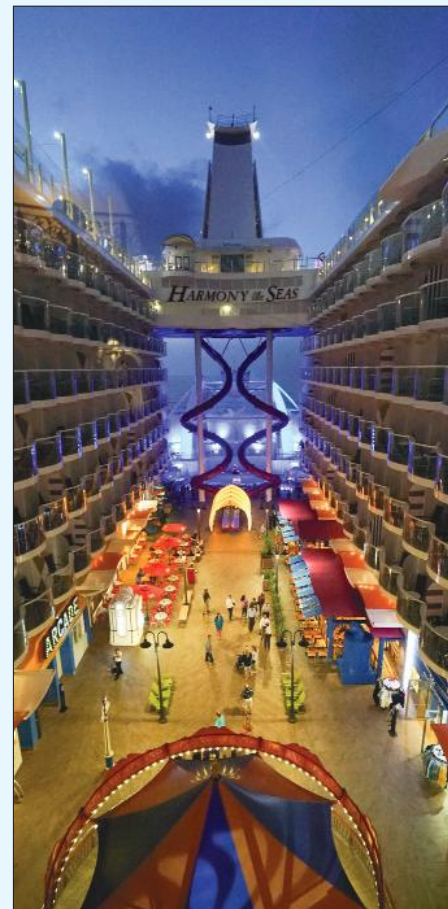
It is 330ft longer than the Titanic, and can carry a human cargo of 8,880 including 2,100 crew from 77 countries.

The largest cruise ship in the world_ measuring more than four football pitches in length with a maximum capacity for 6,780 passengers_ has docked in Southampton for final preparations before its maiden voyage.

Royal Caribbean International's 18-deck ship has set new records for length (1,118ft), gross tonnage (227,000), width (215.5ft), passenger capacity (5,479 at dou-

ble occupancy or a maximum of 6,780) and staterooms (2,747).

With a crew of 2,100 from 77 countries, the floating city boasts seven 'neighborhood's, a 10-storey slide that is the tallest at sea, 23 swimming pools, 20 dining venues, 52 trees, surf simulators, robot bartenders, a casino and climbing walls.



The Journey of Melissa Bennett, a Naturopath Reimagining Wellness

In the shifting world of integrative health, where more people than ever are seeking care that honors the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of wellness, Melissa Bennett, ND, CTN, CNW, stands out as a practitioner whose life and work are deeply intertwined. Melissa's story is not just one of professional expertise—it is a story of survival, faith, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to helping others reclaim their health.



**Rajeswari
Annavarapu**

earnest curiosity about natural medicine and a recognition that true healing must care for the whole person.

Melissa's foundation in the field of naturopathy is rooted in her studies at Trinity School of Natural Health, where she com-

pleted her Naturopathic Doctorate in Holistic Nutrition and Naturopathy between 2002 and 2006. Her years at Trinity were formative, shaping her understanding of biochemical individuality—the idea that each person's body functions in a unique way, requiring equally individualized care. This philosophy would become a cornerstone of her work. Driven to deepen her scientific understanding of predictive wellness, Melissa later pursued continuing education through Emory University's Predictive Health Initiative in 2013. This experience influenced her approach to functional testing, early detection, and using data to guide lifestyle interventions long before symptoms become disease.

Her expertise expanded further through studies in Christian Psychology and Counseling at Liberty University, an academic path that strengthened her appreciation for the emotional and spiritual

roots of health challenges.

She is an active affiliate of the American Association of Christian Counselors, reflecting her commitment to providing care that aligns with her deeply held belief that emotional and spiritual alignment are essential to healing.

Alongside formal education, Melissa earned several specialized certifications that define the breadth of her practice. She is a Board Certified Traditional Naturopath through the American Naturopathic Certification Board, a Certified Practitioner in Nutritional Wellness, and highly trained in the Zollinger Method of reflexology through The Heal Center.



Today, she is the founder of The Olive Leaf in Roswell, Georgia, an integrative wellness center built on the belief that the body has an extraordinary capacity to heal when supported with understanding, intention, and compassion. Yet long before she ever opened the doors of her practice, Melissa's journey began with an



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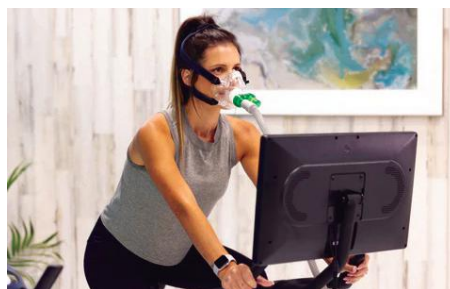
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She also holds the distinction of being an IfHI Master, a credential earned under the mentorship of Dr. Peter D'Adamo, whose pioneering work on blood type science deeply shaped her understanding of individualized nutrition. Through these diverse paths, Melissa built a multidimensional foundation that allows her to view health far beyond symptoms or isolated systems. She sees the body as an interconnected ecosystem whose wellness depends on a delicate balance among its physical, emotional, and spiritual components. While Melissa's education shaped her career, it was her personal journey that defined her mission. In the year 2000, at just thirty-three years old, she received a life-altering diagnosis: a form of breast cancer that required two years of chemotherapy and forty-six radiation treatments. As a young mother caring for her daughters, then just three and six years old, she faced a battle that tested every emotional and physical reserve she had. Her husband, who was a chiropractor at the time, became emotionally withdrawn through the process, leaving Melissa to navigate motherhood, treatment, and the emotional stability of her home almost entirely on her own. It was during these dark and exhausting years that Melissa's perspective on wellness transformed.

Every three weeks, she would sit for chemotherapy and choose a new patient to sit beside—someone she felt spiritually led to encourage. She began sharing what she called her “chem-tails,” sto-

ries of small miracles or moments of hope that appeared just when she needed them most. These experiences sustained her and helped cultivate the compassion, sensitivity, and spiritual awareness that would eventually define her work.

She recalls reaching the end of treatment and praying a simple prayer: “Lord, help me help others.” From that moment on, Melissa describes the next steps of her journey as divinely orchestrated. Every office she worked in, every skill she gained, and every opportunity that opened felt like another piece of a larger plan. Her survival, after being given only a 45 percent chance of living, became the foundation upon which she built her life's mission.



Today, Melissa continues to share parts of her story on the podcast she cohosts with her daughter called The Olive and The Lamb, where she reflects on the miracles that carried her through cancer and the purpose that grew from her pain. Her personal experience with illness, motherhood, and faith has shaped her into a practitioner who understands suffering firsthand and approaches each client with deep empathy, respect, and sincerity. As she often says,



“Healing is not only physical. It is emotional and spiritual too. All three must be in balance for complete restoration.”

The Olive Leaf: Restoring Health, Naturally

The Olive Leaf, founded in 2006 and now thriving in Roswell, Georgia, emerged from Melissa's desire to create a place where people could find clarity, hope, education, and holistic support for every dimension of wellness. The name reflects her spiritual grounding: the olive leaf is a symbol of peace, renewal, and restoration—qualities deeply embedded in the healing experiences she sought to offer her clients.

After surviving cancer and witnessing firsthand the importance of integrating medical treatment with emotional and spiritual support, Melissa knew she wanted to build a center where no one would walk through their health challenges alone. She envisioned an environment that honored the individuality of each person, provided education rather than prescriptions, and empowered individuals to understand their own biological and emotional needs.

From the beginning, The Olive Leaf was conceived as more than a clinic. Melissa wanted it to be a sanctuary—somewhere clients felt safe, seen, and encouraged as they navigated health concerns such as fatigue, inflammation, hormone imbalances, digestive issues, chronic stress, metabolic instability, or simply the desire to live with more vitality.

She believed strongly that root-cause analysis, functional testing, and personalized nutrition needed to be paired with compassionate conversation, faith-centered support, and lifestyle education. This approach contrasted sharply with the hurried, symptom-focused nature of conventional healthcare settings, and it quickly resonated with the individuals she served.

In her own words, “At The Olive Leaf, we help clients restore balance and discover how vibrant life can feel when we reset ourselves and regain health by identifying the cause and helping people make healthy choices.” That philosophy reflects Melissa’s broader view of wellness: health is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of balance that depends on metabolic stability, emotional resilience, spiritual grounding, and lifestyle alignment. She envisioned The Olive Leaf as a partnership, not a top-down treatment center. Clients would not simply receive protocols—they would participate in their own healing process through education, self-awareness, and accountability.

Over the years, The Olive Leaf grew into a comprehensive

integrative center where clients receive individualized support guided by functional diagnostics and holistic principles. But the foundation remained constant: compassion, education, and empowerment.

Melissa cultivated a team that reflects these values, including licensed clinical social workers who support the emotional dimension of wellness, and collaborative relationships with dietitians, cardiologists, oncologists, pediatricians, therapists, and chiropractors who extend the circle of care.

The mission of The Olive Leaf is deeply rooted in Melissa’s belief that every client’s healing journey is unique. Instead of focusing on symptoms, The Olive Leaf emphasizes understanding patterns—nutritional habits, metabolic responses, genetic tendencies, environmental exposures, emotional stressors, and spiritual needs. The aim is always to find the “why” behind the “what.”

The Olive Leaf also champions the idea that education is a cornerstone of healing. Clients are taught how to understand their genetic markers, how their nutritional needs vary based on blood type, how inflammation affects their health, and how daily choices influence long-term vitality. This educational approach creates clients who are not just recipients of care, but active participants in their wellness journey.

Melissa’s vision extends beyond her practice walls. Since 2016, she has contributed wellness insights to the Atlanta Journal-

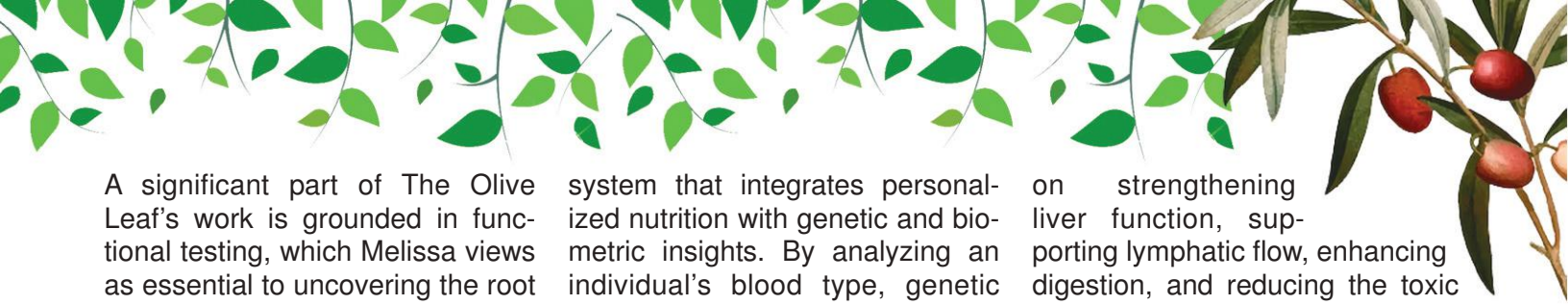


Constitution, offering accessible education on nutrition, preventive health, and daily wellness practices. She has shared her expertise on CBS Local News, participated in A&E’s “The Unexplained”, and served as a featured speaker for Emory University’s “Eyes on a Cure” symposium. These roles allow her to reach broader audiences with the same message she brings to her clients: that healing is accessible, that prevention is powerful, and that holistic approaches can transform lives.

Inside the Wellness

Offerings at The Olive Leaf

Today, The Olive Leaf stands as one of Georgia’s most comprehensive integrative wellness centers. The range of services offered reflects Melissa’s multidisciplinary training and her deeply held belief that health requires examining the whole person rather than isolated systems. Each service is rooted in functional analysis, personalized planning, and natural interventions that allow the body to regain its balance at its own pace.



A significant part of The Olive Leaf's work is grounded in functional testing, which Melissa views as essential to uncovering the root causes of persistent symptoms. These tests offer insights into digestive health, hormonal balance, micronutrient deficiencies, immune responses, adrenal function, metabolic health, and toxin exposure. By studying these internal patterns, Melissa creates highly tailored wellness plans that address not only what is out of balance but why it became disrupted in the first place. This approach eliminates guesswork and allows clients to make decisions based on meaningful data.

One of the flagship offerings at The Olive Leaf is the SHAPE ReClaimed program, a practitioner-guided system grounded in anti-inflammatory nutrition, detoxification, and metabolic resetting. Unlike quick-fix diets or short-term weight loss plans, SHAPE ReClaimed emphasizes long-term transformation through nutrient-dense food choices, consistent monitoring, and lifestyle alignment. Clients receive structured nutritional guidance, weekly or monthly check-ins depending on need, and continual education that helps them understand how the program supports their immune function, inflammation reduction, digestive health, and energy levels.

Melissa often emphasizes that "food is medicine," and SHAPE ReClaimed is one of the clearest expressions of that belief within her practice.

The Olive Leaf also offers the GenoType Program, an advanced

system that integrates personalized nutrition with genetic and biometric insights. By analyzing an individual's blood type, genetic tendencies, body measurements, and serotyping markers, Melissa generates a detailed and highly personalized nutrition plan. This includes tailored dietary recommendations, weekly meal-planning modules, and access to hundreds of recipes aligned with the client's genotype. Some individuals choose to work with personal chefs who prepare meals based on these guidelines, creating a seamless integration of therapeutic nutrition into their daily lives.

Advanced screening tools are another foundational component of The Olive Leaf's services. Thermography, a non-invasive imaging method that detects heat patterns and vascular changes, provides early insight into inflammation or physiological abnormalities, particularly in breast tissue. Because thermography identifies functional changes before structural abnormalities appear, it offers clients an additional layer of monitoring that complements traditional medical screenings. Body composition analysis using BIA and InBody technology further helps clients and practitioners understand changes in muscle mass, fat distribution, hydration levels, and metabolic efficiency. These assessments guide the refinement of nutritional and fitness strategies over time.

Detoxification is another pillar of the practice. Melissa frequently encounters clients whose symptoms are linked to toxin exposure—whether from food additives, environmental pollutants, mold, heavy metals, or chemical burdens accumulated over years. Her detoxification protocols focus

on strengthening liver function, supporting lymphatic flow, enhancing digestion, and reducing the toxic load on cells and tissues. These programs are individualized, gentle, and designed to improve the body's natural elimination processes without causing overwhelm or instability.

Recognizing the deep interconnection between emotional and physical health, Melissa has built a strong behavioral and emotional support arm within The Olive Leaf. Clients have access to individual and group coaching with Amy, LCSW, who specializes in helping people navigate stress, emotional blockages, trauma recovery, and lifestyle transitions. These sessions reinforce the idea that healing cannot occur in a vacuum; emotional resilience, stress reduction, and healthy habits are all essential components of sustained wellness. This reflects Melissa's belief that wellness is not only about what we eat or how we move, but also about how we cope, how we process, and how we connect with the world.

Through its diverse services, The Olive Leaf remains grounded in its original mission: to restore balance, educate with compassion, and empower individuals to take ownership of their wellness. Whether clients seek support for chronic health conditions, metabolic challenges, hormonal imbalances, digestive issues, emotional stress, or preventive care, The Olive Leaf offers pathways rooted in science, natural healing, and unwavering support.

*- Rajeswari Annavarapu*





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